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Natalia Christova

Symptoms of cultural change

The text preceding the factual contents of the matters discussed in a book is usually accepted to be designated as “preface” or “forward”. Since a long time I have asked myself when such use of these terms has come into being and why they have so permanently asserted themselves in Bulgarian and international scholarly tradition. As it is a question of research, I will not make any attempt to trace it even in a shortest referative way. But simply I can not do without placing it into focus. In this course of thoughts “introductory words” (a third synonymous use) seem to me more correct and adequate. The embarrassment comes here with the plural of the noun “word” which could be attacked with the known doubt acknowledged by the popular use of the notion “Words, words, words...” denoting something – and yet telling nothing as an introductory text.

After all such similar hesitations it is apparent that I have had to put a title to the prior to-actually-meaningful text. And as the reality of today is more than questionable rather than concretely-informative, I will tell why and how I have stopped myself over this title. The story coincides to great extent with the presentation of the book with articles “Students’ investigations III”. The enumeration is inevitable and correct, because from one side it is an evidence that it is a part of a sequence of volumes which although not coming out into definite periodicity, stands as a statement of long term intentions of the Department “History of culture” to continue these editions having educative, investigative and, although sounding with a

certain pretension (bearing in mind the politically rejected meaning of the term as a result of its over-use in the near socialist past) historic – i.e. leaving a permanent vestige in the history of the Department, meaning.

Why then is “cultural change” chosen and where and in what do I see its symptoms?

In the last two decades we have been talking too much about cultural change. We have been insisting that it must happen, alleging that it has happened although not liking it that much, or simply that it has not occurred at all – in the last statement the dissatisfaction of its way of occurrence is also transparent. All that predetermined the decision for carrying out a national conference and the choice of the theme of this conference initiated and organized by the Department “History of culture” entitled “Cultural change” and accomplished on June, 11th, 2010 at the New Bulgarian University. Its promptness and necessity have been manifested in the topics viewed and questions raised, moreover in the discussion which far surpassed (with more than two hours) the time dedicated to it. In other words, to use the statement of Prof. Nikola Georgiev, this has really turned out to be a pressing issue which needs a wide forum conference providing possibilities for its problem-discourse and debate. All other topics, standing outside similar ripen for discussion themes are meaningless, he asserts. I fully confine to this opinion. This could be correlated to the different series of volumes and amongst them “Students’ investigations” as well, for they give us the reason to glimpse inside, see and appreciate at least symptoms of a change – first, in this definite case, in the development of the Department, and secondly - in the students’ interests and in their increased or decreased abilities to produce research texts.

The most correct and precise assessment criteria of the first case – the development of the Department – is based on the results of the two above mentioned aspects lying at the second place.

The change in interests of the students could be traced by the contents of the two already published volumes and the present edition.

The first volume is entitled “Students’ investigations. Antiquity - Middle Ages – Contemporary times”¹ It is obvious that Prof. Ivan Marazov as Head of the Department at that time and chief editor (together with Ass. Vladimir Dimitrov) of the book has considered as necessary to state the vast chronologic range of the edition. It includes articles on the pointed out epochs as the rate of the themes on Antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance, the National Revival Period and Contemporary arts shows 12:8.

The second volume already entitled “Students’ investigations II”² does not possess accompanying chronological definition. It is also thematically balanced but with a slight dominance of the themes dedicated to Medieval art.

In the present third volume of “Students’ investigations” the ratio between the different art periods is in favor of modernity - 5:8. Whether this is due to greater activity by the colleagues teaching modern and contemporary art and culture or to the increased interest towards the problems of Bulgarian cultural heritage in the years of our modernity, it is difficult to state. The change is though visible and could be met with admiration applause. The simple explanation of that is that the interest and the attitude of the state institutions and NGOs towards presentation and preservation of this cultural heritage are on the whole very weak and the

¹ Студентски изследвания. Античност – Средновековие – Съвременност. Нов български университет, 2002.

