



REVIEW¹

from Assoc. Prof. Ph.D. Svetlana Stankova, Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Foreign Journalism) with a dissertation on the topic: “Latin American Hispanic literary journalism from the middle of the twentieth century to the present days”,

presented by Vladimir Georgiev Stoichkov, full-time doctoral student in the Department Communication and Audio Visual Production of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. Milko Petrov, DSc.

I. Presentation of the doctoral student on the basis of the submitted documentation

Vladimir Stoichkov graduated at Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication as a Master of Journalism. He has been a full-time doctoral student at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Department of “Communication and Audio Visual Production” since 2019. Vladimir Stoichkov's professional experience is very rich and in various fields - university lecturer in journalism, history and literature, writer, journalist, coordinator of exhibitions, conference speaker, screenwriter and documentarian. His versatile creative biography includes several published books in Bulgarian and Spanish, a collection of short stories, numerous publications in Bulgarian and Spanish-language periodicals, 81 author's series of the Bulgarian documentary series “The Other Bulgaria”, three Spanish-language documentaries for ECTV, Ecuador, museographies etc.

II. Assessment of the qualities of the dissertation text.

The problem developed in the dissertation, about the role of Latin American Hispanic literary journalism as a historical testimony from Latin America and its influence in the trends of modern journalism and the literary market, is current and significant, considering that this is a little-studied topic in Bulgarian academic research field. This journalism has not been studied in depth until now, which gives the dissertation thesis additional value, especially when it comes to the study of women's presence in literary journalism as a reflection of social and political development in the region in the last six decades.

Vladimir Stoichkov presents in his research 122 bibliographic sources in Bulgarian and in Spanish with a clear aspiration for depth and comprehensiveness of the study of theoretical sources related to the place of journalism (literary journalism) in the Latin American creative tradition. It should be noted that his bibliography includes both contemporary scholarly interpretations of the reflexive

¹ Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the review - about 6-7 standard pages



journalistic narrative and basic works on journalism theory (Milko Petrov, Totka Monova, Maria Popova, Umberto Eco, Antonio Checa, Tomás Martínez, Andrés Puerta, Roberto Herscher).

In his scientific study, Vladimir Stoichkov makes a theoretical overview of the existing concepts of the relationship between literature and journalism - a subject of academic research and debate that continues nowadays. It should be noted that the review of concepts of what literary journalism is, who are its origins and stages in Latin America, which are its leading genres, is made with the clear aim of introducing current views and, accordingly, contemporary developments and uses of concepts. At the same time, the doctoral student proves the influence of the geo-political context for the birth of modern Spanish-language journalism in Latin America, looking for the common historical basis, the common characteristics of the countries of Latin America depending on the political and social development in the region from colonialism to the present day.

In order to define the trends of Latin American Hispanic literary journalism in the selected period - from the so-called "boom" until present day, Vladimir Stoichkov traces the entire genesis of Latin American journalism. Focusing on the so-called "Periodismo narrative", which appeared together with modernism at the end of the 19th century, he makes a new systematization of its reference representatives, offering a new interpretation of the metaphorical applications of female archetypes in the non-fiction of the region - "the mother" as a synonym of the homeland; the "criminal" and the "witch" as exponents of apostasy; the "old woman" and the "good fairy" as a parallel to modernism; the "maiden" as personification of the future; the "saint" as an exponent of folk psychology in the area; the "seductress" as an image of Latin America. The proposed interpretation of the female image as a metaphor for Latin America is developed in two main approaches - essayistic and vulgaristic. To illustrate his conclusions, the doctoral student also presents 3 author tables - of the classics of Latin American literary journalism from the boom period, of the most prominent contemporary Latin American representatives of literary journalism and of female archetypes in Latin American literary journalism.

