

RELATIONSHIP GRANDPARENTS - GRANDCHILDREN IN LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN¹⁶

(SHORT STORY COLLECTION "GRlici" BY VASIL TOCINOVSKI)

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Abstract

There is a large number of studies that look at the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. In addition, our article could be conceptualized according to several points of departure that consider this relationship in world scientific thought. A number of studies point to the vast positive impact this relationship has on both babies and grandparents, but mostly on the development of grandchildren. Good communication and joint activities contribute to overcoming loneliness and depression in the elderly, and children, in turn, have faithful friends whom they can trust to, seek advice, but also have joint activities (narration, singing, walks, sports, etc.). The purpose of this research paper is to investigate these interfaces in communication between grandparents and grandchildren and to show how children's literature can contribute to improve the image of older younger generations. For this purpose, the subject of our research will be considered the collection of short stories „Grlici“ („Turtledoves“) by Vasil Tocinovski.

Key words: grandparent, grandchildren, children's literature, Vasil Tocinovski.

1. Introduction

In the daily life of accelerated living, in the race for prestige, success, money, it is a fact that sometimes it is forgotten for the older generation, and in the 60-70 years of the 20th century there was a negative attitude towards the elderly. This attitude was reflected in the literature. If we take into account the fact that man influences the age when it is most susceptible to that, and that is childhood, the inevitably arises the opinion that exactly the literature for children is the place from which the change of this negative attitude towards the elderly should start. This is best done if you closely consider and show the link between grandparents and children.

There are examples that exist in the Bible and testify about the close relationship between grandparents and children. Namely, he tells us the stories about Jacob who blessed his grandchildren on the deathbed, as well as the story of Naomi, the mother of King David's grandfather, whose sons leave no children behind, but after their death, she returns to Bethlehem with one daughter-in-law Ruth. There, Ruth met Boaz and became his wife, and then she gets a son with him. Becoming a happy grandmother, Naomi takes care of her newborn granddaughter (Ben-Noun 2019).

¹⁶ Specialized paper

2. Stereotypes about elderly (grandparents)

In a global sense, in the books for children and young people in the world literature, a stereotyped image of the older generation is most prevalent. Namely, they are most often presented as elderly people, with gray hair, which can most often be found in indoors in their armchairs, without any particular activity or preoccupation. Literature has always played an important role in shaping the behavior of children and in familiarizing them with norms, roles and values in society. Today, the chances of influencing the behavior of children to the elderly with the help of literature may be more important than the past. Research done globally shows that younger people - children, in general, have a negative attitude towards older generations. Hence, children's literature may be able to resist these negative feelings, or at least not contribute to their emergence or development (Barnum 1977: 29).

Peter K. Smith, one of the most famous theorists of this literature, addresses the question about the performance of older people in children's literature, which in his study explains that little has been written about this relationship so far. Although in the 50s and 60s of the last century, grandmothers were even more authoritative than mothers, today that attitude has changed and grandparents increasingly appear in the role of someone who helps children rather than discipline them (Smith 2005:684-687). And Smith agrees with the view that sometimes in children's literature, the older ones are shown stereotypically, in the sense that sometimes the grandmothers with their white hair and a faded look look like great-grandmothers, but luckily it begins to change.

Beland and Mills in their article also confirm the view that children's literature can influence cultural norms and attitudes that apply to older people. In the past, the elderly were seen as people who possessed knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual peace (Beland, Mills 2001). Contrary to the established opinion about the elderly, like white-haired people who sit in the chair for swaying, cooking cakes, playing ball with their grandchildren or participating in some lighter activities, do not make any more important decisions, Beland and Mills emphasize that the elderly (grandparents) do not always have to be old and their chronological age should not be a measure. Simply, becoming grandmother or grandfather, they describe it as a life transition caused by the arrival of another member of the family.

