

Παυλίνα, Ελένη
Κρίση

ELLI PEONIDOU

**THE TWO CHILDREN AND THE BLACK RIVER
(TA DYO ADELFA KAI TO MAVRO POTAMI)**

Review by Zoe Valasi
'Rizospastis' newspaper, Athens, 16-01-1981

Symbolism in Children's Literature

Whenever reality hurts us, each time fear, injustice and harshness bruise our hearts, writers touch the world with their pens which, like magic wands, wrap the truth in the charming veil of the fairytale, dress behaviour in shiny ribbons and "turn the wounds of calamity into poppies".

This disguising of reality is not the same as fleeing reality. It is neither cowardice nor denial. In fact, it is an expression of human strength. The symbolic fairytale is an explosive text because it contains the absolute expression of the whole truth. Everyone knows it and understands it but we have difficulty in expressing it without minimizing it. Words are always poor. Only the dimension of the fairytale can give the full force of reality – however much that may sound like a contradiction.

Symbolic fairytales have always been written during times of extreme unhappiness or oppression to remind us of what must not be forgotten, to stimulate all those who are quiescent and to encourage those who remain vigilant. With sometimes greater and other times less success, they present in story form the nightmarish dimensions of a tragic truth. Here we have such a story, written with a great deal of suffering and love by Elli Peonidou about her homeland, Cyprus.

In her book "*The Two Children and the Black River*" (Modern Times publications), the well-know poet speaks to children about a rich and happy country called Cyprilia. Two children, Hip Hop and his sister Doremi (previously the heroes of a radio series for young listeners) live there and enjoy the beauty of its peaceful life. Suddenly an evil black river splits the beautiful country in two and the children are left on opposite banks. They may be "small and the evil huge but sometimes small conquers big" when someone fights with faith in goodness and with the support of all the other victims of injustice.

The illustrations by Hungarian artist Adam Wurtz stand out for the same virtues as the text and their depictions of the lively atmosphere of the sun-blessed country. For children of 8 years and over.