In his research, Vladimir Stoichkov compares the characteristics of the 19 countries that fit into the parameters of Latin America with an official language of Spanish, making a systematic overview of the achievements of the Latin American tradition in literary journalism. On the other hand, through the presence of women in literary journalism, he analyzes the political and social reality of a given region. In this sense, the comparative-analytical approach to the topic chosen by the doctoral student is operational and relevant.

In his scientific research Vladimir Stoichkov creates a new classification outlining an unknown chapter in the history of world journalism, which can serve as a basis for future research and development, with the aim of deepening knowledge in this direction. However, the special merit of the study is in its cross-cultural comparativism, covering the comparison of the phenomenon of modern Spanish-language journalism in the countries of Latin America.

Scientific research is based on an empirical material that respects with its volume and complexity. It could be evaluated as professional, summarizing and systematizing the separate periods in the development of Latin American journalism. The analysis and processing of texts from the genre of non-fiction are done with extreme correctness and a conscious scientific responsibility to highlight those authors and publications that have left a visible mark in world journalism.

The contributions of the present doctoral dissertation is build on the authors and works used in the analysis of the results. Vladimir Stoichkov defines the leading editions and sources for literary journalism in Latin America according to sales in the book market, as well as the number of readers of the electronic versions. The proposed list of the most prominent names and works of the period of the so-called "Chronicles of the Indies" is comprehensive and correct. Individual interviews were also



conducted with Guatemalan writer and literary journalist Rodrigo Rey Rosa, as well as with Peruvian writer and Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa.

Vladimir Stoichkov includes previously unknown Latin American authors and works, such as Martin Caparros, Leila Guerriero, Juan Villoro, Alberto Salcedo Ramos, Leonardo Haberkorn and others, who in the last decade marked a new Latino “boom” in modern world journalism. The author manages to create a kind of journalistic map of Latin America, including the most significant in the genre from the Spanish-speaking territories from Mexico to Patagonia, as well as to indicate the current trends of Hispanic literary journalism in Latin America.

Vladimir Stoichkov elaborates a systematic overview of the periods in the development of Latin American Hispanic literary journalism, emphasizing the most significant authors, their topics and leading titles, which enriched world journalism with their innovative approach to topics. It also pays special attention to the role of journalism as a historical testimony from Latin America and its influence in the trends of modern journalism and the literary market.

The 122 bibliographic sources presented, both in Bulgarian and in Spanish, show that the dissertation student has the competence to interpret and analytically present a wide range of scientific bibliography. The cited sources are representative of the author's researched scientific field, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the analysis and its contemporary research.

The dissertation text is composed in the following structure - summaries in Bulgarian, English and Spanish, introduction, five chapters, conclusion, research contributions to the topic, bibliography and three appendices. Its structure is balanced and well done. Chapters one and two are staged, presenting a geopolitical context of the emergence and development of literary journalism in Latin America, both chronologically and genre-wise. The overview of the phenomenon of modern Spanish-language journalism in Latin America is methodologically presupposed, taking into account the further tracking of its representatives and the outline of trends in the period from the so-called “boom” to the present day and the results of their analysis. Such a comparison is relevant given that the 19 countries in the region also share some common characteristics. The third chapter presents the research methodology and tools for processing the collected empirical data. The main part of the study is presented in the fourth and fifth chapters. The fourth chapter identifies the most prominent representatives and the leading themes and trends of Latin American Hispanic literary journalism in the selected period, and the fifth examines the presence of women (authors and characters) in Latin American journalism as a reflection of social and political development in the region. In these two parts of the dissertation, the author also analyzes the obtained results, presents the conclusions and generalizations, the limitations of the research, as well as its possibilities for future development and expansion. Such a balanced structure fully meets the compositional requirements for the dissertation text.

The text of the dissertation is distinguished by very good language and style, although the author has been living and working in another continent for many years. The exposition is clear, systematized and does not deviate from the literary grammar, spelling and punctuation norms.

