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Environmental education in Macedonian literature for children and juvenils as a way of humanization of children's personality

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Abstract

Children's literature can contribute to the creation and nurturing of humanistic feelings at children and young people. This feeling can be developed and nurtured by creating a sense of caring and ethical treatment of animals and the entire living world as a whole. Through personified animal characters, which are all human traits, the authors show the relationship between good and evil, between love and hate, between brutality and sacrifice, between friendship and selfishness, between humanity and universal solidarity.

Keywords: animals, nature, pollution, humanistic feeling, coexistence.

Literature is art that brings emotional, cognitive and social relief to the reader by means of nice words, which allows the reader to run away from the everyday life and dive in the fictive unlimited world, observe the problems and the wishes of the imaginary characters, enter the stage of development that he/she already has passed. By observing the future of others he/she forgets his/hers own problems (Dimova, 2007). Thereby it is evident that children find those books interesting that are connected to adventures, temptations, travelling etc. The common companions of the kids in those books are animals. Natka Mickovič pays special attention to the presence of the fauna in the modern Macedonian literature for children and youngsters. There is almost no literature from the modern Macedonian literature that has no animals in it being the main characters, like in fairy tales, or has an active role. Therefore, the personification is the most usual form in our modern literature for children. It gives a special mark to our literature for children. All kids in all times have built up a special relation towards animals that are interesting to them and represent a part from the world that is close to their world because it has all the attributes that their world does – it moves, grows, communicates and gives very attractive opportunities (Mickovič, 1988).

The point of this paper is to show that one can nurture the humanistic feeling towards a kid and a young person though literature. This feeling can be developed and nurtured by caring and having ethical relation to animals, nature and the whole world. In that context the work of the Macedonian writers for children and youngsters is outstanding, like the work from Slavko Janevski, Gligor Popovski, Kiro Donev, Vančo Nikoleski, Vidoe Podgorec and many others, that usually have animals as an essential part in the role of active player in the story.

One of the basic problems of modern civilization, which is needed for the survival of mankind, is the protection of the human environment. Another problem is the interaction between man and his surroundings. During his evolution man has become the biggest enemy of earth, her corrupter. His way of life affects every other rightful member of the environment. He is a part of nature and as a part of nature he must live in agreement with the laws of nature. In this way of live he is an influence to both the living and not living parts of nature. His enhanced technological advance with which he thinks he is making his life better actually results as a catastrophic pollution of soil, water, air... The literature word for today's youth can also be used by adults. That word as a torch educates children encourages them towards ecology and the human environment.

The Macedonian writers for children and young seriously focus on this literature mission. In all books for young readers, they implicate that the existence of ecological crisis can openly confer the existence of the spiritual

crisis. Namely, in some books of science fiction type like the works of Liljana Beleva, Kiro Donev, Stojmir Simjanovski and many others, explicitly clarify that the society which is spiritually degradedly press on the degradation of nature. But, at the same time, writers show the way to the salvation of not just our civilization but of other civilizations too. And that path is love. Love isn't the characteristic of the weak, most sentimental civilizations, on the contrary, only with the power of the love towards the living and none living world around himself, man can prevent the ecological catastrophe towards he is constantly walking to. From here, Macedonian writers for children and young educate them that the reason for the catastrophe is not nature itself, but the reason lies in the human heart. There is the need for a new beginning; there is the need to truly love the Earth, the water, the Sun, the birds, the animals, and the plants.

In the works of the above mentioned authors, the danger from the over development of the society is unambiguous. That danger is especially expressed in the eschatological themes, present in the science-fiction literature.

The eschatological themes, i.e. the themes for the destruction of the world and its renewal are regular themes in SF for children and juveniles. The „Visual encyclopedia“ by Brian Ash gives four reasons for the end of the world: cosmic, extra-terrestrial, human and natural from earthly origin, and in the human reasons lies the danger for human involution (Urošević, 1988).

The destruction of the human civilization usually presented by pointing to the dangers of over-industrialization, which is the main culprit for the environmental pollution on a catastrophic scale, which leads to extinction of the living species and the creation of a sort of a reservation for the survived. The novel „The Eternal Taniz“ by the Macedonian author for children and juveniles Velko Nedelkovski, that is portrayed in a way that despite the big technological development with its negative consequences on people, the author sees the salvation of mankind in the returning to the old values. Criticizing the pollution of the environment by the fossil fuels, the author propagates usage of ecological energy sources, people turn to the utilization of the new transport vehicle „the ecobike“ (Nedelkovski, 1999).

In „The planet Otkalz“ to protect themselves from the over-polluted environment, they live in a reservation under a enormous plastic bell where the air is produced artificially (Beleva, 1988). In the „Charm of the universe“ it is directly pointed out that the reason for the cataclysm is the permanent armament of some mad scientists (Beleva, 2001). In the novel „The adventures of Mark and Damian“ (Zafirovski, 2005) it is implied that the ecological catastrophe on the Black Devil's Planet took place because of the lack of care for the planet and the irrational pollution, so he sets off for a search of a new, unpolluted planet and its occupation, till its exploitation and destruction: „Without caring too much about the future of their planet, and consequently about their own future, they increased the pollution of the water, the soil and the air from day to day. So their planet became so polluted that they could no longer yield fruit, the water became so polluted that the life in the streams, rivers, lakes and seas wasn't possible, and the air, full of poisonous gases“ (p.65).

