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Educational Potential of Ukrainian Children's Literature of Canada

Antonina BOHDANYUK¹

Abstract

The lack of a comprehensive research of the educational potential of art works of the Ukrainian-Canadian children's writers preconditioned the topicality of the research. The purpose of the study is, basing on a holistic analysis of the development of the Ukrainian-Canadian educational thought in the second half of the twentieth century, to clarify its role in shaping the educational potential of the Ukrainian children's literature in Canada. Methods of the investigation include: analysis of the domestic and foreign scientific and fiction literature on the studied problem; classification and generalization of archival sources; comparison and historical-genetic analysis of the preconditions of the origin and development of the Ukrainian educational thought and children's literature in Canada; personalistic and biographical, thematic-ideological and socio-pedagogical analysis of literary works of the Ukrainian writers of Canada; theoretical generalization of the research results and drawing conclusions. The article deals with the activity of ULWCY (Ukrainian Literature Workers for Children and Youth). It reflects literary work of the Ukrainian-Canadian writers, in a civilized manner-elucidative activity and education of rising generations of Canadian Ukrainians. Scientific novelty of the results lies in the fact that little-known works of Ukrainian teachers and literature scholars of Canada in the second half of the twentieth century were introduced into the scientific use for the first time. The practical complement to the theoretical study was a published textbook "Pearls of creativity: Ukrainian children literature of the Ukrainians from abroad", which contains biographies and works of the Ukrainian diaspora writers.

Keywords: educational potential, Ukrainian children's literature of Canada, national education, moral education, religious-spiritual education.

Introduction

The current domestic educational science is performing a purposeful work in the study of the history of the Ukrainian national education and training, including one which takes place outside the Ukrainian state. A valuable and rich experience in teaching and bringing-up younger

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generations was collected by the Ukrainians of the Western diaspora. During the XX century they created a teaching and educational system which made it possible to form ethnic community and ensure its vital activity in the multicultural society of countries of residence.

Literature sources review

For a long time, due to the known ideological circumstances, the achievements of foreign Ukrainians have not been studied by the domestic scientists, though they are noteworthy and are of great practical use. In the researches which appeared in the independent Ukraine (H. Byhar, V. Yevtukh, Y. Zayachuk, B. Kemin, M. Leshchenko, A. Marushkevych, T. Mikhailenko, O. Paliychuk, I. Pits, S. Romanyuk, I. Rusnak, I. Strazhnikova, V. Troshchynsky, S. Fedunyak, H. Filipchuk, A. Shevchenko), the conditions of the origin and development of the Ukrainian education and upbringing in the American countries and Europe were analyzed.

Ukrainian Canadian community is one of the largest communities of Ukrainians abroad, which created a national educational system based on centuries-old Ukrainian national pedagogical experience. A special place in it belongs to the Ukrainian children's literature, one of its tasks is the formation of national character and national consciousness and identity of the Ukrainian Canadians, especially the young generation, conservation of the language and cultural identity of the Ukrainian nation in terms of the Canadian reality, bringing up a harmoniously developed personality as a patriot of Ukraine and a citizen of Canada. The first scientific works which familiarized the reader with their creative outputs, were studies by O. Gay-Golovko, P. Kravchuk, M. Maruchak, S. Romaniuk, I. Rusnak, YarSlavutych, P. Soroka, I. Strazhnikova and others. But the researchers left out of sight creative works of the artists who write for children and young people, even despite the fact that Canada has a special creative association "The L. Glibov Union of Workers of Literature for Children and Youth" (GUWLCY). The pedagogical value of children's writings of the Ukrainian writers in Canada, including their high developing potential, is substantiated by the publications of the diaspora Ukrainists I. Bondarchuk, A. Horokhovych, B. Goshovsky, R. Zavadovych, V. Lutsiv, V. Matskiv, I. Petriv and others. According to the researchers, children's literature is an effective factor in the national education of future generations both in the diaspora and in Ukraine. In the domestic science children's literature as a means of harmonious, comprehensive development of children and youth, was studied by V. Vykhursch, N. Voloshyna, L. Kilichenko, A. Kosteckiy,

