

Review

of the dissertation submitted for defense for awarding the academic title of “Doctor”

Professional area 2.1. Philology,

Doctoral program "Bulgarian Literature" – Bulgarian Literature after 1989

By Marianna Georgieva, doctoral student

Topic: ШЕГАТА ЗА БАЩАТА В ГРОТЕСКНИЯ СВЯТ НА КОНСТАНТИН ПАВЛОВ
(THE FATHER JOKE IN THE GROTESQUE WORLD OF KONSTANTIN PAVLOV)

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Ivan Ivanov, PhD, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

Marianna Georgieva has a master's degree in creative writing and is a doctoral student in the Department of Bulgarian Literature. Over the years, she skillfully combined her research interests in Bulgarian literature with artistic creativity. She has published: "Dlajnikat" - a novel, UI "St. Kliment Ohridski" 2014; "Ekzotichni nachini za riazane na pica" - collection, poetry, UI "St. Kliment Ohridski" 2014; "Izhod" - collection, poetry, "Da" Publishing House, 2019.

An interesting fact from her creative biography is her participation in a workshop on creative writing (2013), held in the Albena resort, where, in the stiff competition of 10 participants from SU and 10 from NBU, she won the first prize, awarded by a jury composed of Ludmila Filipova, Emil Andreev, Milena Fuchedjieva, Vladimir Levchev, Lyuben Dilov, Georgi Nedelchev, Associate Professor Yordan Evtimov, and Prof. Ivan Ivanov. I highlight this fact not in itself, but to try to clarify some specifics of the style of the work, which intertwines artistic experience with theoretical knowledge, which sometimes leads to discrete deviations from consistency and strict theoretical and methodological monolithic, which is replaced by a pseudo-criticism, which, in turn, widens and deepens the emotional connection with the problems posed.

This work is a contribution to the study of the creativity of one of the key figures in Bulgarian poetry from the 1960s to the new millennium, whose creative urge to unravel the complexity of the relationship between the world and man remained for a long period, until the beginning of the

third millennium, misunderstood, unintelligible and inaccessible. This becomes a serious challenge for every research project, which must find an adequate place for its research in the already serious fund of research dedicated to Konstantin Pavlov, built in a short time.

The dissertation is constructed in six separate chapters, which are framed by an Introduction and a Conclusion instead. The introduction is too short, but it sets the mechanisms of the work, the toolkit that will be used, and the leading and very important in the perspectives of globalization of the 21st century, the principle of comparison. The author insists that the work of Konstantin Pavlov will be considered in a national historical context as a mysterious figure, opening dialogical relations beyond narrow national and artistic boundaries. The introduction clarifies the individual chapters of the work by emphasizing the absurdist existentialist line of analysis and the anti-doctrinaire character of Pavlov's poetry, reaching important conclusions about the postmodern transference, crossing boundaries leading to the inexpressible. The dissertation states its ambition for interdisciplinary research and accordingly sets a broad and convincing theoretical and methodological framework.

The first chapter of the work is entitled "Invasion", and with it the dissertation begins to read the poetic space of Konstantin Pavlov's text through an absurdist existentialist prism, appropriately insisting on an interpretation beyond the narrowly ideological and thinking about the poet's work only as an opposition to the totalitarian environment and ideological dogma. The author presents Konstantin Pavlov's early work as a sharp intrusion into the emptiness of the inaccessible, which leads to the exposure of the absurd insanity in the false collectivist unity. Based on serious studies of Konstantin Pavlov's work by authoritative researchers such as Mihail Nedelchev, Plamen Atov, Ani Ilkov, Edvin Sugarev, Alexander Kyosev and a skillful interweaving of philosophical, psychological, and methodological foundations, the work builds a network of meaningful configurations of deconstructed subjectivity and inversion of notions of authentic historicity. Focusing on the poet's first collections of poems, "Statiri" and "Poems", the dissertation begins to outline the routes of self-closure as a radical gesture of resistance to the reality of absurdly grotesque predestination. Referring to Bakhtin and Kaiser, the work goes through an analysis of the grotesque imagery and the connection with the concepts of existentialism, to reach the true conclusion that "In Konstantin Pavlov, these grotesque forms are deployed precisely in this sense - as drawn into the scenes of the unconscious, but at the same time, as Kaiser points out, reduced to the feeling of a foreign force invading and usurping the world of the Self."/p.31/

The PhD student concentrates on the reductions of the Self in Pavlov's poetry, which too accurately embodies the characteristic for the traditions of existentialism falling into nothingness, "being for nothingness". There are also references here to the next chapter, where the deciphering of the thin

thread of interaction of the existential and the psychoanalytic will continue, where the mechanisms of doubling images, the constructed reality, and mirror reality pointed out, in which the motif of madness, the schizophrenic as disbelief in reality, but also the attempt to deny it in silence will be reflected. The second chapter continues the interpretive maneuver begun to construct the notion of a hypnotic scenario of negative typology that deconstructs messianic potentials and possibilities of outcome. The hope for change is deconstructed in the subordination to the unconditional imperatives of socialist realism, which predetermines the literary-historical hopelessness of Pavlov's text.

