



REVIEW

from **Assoc. Professor Dr. Sc. Maria Popova**, Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, History and Theory of Journalism Department, Scientific field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Theory of Journalism and Media)

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communication – Cartoon in Media)

with a dissertation on the topic: “Characteristics of the contemporary cartoon in the press (based on case studies from the newspapers “Sega”, “The Guardian”, “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” and “Le Monde”)

presented by **Peter Borissov Shoylev**, independent doctoral student in the History and Theory of Journalism Department, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski”

with supervisor: **Prof. Dr. Zdravka Konstantinova**

I. Presentation of the doctoral (PhD) student / applicant based on the submitted documentation.

The doctoral student graduated from the Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Institute (now Technical University) with master’s degree in “Power Stations, Networks and Systems” in 1959, as well as from the “Karl Marx Institute of Technology” (now University of National and World Economy) with master’s degree in “Industrial Economics”. He had a specialization in the field of a foreign trade. In 2017 he graduated from the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” with master’s degree in “International Journalism”. From 2019 to 2022 he was an independent doctoral student at the History and Theory of Journalism Department in the professional field “Media and Communications (Cartoon in Media)”. He is also an author of two books. He has teaching experience in the field of marketing, advertising, and leasing.

II. Assessment of the qualities of the text of the dissertation

1. Structure and volume.

Petar Shoylev's dissertation has a total volume of 259 pages and includes an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, and appendices.

2. Relevance of the topic.

The dissertation is dedicated to the current and interesting topic of the possibilities of the newspaper’s cartoons, as an original satirical form, to influence the audience's perceptions in assessing international events. As a journalistic form, cartoons have existed from the begging



of the journalistic profession, but their impact on the society is defining and they remain a preferred instrument of presenting the important social and political issues.

3. Aims, Object, Subject and Content.

In the introduction, the doctoral student has clearly defined the goal, object, and subject of his research. The **main goal** is to highlight the characteristics of a journalistic cartoon in the context of the significant international events. The **subject** of the research are the cartoons, published in the electronic editions of the four major European newspapers – the Bulgarian newspaper “Sega”, the British newspaper “The Guardian”, the German newspaper “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” and the French newspaper “Le Monde” in the period between 2015 and 2021. The 65 cartoons are observed, evaluated based on the features like relevance of the topic, expressiveness of the message, creativity and originality, visual effectiveness, and historical context.

The **first chapter** of the dissertation includes definitions, description and meaning of the cartoons, according to the positions of the different researchers and cartoonists. A brief historical review of the development of cartoon from the Renaissance to the present is made and the specifics in the work of some of its interesting representatives are presented. The basic understanding of the doctoral student is that cartoon is an art, but also a tool for social criticism, a unique communication mean through which cartoonist-journalists can present their satirical and political commentary on the different events. Some of the predominant variants of cartoons (like political, social, humorous, economic, literary, artistic) are described. It is accented on the political cartoon according to its essence, characteristics, influence on the politics, proven social effect. Presented are some of the methods for research on the cartoons in relation to their possibilities of choosing a subject and object for cartoons, reasons for their impact on the audience. The criteria according to which the empirical observation is carried out in the second chapter are also described, such as colour, periodicity, topicality, presence or not of text, authorship (editorial or external cartoonist), objects of representation (people, animals, events), expression (intellectual, humorous, attractive), etc. Petar Shoylev's conclusion is that “cartoons are related to both politics and the history of ideas over the centuries. Each cartoon is a message to the society, in the sense of the author's view of a certain event, person or story. And here we can note that the mockery is not intended to show someone according to your personal understandings, but a desire to push yourself and those who would see this cartoon to think in a certain direction.” (p.56)

This extensive part includes also other topics such as the significant role of the media and communication for the modern society; the dominance of technology and specifically of the convergence and the social networks; the social conflicts characteristics; the realization of the media as social institutions, especially in relation to their attitude to the power elites. The four monitored newspapers are compared in terms of their online and social media visualization capabilities, the use of photographs, videos, cartoons, and infographics.

The **second chapter** of the dissertation includes the journalistic history in the four selected countries, as well as the history of the monitored newspapers. It has been established that Bulgarian cartooning began with the works of the artist Henry Dembitsky and the newspapers “Tapan” and “Budilnik”. Decisive is the role of the newspaper “Sturshel”. Important Bulgarian artists are Chudomir, Rayko Alexiev, Iliya Beshkov, Alexander Bozhinov,



Boris Dimovski, Donyo Donev, Ivaylo Ninov, Ivaylo Tsvetkov, Chavdar Nikolov, etc. The role of the newspaper “Sega” and its leading cartoonist Hristo Komarnitsky is emphasized.

