

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Svetlana Stoycheva

on the dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ogniana Atanasova Georgieva-Teneva CIVIC
VALUES IN BULGARIAN CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH POETRY (1878 - 1918)

I have been following the scientific growth of Ogniana Georgieva-Teneva since her doctoral dissertation, publications, and participation in scientific conferences. All of them invariably radiate her exceptional discipline of behavior, speaking and writing, a high degree of responsibility in researching and structuring the material, precise consideration of theses, specificity and accuracy of expression. These qualities are further developed in the work presented to the jury for the degree of "Doctor of Science". We can call it the ripe fruit of her scientific research on civic issues in Bulgarian literature for children and adolescents. The upgrade is available, so to speak, both horizontally (in terms of issues and material involved) and vertically (in terms of deepening the questions).

The object of her research is the period of the Liberation - the end of the wars - the period of the first construction of civil society in newly liberated Bulgaria and the special commitment of institutions to this task, first of all, the school. The school, in turn, turns to the suggestive possibilities of literature for children and adolescents.

So far, special attention has not been paid to the subject of literature in Bulgarian literature for children and adolescents by literary history and theory. The so-called educational ideas are usually analyzed "in a package" (only the work topic is studied separately by Bozhanka Konstantinova). Furthermore, the clichéd notion that the themes of the Renaissance in this literature did not tolerate any enrichment or development in the first decades after the Liberation also explains the escape of this very topic from the research focus.

There is another important impetus for the coverage of the topic and the issues around it, captured by Ogniana Georgieva-Teneva: the obvious increase in its relevance after 1989, when in connection with the change of the social system again actively discussed the parameters of civil society to look for gaps in the civic education of adolescents. This undoubtedly gives a modern pathos to the research, otherwise sustained in a strictly literary and pedagogical-historical framework (the former rather inscribed in the latter). After so many efforts to build the citizen of a socialist society, we are aware today that it is even more difficult to educate a citizen of a democratic society. The historical perspective would be useful, suggests the work of Ogniana Georgieva-Teneva.

Interesting is the general statement of the author of the work that civic values go "one shoulder forward" over the traditional ones, surpassing them aesthetically: "with increased care for artistic impact" (O. GT). In other words, the modernization of ideas goes hand-in-hand with aesthetic modernization: speech: the instructive tone is incompatible with the principle of freedom." (p. 21)

Focusing not only on author's books and periodicals, but also on textbooks, anthologies and poetry collections (according to those quoted at the end of the work exceeding 120). I find not only as an aspiration for greater scope of the researched material, but also methodologically necessary: it is the textbooks and anthologies that are subject to valuable and aesthetic tastes, and the textbooks usually canonize them. The choice of poetry is also unalterable for literary-historical reasons: during the period under consideration, poetry still dominates prose and drama (repeating the beginning of all literature) and accordingly it exports both artistic and ideological, all kinds of commissions that can be imposed upon it.

The first chapter returns the consideration of literature for children and adolescents in some educational parameters that modern literature has almost forgotten: especially in terms of cognitive and educational tasks, the original reason for the emergence of this specific literature. In contrast to the periods in which the aesthetic value of this literature rose as paramount in the first four decades after the Liberation, writers developed in the first place its educational potential, including civic values. In this sense, poetry is actually reflected in the "mirror of pedagogy" to express values that Ogniyana Georgieva-Teneva rightly defines as "modern": *"freedom of will and initiative, human dignity, resistance to humiliation, rule of law, maintaining public order, participatory democracy, demanding journalism, constructive communication, overcoming prejudice, critical attitude to abuse of power"* (p. 60-61)

In the second chapter, "Citizenship in the dialogue of "children's" discourses", the author ingeniously includes her own methodological resources (I am referring to her former studies in literature methodology), focusing on the study of literature curricula, the development of methodologists, teachers and inspectors, innovations after 1878 subject "Civic Doctrine". The aim is to prove the serious commitment of the state to the formation of civic values in adolescents. Textbooks such as those of Vazov and Velichkov, in addition to following the European measure of literature, turned out to be mediums of "modern understandings of public life" (OGT). The "red thread" of civic education has not been missed in the periodical for children and adolescents either: where else, if not there, should the artistic solutions of educational imperatives be sought - the author proves it even through such a specialized publication as "Art Gallery" and continues with lyrical collections and anthologies.