² Студентски изследвания II. Нов български университет, 2005.

efforts are predominantly turned towards Antiquity and Middle Ages. The education of young specialists who are to commit themselves to studying the problems of contemporary culture and art is one of the possibilities for change towards a positive direction of this situation.

It is quite difficult and not so beneficial as well to comment “per se” the abilities for research of the students who have submitted their articles for inclusion in the three volumes. Because more important here is the initiative and the wish of the young colleagues to make use of yet another opportunity given by the Department “History of culture” at the New Bulgarian University to indicate their interest and try to gain experience in the field of science.

The result for us is satisfactory and now we expect not only with understandable tension but also with the enough dose of open-mindedness the critical opinion of the readers.

This edition of “Students’ investigations” III we dedicate in honor of Prof. Ivan Bozhilov, D-r Hab., after a decision of the Departmental Council. We are not confused by the already noticed fact that the articles on topics from Medieval art history are less in number in comparison with the others. Because Prof. Bozhilov, beside being one of the renowned Bulgarian and World-recognized byzantinist, has always been widely-minded and with profound interest towards the Bulgarian (Christian in its scope of genesis) culture from the Early Medieval times till today. We hope that the surprise we are presenting to him will be pleasant, and it will increase his desire to help students and teachers of the Department in the future too, besides keeping alive his good feelings (and in the perspective, memories) of and about his work at the New Bulgarian University.

June, 12 2010.

Silvana Todorova

**Woman's jewelry from the First Bulgarian Kingdom
in the context of Early Medieval Art:
Traditions, influences, interactions**

The article reveals most of the ideas developed in the B.A. diploma work on the same theme. The classification and typology are based on V. Grigorov's publication, however the main point of discussion here is to comment on the similarities of the items found in today's Bulgarian lands with other jewelry tradition in the East European steppes, Byzantium and Medieval Europe. The discussed parallels with metalwork and goldsmithing of the Avars, Khazars, Early Hungarians and other cultures make explicit the interaction of the Eurasian and Mediterranean tradition as sources of inspiration, adoption and adaptation for the Bulgarian material.

Zhanina Krasteva

**Animal image in symbolism of the belt
in the culture of First Bulgarian Kingdom**

The article tackles one of the most important aspects of the B.A. theses on the zoomorphic code in the metalwork of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. It deals with different aspects of animal symbolism as expressed in the visual imagery in the pagan Bulgarian culture which is usually discussed as one of the hairs of "nomadic" Eurasian steppe tradition. The belt is one of most significant sign of status of the warrior in ideology of Old Bulgarian society. The animal images used in decoration of the belt express their views on cosmogony, sociogony and ethnogony in mytho-ritual context. The analysis of the styles, techniques and iconography of images

and subjects shows close similarities of Bulgarian examples with the cultures of Avars, Khazars and the Hungarians.

Dimitar Vuchev

The “*Responsa Nicolai I papae ad consulta bulgarorum*” as historic source (three fragments)

The “*Responsa Nicolai I papae ad consulta bulgarorum*” are result of the diplomatic contacts between the Bulgarian king Boris I (852-889) and Pope Nicolaus I (858-867) and a valuable source for the Bulgarian history at the edge of two epochs – the pagan and Christian one.

The “*Responsa*” (as every other source with historical significance) should not be discussed out of the context which has provoked them and created them. This context is not simply political. In a certain sense, it surpasses the formality of “high politics”, reflecting the life of society manifested in different ways. As a historic source “*Responsa Nicolai I papae ad consulta bulgarorum*” presents the observation of historical past precisely from such a perceptive view towards the life of Bulgarians and Slavs. The “*Responsa*” are an explicit “extract” documenting the confessional chasm amongst Bulgarian and Slavs which has started before Christianization. The unquestionable historic price of the “*Responsa*” lies in their scholarly variability of problems, in the number of fragments which are “deciphered” only in comparison with analogical sources from interdisciplinary point of view. The result is an attempt for reconstruction of the historical picture. Three fragments of this picture are the core of such an attempt in this text.