B.Plahtiy, O.Savchenko, N.Skrypchenko, V.Sukhomlynsky, A.Ternovskyi, Y.Yarmysh etc. However, a comprehensive study of the educational potential of artistic works of the Ukrainian-Canadian writers-teachers for children and young people is missing, although their works starting from the early 90's of the XX century are widely used in the educational process in secondary schools of Ukraine, as well as in higher educational institutions of different accreditation levels (Bogdanyuk, 2003). Thus, insufficient investigation of the outlined problem, its relevance to modern national educational theory and teaching practice determined the choice of the research topic.

The results of the research

The chronological boundaries of the research cover the second half of the twentieth century – the period of active work of the Union of Workers of Literature for Children and Youth in Canada, the founders and active members of which were leading Ukrainian-Canadian educators –the authors of fiction books for children and young people (Bogdanyuk & Rusnak, 2014).

Exploring the development of the Ukrainian educational thought and children's literature as an ethnical-pedagogical phenomenon in Canada, we determined the role of the Ukrainian community in the development of educational thought and native language children's literature in Canada; socio-cultural conditionality of the educational potential of Ukrainian children's literature in Canada was defined; the views of the pedagogues of the Ukrainian diaspora on the meaning of literature in the education of children and youth were analyzed. It was established that the emergence and development of the Ukrainian educational thought and literature in Canada were preconditioned by the peculiarities of formation of the national community of the Ukrainians in the country. This process began in the late nineteenth century and underwent already four periods: I –the end of the XIX – early XX century; II – between the wars; III – post-war; IV – the beginning of the 1990s. – until now. Each of them is characterized by specific features, but for all periods peculiar are the ethnic community efforts to preserve their native language, culture, customs and traditions, educate nationally conscious generation of the Ukrainians. The means to achieve this goal were chosen family, church, native language schooling, public cultural and educational societies, youth organizations, etc. (Bogdanyuk, 2011).

A special place in this system was taken by literature, because it has always been and must continue to be a national educator in the broadest sense. Traditionally, literary critics distinguish in the development of the Ukrainian fiction writing in Canada three periods that coincide with the three waves of emigration. In our opinion, in the first period it is advisable to distinguish two phases (late nineteenth century–1907 –the creation of the pioneering poetry on the folk basis; 1908–1916 –the formation of the realistic trend in the work of the Ukrainian-Canadian masters of the word). However, the formation and development of children’s literature dates back to the second half of the twentieth century and it is associated with the activity of the creative writing organization the L. Glibov Union of Workers of Literature for Children. Founded in 1946 in Germany, in 1950 it moved its organizational structure to Canada and started to act widely both in the creative and cultural and educational sphere. Later the name was changed to the association “the L. Glibov Ukrainian Workers of Literature for Children and Youth” (GUWLCY), which better reflects the content of its work – the extension of the union’s influence on young people. The main goal of GUWLCY is the creation of children’s literature as an important means of national education of young generations of Ukrainians and providing them with fiction books as a highly valued literary and artistic work which passed to the child the spiritual treasures of the Ukrainian people.

The researchers proved that the formation of the educational potential of the Ukrainian children’s literature in Canada in the second half of the twentieth century was influenced by such factors as an English speaking environment of children, insufficient knowledge of the CanadianUkrainian language in general or its total absence, a sense of inferiority in a large part of the Ukrainians, the desire of young people to integrate into Canadian societyas soon as possible, have some status in it, lack of close ties with their ancestral home, indifference to the affairs of the ethnic community, Ukrainian church,native language school system, media, literature and so on. Seeking to counter these negative processes among the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, teachers-writers chose appropriate stories and characters of their works of art and scientific works called to create favorable conditions for the spreading of children’s books.

