

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Nikolay Dimitrov

on the habilitation work of Plamen Penev "The Child and Childhood.

The Evolution of the Self - Child in Bulgarian Poetry. Between the literature for children and the other literature (the 1950s - 1990s of the 20th century)

Plamen Penev's research includes two chapters with several subchapters. In the first chapter, "The New Bulgarian Literary Tradition and the Evolution of the Idea of the Child and Childhood," an attempt is made to outline the developmental path of children's literature up to the period that interests the author - the second half of the 20th century. Unfortunately, the exposition in this part does not rely on literary-historical facts or textual empiricism at all; instead, it is filled with general considerations about literature and quotes unrelated to the topic. The only name from the period of the Revival to the beginning of the socialist era mentioned is that of Ivan Vazov. The thought jumps from topic to topic, revolving in some small circle of metaphysical reasoning, without any compositional or logical order.

The second chapter begins with "some accents from the theoretical basis of Bulgarian poetry for children." In fact, the only accent is the thesis that during the socialist period, the child's imagery construct is subordinate to the societal idea and ideology, and that literature itself is politically engaged in the spirit of that era, which does not reflect on the "childhood" as a literary phenomenon. On the other hand, after the 1990s, the national state is denied, semi-erased, which has a destructive influence on thinking about humanity, about childhood. This applies to adult literature as well. The focus is on the paradox that in the unfree era until 1989, literature, including children's literature, is socially active and significant, while after the specified year, art is marginalized in terms of its social function. This thesis, besides being historically imprecise, remains the only one for the entire subchapter. The exposition delves into political and social ideas, which are suitable for a journalistic or essayistic text but not for a scholarly one.

The second subchapter, "Classical and Modern Authors in Bulgarian Poetry for Children. Generations. Aspects of Ideological and Independent Artistry," is well-formulated as contextual groundwork for specific observations later on. Unfortunately, here too, ideological rhetoric from the previous chapter predominates without adding anything new as an idea. Generations are discussed, yet not a single name of a children's author is mentioned.

Only in the third subchapter (from page 96 onwards) does the substantive work on the topic begin. This chapter, titled "Common Linguistic Expression Model in Both Parts of New Bulgarian Poetry for Children," presupposes work with specific linguistic structures, approaches, and reception projections; in other words, a comprehensive study of the poetics of specific poetic texts and books. A similar approach has only been carried out in the writing about Ivan Tsanev. However, it was based

on an earlier published text related to Plamen Penev's work on a dissertation about the poet's work. Besides the writing about Ivan Tsanev, several relatively successful research observations on the works of Dobri Zhotev and Petya Yordanova can be distinguished. In most cases, in the approach to other authors mentioned in this chapter, such as Leda Mileva, Liana Daskalova, Lilyana Stefanova, Nadia Kehlibareva, Teodora Gancheva, Petya Dubarova, and others, an approach characteristic of adult literature is used, which leads to some kind of over-interpretation, as has happened with the poetry of Leda Mileva.

Throughout the subchapter, which constitutes the majority of the book, there is a lack of any principle of composition, even the simplest one - chronological. Authors from different subperiods of examination are moved from one to another without any logic or motivation as to why exactly these authors are selected. The name of Chicho Stoyan from the dawn of Bulgarian children's poetry appears, simply because his poems were reissued in the 1980s, sounding contemporary. However, this can be said for all classical children's writers reissued during the socialist period.

In conclusion, I can say that Plamen Penev's book, which is well-conceived as a topic (but not in terms of structure), is poorly executed. There are passages containing valuable observations on the subject related to the specific works of the authors mentioned above, but they are extremely disjointed for the research.

The main weaknesses of this study are as follows:

Chaotic composition: The lack of a clear organizational structure hampers the coherence of the research.

Unclear theoretical framework: The concepts of "child" and "childhood" are often treated interchangeably without adequately addressing their aesthetic, psychological, semantic, and reception differences.

Failure to differentiate between different parts of children's literature: The study does not distinguish between various genres or age groups within children's literature, resulting in a lack of varied research approaches.

Use of unnecessary verbosity: The text contains unnecessary rhetoric and wordiness that detract from its scholarly value.

Linguistic opacity: The writing suffers from convoluted syntax and unclear expression, making it difficult for readers to understand the author's intended meaning.

Here are just two examples of convoluted language:

"For Razvetnikov, as became clear and has already been emphasized in the first part of the exposition with some notes on his problematic, this movement from the 'other' to the 'children's' poetic expression and worldview system is categorically expressed, in order to articulate what is

impossible and unattainable, inappropriate in the first - from the second lyrical part - as indivisible and dual-component poetic-aesthetic and stylistic fields of one and the same poetic message, achieved and scaled in these two developmental-variant, experimental varieties." (page 216)

"And it is precisely with this characteristic unified and dual-component world of inhabited poetry, poetological representative both for Alipiev's poetics and for Gerov's (dualistic poeticism), and for the beginnings, the profound foundations for kinship in this new lyrical tradition of the 'physical' linguistic territories, upon which full-fledged artistic-creative potential is possible "child" and "other" parts of authors, books, tendencies, in which he is developmentally literary-historically conditioned and consisting."

A scientific editor would not allow the publication of a scientific book in this form. Given the weaknesses outlined in Plamen Penev's book, considered as a habilitation work, I cannot provide a positive vote for the habilitation of the candidate.

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