

REVIEW

of the dissertation of Ass. Prof. Dr. Ogniana Georgieva-Teneva

CIVIC VALUES IN THE BULGARIAN CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH POETRY (1878 – 1918)

by prof. Dr. Mladen Enchev (Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen), member of the scientific jury for the defense on acquiring a scientific degree Doctor of Science in professional field 2.1 Philology, appointed by an Ordinance of the New Bulgarian University № 3–PK –182/ 24. 03. 2022 on the grounds of Decision of the Academic Council No AC 07/ 22. 03. 2022.

The dissertation, presented by Ass. Prof Ogniana Georgieva – Teneva for the awarding of the scientific degree Doctor of Science is a serious, exhaustive and scientifically substantiated research in the cognitive field of Bulgarian children's and youth literature. It is oriented towards the poetic genre manifestations in this literature in a particular and clearly designated segment of its history. The dissertation approaches its subject with the ambition and the tasks of a research, that does not have any special and complete transitional elaborations in our national literature studies until the present moment. Despite that some individual civic values have attracted certain scientific attention in the past, this has usually been done separately, in peripheral connection with other issues, and within a different research discourse. The theme chosen determines the research as a practically unanalyzed area (or, at best, very little analyzed) axiological part of our children's literature, making a statement for a product of a modern research attitude, provoked by and in line with the contemporary dynamics of the social values. The work of O. Georgieva – Teneva is the first deliberate attempt to observe and comment the civic values, in which our children's and youth literature raises its auditory, in their systematic relatedness, in the required thoroughness and in optimum wide context. The dissertation is an original and contributive work, successful in realizing its task to "precise" (we could add – to enrich) the traditional notion of axiological content of the Bulgarian literature for children and adolescents.

One of the strongest qualities of the dissertation is the extensiveness and the formal variety of the literature resources, from where the analyzed material is taken. The commented literature excerpts are taken from poetry collections for children and children's periodicals, as well as from textbooks and reading books, studied in the Bulgarian schools. Such an extend qualitatively reflects not only the richness of the illustrative texts and their resulting interpretive potential, not only promises the opportunity to meet little-known texts, but also affects the overall logic of research and its ability to be convincing. The opening of the exemplum part of the dissertation text to the textbooks and reading books is in close agreement with its topic. Focused on civic values in poetry for children and adolescents, it implicitly contains the idea of nurturing those values through literature. The school is the main institution of children's education and upbringing, and the spelling and reading books serve this function, they are the books where the school and literature meet to realize common intentions.

Separately, but in connection with all this, it is worth noting the manifestations of another important aspect of the material cited as a literary sample material - the exact and complete indication of its source. This is a requirement for a scientific text, the seriousness and necessity of which is often underestimated. The work of O. Georgieva - Teneva does not do it and gains expected and unexpected advantages: the expected ones are related to the good impression of respect for the rules of a scientific exposition and the unexpected ones - from the impact of this formal act on the overall reader's attitude to essential opinions. The correct bibliographic designation of the analyzed literary text is one of the means by which the work overcomes any possible doubts about its age relatedness. (More on that - a little further.) Productively chosen, the topic of the dissertation turns out to be spontaneously aimed at the very essence of children's literature - its vocation to be a form of communication between generations and the transmission of values in the flow of the communicative process. This circumstance enables the research to exceed the pre-assigned expectations and to achieve interesting results beyond the thematically set axiological horizon. In this sense, the work of O. Georgieva - Teneva gathers positives from the fact that it offers a new look at the classical for children's fiction connection - literature - pedagogy, reveals new thematic areas and

comments on new manifestations of the genetic artistic – didactic connection for children's literature, specifically researches its problems within the general aesthetic processes historically taking place in our national children's literature, enriching the knowledge about this course with new argumentative facts, but also with additional nuances of content.

The dissertation, of course, defends its merits, on the first place in the study of the specific research direction stated in its title. With indisputable logic, it motivates the interest in civic values in our children's poetry from the years after the Liberation with the importance of the political education and upbringing in a young country. A specific success of the work is the fact that the presence of these values in the poems for children and adolescents is shown as an element of a common socio-pedagogical trend running in different but interrelated areas - school (textbooks, teacher guides, reading and spelling books), children's periodicals and fiction for children. In this social context, the existence of consciously nurtured civic values through children and adolescents literature seems not just logical, but natural and logical, a conclusion that, among other things, raises the question of their strange underestimation in the up to now ideas about the axiological foundations of our children's poetry.

