

Patriotism in The Work for Children by Olivera Nikolova

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Abstract

This paper examines the work of one of the most famous Macedonian writers for children and adults, Olivera Nikolova. Her work is really impressive, especially one intended for children. The paper will particularly pay attention to the patriotic theme in the work of Nikolova, which emphasis will be put on two of her works, "The secret of the yellow suitcase" and "Rosica's Dolls." The purpose of the paper is to discover and paint the context of the child and the young girl in the midst of war, trauma to survive, the consequences arising from them, and how these female characters work tirelessly with all this.

Keywords: children's literature, Olivera Nikolova, patriotism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Olivera Nikolova is Macedonian writer for adults and children. She was born March 11 1936 in Skopje. She graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy, University "St. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. She spent the entire working life in the Macedonian Radio and Television working as an editor and playwright. She is a member of the Writers' Association of Macedonia since 1963. Her best-known works for children are: Zoki Poki, Den za letuvanje, Zemja vo koja nikogas ne se stignuva, Tazniot vesel Vladimir, Prijatelite Bon i Bona, Cuk cuk Stojance, Devojkite na Marko, Kamerata na Boris, Mojot zvuk, Ljubobolki, Domasni zadaci, Preminot ne e osvetlen, Sifri na kamenot, Beli stapki...

2. "THE SECRET OF THE YELLOW SUITCASE"

"The secret of the yellow suitcase"¹ is novel by Olivera Nikolova published in 1965. The main narrator is eight years old Catherine. However, although it is her real name in the novel no one addressed so primarily because of age, and then for affectionately that her address. Everyone usually names her with Kiki, and in only one case with - Kate. Personally it bothers her very much: "Her long and officially named, by adults, yet it was deserved. ... Would it be displeasing to you to not have the right to wear it, because I still have not been enrolled in school's documents" (p.7).

The reason that small Kiki does not go to school is a war for which her father does not want to send to school, not only because of the danger, but also because: "He probably wanted to have me in spite of himself, but more likely – he was not willing to learn the first letters on a foreign language" (p.7).

Precisely because resistance to foreign education is the reason why small Kiki cannot go to school and will be not only a witness but also a participant in the events of her family. Precisely because the events are seen through the lens of the eyes of Kiki, they gain customer dimension of mystery.

The biggest mystery is about the contents of the yellow suitcase which sometimes disappears, sometimes appears, sometimes is empty, and sometimes is full, which in Kiki born desire to explore: "When we already brought it with us, It is strange – but where could it disappeared?; "After a week, a yellow suitcase it was still in place. I found it in the morning, and I was so excited that I felt I could scream" (p.27).

¹ Olivera Nikolova, Tajnata na zoltoto kuferce, Mislra, Skopje, 1986.

Very much mysterious conversations stretch around Kiki between adults and she accidentally caught several secretive glances and mysterious verbal messages and it strengthens her desire to be treated equally as adults and emulating template for that is her older cousin Tommy.

Her composure and ability to prove as adult she shows in sequence critical moments, as when is the bombing of the city and all flee to the shelter, and that at the last moment she returns because she will hear the weak voice of her younger brother and saves him: „ And my father before all boasted me that I'm very brave and not at all look like other girls on my age“ (p.16).

Then follows fleeing to the countryside, where children, including the Kiki, accept hunger, cold and fear as adults and do not rebel against the conditions. Children, Kiki and Tommy, exhibit a great desire to see the guerrillas, because among them is father of Tommy and that at the end of the novel will find that he is actually dead. But during all that time before they find out the truth about his tragic fate, Kiki as all, feels proud of their family having partisan"-And my husband is partisan - said my aunt. I first heard this for my uncle and I was amazed. But Tommy proudly shaking my hand. He looked like he knew sooner“ (p.41).

And through this narrative sequence, from the conceptual point of view, the author introduces one important point where the patriotism is born in child, in particular - the crown stories about Kiki and Tommy, their parents, wounded partisan, secret that is hidden in the yellow suitcase etc (Drugovac, 1986"345).

In this novel, the author introduces us to a time of war, a daunting uncertainties about the heroes whose game continues, but this time with other means and other purposes, among other things, to witness the heroic events of our Revolution; true to her's aesthetic concept, Nikolova and this time does not goes with moralizing, not patriotising, does not lecture and preaches, acting on our knowledge only through subtext suggestions of where comes ethical notion of the heroic children feat (Drugovac, 1986:345).

