

OPINION

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member of a scientific jury for the evaluation of a dissertation thesis

The Joke about the Father in the Grotesque World of Konstantin Pavlov. The thesis was proposed for a public defense for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional direction 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian literature – Bulgarian literature after 1989)

Marianna Georgieva’s dissertation thesis *The Joke about the Father in the Grotesque World of Konstantin Pavlov* was discussed and proposed for a public defense by the Department of Bulgarian Literature at the Faculty of Slavic Studies, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, at a meeting held on January 23, 2024.

The research work presented consists of an introduction, six chapters, an “epilogue”, a conclusion and a bibliography with a total volume of 212 computer pages. Although the title is not standard for a dissertation thesis, it opens wide, intriguing and unexplored interpretive perspectives, including literary-historical ones, insofar as the figure of the father can become a resourceful focus for making sense of Konstantin Pavlov’s works in the course of their various “appearances” over the decades and to make sense of their conversations with the works of literary generations in a rather wide range, starting from the 1920s, passing through the 1960s and 1980s and ending at least until – let’s say – 2016. Marianna Georgieva goes in a different than expected, but no less successful direction – she interprets the father figure in another, largely non-chronological and psychoanalytical way – not as a biographeme, but as a function or projection of the text. Each potential mythologizing of this figure is subject in its turn to a demythologizing deconstruction. Although the psychoanalytic key has been used in certain critical texts on Konstantin Pavlov’s work, a wider research work on

this topic is missing in Bulgarian literary studies, therefore Marianna Georgieva's direction of study has a contributing character.

Both the dissertation thesis and the chapters are titled metaphorically and are organizing a kind of critical-literary plot: "Invasion", "Doubling. Multiplication"; "The Unenforceable Communication"; "The Catastrophe. Naming", "The Joke about the Father" and "Group Reality v/s Group Unreality". The composition of the thesis shows to a greater extent the characteristics of a literary than to an analytical-critical text, and the naming of the fifth chapter with the name of the entire dissertation is one of the overt signs of this particular approach when presenting the observations. It can be said that throughout the research, and often in every single chapter, the conceptual culmination is pulled back, provoking a, it could be names, a specific *suspense*, which, however, can cause sometimes hesitation in the logical progression of the work.

Ex abrupto, with a story about a mass murder in Britain in 2010, begins the analytical part of the research, and the story itself is explained at the end of the first chapter – this framing is effective, if succinctly motivated in the end of the chapter. The other similar deviations are not in such a large volume, but the abrupt beginning of the paragraphs, their fragmentation, combined with the recognizable and effective metaphoricality of the language distinguish the style of the Ph.D. student and give a specific "sharpness" to her thesis. Thus the research work begins to look like the poems by Konstantin Pavlov (one can talk about certain analogies between Marianna Georgieva's critical language and Bulgarian critical languages of the 1990s). Insightful thoughts appear that set a broad horizon of interpretation, as the main thesis is about the negative realization of the "father" figure with its various metaphorical transpositions. The first chapter poses the question of the poetic world "permeable border" in relation to external events, insisting on the solipsistic nature of Konstantin Pavlov's works and reflecting on the construction of the lyrical self as withdrawn (p. 12). Continuing the above thought, I would say that the language and methodology of Marianna Georgieva

presupposes the solipsistic character of her own work (being impulsively permeable to the literary texts themselves). It has already become clear that this chapter does not present the expected literary-historical review and does not set certain theoretical-conceptual borders of the thesis. However, this does not mean that the research work lacks a theoretical basis, since in the first chapter the Ph.D. student began to work with studies of different character, including those by Walter Benjamin, Wilfred Bion, Roger Caillois and Theodor Adorno, and subsequently after that with studies by Melanie Klein, Giorgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault and others.

One of the important and productive highlights of the dissertation thesis is the reading of historicity beyond factology, through the overcoming of linear chronology and the understanding of that “dangerous” and “lightning-like” joining of “present” with the “past” as presented by Benjamin. The *Angel of history* with its back turned to the future is, it seems to me, albeit not explicitly stated, one of the allegories of this research work and one of the possible directions through which the voice within the work itself is constructed. The second chapter marks the next degree of pushback from the historicity by looking at the fragmentation of images, at language “regression” and their reduction to the absurd. The mention of absurdism unfolds fruitful interpretative connections with Beckett and Kafka. In the Third chapter it is insisted that Konstantin Pavlov’s work create their language, which, however, is freed from its communicative functions, “wedged” traumatically in the disintegration of the world. In the next – Chapter Four – the Ph.D. student also states the need for an alternative interpretation of language, for deconstructing poetic language, freeing language itself from the mythological aura of creation and studying it from the perspective of its catastrophic nature, of the nullification of the signified. It is exactly this catastrophic language that produces its *author* anew, sustained by the literary work that demythologizes and demystifies all projections of power even beyond the contexts of the political present. I would define this direction as the concluding

and unifying emphasis of the conceptual Chapters Five and Six, which also expand the ideological and political contexts to which it is referred in the work.

In the end, I would say that a tighter and clearer conceptual summary in the chapters would not have broken the artistry of the text, but would have highlighted much more its depth and the thoughtful cohesion between the separate parts. Also, despite the affluence and sometimes the vast character of references to psychoanalytic, cultural, anthropological, etc. papers that are specific to each chapter, I think the study would have benefited from some additional terminologically refining.

The abstract summarizes the observations of the research work. Marianna Georgieva has submitted the necessary number of publications on the topic. There is a list of four articles, three of which are in volumes registered in the National Reference List of NACID.

In conclusion, I confirm that the dissertation thesis by Marianna Dimitarovna Georgieva *The Joke about the Father in the Grotesque World of Konstantin Pavlov* offers a new perspective to the author's works. Contributing conclusions have been made that expand further our literary-historical knowledge of Konstantin Pavlov's work. The qualities mentioned give me reason to vote positively for awarding Marianna Dimitarovna Georgieva the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" in the professional field 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian literature – Bulgarian literature after 1989).

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