The presented abstract, attached to the documentation, has a volume of 35 pages and contains the necessary scientific details, namely: object and subject of the scientific research, scientific hypotheses, scientific goals and scientific tasks, obtained scientific results. The abstract meets the technical and regulatory requirements and correctly presents the essence of the dissertation work, both from the point of view of the content and in terms of the contributions made.



III. Contributions to the dissertation research

According to me the main contribution of the dissertation is in the creation of a new conceptual framework of Latin American Hispanic literary journalism in the last six decades - from the “boom” period to the present day. This scientific-applied contribution can be considered from two aspects - first, as a critical analysis of a poorly researched and, accordingly, unknown chapter in the history of world journalism. An analysis defining both the most prominent representatives and the leading themes, as well as the trends of Latin American Hispanic literary journalism in the selected period. And secondly, as a comparative analysis between classical female archetypes and their application in Latin American literary journalism, reflecting the social and political development in the region.

Using quantitative and qualitative methods of gathering information and analysis from the specialized sources, Vladimir Stoichkov makes valuable authorial findings based on the wide-ranging empirical material. On the one hand, regarding female characters in Latin American literary journalism as a metaphorical projection of the local worldview, he derives six types of female archetypes in the non-fiction of the region. On the other hand, the author creates a kind of journalistic map of Latin America, including the most significant in the genre from the Spanish-speaking territories.

As a lecturer in “Narrative Journalism” at the Ecuadorian University “Universidad Tecnica Particular de Loja”, the author utilizes the results obtained from the dissertation thesis very resourcefully with the creation of an author's virtual guide. It is entitled “Periodismo Narrativo. Guía didáctica” (Narrative Journalism. Didactic Guide) and is published with the University's logo. This guide can be used by both students and future researchers of Latin American literary journalism. The findings and contributions made in the dissertation could be used as a starting point for future research in the field of journalism as a historical testimony from Latin America.

IV. Notes and recommendations

As for the directions for further work on the presented doctoral thesis, the present study could be expanded by strengthening the comparative-analytical approach to the trends in journalism in the region. The paper would benefit from cleaning up the many proofreading errors in the text and citing irrelevant sources such as Wikipedia for example. The publication of the research study would be of benefit to a wide range of readers – both to academic circles in the field of journalism and media theory, to students, to active practitioners in the field of professional journalism, and also to readers with a taste for rich production of non-fiction texts in Latin America.

V. Publications and participation in scientific forums

In the period 2006–2018, Vladimir Stoichkov published three novels in Bulgarian and one in Spanish, a collection of short stories in Spanish, a biography of Oswaldo Mora in Spanish, he is the author of a chapter of the book “Image, Stories and Means”, published by the prestigious scientific Portuguese publishing house RIA Editorial, entitled “Literary Journalism in the Time of Facebook”, in Spanish. Along with this, the doctoral student has presented twelve scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation, published in the printed edition of the magazine “Economist”, a franchise of the English “The Economist” and in the online publication for research, analysis, criticism “Media of the 21st century”. All this shows a long-lasting and deep interest in the scientific problem and an international resonance of the research conducted by him. I could say that the requirements of the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” for approving and disclosing the results of the research according to Art. 5, item 5 as regards the minimum national requirements, are fully covered.



VI. Conclusion

The peer-reviewed doctoral thesis fills an important scientific field - the study of Latin American Hispanic literary journalism from the period of the beginning of new journalism in the 1960s to the present. Vladimir Stoichkov has been worked on it in detail, with a focus on the role of journalism as a historical testimony from Latin America and its influence in the trends of modern journalism and the literary market. A special place is also given to the presence of women in literary journalism as a reflection of the social and political development in the region in the last six decades. All academic and procedural requirements have been complied with. The presented contributing points of the doctoral thesis give me the definite reason to propose to the esteemed scientific jury to vote positively for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (Ph.D.) to Vladimir Georgiev Stoichkov in a professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Foreign Journalism).

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