Through the episodes with wounded partisans whom extend assistance, exhausting running with Tommy thru the wood in the night to see partisans, meeting with Mrs. Flora, their former neighbor, escape from the enemy as the greatest evil - all this is reflected in the children soul, and through encouragement to endure, it is nourishing their patriotic feeling: "How much I regret that you live in such a time, my beloved ... But all these will pass, you will see ... Be brave children...(p.61). And, indeed, the children try to do their best not to cause additional problems of the elderly, and even behave as adults in certain situations: "We have stopped talking about dangers..." (p.67).

3. "ROSICA'S DOLLS"

The novel "Rosica's Dolls"¹ is one of the few Macedonian historical novels written by a female author. Its distinctiveness on the one hand, is the selection of a national historical subject by a woman author, and on the other hand, that the main character in the historical events described is also a woman.

The events taking place in it are placed in the second half of the nineteenth century, from 1879 to 1899. Divided into three chapters, each of which deals with the beginning of a decade, the novel shows a stormy and still insufficiently clarified developments related to the beginnings of the creation of the Macedonian national identity.

Dedication of this book clearly indicates its dual nature, where Nikolova says that the novel is based on the available documents from Bulgarian, Serbian and Macedonian sources: „Historical facts and figures in it are interpreted in a free literary context“ (p.5). Historiographical point is marked by short introductions to each decade, entitled "Glossary of calendar years" that the events which follow are placed in a wider historical framework.

The first "Dictionary" begins in 1879, when "a year after the signing of the Agreement of Berlin, the International Border Commission, which borders of Bulgaria still have not yet been determined or to Turkey, or to Eastern Rumelia, for the first time in June conditionally marked the frontier to Macedonia and Dupnishko and Dzhumajsko..." (p.9).

¹ Оливера Николова, *Куклите на Росица*, Култура, Скопје, 2003.

So the first "Dictionary" begins with the physical demarcation of the area of present-day Macedonia, i.e. with its separation from the then newly formed Bulgarian state, and the last ends in 1899, with the Austrian writer Karl Hron, which illuminates the Macedonian issue from a historical and linguistic aspects.

But he predicts that his dismissal, because of the confusion of the political circumstances in the Balkans, it will belong to a later generation. The pages between these time entries are filled with a multitude of historical figures, their conversations, their written documents that are mention or cited.

All those who parade through the pages of the novel are large man, already known (for good or bad) in Macedonian or Bulgarian history of this period - Dimitar Miladinov, Marko Cepenkov, Kuzman Shapkarev, Gorgija Pulevski, Pricev, Bishop Nathaniel Kuchevishki of course, Goce Delcev, a character who at the end of the novel gets a special meaning and symbolism.

Amid all their big talk and actions, and big plans for the liberation of Macedonia, the main character (the subject) of Nikolova and witness to most of these events is mute girl Rosica. Rosica character as a subject in this novel, contributes further to his uniqueness, diversity compared to other historiographical prose in Macedonian literature, functioning on several levels. First, into the historical framework she brings personal history, a history that is present in people's memory, which remained secondary or less relevant than (official) history.

In the first chapter, entitled "Separation" it said: "Rosica left the past behind. But instead remembering, she first had to learn to speak" (p.11).

Inability to speak for Rosica is an additional factor that increases the feeling of forgetting by the history as fate determinant for the woman - she has no access to the language as a way of communication and therefore she remains on the margins of history that they have created, she is always there to convince, but never enough to present to notice what she witnessed, let alone participate in it.

And that language, i.e. Macedonian in that historical context and often even unnamed, not created, not yet codified, another language, one different from the Bulgarian and Serbian, repeatedly is mentioned by Gorgija Pulevski, character who is key unifying factor of the Macedonian people, specific identity sign that marks different from the other, forming a separate national consciousness: „Everyone should turn to their mother language, he said, to introduce themselves and their nation. We are Macedonians and our fatherhood is Macedonia and Macedonia had been praised in the time of Alexander the great, what to tell you more! Should we remind ourselves of Cyril and Methodius, who translated the Greek church books on our language, which is closest with church Slavic?“ (p.63-64).

However, Rosica exclusion of the great history does not mean her lack of her own history. Inability to enter in the language that works, she compensate or be replaced by a different one - making dolls.