The use of cartoons is of great importance in England, Germany, and France. Most authoritative is the influence of the key magazines such as “Punch”, “Simplicissimus” and “Le Charivari”. Leading cartoonists are Steve Bell, Chris Riddell, Ben Jennings, Achim Greser and Hubert Lenz, Plantu, etc.

The main contribution of this chapter is the sequential presentation and description of the specific cartoons from each of the observed newspapers. They are selected according to seven key criteria. The analysis shows that all the cartoons published in “Sega” are in colour, most of them contain text and all of them are drawn by Komarnitsky. The main protagonists are the people. Mostly they are on the political (even internal political) topic, as mechanisms of influence are used irony, stereotype, and allusion.

Similar is the presentation of the cartoons in “The Guardian”, where the colour cartoons supplemented with the text also predominate. And dominate provocation, paradox, allusion, absurdity, irony. Cartoons are created by editorial cartoonists and by other artists, and as a result the style is vibrant. The political topic is prevailed, mostly people, but also objects is presented. The impact relies on allegory, irony, and absurdity.

The conclusions from the observation of “Le Mond” are that all cartoons are colour and supplemented with the text. They count on irony, allusion, absurdity, paradox. The cartoons are current, mostly on political and social topics, presenting people and objects. Allegory, metaphor, irony, absurdity are used.

“Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” also relies on the colour cartoons, but there are also black and white, the text is actively used, and irony and allusion are emphasized among other satirical elements. Again, political, and economic topics dominate. Cartoons mainly feature people and objects and they are drawn by the editorial cartoonists. The cartoons are current, allegorical, and metaphorical.

In the **third chapter**, through the prism of the cartoons, are examined four social, political, and economic events such as Brexit, the meetings between Kim Jong-Un and Donald Trump, Covid-19, and the US presidential elections in 2016 and 2020. Logically, the topic of Brexit is most actively covered in “The Guardian”, as it directly affects the British society. But it is also interesting for other newspapers, depending on their commitment to the foreign or domestic policy of their countries. The rest of the topics are presented much more briefly. The doctoral student concludes that “the cartoon is a form of visual expression that often uses humour, satire, and irony to comment on the political events and figures. It can be highly



emotional and impressive and convey messages in a more direct and highly charged manner. Cartoons can highlight key issues and challenge the public opinion.” (p.224)

4. Used scientific literature.

116 sources were used, of which 46 articles, and monographs in Cyrillic, 70 in Latin. The dissertation also includes 76 colour and black-and-white cartoons.

5. Abstract

The presented abstract has a volume of 26 pages and reflects the structure and content of the dissertation work.

III. Contributions to the dissertation research

Contribution of the dissertation is the choice of an interesting, current, and original topic. The forms of the media content visualization attracted public attention in the recent years due to the ubiquity of the Internet and the social networks. But the ability of images to easily and impactfully reach an audience has been valued by the journalists since the dawn of the media. Therefore, presenting how cartoons can interpret important social and political events is relevant to the contemporary media studies. At the same time, cartoons are among the leading satirical genres that manage to show serious topics through humour and irony and thus expand the range of perception of the modern man. The dissertation contribution is the attempt to interpret their influence through sociology, cultural studies, psychology, political studies, media theory and art studies. The assessment of visual communication as a part of the mechanisms by which the quality journalism forms the public agenda of the modern society is also of a contributing nature.

IV. Notes and recommendations

The main recommendation is related to the need for a more clearly formulated logical connection between the various sub-parts, which would stabilize the compositional structure. A future extension of the own conclusions would also be useful. If it is possible, I would also recommend that the text to be published.

V. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The doctoral student has three publications on the dissertation topic, which are presented in the scientific online journal “Media of the 21st Century” (www.newmedia21.eu) in October 2020, October 2021 and in August 2023. He has participated in two scientific forums – doctoral seminar and international scientific conference. All texts meet the required quality standards.

VI. Conclusion

The dissertation is devoted to the important, interesting, and current topic of how cartoons as a media and satirical tool manage to influence the audience in relation to the



important social and political events. A complex and scientifically based approach is used, interesting statements are made. Based on the presented dissertation, I recommend the respected scientific jury to award PETER BORISOV SHOYLEV the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in scientific filed 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Cartoon in the Media).

Date: 04.01.2024

Reviewer:

/ Assoc. Professor Dr. Sc. Maria Popova /