Radoslava Yordanova

**The ceramic icon in the art of Preslav civilization
and Early Medieval Europe: problems and investigations**

The article discusses the major problems of the B.A. thesis on the same theme. The appearance of production of icons in white glazed ceramic technique in 10th century Bulgaria is still in the center of researchers of Medieval Bulgarian art. Texts in Slavonic script were also found on ceramic plaques showing close relations of icon painters, writers and masters in 10th century Bulgarian monasteries. Though its local production is not questioned because of the discovered workshops and pits for broken material, scholars are not unanimous on the questions of its sources of inspiration, function and parallels. The material discovered in other places like Nicomedia, revealing the Byzantine production, is not so close to the Bulgarian production, despite following common iconographic models.

Prespava Ilieva

Paintings from the nave of the church "St. Eliah" in Iliantsi

The article examines the frescoes from the nave of church "Saint Eliah" in contemporary quarter Iliantsi (Sofia). The paintings are dated to the 16th century. This is the reason for the interest towards them, as being a part of the tendency of expanding the research of little known monuments from the Ottoman period in general. The iconography and the scenes in the church program are determined by the spiritual life of Bulgarians living in Sofia and the region by that time. The study discusses the presence of unusually large amount of scenes from Great Feasts, the Passion of Christ and The Triodion. Another accent in the investigation is placed on the large composition "Last

Judgment". In this fresco and in some others certain traces of influences by the painting tradition of Mount Athos can be detected.

Mila Boyadzhieva

The exhibitions of George Papazoff from 1934 till 1937

This article takes into account George Papazoff's exhibitions from the first one in 1919, to his last pre-war exhibition in 1937. The question of Papazoff's lack of fame in his own country, and switching this state has a very important value in the contemporary Art history. Mostly known among a small circle of art specialists and not well-known in Bulgaria, this painter reaches a worldwide fame through his work, but his art still remains not that fully appreciated in his motherland. This memoir is chronologically arranged and follows the creative development and the growing popularity of G. Papazoff. Its essential point is to discuss the reasons for G. Papazoff's being hard to be linked to any modern movement and the time of his famous career abroad. The clarifying of this problematic circle will be of significant contribution to the investigations and art criticism on modern and contemporary art.

Stoyanka Krasteva

Boris Stefchev (1894-1983)

Born in the end of the 19th c. the artist Boris Stefchev (1894-1983) lived and painted in most of his life in next century. He finished as a pupil the Art Industrial School in Sofia in the class of Prof. Tseno Todorov, and

then continued as a student in decorative art with Prof. Stefan Badzhov. Between 1918 and the end of 1921 he specialized painting at the Viennese Royal Academy. The early work of the artist is strongly influenced by the ideas and aesthetic of Western European symbolism. After his return to Bulgaria Boris Stefchev began to work as a teacher. In his free time he created landscapes, still-lives, portraits, genre paintings, reaching true revelations awakening different moods and spiritual atmosphere. Since 1927 to the end of his life the artist devoted his work to marine painting. His oils are kept today in several regional galleries and private collections. Boris Stefchev is also author of two stain-glass works, sculptural projects and sculptures in round, which add to the characteristic of his versatile and wide-minded scope as a person and an artist.

Maya Pavlova Magda Abazova and the 60-ies

The article "Magda Abazova and 60" discusses the artist's creative activity in the context of the period in question. A brief summary of events occurring in the cultural life in the country is presented. Information about visiting foreign exhibitions and Bulgarian artists exhibited in other countries is included as well. This parallel is necessary in order to give a full assessment of the situation in the country, and the question of how adequate the picturesque expressiveness of our artists, and in particular that of Magda Abazova is situated in these trends. The article examines the construction of forms and volumes typical of her style and colors. The provided personal information about the artist is received through conversations of the author and the artist, adding a special tint to the interpretation of her work.

Boris Dobrev
Genko Genkov – late works 1989-2004

More than 50 years the painter Genko Genkov manages to keep the attention of the public not only on his work but also on his personality. This is due because of his life – stormy and scandalous, full of conflicts with those on power, making him changing homes, political camps, psychiatric hospital...