3. Activities: grandparents-grandchildren

In their study in which they try to systematise the conducted surveys, Smorti, Tschiesner and Farneti give precise conclusions regarding the issue of the joint activities of children with grandparents. Namely, they came to the conclusion that since the grandparents do not have the responsibility to educate their grandchildren, their mutual relationship is more relaxed and they are more tolerant than the parents. Because the elderly do not have such pressure for their future, they are more willing to enjoy the present and appreciate the pleasures of everyday life, including the care of grandchildren. In this study, the authors also analyzed the joint activities of grandchildren and grandparents. They identified three groups of activities:

1. Activities based on language;
2. Activities based on technology (computers, television), and
3. Physical activities (sports, walks).

The analysis of the obtained data showed that most of the activities can be placed under the first and third group, where the grandmothers proved to be more involved in all activities, unlike the grandfathers (both the father and the mother side). Another data from their

research is that grandparents from father's side are more involved in activities than grandmothers and grandfathers. But in this context, a significant difference was made in the activities related to the language (storytelling, conversations), and these linguistic activities dominated the grandmothers, while the grandfathers were more involved in physical activities (playing balls, walks) (Smorti, Tschiesner, Farneti 2012: 895-898). Ben-Noun emphasizes the role, especially of grandmothers in the education and teaching of grandchildren by reading or telling, and Beland and Mills devote a whole chapter of storytelling. In doing so, they point out that this segment is of great importance for strengthening intergenerational family relationships. We all have favorite memories of childhood by telling tales by grandparents or reading them from a book. Telling or reading can greatly affect the lives of grandchildren. Their analysis emphasizes the importance of reading / telling stories, because by personalizing, through them, grandparents express their own lessons and experiences that in this way convey them to younger generations. Here is given an example of the recent Nobel Prize winner, who remembers the positive effects on his personal life had grandfather's storytelling (Beland, Mills 2001). Talking about the activities of grandparents, one can make a distinction between the activities of grandparents and their social life. Namely, the majority of the authors who wrote on this subject agree that the stereotypical image of grandparents is most often used in children's literature, as retirees who spend their days in domestic conditions, dressed in comfortable, homemade clothes, sometimes slightly neglected, forgetful, but cozy and full of understanding and wise advice for the younger ones. They have joint activities with their grandchildren regardless of their age, they always have positive emotions for their grandchildren. Somewhere are shown as passive or incapable, but these examples are less numerous (Barnum 1977: 29).

But here another question is raised, that is, how many grandparents have a social life. Namely, the Barnum survey shows that in most cases (books for children and young people) grandparents have divided roles. The grandmother can often meet in the kitchen as cooked, keeps the house, and the grandfather mostly works out. The fact is that they rarely engage in activities outside the home: politics, clubs, concerts or lectures. They are most often shown at home or visiting grandchildren, in a park or shop, and are rarely shown at work.

4. Impact on young readers

Except in the role of babysitters, grandparents are often friends of grandchildren (Constant 1977). Because they are close to grandchildren, but do not have the role of authoritarian parenting, grandparents often play the role of someone whose grandchildren entrust him to those situations where the child does not want to entrust his parent. They also often know much more about family or national history, and they also play the role of educators of grandchildren. Smith points out six factors for the relationship grandchild grandparents, with the geographical distance, and sometimes the very character of children, as a key factor. In any case, the influence of grandparents on the development of children is directly and indirectly, and above all contributes to bringing the generations together (Smith 2005: 684-687). From a study in Chile, it has been proven that in those families in which grandparents live together with their grandchildren, the vocabulary in children was 10% more wealthy than children who did not live with grandparents (Reynolds, Fernald, Deardorff & Behrman 2018: 1777-1814). Talking about the role of elders as educators, Muhammed Yusuf emphasizes their role as educators for physical health, but also about the cultural and mental health of grandchildren. Namely, through communication with the children who realize them through