The observations on poems concerning the civil attitude towards the state power, which represent the two behavioral positions is amongst the achievements of the text proposed: the passive – the one of the subject and the active – the one of the citizen (third chapter "Freedom of the individual as a lyrical message"), the interest in the role of the public speech in the education of the citizen realized by the role of our children's and youth literature in the upbringing of the citizen (the "Public languages: division, corruption, power" paragraph in the seventh chapter - "Lyrical word for the word"), the placement of civic issues in the theoretical discourse on the communicative strategies of lyrical speech for children and its understanding as a prerequisite for the adult lyrical speaker and the young recipient“ (p.156).

Special congratulations are due to the pages problematizing children's play in the context of the perspectives, outlined for the upbringing in an active civic behavior ("Civic Pledge of the Liberal Pedagogy" Paragraph in Chapter Three), observations and conclusions in the sixth chapter - "Children's Poetry under a shoulder's strap”,

designated to the formation of the consciousness for a military duty and the cracks in it under the influence of the high Renaissance identity between the homeland and the state, which was shaken by the wars.

Another undisputable merit is the productive decision of the author to support what's formulated on the children's poetry of a given author, with examples from the work of the same author, targeting adults, as well as extra-literary facts indicative of her way of thinking on certain civic values (examples with K. Velichkov and Uncle Stoyan). This not only strengthens the persuasiveness of the proposed thesis, but also activates new contextual directions of the study. One of the products of such orientation, for example, is the important conclusion about the role of the commented values in the relations between the two age-specific parts of our national literature: "The two Bulgarian literatures - for children and adults – connected, not only because of numerous other reasons, but also through the bridges of civic thinking". (p. 295)

A reader of the work of Ogniana Georgieva - Teneva can not miss the author's ability to purposefully pursue her research tasks, to defend her scientific theses, gradually and consistently applying new facts in the defense, an impression that is imposed also by the compositional scheme of the dissertation. She reveals a coherent organization of scientific activities, sharing the gradual movement of a clear research thought towards her final goal.

The dissertation could provoke some reservations with the spontaneous tension between the child-adolescent specificity of the literary material she researches and some of the poetic texts she examines. The author is aware of the negative sides of such a risk and touches on the problem several times, clearly pointing out and quoting for the concept of the adherent boundaries of children's literature. The provided theoretical argumentation gives sufficient scientific legitimacy to the used literature material and to a large extent overcomes the above-mentioned tension, although, in my opinion, it is not able to eliminate it completely. Indeed, non-intentional children's literature (children's reading, as it is already known in Bulgarian literary studies), not written specifically for children, but for various reasons becomes part of their reading practice, is a legitimate part of the general body of children's -youth literature, and institutional (through school) age

redirection is one of the forms of filling its representation.. Obviously, from the standpoint of pure theory, the work does not suggest problems with its material. However, the question remains whether the "accessibility" of the text (according to the logic of the scientific citation given in the dissertation text) is a sufficient condition for the transition to the area of "secondary children's" literature of a work written for adults, whether school boundaries coincide with the boundaries of childhood, as well as with the theoretically placed age limit, defining what is children's literature.

In fact, the mentioned "tension" should not be seen as a weakness of the dissertation. It does not derive from it, but it is the result of unresolved theoretical ambiguities about the question of the boundaries of children's literature in science (as well as the variability of the boundaries of childhood in its various conceptual contexts). For this reason, it (the tension) rather gets the effect of an advantage of the text, expressed in its provocations to a dialogue, to an invitation to meet different, including theoretical, opinions, in refusing to obsessively and categorically complete the shared opinions. These are qualities that the text reveals as qualities of the personal research manner of its author, a manner that reasonably protects her (exceptions are so few that they seem practically non-existent) from the often uncontrolled bias of scientists to the theses of their research and allows her objectively and critically to evaluate the facts studied.

It is in the context of provocations to dialogue that I would like to point out the possibilities of work for further problematization of the dynamics in the moral-civil relationship, reflected in the axiological system of our children's literature - for example, may we speak about transformation of one type of values to other or whether we are just talking about parallels? Good perspectives for useful scientific communication are given by the shared reflections on the animalistic power plots in our children's poetry, which, in my opinion, could seek their cultural and aesthetic depth in folk laughter culture, hence in the carnival comedy of children's poetry to fully motivate the communicative perspectives of its power-political semantic layer.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again, that the presented dissertation *Civic Values in Bulgarian Children's and Youth Poetry (1878 - 1918)* is a thorough, original and contributing study that has the dissertation qualities necessary to obtain the scientific degree of *Doctor of Science*. Convinced of his merits, I propose to the distinguished colleagues of the scientific jury to award the degree of *Doctor of Science* to Ass. Prof. Dr. Ogniana Georgieva - Teneva, while declaring that I will vote without reservation for such a decision.

The town of Shumen

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Prof. Dr. M. Enchev