Like Picasso he is drawing since childhood as a grown-up artist Graduated from the Academy of Arts and being accepted as a phenomenon in Bulgarian contemporary art, he tends to develop further to Abstractionism. However, he has always denied this explaining in details what he had rendered on the canvas.

The article discusses his works in the different periods, based on the monograph by D. Avramov and a few articles in the quarterly “Izkustvo”, pointing the lack of publications on the artist and the need to outline the significance of his art in the picture of modern and contemporary Bulgarian art.

Joanna Andreeva
Rumen Skorchev and book illustration in Bulgaria

The purpose of this publication is to discuss the rise and development of the art of book design. The author seeks answers to questions related to the nature of illustration, its place in graphic art in general and the scope of possibilities for creative expression of the artist. Another important theme is the discussion of major changes in the art of illustration in this period of

Bulgarian art. In this respect a very important issue is to find the place of the illustration by Rumen Skorchev among the trends of contemporary Bulgarian art.

Rumen Skorchev's art is related and intertwined with the written word. When examining the tendencies and phenomena in the development of Bulgarian graphics and book illustration of this period there is no way to miss the original rich creative talent and potential of Rumen Skorchev as an artist. The development of individual subjects and themes, inspired by literary works, speaks of a consistent problem-oriented effort in this field. Being an active contributor to several publishers in the country during the 70's and 80's ("Popular Culture", "Bulgarian writer", "Bulgarian artist, "National Youth", etc.) Skorchev exerts a particularly significant influence on the formation of modern understanding about the role of book design and illustration.

Vasil Markov
The electronic eye

The essay elaborates on the complex relationships between video art and video surveillance. Given that both phenomena share the same technology, it is especially revealing to explore the ways in which video artists have reacted to the problem of social control and surveillance and adopted its patterns for their artworks.

Today we are surrounded by video cameras, our actions being monitored by an anonymous and automated gaze, an all-seeing electronic eye. The concept of panopticon, introduced by Jeremy Bentham and later problematised by Michel Foucault, proves to be instrumental to the

understanding of the mechanisms governing video surveillance. To this end a comprehensive theoretical account is given to this concept and the related regime of visibility. Furthermore a particular emphasis is placed upon the temporal structure of the video image and the removal of authorial presence adopted by artists as a critical strategy.

Video artists respond to the issues of surveillance in a number of ways ranging from closed-circuit installations to assembling and appropriating footage from public cameras. The essay's theoretical conclusions are supported by examples from Bulgarian and international artists alike.

Nina Hadzhieva

Cultural-historical heritage and possibilities for cultural tourism in the region of Gotse Delchev – a current „photo”

One of the basic and urgent tasks standing in front of Bulgarian culture today is the preservation of cultural heritage. Thus the question referring the cultural heritage can be differentiated and problematized in two main directions – one concerning preservation (conservation and restoration of monuments) and the other concerning its exposition, (maintenance and preparation for presentation to the public), which are major issues in cultural tourism.

The region of the town of Gotse Delchev, which includes the communities of Gotse Delchev, Hadzhidimovo, Garmen and Satovcha is especially rich in cultural and historical monuments, numbering more than 220 registered archaeological sites. This multitude and value of the monuments in the region suppose not only serious cares on their

preservation but also on their presentation amongst specialized and wider public.

The article aims at giving actual information of the condition of several sites in the region of Gotse Delchev in respect of the two above mentioned aspects of the problem, seeking alongside this some advices on better exposition and popularization of the monuments. Another purpose is to show the contrast between some cases lacking cares and others where the monument bears the marks of personal initiative for preservation, re-innovation and better socialization.

Marieta Bancheva

Early socialization of the child in contemporary Sofia

The paper studies problems related to early socialization of the children in contemporary Sofia. It focuses on characteristics in the process. It traces the period from the mother's pregnancy to the individual's first years of life. Results are acquired by comparing lifestyle surveys in the socialization of children in Bulgaria in XIX-XX century. There is a parallel between two time periods, which bear both different and common features in socio-structural terms. The major sources of recent information are interviews with mothers, a couple of statements in the media, and the authors' observations.