the narration of stories, on the one hand they can help the children learn, and on the other hand they get to know them with their ancestors, culture and religion. In this educational mission, the older ones seem to overcome the negative experiences, because they are in the last stage of life, so they can protect their grandchildren from bad influences and behavior, to contribute to the development of their social skills with leisure activities. Of course, one should not neglect the fact that they own domestic skills, which young people (parents of children or children themselves) do not have (Yusuf 2014: 337-342). Taking care of the young generation contributes to long-term harmonious family relations, and on the other hand, they transmit cultural heritage to younger (Beland, Mills 2001). Studies have shown that grandchildren can draw many positive benefits not only from observing direct communication with the elderly, but also from the stories and memories shared by their grandparents. This includes, of course, other knowledge that children acquire and which are crucial in life, such as family models, about the important role of a woman in the family (though usually secondary and passive), for building family and social relationships, for friendship and joint recreational activities (playing cards, visiting a wrestling match in which the grandson participates, etc.) (Goodsell, Bates & Behnke 2011:134-154).

Ben-Nun also points to other benefits for young generations of relationships with grandparents, such as building habits related to diet, behavior, and physical activity. Namely, grandparents have the opportunity to influence the nutrition of their grandchildren and thus shape their behavior, positive emotions, and above all, the healthy way of eating. In cases where children have a negative or repulsive attitude toward food (which is very common), grandparents are those who with their knowledge and experience can help with their feeding (Ben-Noun 2019).

5. Impact on the elderly

The practice of extended families in which members participate in caring and raising children is a long-standing cultural tradition in many parts of the world. Caring for children by the elderly, for families, can mean great benefits, in terms of greater financial stability and physical and emotional health, both for children and for the elderly (Choi, Sprang & Eslinger 2016). Ben-Noun points out other positive benefits for elderly people from their relationship with grandchildren, such as the positive impact on their psychological health. Child care makes the older happier and they enjoy life more than before. In this way, their mental health is maintained, especially as a way to overcome loneliness and depression (Ben-Noun 2019).

6. Relationship grandparents-grandchildren in collection of stories „Grlici“ („Turtledoves“) by Vasil Tocinovski

For this book, Vasil Tocinovski received the award from "Lake Raging" named after the prematurely deceased novelist, short story writer and poet "Krste Chachanski" for 2016, which is given for an unpublished short story book. The Commission composed of Dobre Todorovski - President and members Misho Kitanoski and Vasil Mukaetov in the explanation for the winner of the Krste Chachanski Prize, points out that in the book short stories "Turtledoves", Tocinovski best demonstrates and proves that literature is valued only according to aesthetic values. - The old professor, as a narrator in the I-form, retains the life experience and rebirth and turning time, but here besides him are children as a new force and faith in life, as lasting values of the home and the family. Despite the burning experiences and ages, there are lyrical and humane displays of child and childhood. With them, as equitable narrators, the writer leads a dialogue on the existential interests, the inability, the infinity, absurdity. Life is one and only and needs to live in full meaning, says the commission's

explanation. The author himself explains his motivation for the book: "Children grow up and one day they will be big, grown people, and their memories of childhood can only come in and carry themselves as the most beautiful flower in themselves, and with the help of literature, adults return to that part of life. I tried to write a book, according to my theoretical conviction, that literature does not recognize the division according to the age of readers. There is no literature for adults and children's literature. There is literature with aesthetic values and she does not know age limits “.

According to the structure, it can be noted that out of a total of 34 stories stretched between the covers of this book, in 28 short stories the characters of grandparents, ie. the elderly are present. Hence, the imperative imposed this little book of appearance, to be considered as a valuable work in which the author referred to these important characters for the development of the younger population. Quite correct is the observation of Nada Zafirovska-Matic that thirty-four stories can be divided into two parts with the first part belonging to fourteen stories related to the life of the family of the author in his country - Macedonia and the second group also make up fourteen short stories related to the family of his close friends in which the author resides and works and is preparing to leave – Croatia. The remaining six stories are deployed among the aforementioned and serve as an introduction and acquaintance of the reader with the author and the families. In them a thoughtful conversation of the writer with throats is given, as some kind of self-reflection.

The turtledoves as a motive are encountered in the first short stories of both parts and in the last story of the book, which we can call an epilogue for wisdom and thinking about the transience of life. The old professor as a narrator in the I-form, recounts, recalls the life experience in this our turning-around time, and besides him are the children as the lasting values of the home and the family (Зафировска-Матиќ 2017: 139-141).