Sometimes the reasons for the catastrophe can be natural, i.e. from earthly origin (various epidemics, viruses, microbes, water evaporation etc.), like in the novel „Acela“ where (once again due to the human lack of care), due to the over-industrialization of the society lurks the danger from the vegetation which is irresistibly flooding the planet, showing unusual features: mobility, poisonousness, aggressiveness or a sort of intelligence:.....„When suddenly and unexpectedly it started to spread, it took her only a dozen of years to turn the planet into a jungle, menacing to destroy everything, because the roots of that strange plant corroded even the metals“ (Simjanovski, 1977, p.5).

Another novel for children in the Macedonian literature, „The four-footed knights“ (Donev, 1993), which Blaze Kitanov hails as the „first ecological novel“ (Kitanov, 2007) has as protagonists the animals that children met in their daily environment and whom people often treat cruelly. But, this time the animals have a different role. Namely, the author uses the characters in this book to dedicate it to the youngsters, whose future depends on their attitude towards nature. The author warns the readers „never to succumb to the temptation of modern science and technology, when the protection of nature is at stake“ (p.4). The voyage of the swallow Martinka, in quest of a cure for her little swallow turns into a real Odyssey. Namely, searching for the cure, she makes a lot of friends with other members of the animal world that offer their unwavering support. But, at the same time, she witnesses the animals' narrations for the forest over-pollution in the vicinity if the „Big City“: „He wasn't even considering to let her go there, because all the field and forest inhabitants were already informed that an accident happened in the biggest factory for pesticides of that place. That is way, it's impossible to breath even an hour, let alone to roam in the asbestos-lead fog hanging over the city“(p.29). The author openly points out not only the pollution of the air, but also the pollution of the soil and the water: „You want drink from the water? No way! Even people no longer use it

for the irrigation of the vegetable gardens...If you could only take a look at what flows in the river leaving the Big City for the field: animal refuses, plastic, glass and metal packaging..." (p.40-41). In this interesting novel, through the dog's speech, the author points out the inhuman attitude of the people not only towards nature, but also towards the animals: „People are investigating us, testing us, performing various experiments on us, putting us in the most sophisticated laboratories in order to examine the sensitivity of our eyesight, our hearing, our smell..." (p.56). In the novel there are characters like the people who will unite themselves with the animals in a common mission, to thwart the new plant for production of pesticides at the nearby factory. And everyone takes part in the action: „Everyone who feels that their survival on the Earth is imperiled. Everyone who respects the unwritten laws of Mother Nature!" (p.95). The organizer of that action against the pollution of the environment is a man who distanced himself from the people after he came to the conclusion that we mustn't treat nature as if she exists only for us, the people. In it, all living beings: birds, insects, animals, fish have the equal right to live and survive. They organize themselves against the people who are infringing the laws of nature and its' equilibrium: „Mother Nature is constantly pressing the button of the big "ecological bell", it is ringing alarmingly, but those to whom these alarming signals are directed to, are either "deaf" or do not want to hear them..." (p.101). Calling them "four-legged knights", the author has chosen the animals, the birds and the insects to be the main characters in the novel, to send a message to the people that we too are inhabitants of this planet and should take part in their holy mission. In that struggle among people and nature that is already taking place, the force is occasionally on one side and at times on the other side. For its pollution, nature sends back to humans natural disasters. And if they win that battle, they are nonetheless losers. Because winning over the nature, they will sign their death sentence. If the man disappears from the planet, the remaining living beings will continue to live, but if they die out- the man definitely will not survive.

The novel „Stairs in the green" (Acevska, 1994) is interesting from other aspect. Namely, in order to tear them away from constantly sitting in front of the computers, which is reflected on their behavior, the parents send their children to one of the most beautiful places in Western Macedonia, close to the monastery „Saint John Bigorski". There, in the pure and pristine nature the children completely forget about the computers, they experience a sort of renaissance: „Here, in the mountains, the singing became important to me as the jokes, the laughing, and they enable you to purify yourselves, to refresh yourselves as if you have taken a shower, to shine with all your tameness" (p.56).

In the novel „Kinder broodhen" (Donev, 1999) we met the character of granddad Ilija, who after going into retirement, doesn't seem to know what to do with his life, so he finds solace in the nature, its beauties and rules. Using words and deeds he is trying to develop ecological awareness and love towards nature in his nephew: „Why gather more than we need?" Nature, my nephew, doesn't like the imposers, those that undertake destructive raids against its natural resources. On its abounding table, there is place and food for everyone, almost during all seasons. But everyone should eat only as much as it is necessary to survive, and leave some for those that will come afterwards... Only those that respect nature, that defend her and conserve her, those that do not disturb her equilibrium and respects her unwritten laws is entitled to usage of her goods!" (p.79). Granddad Ilija is an unusual man who always finds shelter in nature, her beauties and resources. He knows the secrets of the curing plants, so he is constantly searching them. He is a man of science, "a living walking encyclopedia", but also a man close with nature, close to the children's mischievousness.