For more than half a century of its existence GUWLCY issued or contributed to the publication of about two hundred names of books for children, and through the action “A Heart and a book” thousands of them were sent to the Ukrainian children in South America and Ukraine (over 70 thousand books). Also they sponsored the printing of books in Ukraine. Ukrainian teachers, writers, public activists were well aware: youth is the future of the community. At the same time they understood the difficulty of

the task, because young people being born and brought up in Canada – a country full of freedom, cannot understand the troubles of enslaved people, and cannot be excited by the liberation ideas as those who personally experienced and suffered the oppression of foreigners. A Ukrainian emigrant child has never seen Ukraine and does not live in its reality. Therefore, the diaspora youth cannot be put the same requirements as those used for young people in Ukraine. Indeed, “the spirit of their time formed a very different type of a person – a man educated in freedom, welfare, a new school, new methods that lead kids on the path of practicality, self-sufficiency and independence of thought and rank”(Bogdanyuk, 2011). The educational work of all institutions, therefore literary works of writers, was directed in such a way that a new type of a Ukrainian should know the mother tongue, national values, with their capabilities contributed to the liberation of Ukraine, helped in the reconstruction of the Ukrainian statehood, development of the Ukrainian community in Canada.

Studying the works of leading Ukrainian-Canadian educators and literature scholars showed that among the many means of influencing the formation of children’s personality their authors singled out fiction as the most effective one because it “equally affects the mind and feelings of a man, covering all his creature, touches, excites, worries; it become for children a decisive creative force, educational factor, directing them to a specific life goal; teaches how to perceive life” (Bogdanyuk&Rusnak, 2014). It was found out that Canadian educators believe the works, which depicted the Ukraine in the past and today to be particularly valuable to the education of future generations, the courageous struggle of the Ukrainian people for their own state, noble, honest, fearless, brave, kind and hardworking Ukrainians– true patriots of Ukraine and loyal citizens of their countries of residence / birth. The works on the given subject include the books by R. Zavadovych (“The Boys from the Green Forest”), V. Bandurak (“Cossack’s Child”), M. Pohidnyi (“Silver Hryvnia”, “Hetman’s Mace”), L. Poltava (“Man, that Fell from the Sky”), O. Tsehelska (“Petrus’ Story”), V. Barahura (“Glory will not Fall”, “The Sword and the Book”), Y. Tys (“Zvidun from Chyhyryn”, “The Raid to the Unknown”, “Konotop”), I. Steshenko (“How Yurko traveled on the Dnipro Rapids”) and others.

Teachers in the Ukrainian Diaspora considered fiction as an effective factor of influence on the minds and feelings of children, an important means of forming their inner world, high moral qualities. Ukrainian-Canadian teachers believed that literature promotes building a harmonious personality of the young reader, his religious and moral, patriotic and aesthetic education, produces character, generosity of soul, understanding and sense of beauty affects the reader not only through its ideological

content, moral creed of the characters, the beauty of human relationships of positive protagonists, but through the beauty of verbal images, music of expressions and the entire arsenal of poetic words. The study found that Canadian Ukrainians' pedagogical ideas in the native language children's literature in Canada in the second half of the twentieth century were presented through the peculiarity of the reflection in the features works of art of the educators Ukrainian writers in Canada of the ideas of national, religious and moral and spiritual education of children and youth (Bogdanyuk&Rusnak, 2012).

The priority direction of the education of the younger generation of the Canadian Ukrainians during the study period and now has been and remains a national education. In their literary works Ukrainian-Canadian educators and writers proceeded from the fact that national education is to form those internal positions, which express a kind of attitude of children and young people to the values of Ukrainian culture, that is their national outlook, national consciousness. The teachers and writers believed native language to be the most valuable treasure of the nation, the key to its present and future. To instill patriotism in young readers, love and desire to learn Ukrainian, they sang the praises of its beauty and power (I. Bondarchuk, V. Vorsklo, R. Zavadovych, L. Murovych), depicted the heroic past of the Ukrainian people and distinctive beauty of nature in Ukraine (V. Barahura, V. Vorsklo, D. Humenna, R. Zavadovych, O. Kobets, L. Murovych, M. Pohidnyy, L. Poltava, I. Savitska, Y. Tys, O. Tsehelska). This goal was achieved through "vivid imagery language of the works of art, their rhythm and melody, skillfully drawn images of characters, logically reasoned deployment of the story, originality of collisions, dynamics of events" (Bogdanyuk&Rusnak, 2012).