It is no coincidence that the author took the motif of the turtledoves as central in this book. This motive is otherwise known for a long time. Probably because of the biblical metaphor of the headline in the "Song of Songs", with her magic voice and because of the fact that she formed a strong bond, she became a symbol of dedicated love. In the New Testament, two turtledoves are mentioned that they are sacrificed at the time of Jesus' birth. In Renaissance Europe, the turtledove is represented as a dedicated partner of the bird phoenix. Such significance is found in the poems of Robert Chester and William Shakespeare ("The Phoenix and the Turtledove"). And in many folk songs turtledove is associated with love and devotion. Turtledoves symbolize love and faithfulness because they mate for life, work together to build nests and raise their young together. ... In Egyptian, Roman and Chinese societies, doves symbolized innocence, long life, peace, devotion and love, and caring for one's family.

For these reasons, after reading the stories, it is evident that the metaphor - turtledoves is used to display the warmth of the family home in both families, the one in Macedonia, the other in Croatia.

The first part of the collection includes fifteen short stories (along with the introductory). In them is depicted the everyday life of the family in Macedonia, which consists of grandparents, mother, and her two daughters Kristina and Natalija. Interesting is the fact that the father as a character is completely absent in this part. It is a household of three generations, in which the grandfather and grandmother of the children live, from the mother side. They are pensioners who spend their days in the home, trying to help raise their two grandchildren. If we take into account the aforementioned (stereotypes, activities ...), we can make an interesting review of stories from this small but multifaceted book.

The mother is torn between work in a dental office and somehow manages to take care of her children, to help with homework, but also to take care of household. There, she is most helped by the grandmother, who has the biggest obligations around the home, but she also goes on an English course. Natalia, the bigger daughter is the first-generation of the generation, while the smallest family member - Christina is getting ready for school. Everyday obligations and worries of everyone, however, does not prevent them from helping each other and caring for each other, expressing one another's love and living a nice and peaceful life. For example, the short story "Homework" represents a kind of acquaintance with the family members, with the older members of the family - the grandparents and their everyday activities in the foreground: „So Grandpa speaks loudly and begins the day with the preparation of the morning coffee. He calls everyone by name and his voice is a lovely dear ... Grandpa prepared the juices for Natalia and Kristina. Then he sits down in front of a TV and reads the newspapers. At a certain time, she gets off to the first floor to visit her mother. Cooking is a pleasure for him, so it is not uncommon preparing the lunch to be his job... The domestic obligations and responsibilities of a grandmother do not have a number. ... It has exactly what has to be done in a certain time...“ (Тоциновски 2016:12). In this story, with the establishment of the routine of the day in all members of the family, there are unimpededly very important didactic lessons that lead the children to the point that each task should be done on time and that the whole day should be productive: „Just be alive and healthy, says grandfather, one day the things will come to an end and you will be what is written to you. And in your life you should do what you love most, adds the grandmother“ (Тоциновски 2016:14). On the other hand, in the story "Grandpa is Bad", the grandfather is presented as a teacher who constantly reproaches everyone how everything should be in place, and rebukes his wife that she does not need to spoil the children too much and that cups of coffee always need to be sorted in place, reprimanding their daughter for the dishes not to put them in the cupboard, teaching her niece Natalia that the shoes do not belong to the living room and other grandchildren Christina that she should not throw the markers all over the room. But, therefore, the grandmother is here, after the children's conclusion that the grandfather is bad, to point out the lesson: "It's bad because he seeks an order and warns that things can not always be in ours“ (Тоциновски 2016:17). The grandmother is the central character in the house, and it is not by chance that the narrator will say: "And she wants things to be in the best order, for everyone. Always willing to help with a nice word and advice. In the beehive basket, she is our queen mother, very often her grandfather says“ (Тоциновски 2016:12). The story "The lunch will cool down" tells the golden rule that no matter what work everyone has during lunch everyone should be on time at the dining room: "At home lunch is always on time, it is a golden rule and no deviations“ (Тоциновски 2016:33).