From the following chapters we understand that even legal and crisis issues, such as the misunderstanding in the National Assembly, are raised in the periodical press for adolescents. Here, along with the lyrics, special attention should be paid to the enhanced function of the fable, precisely in connection with the civil issues and the finding of the first "stumbling blocks" before the free society.

The third chapter, "Freedom of the individual as a lyrical message", opens the debate on the "obedient child" in the lyrical texts themselves in connection with the clash of two diametrically opposed concepts of child rearing: generally speaking, free and submissive will. During the Renaissance it was clear which of the two prevailed. I have some reservations about the interpretation of Vasil Popovich's poem Repentance. The fact is that it is the only poem in his collection of poems written in the feminine gender, and assuming female original sinfulness, the author actually offers a prayer poem-matrix to "serve" after each "sin" of the little girl (and maybe grown up) - ie it is much more patriarchal than a civic reflex.

In this chapter, Ognjana Georgieva-Teneva, at first glance, surprisingly connects the thematic field of the game with the subject of her research - civic issues. Children's play is usually associated with the independent children's world, with children's autonomy ("children's island", if we use Ran Bosilek's metaphor). On the other hand, there is really nowhere else for the free child to manifest except in the game (the rest is deontic upbringing). It is in the game that the adult models are infantilely rehearsed, including not only the family and clan ones, but also the civic ones.

A critical reading of the signs of Bulgarian statehood (Chapter Four) in poetry for children and adolescents has also not been made so far. Here the surprise comes from the registered ambiguous attitude towards the images of the state and the implied (and somewhere clearly stated) civic satisfaction / dissatisfaction with the state of the state and its institutions. At the beginning of her research, the author warns: "Compared to the main body in our children's literature, which suggests a sense of harmony and meaningful, stable order in the world, poetry with civic messages is a space of storms" (p. 18). Hence the convergence of children's literature with adult literature, when the focus is on the shadow side of civic issues and the utopian position on the child and childhood is completely forgotten (examples of satire by Stoyan Mihajlovski, civic elegies of Petko R. Slaveykov). This led to the introduction of new tonalities, genres and poetics in the literature for children and adolescents (for example, the emergence of critical and satirical notes and the development of almost the entire genre palette of the comic). When the sharp devaluation of the patriotic and moral values of our society is established, civic education is transformed into civic criticism.

The following chapters prove the "maturation" of children's literature when designing social issues, especially if they are negative: "...but the lyrical texts we study depict an atomized society, selfish self-isolation, relentless contradictions, conflicts and sharp clashes." (Abstract, p. 20) In this case, civic education relies on exposed statelessness. This strategy obviously raises expectations for the reader - only a reader with a developed civic consciousness can perceive and appreciate such critical poetry (examples abound).

The civic aspects of the messages sent through poetry for children related to military issues are sought in the chapter "Children's poetry under the banner" (especially the reflections on the so-called "military duty"). The attempt is to capture the dynamics of the impact of this even less "childish" issue from the beginning to the end of the period under review, when, as we know, Bulgaria is involved in several wars of different nature. For example, after recognizing the negative civic position in the Inter-Allied War and in poetry for children and adolescents, the author notes the decline of "childhood" and the introduction of certain "adult" issues in children's poetry: "Children's audiences fall into a new orbit of literary communication, where the entertainment, which has barely taken its first steps, disappears." (P. 26)

Chapter 7, Lyrical Word for Word, examines how one of the most important values of democracy, freedom of speech, is presented in our poetry for children and adolescents. Here Ogniyana Georgieva-Teneva tries to fill in as comprehensively as possible the map of the clashes of opposing discourses in the researched material. Manipulative speech has already taken root in the official socio-political "substance". Positive messages are extracted in a complicated way through the comic-satirical overexposure of the negative image of the word - this is not for young children.

Question: Do the patriarchal reflexes of the Bulgarian children's writer overcome the civic ideas in our poetry for children?

Question: Is it still possible to find ambivalence in the understanding of civic values in the period under study? Or is the critical position against institutionality and statehood very, very far away?

The author has really succeeded in her topic, suggesting above all a counter-aesthetic perspective. Without forgetting the aesthetic value of the works in question, it reaches another, deeper plan of children's literature, relating to society and the anthropological foundations of life with others (said in the famous title of Tsv. Todorov). I see this as the greatest contribution

of effort. From this point of view, her work will be unavoidable by future researchers of literature for children and adolescents.

That is why I strongly support the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ogniana Atanasova Georgieva-Teneva for the degree of "Doctor of Science".

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