

EVALUATION STATEMENT

By Vladimir Ivanov Donev, PhD,
Associate Professor at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko
Tarnovo

of materials submitted for participating in a competition
for the faculty position of Associate Professor
at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

in the higher education field of study: 3.5 Public communications and
information sciences, research specialty: Critics and Critical Practices

1. Evaluation of competition publications.

By Order No. P 38-705 of 13 December 2019 by the Chancellor of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" I was appointed member of the academic panel for a competition for the faculty position of Associate Professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in the higher education field of study: 3.5 Public communications and information sciences, research specialty: Critics and Critical Practices.

In order to participate in this competition, being the only candidate, application papers have been submitted by Senior Lecturer D-r Marin Bodakov from SU.

Dr Marin Bodakov has enclosed a total of 14 scholarly works, including 1 monograph published as a book, 13 publications within the competition's thematic field. All of the articles have been published in scholarly journals.

2. The relevance of the publications presented in the competition.

I would like to focus on the main work in the competition – the book „Criticism and Sincerity. The case of Jordan Marinopolski“. The title of the book directs us to the problem of the relation between literary criticism and sincerity. The author proposes to consider this relation in ethical and psychological terms. M. Bodakov thinks that the leading life and professional attitude of critic Yordan Marinopolski is sincerity and this makes him hypersensitive to the discrepancy between text and behavior manifested by his literary opponents Krustyo Krustev and Pencho Slaveikov in the literary process from the beginning of the 20th century. Krustyo Krustev and Pencho Slaveikov stand out with great literary ambitions and personal strategies for building their own image in the field of Bulgarian literature and culture and hurt the delicate spirit of J. Marinopolski.

Sincerity is also called "congruence" – the psychological integrity of the individual, the coincidence between word and deed, between ethics and aesthetics, to say in more ordinary words.

How does the author interpret the ethical approach in his work? He does this by directly identifying himself with the position of his researched object, critic J. Marinopolski, and his views on literature and on the works of his literary opponents. Marin Bodakov attempts to write a biography of Marinopolski by making a psychological description of his personality and literary works and of the literary figures Pencho Slaveikov and Krustyo Krastev with whom Marinopolski enters into personal and aesthetic disputes. The author has been involved in these disputes over 100 years ago and tries to justify and resurrect the image of his character, Marinopolski. Therefore, he questions the already established truths about the talent and role of a critic such as J. Marinopolski in literary history – a literary figure with no major achievements in literature at the beginning of the century. M. Bodakov cites the opinions of critics who did not recognize Marinopolski's "valuable" role in Bulgarian literature, subjective opinions of other writers, and made attempts at his own psychoanalytic assessments of writers' conflicts at the beginning of the century.

There are reasonable doubts against such a simple point of view for the interpretation of literary subjects from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Naturally, an ethical criterion cannot be applied to the sphere of aesthetic phenomena. The role of a writer is measured by his or her talent and contribution with texts in literary history that are considered significant over time. What did J. Marinopolski contribute to literary history - with his "humorous stories" and pamphlets? Should the Researcher intervene in the literary disputes of a century ago? Why is this necessary? How is the "congruence" measured by the stated intentions of a person in her letters and articles or by her actions? What does J. Marinopolski's personality look like according to the published letters?

I will start by answering the last question. From the letters themselves, contrary to the apologia of Marinopolski, the image of a sincere and consistent person in his arrogance emerged for me. "Congruent" as a personality, he directly bothers critic Krustyo Krastev with his claims. What do the facts presented by M. Bodakov tell us? In 1898, two texts by Marinopolski were published in the Thought Magazine – the

humorous story "A quarrel" and a review of A. Strashimirov's "Laughter and tears". In the same year, Marinopolski published his book "Bulgarian Literature after the Liberation", where he defeated the critical activity of Krustyo Krastev. In these letters, Marinopolski almost advises the editor-in-chief of Thought Magazine to publish his humorous stories in every issue. Obviously, Krustyo Krastev gives him some space for expression, but with unsubstantiated claims, Marinopolski continues to press for publications of his works. In the meantime, he asks Dr. Krastev to apply for his transfer as a teacher from Lovech to Svishtov, and this is done with the intervention of the editor of Thought Magazine. Coming in 1902, Marinopolski continued to claim K. Krastev to print his story "My Marriage" and demanded a fee. Krustyo Krastev may have saved the life of J. Marinopolski by including him in the list of cultural figures to be recalled from the battlefield during the Balkan War. In fact, Marinopolski becomes quite antipathic with his ungratefulness as a person, and this, paradoxically, is evident from M. Bodakov's text. Unfortunately, being too close to the object of his research leads the researcher to blindness to the value of the facts he collects.