Grandparents are not named, but simply "grandmother" and "grandfather". They live less stereotypical and monotonous life, typical of pensioners in our society. The grandmother cooks, cleans, arranges the apartment, takes care of the grandchildren, who supports them when they say poems, blesses Christina when she needs to go to kindergarten: „Be alive and healthy, and let things work out in your own way as you wish for yourself“ (34). She also supports her daughter when she advises her not to be annoyed because of the many responsibilities she has at work, at home, with her children: „Grandma constantly tells her not to be so nervous ... Look after your soul, work, says the grandmother, but let her go a little to the soul. She listens to you, but you also need to listen to her“ (8). The grandfather also participates and helps in the home, prepares breakfast, makes coffee in the morning, cuts wood, helps workers who renovate the apartment, teaches their grandchildren, reproves them, but also their daughter for irregularity, but also knows to be generous when his niece carries

the slippers at his standard place in the house - the quilt swinging chair, because everyone has their own place. Grandma loves to watch Turkish series in her place on the couch: „Everyone is sitting in the salon. Everyone has a place and they never change. Grandpa laughs because everyone has a lifetime subscription to the site“ (28). They both never complain about something and enjoy evocating memories with their relatives, giving children an example of a harmonious family model. This picture is even more intensified with the fact that the grandfather visits his old mother every morning on the lower floor, which testifies to his respect for the elderly. Thus, at the same time, young people (of grandchildren) are given a positive example. Although apparently it is a stereotypical model of grandmother / grandfather, however, the grandmother deviates from that image, with his desire to study foreign (English) and visiting the course, thus showing some kind of social activity outside the home. In general, the whole picture speaks in favor of the fact that it is a grandmother and grandfather who have solid communication with their grandchildren, supports them and understands them always, gives them advice. As for the joint activities of grandchildren with grandparents, in this part of the collection they are limited (in the home) only in the part of language activities, presented as conversations, lessons, poetry, mutual help. There are not common activities are out of the home.

The second group of short stories starts with the short story "Nothing is as it used to be", which is a reflection of the fate of the poet Kocho Racin, which will cause the author to feel sad emotions about the transience of life: „A youth and years tumbled and fled like white doves. They flew away and never returned again“ (40). The author exchanges thoughts with the turtledoves, which here can also be a metaphor precisely on the transience of youth and life: „And ideals, our dear professor, the ideals are like the stars. You can never grasp them, but do not forget, never forget that you can compare with them“ (40). After this story follows "Something will become of them" that represent a kind of introduction to the second part of the book. It depicts life in the second family, that of the author's friends in Croatia. This family was composed of grandmother Zlatica, granddaughter Zvezdana, son and daughter of law of Zlatitsa, the child Konstantin, new baby, uncle Alexander and the best friend of the family - Uncle Domagoi. It is a household, a family of two generations - parents and children, in which the grandmother Zlatica comes only occasionally to care for her granddaughter Zvezdana. It is a household, a family of two generations - parents and children, in which the grandmother Zlatica comes only occasionally to care for her granddaughter Zvezdana. She is a babysitter and assistant at the same time in the household: „Баба е вредна и даровита, таква ја знаат и така сите ја прикажуваат“. Only one of the stories "Grandma Ferdana" described the friendship of the great-grandfather Ferdana with her great-grandson Zvezdana. And in this family is described the everyday life of the growing of the Zvezdana, the jealousy of Constantine at the birth of the baby, walks in the streets, the growth of children that passes so fast, the rules to be respected, and for similar things that inadvertently, but surely must happen, because such is the life of people. Days are rolled up like pearl necklaces along a broken end that brings bad and beautiful things and everything that remains is a family that is worth the very end. So, for example, in the story "Semaphore" the grandmother teaches Zvezdana as if she were passing the street of the green light from the traffic light that is just like the grandmother's handbag; " Zvezdana and grandmother are walking. ... In the immediate vicinity of their house is the market ... And they both are in charge of shopping and cooking“ (Тоциновски 2016:57). In the story " Reading Hour", grandmother Zlatica helps the Zvezdana read from the picture book she found herself and manages to deceive a smile on her grandmother's face, and thus she happily and happily clapped her hands. In the

short story "Constantine's Displeasure", Constantine's jealousy at the birth of a new member in the family suggests that every parent likes their children equally and that one can never be loved anymore.