In the short drama play „Ety saves Tera" (Kacarov, 1997) the main character is the Ecologist Titan, named Ety, who is also the narrator. At the beginning Titan acquaints us with the shepherd whose lamenting song can be heard faraway, because the green field and slopes where his sheep herd grazed have vanished: „Save the green rug! Save Mother nature!" (p.13). In the second scene the main character is the fisherman who is mourning the river that no longer narrates and brings happiness but, silence and sorrow: „I am sitting for days on its strand and listening to her stillness. I hear her wrapped in silence. I hear walking on the road. I hear carrying sorrow. A heavy sorrow weighing millions of tons" (p.18). In the third scene, the main character is the woodcutter who is lamenting because there isn't a single tree and that he is located in a heath. His voice sounds desperate and warning: „Return the forest to us! Deliver us from the misfortune" (p.25). The main culprits for these misfortunes are "the black fairy, the mother of all evils, of all impurity, of the ash and of the bad fire", "the black fairy that has imprisoned the water and the fish of the river", "the black snake-mother of all impurities, the mistress of garbage and death". It is not difficult to recognize in their characters the main pollutants of the environment. The ecologist Titan, named Ety declares war to every one of them. Consequently, we are not surprised by the moral lesson, inwrought in Ety's word who takes the field in order to rescue Tera (the Earth): „Each of you can be the ecologist Titan named Ety, provided that he is resolute, brave and full of love for the mother nature" (p.33).

In the novel „Bojan“ (Popovski, 1973), the boy Bojan leaves on a winter vacation to his granddad in the mountains, but by circumstance he remains alone, cut off in the mountain, where his only friends are the herd and the loyal dogs. There, Bojan „goes through a lot of temptations which threaten him every moment from the white breadth of the mountain, from that nice to look at white evil“, with wolf’s howling, the dogs Strela and Karaman, the deer Krotka, and above all, with Bojan’s pride. I will also say with his astuteness and wisdom, to participate in everything and emerge as a victor. Bojan is a winner because his love for the beauties, secrets and dangers of the mountain is enormous“. It seems as if at times he loses the battle for survival in the beautiful and dangerous mountain. That fight, although unsuccessful, will put aside his thoughts for the everyday worries and problems and will chase out his fear and his anxiety. Then something occurs that will reinforce even more his conviction that he should endure, and that is the arrival of a small, lost, scared and injured deer (which Bojan will name Krotka), which will help Bojan more, than vice versa. The fact itself that he has the chance to help someone fills Bojan with joy. That, and the work will help Bojan to clear his thoughts. In that context, Duško Cackov points out that the novel „Bojan“ contains „humanistic emphasis“. Namely, according to him, in this work, Gligor Popovski, once again, strives „to glorify the goodness and justness and to determine their place in people’s lives“ (Cackov, 1982)

CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, there is an ecological concern for the present ecological crises. The present civilization is technologically advanced, but culturally impoverished and crippled. Such techno centrism and homo centrism has unfavourable influence on the entire living world, including humans. And not only that, it inevitably leads to the destruction of the entire life on the Earth. Of course we can’t deprive ourselves of science and technology, but they can and should be controlled. On the contrary, they will become the biggest enemies of the humanity. That’s why it is necessary to concentrate our efforts on the development of the ecocentrism. i.e. the balanced coexistence of mankind and nature.

The issue of progress of modern civilization is directly related to the survival of mankind and the protection of his environment. During his evolution, man has become the biggest enemy of the earth, her destroyer. His way of life affects every other equal member of the environment His enhanced technological development, which he thinks makes his life better, actually results in catastrophic pollution of the soil, water, air...

The literary word intended for the youngest can also be recommended to the adults. As a torch, it educates children and cultivates in them love for ecology and the natural environment

At the same time, the writers show the path to salvation not only of our civilization, but any other living creature. And that path is love. Love isn’t a characteristic of the weakest, the most sentimental civilizations; on the contrary, only with the power of the love towards the all living world around him, man can prevent the ecological catastrophe he is heading for. Therefore, the authors of children literature point out that the reason for the catastrophe is not the nature itself, but the reason lies in the human heart. What is needed is a new beginning, a true love for the Earth, the water, the Sun, the birds, the animals, etc. Therefore, children’s literature can contribute to the creation and nurturing of humanistic feelings at children and young people. This feeling can be developed and nurtured by creating a sense of caring and ethical treatment of animals and the entire living world as a whole. Through personified animal characters, which are all human traits, the authors show the relationship between good and evil, between love and hate, between brutality and sacrifice, between friendship and selfishness, between humanity and universal solidarity.

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