In "Overdance," the psychoanalytic code actually expresses the inaccessibility of a world wished for and sanctioned in its inaccessibility, which remains in the dignity of its suffered aloofness that generated the calls of resistance. The chapter devoted to "Over-singing" naturally evokes the conclusion of the "super-sensible and super-intense" representation of the reality beyond language, the reality of the deconstructed selfhood illustrated in language. Declared a pasquil by totalitarian criticism, the work turns out to be the border zone between multiplied reality and its reduced equivalence experienced in absence.

It all spills over into the next chapter of the dissertation, "The Inapplicable Communication," in which specific examples are translated from poems in Konstantin Pavlov's first collections of poetry from the 1960s, Satires (1960) and Poems (1965), where the parodically grotesque turns out to be a necessary and important mechanism for expressing the collective silence and sacrifice of the self in its function as a constructed lyric subject, withdrawn into the self-reflexivity of a preconceived and lived catastrophic existence. The Doctoral candidate emphasizes that "It is above all the 'they' which remain nameless, in their subjectlessness the self is lost, it is subject to acquaintance, invasion, robbery, and killing, which it not only cannot resist but cannot personify, so it must break down the visible, metaphorizing it with an animal, almost primordial matter. Therefore, the only way out that exists is for death to be self-inflicted - this is not only power, but also making a concrete, own contribution, to a reality that collectivizes facts primarily in their sense as feelings." /on page 73 It reached the productive and innovative opening to typologies with existentialism and absurdism, and subsequently with postmodernism, which makes Konstantin Pavlov's poetry an integral part of processes in European and world literature, the early phase of the emergence of national literature beyond the trap of totalitarian unconditionality and national impasse. The PhD student highlights important features of Pavlov's language that represent postmodern poetry through Brian McHale's concept of "anti-language" and accordingly reaches the legitimate and adequate reference to researchers such as Plamen Antov, who presents Konstantin Pavlov as "the first trace in the Bulgarian postmodern poetry". I believe that placing

Konstantin Pavlov's poetry in the field of Bulgarian postmodern poetry, found a place in the studies of Rosalia Likova, Galin Tihanov, Plamen Antov, Plamen Doynov, highlights the international character of Konstantin Pavlov's work, but also gives much broader opportunities for analysis and interpretation in the perspectives of 21st-century globalization.

The author outlines postmodern changes in the structure of style, but also of semantics, which loses its referential unambiguity, transforming images and dissolving meanings. The question of the relation of reality to poetic imagination is naturally brought up, which in turn leads to the political character of Pavlov's poetry, which through the absurd and the grotesque experience, in its emotional intensity and irrepressibility, penetrates the doubled realities and encounters with the incompatible. The typologies with the absurd in Beckett and Kafka are unobtrusively but convincingly brought out to express the modalities of suffering and horror in Pavlov's poetry, embedded in the specificity of a complex semantic, stylistic and graphic system that represents the dissonance in meanings through the invented words, the sound-alikes that gave birth to the cry of discontent. The dissertation insists that catastrophic visions of life are already embedded in the poet's early poetry and are examined through the prism of the psychotic and the closure of the self in its duality, but also in the reflection on the political as coming from beyond the context of the time. Spasmodic living is portrayed with the intensity of paradoxical and sinister imagery, illustrated with "predatory nightingales, babies with moustaches and beards, self-devouring dogs", to form the notion of "exclusion" from life and the ongoing agonality of not being able to recognise it in its authentic hypostases. Through Bion and Melanie Klein, the PhD student expresses very convincingly the border state of the subject between external reality and self-reflection that represent the symbiotic proximity of killer and victim, and the body is seen as the site for testing the tolerance of suffering, the limits of fusion between abuser and victim in a common symbolic field. It is natural to arrive at the schizoanalysis of Deleuze and Guattari, in which the author finds support to argue for a paranoid-schizoid position that equates the valences of the living and the dead, in the infinity of rhizomatic incarnations of suffering and horror. Appropriately, the author cites "Goya's Capriccio", 1965, which expresses the grotesquely compressed time in which the nightmares of the mind are confined, leading to the limits of existence, expressed in Sartre's "nothingness" or Kierkegaard's "nonsense"

This is where the idea of the internal halving of the human between authentic belonging and likeness, imitation, duality, which closes existence in absence, in non-living, which Konstantin Pavlov's poetry recreates in the obsessive return of the horror of collective catastrophicity in personal suffering "which pays for the insights of human sadism with silence'.