One of the most important direction of education, which begins in the family, continues in pre-schools and secondary schools and is most active in daily life, is moral education. And it is exercised primarily on the national ground through the assimilation of the established for centuries requirements and traditions, rich spiritual culture of the people, those moral standards and qualities that are regulators of the relations in the society, coordination of people's actions. These standards are the first of all humanism and democracy, as embodied in the ideal of a free man, able to work well with highly developed sense of dignity and the same respect for the dignity of another person; the love to parents, to the Fatherland, to the Ukrainian language; truth and justice, diligence and modesty; willingness to defend the weak, to take care about the younger, children in particular; noble attitudes towards girls, women, mothers, grandmothers; the ability to act honorably everywhere, nobly, to identify other Christian virtues. We can

confidently assert that the Ukrainian children's literature in Canada raised various ethical problems that can "interest and entertain a child, are needed for its knowledge and development of its mind". The examples of works in which images of children are depicted with their inherent actions and habits, peculiarities of behavior and traits of character are "Brother and sister" by H. Cherin; "Black Dolko" by R. Zavadovych; "Dawns and Twilights" by N. Mudryk-Mryts. It was found that in many works for the children their authors touch upon such important high moral virtues for a child as love and respect for mother, father, grandparents, respect for elders ("Dear Mother", "At My Mother's day", "Mother's Hat" from the "Golden Garlands" by I. Savitska, "For Mom" by A. Brodshed-Kryshchanovych, "I know a lot of songs" by S. Kuzmenko, "Happy Mother's day" by O. Tsehelska, "The Conversation of Daughter with Mother" by T. Biletska, "The Tale from Mother", "My Mother Taught Me..." by R. Zavadovych) and others (Bogdanyuk, 2008).

Moreover, the vast majority of works of children's Ukrainian-Canadian writers are deprived of "annoying moralizing", the reader perceives their ideas, characters' images with delight, aesthetic impact of such works on the consciousness of the reader is easy and natural. Due to this, says A. Horohovych, "people, who read often, unconsciously enrich themselves spiritually and their outlook on life becomes acute as their preferences get more delicate and more perfect". This is due to the fact that the literary work influences the reader not only by its ideological content, moral creed of the heroes, the beauty of human relationships of good characters, but through the beauty of the images, music, expressions and the whole art of the poetic word. So it helps to solve an extremely difficult task – to shape spirituality and characters of new generations, to teach children the difference between good and evil, truth and lies, to inculcate patriotism, reveal the beauty of poetry, the nature of a man.

Analysis of literary sources suggests that religious education in the Ukrainian community of Canada permeates all areas of education, forms the inner world, character values which ensure his development and self-development, manufacturing desires and the willingness to work for the Ukrainian community in Canada and for Ukraine. Effective means of religious and spiritual education of Ukrainian-Canadian educators believe that fiction for children, which by means of the figurative speech reflects the beauty and grandeur of Christian values and their central role in human life, reveals the magical world of religious rituals, customs and traditions that have become an integral part of the spiritual life of Ukrainian people, enriching them spiritually and morally, cultivates love for God, people and Ukraine.