In the text of Marin Bodakov, literary-historical processes are misinterpreted. The author characterizes the entry of modernism as an artistic trend as an import of imperial literary fashion. According to him, Krustyo Krastev and Pencho Slaveikov become "imperial critics". Their role as cultural builders is seen as a repression of the delicate sensitivity of second-tier writers. Complex cultural processes are explained by interpersonal relationships and personal strategies for imposing one's own image in the literary field, behind which some psychological imbalances are visible ("In general, if we continue to follow Nancy McWilliams' understanding of narcissistic disorders, we will see how on the surface The Pencho-Slaveikov critical texts have a sense of righteousness, pride, contempt, protective self-sufficiency, vanity and superiority. But beneath, shame and envy, emptiness and inferiority break out" (p. 149).

At the end of his book, the author remembers that there may be significant prisms through which processes in the "literary field" such as "individualism" and "communalism" (a term used by R. Avramov in business history) can be thought of. Only one place mentions an opinion (M. Nedelchev's concept of Bulgarian modernism) how these processes in Bulgarian literary science have been explained so far, as if all scholars

of modernism were using a psychobiographical approach (as the author), and this is self-explanatory. There is no sober critical distance to appreciated aesthetic phenomena and literary-historical facts; there is no theory as the basis for deep literary and cultural sections in the scientific field of „Criticism and Critical Practice“.

Oscar Wilde expresses a very close observation in his brilliant essay "The Critic as an Artist" about the causes of this chaos in the text: "Two of the three qualities he offered - sincerity and justice - if not purely moral, at least in the border area of morality, and the first requirement for the great critic is to respect the absolute independence of art from ethics and vice versa. If their phenomena are united, chaos ensues. "(P. 121) Oscar Wilde believes that this "ethical approach" is most commonly applied in journalism. I will save a quote on Oscar Wilde's path against journalism, and here I state that I do not put hierarchies between literature and journalism (Please understand correctly!). It's about a clear awareness of where the flow of critical writing takes you, what you aim for with your text and where you end up, ultimately, in what field – literary studies or journalism.

What are the features of this journalistic approach in literary studies? Using the "ethical" criterion, reducing cultural issues to interpersonal relationships (self-strategies and "repressions" to build one's own cultural image), subjectivity and bias towards the object of study, fragmentary narrative in much of the book that can be presented in gadget newsletter, captioning the "scoop" of each chapter on the principle of bold content in the headline or provocation to the curiosity of the reader, challenging formulations (judgments and pseudo-psychoanalytic diagnoses for major Bulgarian writers made retroactively), attempts to modernize and rise through comparisons "height" of the criticism of J. Marinopolski, interest towards factual pikanterii which would satisfy the curiosity of "curious" readers.

With these features, the book presented functions more like a journalistic biographical essay than a literary monograph, so many of the contributions claimed by the author seem to me unbidden – the claim to a successful dialogue "to look at literature from the media and from the media to literature", the marginal critical phenomenon to become the center of literary history, "his intellectual domination", the staging of the

psychological integrity of the literary critic as a guarantee of his quality validation in the literature, etc.

Fortunately, Asiss. Prof. Dr Marin Bodakov has also presented articles that express a clearer metacritical awareness of their own genre, probably because the subject of these publications is the complex relationship between literature and journalism and this directed the senses of the researcher with greater attention to his own point of view. I think that the texts "Nikolay Raynov: The City" and "Art and Style", "Chudomir as a Media Critic", "The Feileton" From the Diary of a Reporter" by Hristo Smirnensky: A Critique of Journalistic Daily Life“ are very successful.

The reviews presented on the books of Ivan Stankov and Emilia Dvoryanova reveal the features of a distinguished critical style of the researcher – the use of the essayistic form, the fragment, figurative expression and synthesis of thought, meaningful ellipticity, depth of observations.

3. Academic activity at the university

Asiss. Prof. Dr Marin Bodakov was the scientific advisor of 14 graduates in the period 2016 - 2019. The topics he proposed are relevant and sound conceptual. The large amount of diploma papers is a sign of the preferences of the students to choose Mr. Marin Bodakov as their scientific supervisor and this is a mark of professional maturity and accumulated teaching experience.

4. Professional achievements.

Marin Bodakov was an editor in a reputable national printed publications such as Bulgarian Monthly Magazine (1997-2000), Culture (2000-2018) and its successor, „K“ (2018-2019).

Some of the important rewards for his work as a journalist are:

- 2013 - Knight of the Book Award, category "Printed publications - newspapers and magazines", awarded by the Bulgarian Book Association;

- 2013 - Ambassador of the Libraries, title awarded by the Bulgarian Library and Information Association;

- 2015 - National Literary Prize "Hristo G. Danov", category "Presentation of the Bulgarian Book", for the review columns of "Culture" newspaper - together with Prof. Milena Kirova and Dr. Angel Igov.

5. Conclusion

Appreciating the importance of Marin Bodakov's work in the field of Bulgarian journalism and literary criticism, I find that I could give my affirmative evaluation and recommend the academic panel to prepare a proposal report to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication to elect Senior Lecturer Dr Marin Bodakov for the faculty position of Associate Professor in the field of Public Communication and Information Sciences (Critics and Critical Practices) at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University.

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Veliko Tarnovo

Evaluation prepared by:

Associate Professor Dr Vladimir Donev