Through her dolls, Rosica not only becomes a part of this universal discourse, but she intervened in recorded history, *Преку своите кукли, Росица не само што станува дел од овој универзален дискурс, туку таа и интервенирала во забележаната историја*, with the choice of which doll will do, and how the doll will display man against whom he has made, because she cannot do doll if there is no character for her: „And the dolls were beings and what will it being be without character and biography“(p.20).

Thus, through dolls, Rosica tells history as she sees her, and this narrative "provides a link between the private and public history because all historical events are someone's direct experiences". Through puppets, Rosica transfers her point of view on things, her image for the people she encounters, and their desires about what she would like them to be: "... The same night Gorgija Pulevski doll revived in the hands of Rosica. The old man was not sad anymore, or resentful. His whole face was shining with a light that showed the elders in Buchin, when they awaken grandchildren in the morning for going to the field with tobacco ... Rejoiced Rosica, twinkled with delight.... Was Gorgija Pulevski on the wedding, was he was baptising some of his grandchild? Was he going to the church? His shoes were brand new, still not soiled on the Macedonian battlefields, still not chopped of Macedonian hills, they gathered itself muggy colorful knitted socks..."(p.166).

With this narrative, and the choice of Rosica as a way to perpetuate those who are inclined with the dolls, opens the question of subjectivity in observation and interpretation of historical data. Mostly in black and white world of interpreting national histories, the female subject brings a lot of nuances, such as pages devoted to the intimate parts, spiritual and national turmoil Bishop Nathaniel Kuchevishki for which official national history acted critically. Hence, it is

clear that the personal and subjective have equally influenced the history as (abstract, elusive) universal and objective, and it is fully confirmed by the personal, love story of Rosica: „...in her real world unaware, she repeatedly searched the causes of others' preferences, what was the secret someone to love you, and someone does not stand you, someone to believe you without verification, and someone to risk his life just for a glance thrown upon you?“ (p.105).

At the end of the novel, when on the p. 270 we reveals her surname, Rosica becomes self-conscious entity - she finally becomes an individual, an active participant rather than just a silent observer of events. Her personal narrative becomes part of the history through the act of awakening, awakening of the female body and first through the experiencing of physical love with Andon, then through pregnancy, the symbiosis of her body with new life.

This transformation reveals and another level to which the entity Rosica operates, the level that put her in position as a kind of metaphor for the entire Macedonian nation in the historical moment in which she is situated.

The titles of specific sections in each decade (Separation, Languish, Demarcation, Enchanted), are indicative of the processes of collective destiny of the Macedonian people in that period: „Considering the whole lost to former fighters for the liberation of Macedonia, as beneficiaries of state pensions of newly created country, Bulgaria, sadly revealing their thirst for some certain property as it had at home: they had nothing more....“ (p.137).., and at a certain moment Rosica also starts to review the meaning of her existence: "How did she live? She lived only for mockery of others? For ugly comparison? For pity? What did she wanted? What did she yearning to happened to her?“ (p.219).

Rosica simplicity, and simplicity of her people, in the time of great intrigues, pressures and impacts in the search for true leaders and happy future, inevitably lead to wrong choices. Hope is shown through the character of Goce Delcev (one that correspondence, because he knows how to communicate to the people on their language) and thru the child to be born, and dies prematurely, and the entire Macedonian nation, faced with internal divisions and fraud. Thus, the history of the Macedonian people is actually identified with the history of women, especially women's writing - here's marginality in relation to the big (male or national) discourse, denying the uniqueness in terms of universality (male or Slavic), and the process the awakening of that distinctiveness through promotion of the national language as a national landmark or corporeality as an authentic source of creativity.

The novel "Rosica's Dolls" by Olivera Nikolova conveys Macedonian fate closely, making personal story of the Macedonian golgotha. Mute and raped Rosica becomes a metaphor for violated and stiff Macedonia. The message from this work, the author Olivera Nikolova transfers starting from history where she recognizes the continuity of long struggles for national freedom and the desire for emancipation. Through the past, she recognizes the present and through the present feels the future, because our present was the future of our ancestors. And the future of our descendants, we dream today, in our present. With each passing moment we spend in the past, and again this past becomes a factor for survival of those who will come after us.¹

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¹ Раде Силјан, Македонски писатели и дела, Матица Македонска, Скопје, 2008, стр.202.