In this context the creative heritage of the writer and pedagogue I. Petriv deserves special attention. Her artistic work is distinctive for passionate desire to educate young readers in the Christian spirit. Thus, depicting figures of her characters ("Grandmother", "Parents Tear", "Easter Remembrance", "Forget-me-nots", "Fog for the first St. Communion", "Glory to Jesus Christ!", "Ukrainian Christmas Eve"), she is trying to cultivate in children a love "for God and people". In her poetry I. Petriv constantly advocates about the need of daily honoring the Mother of God and prayers for the proclamation of oppressed homeland. Poetic works by I. Petriv constantly reminded Ukrainian diaspora of the feasts and ceremonies of their native land, have contributed to the education of youth in patriotic spirit that is actually true for modern students of Ukraine ("He is risen indeed!", "A Letter to St. Nicholas", "Along with Christmas...", "Christmas Star" etc). The theme of love for God and Ukraine was leading in the literary works of the other renowned educator of the Ukrainian diaspora A. Horohovych. Her creative works include ones which introduce the history of Christian holidays, highlight features of their celebration by the Ukrainians, reveal the relationship of religious, spiritual and moral development of personality ("Saint George and the Serpent", "Michael's memorable holiday", "A Letter to St. Nicholas", "Gryts' Christmas joy", "Grandmother's happiest Christmas Eve" and others). Christmas Celebrations are depicted in the works by Ivan Bondarchuk ("Kolyada at Grandfather Mykola"), V. Vorsklo ("Kolyada"), M. Holod ("Christmas"), R. Zavadovych ("Children's Christmas"), O. Kobets ("On Christmas Eve", "A Caroler"), I. Savitska ("Christmas in the Forest"), N. Mudryk-Mryts ("Carol", "Christmas", "Christmas candle"), O. Tsehelska ("Halyusia's Christmas Adventure", "On Christmas Eve"), P. Shkurat ("At Christmas Supper") and others. It was established that, considering the "Ukrainian people's customs, habits that are connected with their great-grandparents' faith and its history" as the foundation of spiritual and national life, the Ukrainian-Canadian writers reflect in a vivid, poetic form almost all the festivals and rituals of religious and folk calendar, direct participants of which are children. Valuable and important source of knowledge is a poetry collection by Lesia Khraplyva "To All God's Year: A Reciter for Children", in which the poet, beside already mentioned Christmas, glorifies the Easter holidays ("Easter", "Easter egg", "Easter Bells"), Mother's Day ("In May", "Evening", "The Mother's Day"), other holidays and celebrations ("Green Holidays", "Autumn", "The Supper at St. Nicholas"). Religious motifs designed to educate the reader's respect for Christian values, willingness to adhere to the principles of religious and

moral life, tightly intertwined with national and patriotic motives (Bogdanyuk, 2007).

Conclusions

Everything mentioned above makes it possible to draw conclusions and determine the prospects for further study of the outlined problems. Ukrainian pedagogical ideas and children's literature as ethnical-pedagogical phenomenon and a part of the spiritual life of the ethnic community in Canada developed under the influence of objective socio-political and socio-economic conditions of the country of residence and the processes taking place within the community. The external objective conditions of the formation of ethnic community as the main factor of development of the Ukrainian educational thought and children's literature in Canada include: the features of immigration policy of the Canadian government in different periods of Ukrainians' arrival in the Land of the maple leaf; settlement of immigrants from the Ukrainian lands using "block" method, which allowed them to quickly solve the problems of socio-economic, cultural and educational nature, build on the Canadian land "little Ukraine"; the growing influence of the process of assimilation of the younger generation of the Canadian Ukrainians, which led to their departure of a large part of their life from their ethnic community. The internal ethnic processes include: efforts of the progressive part of the Canadian Ukrainians through the activities of cultural and educational organizations, the church, the press, native language schooling to preserve and increase their national and spiritual treasures (language, culture, customs, traditions, etc.); the desire to educate young Ukrainian patriots of Ukraine sincere, loyal citizens of Canada, active members of the Ukrainian national and cultural life in the diaspora; the growth of contradictions between different political organizations, religious confessions, representatives of different generations and waves of immigration, between the older and younger generations of the Ukrainians; the absence, for many decades, of standing political, cultural and educational ties with the mainland Ukraine, reducing the influence of immigrants and others.

It was determined that the described above conditions and processes prompted Ukrainian community in Canada, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, to find effective ways and means of self-preservation and self-development. They selected fiction as an effective factor of influence on the mind and feelings of children, an important means of forming their inner world, high moral qualities. Its educational potential lies

in an organic combination of ideological content and imagery and emotional quality of the artwork and its specific rhythm-melodic structure. Subject, content, ideological orientation, i.e. educational potential of art works for Ukrainian children and youth in Canada were preconditioned by the influence of the progressive ideas of the Ukrainian-Canadian teachers and aspirations of their authors to promote the formation of a nationally conscious personality with the depiction of the past and present life of the Ukrainian people, the reproduction of life of foreign Ukrainian in the countries of settlement and also needs of the teaching-educational practice of the native language schools and public educational, cultural institutions.

