

Opinion

By Assoc. Prof. Natalia Hristova, New Bulgarian University,
for the degree of Doctor of Education and Science, in professional field 3.5.
(Media and Communications - Caricature in the Media)
with a dissertation on:

Characteristics of contemporary cartoons in the press (based on a case study of the newspapers "Sega", "The Guardian", "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" and "Le Monde").

by **Petar Borisov Shoylev**, free PhD student at FJMK

Scientific supervisor **Prof. Dr. Zdravka Konstantinova**

I. Evaluation of the dissertation qualities.

The genre of "caricature", which bears the characteristics of visual art and journalism and presents the "other view" of the life of society, is not easy for scientific research. The PhD student's choice of such a topic definitely deserves admiration. Moreover, the subject of the thesis are cartoons from the online editions of four newspapers ("Sega", "The Guardian", "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" and "Le Monde"), respectively from Bulgaria, Great Britain, Germany and France, which have not only national but also international popularity. The cartoons of "Sega" cartoons also enter the global network through new technologies.

Petar Shoylev's doctoral thesis is organized in an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and an appendix, amounting to 259 pages.

The **introduction** clearly states the aims, objectives and methods of the research.

Chapter One *The Journalistic Genre of Caricature* is to some extent theoretical. Based on the analysis and commentary of studies by Bulgarian and foreign authors, different opinions and interpretations of caricature as a visual and journalistic genre are presented, as well as different models for the study of the genre.

Petar Shoylev has reviewed numerous cartoons from the selected newspapers and selected

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Chapter Two *The role of cartoons in the newspapers analyzed* is structured through recurring paragraphs to each of the publications. Initially, a brief history of the cartoon in the individual country is set out, followed by an introduction to the newspaper. The third paragraph examines specific artists and their cartoons, on which it provides a formal and content analysis. The historical overview of cartooning in Britain, Germany and France is somewhat fragmentary and rather promotional. It is understandable that the PhD student has not had the opportunity, and has not set himself such a task, to investigate these issues more precisely. However, it would have been better to make a brief historiographical review before starting the part concerning the history of Bulgarian caricature, for which there is enough research.

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Chapter Two is particularly useful in introducing into the Bulgarian milieu the significant names of cartoonists from the three foreign publications. Information on preferences for staff or non-staff contributors is interesting, as is the publication of drawings by artists from other

Chapter Three, *Cartoon Commentaries on Events*, traces four significant moments in international political life during the period under review. The PhD student's observation that the topic "Brexit" logically dominates in the newspaper "The Guardian" is noteworthy. Here the illustrations presented by Peter Shoylev are well selected, and through the cartoons the different attitudes of the public and artists in the Brexit period towards the changing prime ministers - Boris Johnson and Theresa May - are shown.

The "Brexit" issue, according to the author, is seriously covered by domestic and foreign cartoons in the French "Le Monde", which is not surprising given France's leading role in the European Union. It would be useful to comment on the reason for the small number of cartoons in the newspaper "Sega" devoted to this important topic for the EU, which is linked to Britain's

The richly illustrated appendix on the history of the Pulitzer Prize for cartooning is very interesting. The PhD student also has a publication on this topic, which explains the more comprehensive presentation of the prestigious award.

The **Abstract** correctly reflects the content of the dissertation. Petar Shoylev has listed the contributions of his doctoral thesis, publications and participations in scientific forums are also included.

II. Contributions of the thesis research.

The main contribution, in my opinion, is the introduction of some little-known foreign authors into the scientific environment and introducing their work to a wider audience through online publications. In the PhD student's research, the world's leading themes for cartoonists publishing in the publications under consideration during the period under review (2015-2021) are

Peter Shoylev's dissertation shows one of the models for considering cartoons as an important communication tool in the contemporary world.

The selection of cartoons applied is very good. The images contribute to a more adequate perception of the author's analyses.

III. Notes and recommendations.

The text needs proof reading to eliminate a number of typographical, punctuation and spelling errors, as well as to standardize the grammatical tense used. Scholarly editing is also needed to avoid frequent repetition of theses and findings.

My main recommendation is to the formal analysis of the visual material, which focuses on the technique of execution (colour or black and white), on the percentage of images used (people, animals, objects), and the expectation is to highlight the specific style of depiction of individual artists, although the aim of the PhD thesis, as stated by the author, is to present the role of political cartooning as a specific genre in journalism.

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums.

The three publications on the topic of the thesis in electronic publications and two participations in scientific forums fully meet the requirements of the law.

V. Conclusion.

In general, the dissertation meets the basic requirements of the Law on Scientific Degrees and Titles, the PhD student handles the literature well, the citation is correct, the analyses and conclusions are adequate to the empirical material and I will vote "For" the award of the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" to Petar Shoyilev.

Date: 14. 01. 2024

Reviewer:
Assoc. Prof. Natalia Hristova