

## EXAMINER'S ASSESSMENT

By Prof. Albena Vladimirova Hranova, DSc., Department of Philosophy, Paisiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

- Regarding the materials presented for the participation in a competition for the acquisition of the position of Associate Professor of St. Kliment Ochriski University of Sofia, in the field of higher education 3.5 Public Communication and Information Sciences (Criticism and Practices in Criticism);
- In the competition to fill the vacancy of Associated Professor, as announced in State Gazette No. 93/ 26.11.2019, for the needs of the Department of Press and Publishing at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications, being Chief Assistant Professor Marin Bodakov, PhD the sole applicant.

**General presentation of the applicant.** Chief Assistant Professor Marin Bodakov, PhD was born in 1971; he graduated in Bulgarian Language and Literature, Sofia University in 1994, M. Phil. degree. Marin Bodakov is an author of eight collections of lyric poetry that prove him a remarkable contemporary poet. He has been an editor in *Bulgarski mesechnik* magazine (1997-2000), *Kultura* newspaper (2000-2018) and *K* newspaper (2018-2019). His long lasting practice as a literary critic in printed media and a journalist is of notable importance for the requirements of this competition. Marin Bodakov is also a prize-winner of five prestigious awards for lyrical poetry, literary criticism and library causes. From 2006 to present he is a full-time lecturer at the Department of Press and Publishing at Sofia University. In 2014, he defended a PhD thesis "Policies of Presentation of Bulgarian Literature in Print Media in the 90ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Problems of Critical Self-Reflection" published by the title "Who "killed" Literary Criticism" (Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2019).

**Lecturer's activities.** As to the moment of competition, Chief Assistant Professor Bodakov, PhD, holds lecture courses – "Writing for PR", "Literature and Media", "Journalism and Art Criticism", "Criticism and Practices in Criticism" for full-time and extramural students in modules "Public Relations", "Journalism" and "Publishing". During the last three years, under his scientific supervision, 14 undergraduates successfully defended their graduation theses. Mr. Bodakov's lecturer's activities are quite relevant to the requirements of this competition.

**Research works.** The candidate has presented to the competition 10 articles published in the 2016-2020 period, after dissertation thesis defense (plus other three published before the defense yet different from its topic). They refer to different problems of literary publicity – the differences between literary criticism and literary journalism, the crisis of journalistic genres, as well as analytical works on writings of Yordan Marinopolski, Hristo Smirnenski, Nilolay Raynov, Chudomir, Emiliya Dvoryanova, Ivan Tsanev, Ivan Stankov. As a post-doctoral dissertation, Mr. Bodakov, PhD has presented the monograph “*Kritika i iskrenost. Sluchayat Yordan Marinopolski* [Critique and Sincerity: The Yordan Marinopolski case] (Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2019). It consists of 250 pages, including two parts, conclusion and bibliographic citation.

“Sincerity” is the central operational category in the research work. Yet it does not prove its heuristic ability and not only because the concept is “obscure and fatally immeasurable” (p. 9), as the author puts it. Although formulating the conceptual vagueness of “sincerity” the author permits its limitless axiological power to penetrate his work. That is why the semantic action of “sincerity” is stimulated by its powerful everyday connotations; it appears as an instrument producing the formula of value, grounded by ethical pathos. Herein it has at least two results that block the analytical proceedings – it could not be contested (because of ethical reasons) and it could not be used as an analytical tool (because of its lack of operational capacity).

Following Marinopolski’s attempt to denounce the contradictions in the writings of the *Misal* literary circle (especially Kristev’s and Slaveykov’s), the author is inclined to understand the notion of sincerity as absence of contradictions. This juncture is quite disputable as sincerity and contradiction have no logical correlation able to supply their conceptual opposition. If we take contradiction as insincerity, Yavorov’s poem *Dve dushi* looks like a paradigmatic example of insincerity as it is a topical picture of contradiction and a model of antithesis; besides, if we take “sincerity” as having different contents in literature and in literary criticism (“let us apply it only to literary criticism, not to literature itself” the author notes at p. 9), this only means that we completely annihilate any possible kind of conceptual relevance of “sincerity”. What is more, the contradictions in the critical thinking of *Misal* are easily qualified as “lack of integrity” (p. 148), while the contradictions in Marinopolski’s attitude to *Misal* are qualified as “peripeteias of sincerity” (p. 81) and as “an attempt to be integral” (p. 151) in the monograph. The author strives to supply at least a psychological relevance to the concept of sincerity by involving the notion of “congruence” which means a correspondence of experience, consciousness and communication in the terms of Carl Rogers; yet this only prolongs the question how to rationalize the correspondence in the cases of Marinopolski and *Misal* and how to measure its presence and the balance of its ingredients in any practice of literary criticism.

“Critique and Sincerity” is a monograph dealing also with human characters and makes clear its correspondence to some of the genre schemes of the belles lettres rather than to these of a literary research; and especially the scheme of the Romantic contrast proves available in these pages. There are “bad”(Slaveykov and Kristev) and “good” (Marinopolski) characters; the entire identification of the author with his protagonist also contributes to this effect; also the aspiration of the text for producing allegorical inspirations and delivering morals to our contemporaneity. The protagonist looks like an exemplary Romantic character – a brave hero and a victim at the same time, suffering from his sincerity and high moral standards. The critical style is congruent to such a character – Marinopolski has “a tragic presence” (p. 8) in Bulgarian literary criticism; he is “a provincial David against the Goliaths of the capital city as Slaveykov and Kristev are”; the latter, being the “bad” characters are qualified by the author – no more, no less - as follows: “everyday grandomania, arrogance, will of literary power, speculative texts, manoeuverability”(p. 13). The negative qualifications culminate in the conviction that the literary ideology of *Misal* imports a foreign aesthetic doctrine of modernism which is discrepant to traditional Bulgarian literature, while Marinopolski stands for an “another type of literary publicity which derives its own norms from itself”(p. 69). This way, throughout Romantic contrasts and axiological sanction of cultural autohtonity this research work depicts a negative image of *Misal* literary circle, which - unintentionally and unfortunately – coincides with the main contours of *Misal*'s negative image in the official literary studies of the 50-70ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century period. The book also lacks attention to the newer interpretations from the last three decades; in them, neither Marinopolski is that much forgotten, nor *Misal* is considered as definitely “bad” or “good” character of Bulgarian culture. Albeit these critical notes I do appreciate the main contributions of the monograph as follows: “Critique and Sincerity” is an initiatory work providing details to Yordan Marinopolski’s presence in Bulgarian literary criticism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> c.; it reveals and supplies new archival sources in Bulgarian literary studies referring to the processes and interrelations in Bulgarian literary milieu at that time; it elucidates new aspects of the literary publicity of the period referring to the practice of media in the everyday life of Bulgarian culture.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, I pronounce with conviction before this distinguished jury the high assessment of applicant’s lecturer’s and scientific works and vote positively the academic position of Associated Professor to be awarded to Chief Assistant Professor Marin Bodakov, PhD.

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Sofia

Prof. Albena Hranova, DSc.