The analysis of scientific and pedagogical sources gives us reason to believe that the Ukrainian-Canadian educators consider fiction, especially children's, as one of the most effective means of identity formation. It teaches life wisdom, man knows from it his and other peoples' past, it inspires for noble deeds, cultivates love for their land, language, culture and ennobles human ideals, forms the moral beauty, the harmony of nature and human relationships. According to the beliefs of the Canadian teachers, the works for the youngest children language is the most important – bright, vivid, emotional, mostly rhymed and rhythmic as it is the nearest for the children's perception. The works for the readers of other ages, in their opinion, must be marked with their ideological meaning, heroes' moral creed, beauty of the language, image and musical melodies. In the artwork for children every word and every sentence must be well-reasoned, measured, brightly imaginative. One should try to make the young reader understand correctly not only the main thought of the work, but each episode and its image.

The ideological and thematic content of artistic works for children was defined by the problem of two motherlands– Canada and Ukraine, as for most children and young people of the period under study Canada was the homeland. However, their education in the Ukrainian traditions, customs, achievements of the Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian spiritual life was becoming very important, that is the establishment in fiction love for Ukraine – their homeland. This prompted the writers to refer primarily to the past of their native land, to describe heroic and tragic history of the Ukrainian people, to portray the majestic images of its brave sons and daughters, to show their invincibility in the struggle against oppressors. It was revealed that heroic and historical themes in the works of Ukrainian-Canadian writers was marked with brightness of images, feats and victories over enemies by the Ukrainian characters and dark forces captured young readers. Important place in the Ukrainian Canadian children's literature was taken by the problem of moral, ethical and religious character. Thus, it was

discovered that the ideas of Ukrainian teachers on issues of national, religious, moral and spiritual education of the Canadian Ukrainians found artistic embodiment in the works of the Ukrainian writers of Canada for children and youth.

The priority direction of the education of the younger generation of Canadian Ukrainians, as confirmed by the analysis of sources, during the study period and, in fact, now was and remains the formation of their national identity, cherishing love for their native language, the Ukrainian nation, its traditions, customs, spiritual culture, history, instilling in them a desire to learn the Ukrainian language, to communicate it in everyday life. Indeed, the respect for national values, especially the language, good mastering of it, participating in cultural and educational work and public life of the ethnic community, the ability to properly assess the cultural heritage of other peoples and nations is an important criterion of national consciousness of children and youth in the diaspora. The Ukrainian-Canadian writers considered to be of great importance the artistic expression of pedagogical ideas for moral improvement of a man, including the formation of qualities such as honesty, fairness, diligence, modesty, self-respect and respect for the dignity of another person, taking care of elders, noble attitude to girls, wife, and mother. The problem of religious and spiritual education is also topical for the Ukrainian community in Canada, as some young people are exposed to the temptations of the material world, gradually becoming indifferent to religion and Christian rules of life, dishonor the commandments of God. That is why many Ukrainian-Canadian writers-teachers in their works depict images of children involved in religious festivals and rituals, read relevant literature, follow elders in the performance of daily religious duties, live in love for the God and people.

Consequently, the Ukrainian children's literature in Canada widely reflect different themes that might entertain and interest children, and are also needed to expand their knowledge and develop their minds, formation of national consciousness and high moral human qualities. And due to their high educational potential the works of Ukrainian-Canadian writers for children and young people became the property of the entire Ukrainian diaspora, and with the proclamation of the independence of Ukraine also spread to the motherland.

The study does not cover all aspects of the problems outlined. Further study should be applied for the problem of aesthetic education in the Ukrainian children's literature in Canada; the ways of use of the creative works of the Ukrainian-Canadian writers for children in the educational process of the native language schooling in the diaspora and the domestic education system, in the activities of children's and youth organizations;

pedagogical potential of children's works of individual Ukrainian-Canadian writers.

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