

Position on the scientific work and academic activities and responsibilities of Asst. Prof. Yassen Borislavov, PhD, a participant in a competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” in Journalism, professional division 3.5. “Mass communications and Information Studies” (Journalism – History of Bulgarian Journalism)

by Prof. Ivan Elenkov

The academic biography of Yassen Borislavov could be traced in an ascending line with the completion of his higher education in 1990 with a MA in Journalism in the Faculty of Journalism of St. Climent Ohridski University in Sofia, Bulgaria. In 1994 he graduates a second higher education in history with a master's degree from the Faculty of History. In 2006, he successfully defended his dissertation earning a doctorate degree.

In 2013 he starts work in Sofia University in the History and Theory of Journalism Department as a lecturer on history of the Bulgarian Journalism. Since then the curricula he developed, his lectures, seminars and courses have been distinguished for their design, contents and format. They possess high scientific merits, methodological quality and outstanding academic results that evidence the positive development of his academic career.

He enters in the competition with two monographs, two small monographic research and four articles that reveal fruitful scientific work. These publications cover important and unstudied research spaces in the history of Bulgarian journalism; they are widely acclaimed among the scientific community and have a high frequency of reference.

Starting with his dissertation work, Borislavov outlines an innovative research field that gradually becomes his trait – satirical-humorous press and study of historical forms and figures of laughter on his pages as an essential element for understanding Bulgarian culture during the decades of early modernity. Transformed into a remarkable book “Natural History of Bulgarian Laughter” this early research of his reveals, through the prism of laughter, the structural reformations of society after the liberation period – how new public spaces are formed, the new roles of their inhabitants and what are the dimensions of individual aspects of modern changes at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

In the texts presented for the competition, his original and deeply penetrating historical and reconstructive methods unfold in the decades between the two world wars, reaching new authoritative evidence, convincing analytical arguments and conclusions needed for understanding Bulgarian life at that very distinct time. What is now new and different in Borislavov works is rethinking laughter through introduction of the political factor and cultural variations of the political, including its definite apolitical aspects. By standing

between these two extremes, Borislavov defines the Bulgarian humour in those years as (im)possible form and (lack of) civil solidarity. He traces lost sentiments over the pre-war times, the impact of antimodern reflections and antiliberal attitudes after the wars in comparison to cultural predispositions and reactions of the Bulgarian pre-modern society.

There, between those two defined extremes, the “intelligent humor” of Rayko Alexiev is presented – an important narrative and plot revealed by Borislavov with skillfulness and subtle analytical sensitivity that allows him to achieve even greater contrast between radically political and apolitical. In this respect, I would like to point out that the study gives him the opportunity to think of "Alexiev's laughter" as a starting point for the study of the Bulgarian intelligent "right" from the interwar period with all his restrained or unrestrained sympathy for power, leadership, unity, the "native" and its relations with the pre-war liberal ideological heritage; an opportunity that would outline a more definite understanding of laughter and the culture of the "right" in equilibrium with the "left laughter" displayed clearly on the pages of the book. Along with my observations on his impressive cultural explorations, I note the consistent unfolding of his work to a special media analysis in relation to the examined publications which I highly estimate but I leave the opinion to the scientific jury specialized in media studies.

All in all, after emphasizing the high achievements from the cultural production of Yassen Borislavov, its empirical diversity, its theoretical, methodological and interpretative merits; after pointing out the obvious projections of his entire creative work in science and public spheres; considering his fruitful academic career, teaching practices and indisputable authority in the collegial communities, with the utmost conviction, I encourage the distinguished Scientific Jury to vote without hesitation with “YES”, choosing him as “Assistant Professor” in Journalism, professional division 3.5. “Mass Communications and Information Studies” (Journalism – History of Bulgarian Journalism).

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