

À LIRE / PROPOSALS FOR READING

Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga – A Cultural and Spiritual Model¹

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For many years, the university scholar Silviu Mihăilă has been researching the life and works of a prominent figure in Romanian culture, academician Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga. His thorough monograph, which originated as his doctoral thesis, highlights the role of a spiritual master for society, the younger generation, and the construction of a solid spiritual identity. Passionate about poetry, and the author of a volume of poems titled *Cumpăna dintre noi* published in 2020 (the debut prize in poetry for the year 2020, awarded by "The Union of Romanian Writers", Alba-Hunedoara branch), Associate Professor PhD Silviu Mihăilă is primarily dedicated to literary research. In this context, he has published two substantial studies: one of literary criticism and history, *Ioana Em. Petrescu, citindu-l pe Eminescu. Note, arhive, documente* (Preface by Ioana Both, 2013), and a philological critical edition, *Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga în conştiinţa critică a contemporanilor* (2016), a book that precedes the recent monograph.

Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga or about the "Taming" of Literature. Aspects of the Paideic Master (2024) is, as highlighted in the Preface, "a substantial book, with great documentary effort, but more importantly, one in which a young, comprehensive, and intelligent critic brings a striking personality back into the public consciousness." (Lăcrămioara Petrescu). We fully agree with this opinion, especially since the biography of the distinguished Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga was known only fragmentarily, and her work required further research and attention. Filling this gap is the author's

¹ See Silviu Mihăilă, *Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga or about the "Taming" of Literature. Aspects of the Paideic Master*. Preface by Lăcrămioara Petrescu, Iaşi, Ars Longa Publishing House, 2024, 334 pp.

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stated intention, who also aims to rectify some value judgments regarding the work of Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga and to present her both "from the perspective of the history of literary ideas and from the hermeneutic models proposed."

Thus, Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga constitutes a living example of a philologist who manifested during a difficult time for Romanian culture but benefited from a solid education. She grew up in a family of intellectuals, a family that gave the country personalities in various fields, and this proximity could not help but mark her. The directions in which she worked reveal a spirit of great intellectual availability: she followed her mentors in literary criticism and history, G. Călinescu and especially Tudor Vianu, elaborated studies of Eminescu exegesis, wrote about the great classics, was a Renaissance and paideic spirit, placed under the "obsession of classicism" and having the "vocation of interdisciplinarity," as the author emphasizes, worked in diplomacy as the director at the Romanian Academy in Rome, was a publicist, preface writer, book person, and supporter of younger generations, offering a humanistic and religious model, and finally embraced monastic life.

All these aspects are extensively analyzed and presented, with an emphasis on the modeling role of a great personality for young people and for a society lacking benchmarks, exposed to the risk of getting lost in a world of image and superficiality: "Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga sends an important alarm signal regarding the construction of the individual (the formation and becoming of the self), the need to (re)find an authentic identity, and to settle into an order of moral and ethical values and principles." These goals are perceived as imperatively necessary in a transitional moment for Romanian society when many were not yet aware of the danger looming on the horizon with democratization and the much-dreamed-of freedom.

Seen as stages of formation, these steps in acquiring a serious education, followed by the teaching period, continued with the writing of fundamental studies of comparative literature and art history, complex exegeses about Eminescu and Creangă, memoirs, diplomatic, publicistic, and academic activity, trace the axis of a destiny culminating in an inner illumination, with that peace and joy of existing in the Christic truth. The present monograph facilitates a better understanding of the context in which Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga was formed and created, as well as an

approach to the deeply humanistic and religious, formative, and open spirit that Silviu Mihăilă had the opportunity to know through a two-year epistolary exchange, arising in the happiest period of life, during adolescence and great ideals.

Using modern tools and interdisciplinary analysis, which handles concepts from philosophy, theology, literary theory, and plastic art, Silviu Mihăilă manages to construct a complex portrait of the investigated personality, articulating a methodological and hermeneutic approach of documentary meticulousness and scientific relevance. All the criteria of such research, which involve extensive bibliography and explanatory notes, are met and respected, as well as a discourse defined by moderation and the courage of a detailed approach. Considering it a "confessional book," Diana Câmpăan remarks not only "the polyhedral and complete view" on the life and work of Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga but also "the essayistic beauty of the author's discourse, Silviu Mihăilă, himself a promoter of authentic cultural values."

Thus, the rigorously scientific component of the book is charged with the affective surplus of a direct, long epistolary contact, with a modeling role, through which the master-disciple relationship was restored on a testamentary scale, diagnosing "the relationship between literature and life as a *counterbalance*, as a solution or as a refuge from the vicissitudes of life. Because our encounter with the work of Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga proved, in the end, to be more than a doctoral project, surpassing the limits of a rigid and tedious research to become an important stage in what can mean building a (personal) destiny not only intellectually but especially spiritually."

A restitutive work, Silviu Mihăilă's monograph emphasizes with deep relevance the *Aspects of the Paideic Master* explored by Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga, a cultural and spiritual personality of the past century, as well as a model of Christian humanity, who "undoubtedly offers the lesson of love, humility, purity, and modesty of the spirit along with the natural assumption of the transition from the *paideic master* to the *kairotic man*" (beautiful, valuable, "good sower").