A contributing point in the work is the analysis of the symbolic world of Konstantin Pavlov's poetry, filled with nightingales, spiders, dogs, frogs, and piglets, firmly welded into the polyvocal nature of the poetic text to express the relentless threats to the self shared by the reader-listener, engulfed in the eerie absurdity of the lived and expressed simulacrum of inauthentic, empty living. The aporeticity of existence is expressed in silence, but also in shouting, in screaming, in "moaning" (Adaptation, 1983), leading to key dystopian ideologues of the last man and the dead world.

In the fifth chapter, "The Father's Joke," the PhD student, referring to Freud, continues to outline the correlates of the instinctive oppositions in which the human oscillates between the urge to live and his predestination in death. Konstantin Pavlov's poetry turns out to be a boundary line between the catastrophic and the resistance to the intolerance of mortality, which often leads to a distortion of the meaning and activates the pictorial layer in which the perverse, the grotesque and the absurd are overexposed, unlocked in the collision of the external and internal world. Seeking to read the symbols of the father and language as its correlate in its function of creating "organizational order", the dissertation accumulates references and quotations from Lévi-Strauss, Darien Leader, Roger Caillois, Lacan, Foucault, /p.127/ which to a large extent, they oversaturate the text, and lead to some compositional problems, repetitions and returns to already stated positions.

Either way, I don't see this as a fundamental problem of the work, which through the symbols of the father seeks to delineate the intersections of simulacrum and referent language, trapped between external coercion and the exalted irreconcilability of the spirit. According to the dissertator, it is a symbiotic language that "should protect its author, but at the same time, because of its deliberate lack of meaning, it irrevocably binds him to the environment to which he belongs - it is constantly invading, and this is the dynamic that creates language, as well as its special punctuation. "/Cf. 147/

The sixth chapter of the dissertation "Group Reality vs Group Unreality" begins with an overview of the political situation in the 1960s, when the Communist Party continued to assert and spread its principles over all spheres of the culture. It insisted on a relentless struggle against "formalist perversions" and, accordingly, on following the line of the Soviet Communist Party. Before returning to the specific topic at hand, the PhD student takes a detour into the global and national political situation against which literary events are set. The author highlights the dual function of language in Pavlov, which simultaneously generates the facts of historical time, but also the act of resistance, to return to "Five Old Men" and "Persephedron", which prove pivotal in depicting the dissolution of the group and the torrents of absurdity that open up the possibilities of deliverance in madness.

Passing through Beckett, and through Deleuze and Guattari, the text accentuates the schizophrenic personality, objectified and multiplied to foreground the hopelessness of collectivized impasse. Hence the idea of moving beyond existentialism and impossible paternity to get through the biographical to the idea of its irrelevance, highlighting the quintessences of the work, that the joke about the father in the reduction of paternity turns out to be the generative mechanism of the poetic that creates the author. In *The Five Old Men*, 1965, more possibilities of authenticating the absurd are opened up in order to pass through the absorption of the self and the absence of meaning, leading to the empty space in which the transcendent grounds of the human are obliterated. The dissertation student insists that it can be preserved not in corporeality but only in thought and spirit.

Returning to the problematics of "Five Old Men", at the end of the dissertation, the PhD student emphasizes again the specificity of the language that expresses the unending nightmare of collective and personal suffering, conveyed through an expressive imagery system taken to the limits of the absurd. Transcending the boundaries of the historical, the dissertation authenticates the impossibility of assuming violence into regimes of tolerance and affirms the significance of Konstantin Pavlov's poetry beyond the national historical.

The work ends with "Instead of a conclusion. The Timely Refusal of Death", where the Doctoral candidate has tried to summarize his observations, highlighting the identity of the text and the author, as well as the orgasmic predetermination of creativity, preserving the author from the violence and the mortality. I believe that the thesis about the cinematic nature of Konstantin Pavlov's poetry argued through Warhol, Tarkovsky, and Charlie Chaplin could also find its more appropriate positioning in the composition of the text, which would strengthen the concreteness of the conclusions. I assume that perhaps this is the author's view of Pavlov's text, beyond itself, open to comparison and interpretation in the context of the dynamically changing perspectives of globalization and the unconditional positioning of the text in world literature.

In conclusion, I would like to confirm the positive assessment of the dissertation, which skillfully balances adequate theoretical, literary-historical, and methodological tools, and reaches important research findings, conscientiously, thoroughly, and correctly stated in the abstract. All this gives me grounds to recommend to the honorable members of the scientific jury to award to Marianna Georgieva the degree of Doctor.

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Prof. Ivan Ivanov, PhD

Sofia