Baba Zlatica is obviously younger. She works in the dormitory where the author / narrator resides. After working hours and leisure time, she comes to the home of her son and daughter-in-law and helps them to keep her granddaughter and maintain their home.

The grandfather is missing, but the grandmother is very active and she constantly has activities with her niece, both at home and outside. At home, she knows, and while performing her homework, to entertain her granddaughter, and have joint activities outside the home (going to the market, riding a bicycle). In fact, the stories tell us several stages of the granddaughter's growth, from a baby, to the moment when the niece is able to ride a bicycle. The grandmother is very active, she constantly composes songs that she sings to her niece and plans to publish them in a poetry collection (language activities): „At each arrival, she creates a new song for her granddaughter. At the same time she creates both the words and the melody. Then she writes them down and promises that when they collect enough, she will publish her new poetry book with a dedication to the Zvezdana“ (Тоциновски 2016:45); she cooks her granddaughter's favorite food, and has computer skills: "Opens the computer and shows the latest photos of the grandchild, son and daughter of law “ (Тоциновски 2016:43). It is evident that the grandmother is always in a good mood when she needs to keep her granddaughter, and if she ever succumbs, the granddaughter refuses to accept that the beloved grandmother is tired and old, so before the child's optimism the grandmother's vanity fades: “And do not say anymore that you are old, fat, tired ... Remember, you are my dearest and most beautiful grandmother! “(Тоциновски 2016: 61); "Always cheerful and smiling. She does not lack a good mood“ (Тоциновски 2016:65). Apart from language activities, grandmother and granddaughter also have joint recreational activities outside the home (physical activities: walks, cycling, etc.): "She does not miss out on all her obligations to be with her granddaughter. She holds her in her embrace and sings, then she grabs her hands and makes the first uncertain steps ... While I am preparing, if not bored, you can sing your wonderful songs“ (Тоциновски 2016: 54).

The narrator, the old academic professor, confirms the thesis that people, and especially children's hearts everywhere, are obsessed with the desire to grow as soon as possible. They sometimes surprise adults with their comments, but also warn them that they should think about their actions. Small things are content of family relationships. All members of the large family respect the habits and character of the elderly. If grandparents while drinking coffee did not say a word niece knows that the odds for something (Зафировска-Матик 2017: 139-141).

7. Conclusion

In this scientific paper we tried to answer the question about the importance of the grandparents' presence in the lives of their grandchildren. In order to achieve this goal, we first referred to studies on this subject worldwide, research in different countries. The comparative approach of that literature showed that the influence of grandparents in the lives of their grandchildren is vast and above all positive. Among these two generations, an intergenerational relationship is easily established, and the biggest reason for this is the absence of pressure in the older generation of the responsibilities and stresses of everyday life. It was elaborated that because of the absence of parental authority, grandparents easily become confessors and friends of their grandchildren, have joint activities (linguistic and

physical), help them in socialization, building family models that can be imaged, etc. Hence, the imperative imposed upon us the idea to explore the presence of grandparents in children's literature and their influence on young readers. In this article we did this with the collection of short stories "Turtledoves" by the famous Macedonian author, critic and essayist Vasil Tocinovski. The research showed that the present grandparents of this book tends to display a picture of relatively stereotyped models, but also models with new, contemporary tendencies, and so, except in home, homework and care for grandchildren, these people engage in outside, attend classes in English, work on a computer, write poetry with the desire to publish it in a collection, regularly have joint activities with their grandchildren, such as talking / telling stories, reciting poems, talking about the responsibilities of everyone, etc.

The impression remains that this issue deserves more attention and research, on a larger body of works from the Macedonian, European and world literature for children and young people.

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