

OPINION

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on the appointment to the academic position "Associate Professor" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" of Chief Assistant Marin Bodakov, PhD, in the scientific field 3.5. Social Communication and Information Studies – critique and critical practices, announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in the State Gazette, No 93 of 26.11.2019 for the needs of the *Department of Press and Book Publishing*

General record of the scientific and teaching activity of the applicant

Chief Assistant Marin Bodakov, PhD, presents a dignified description of his activity as a scientist and lecturer. He became part-time assistant in 2004 on the subject "Creative Writing". Since 2006, he has been full-time assistant, and, since 2011 – Chief Assistant at the Department of Press and Book Publishing with the FJMC at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". His courses are greeted with great interest by the students for several reasons. Marin Bodakov can work with words; he can also teach how one can work with these. This is not a frequent phenomenon. He was admitted to our faculty as an acclaimed critic and poet, as a person with an excellent knowledge of the Bulgarian literary critique because he is a part of its operational construction. It is here that we should mention his previous works which have, undoubtedly, had an impact on his creative development. I would like to mention specifically the 18 years during which Dr Bodakov evaluated every week the contemporary events in our literature by wielding a vivid pen for the *Kultura* newspaper, as well as every two weeks for its successor i.e. the publication "K". In itself, this is a school that not everybody can endure and come out with honour and a proud stance. Dr Bodakov managed this by becoming a byword for an honest critic wielding a brilliant pen and having the necessary general knowledge via which his judgements began to sound like a compliment and his compliments like a judgement. Given his inherent tact, he rarely went to extremes but rather tried to present his well-argued opinion in an honest and decent manner.

It is only natural then that he started teaching as titular at our faculty on the following subjects:

- "Critique and Critical Practices", major "Book Publishing";

- "Literature and Media" and "Publicism and Artistic Critique", major "Journalism";
- "Writing on PR" , major "Public Relations".

I have claimed for a long time that FJMC must find the optimal teaching balance between lecturers and theoretical attitude and people involved in the practical field. The faculty was lucky in appointing him as a lecturer because he combines both concepts, which only goes to show that these do not exclude each other, if one has the necessary experience. Only naturally, he began to teach in our MA programmes with courses on "Journalistic Genres", "Educational Practice" and "The Book as a Game". I have known Marin for several years and I know that he has two passions – the students and books. The former is supported by the fact that he has always been one of the favourites of the academic youth, mostly because of his knowledge which he presents to the students in an accessible manner, because of his dedication to the teaching process, because of the fact that with him students work on practical problems and do not merely read old-fashioned theoretical postulates. It is not per chance that that he has been the academic supervisor of 14 graduating students at our faculty and, this is a well-known fact, students themselves choose their academic supervisors. A fact that speaks eloquently of the mutual sympathy and recognition with the student community.

Parallel to his teaching activity, Dr Bodakov develops serious scientific and creative work as well. In the last nine years, he has been awarded five awards and I would like to point out – "Knight of the Book" of the Association "Bulgarian Book". I am pointing this particular award out because it suits him fully. He has published 12 books on different topics. Ranging from tender lyrics to serious monographs like "Who "killed" critique: Politics of representation of Bulgarian literature in the printed media in the 90's of the 20th century " which includes a part of his PhD work, as well as "Critique and frankness: The case of Yordan Marinopolski". I will review the latter separately but I dare claim that it ranks among the best academic publications in the last few years which have been dedicated to Bulgarian critique and its relationship with the media. For now, I will only point out its innovative approach. He deals with the body of work of his protagonist in a multi-layered manner within the framework of three research flights – media and literary history, media and the objectivity of literary facts, the media in the history of literary critique. I can categorically claim that there are not many people who are capable of such an analysis which requires profound and specific knowledge of literature, critique, media and the state of overall spiritual life during the period under review.

The creative activity of Dr Bodakov continues also in a series of articles on the topic of Bulgarian critique in different publications, as well in the presentation of 12 sectional reports at prestigious academic forums.

Scientific-teaching activity with regard to participation in the competition

Marin Bodakov is taking part in this competition with a single monograph: "Critique and frankness: The case of Yordan Marinopolski", as well as ten scientific publications related to the topic of the competition.

His monograph is of special interest. A lot of things may be said about it. For example, the innovative approach – to explore the way a given work is perceived by the operational critique and its transition to literary history. This is an old topic for Bodakov. He has always been interested in no man's land between contemporary literature and contemporary critique. Starting off from this perception, the author presents an almost all-forgotten critic with a contradictory fate – Yordan Marinopolski. He also presents the main reason for this – namely, the frankness of the author. By raising it to the rank of a "moral imperative".

Indeed, let's think about this: how many critics are there in our literature who write without being influenced by their ideological, partisan, social, close-circle, aesthetic predilections? Predilections that bear down like chains upon their creative elan. There are not a lot of them. Most of them have always taken into consideration something – be it the powers of the day, personal enmities or personal friendships. The masters wielding the pen have always managed to mask these motives as considerations of principle or aesthetic reasons. Those who did not possess the artistic might remained at the level of claqueurs or small-time vituperators.

Frankness, inherent integrity, non-compliance with hierarchy, the rejection of the influence of particular literary circles, writing in accordance with one's own conscience – this is Marinopolski's credo and Bodakov reveals it very well.

Naturally, frankness (on its own) is not a guarantee for the creation of great works but it is a guarantee and a necessary precondition for the creation of genuine literary critique. Without idols erected in advance and without enemies declared beforehand.

This sounds too idealistic. In that era and in the contemporary one – an era of personal relationships, aesthetic contradictions, media noise and emphatic advertising pathos – frankness is not the preferred quality on the market of ideas and suggestions. But it must exist so that there may be purity in the literary process and its evaluation.

In my opinion, the great contribution of Marin Bodakov with this book is not that he reinstates in our horizon a Bulgarian critic but rather that he convincingly reminds our value system of the frankness of intentions, of evaluations, of behaviour as a forgotten but yet eternal virtue. I reckon that had this been Dr Bodakov's only contribution, it would have still been sufficient for his habilitation.

Conclusion

The application of Assistant Professor Marin Hristov Bodakov, PhD, is in accordance with all requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and its Statutes. I assess highly his teaching, pedagogical, scientific-research and creative accomplishments. The works with which he is applying to the competition have made me vote in a convinced and frank manner for his selection for the academic position Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication in the scientific field 3.5. Social Communication and Information Studies (Critique and critical practices). I will recommend in a well-argued and frank manner to the rest of the academic jury to support my assessment.

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