

**"OVIDIUS" UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA
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ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS:

**CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH NOVEL IN THE
COMMUNIST PERIOD (1948-1971)**

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ABSTRACT

Key words: children's and youth literature; novels about children, teenagers and young people; European Socialist Realism; the Socialist Realism method; canonical Soviet novels; Soviet cultural colonization; communists, komsomolists and pioneers; Utemists/Uteciists and pioneers; the Union of Romanian Writers of Literature for Children and Youth; the corpus of literature for children and youth; the "positive hero" of a novel; Soviet heroes/Romanian heroes; the formative novel as *bildungsroman*; aesthetic reception, *agitprop* sample as ideological proof; political education novels.

Registering many disqualifying critical labels or outright rejection of the texts published during the period of socialist realism, I considered it necessary to analyze, in the academic space, the novels for children and youth, published in the period 1948-1971. The time interval chosen for the research, more extensive than the period of socialist realism, delimited as such in literary histories, we consider it a reasonable time guarantee for the imposition of cultural and literary-artistic directions, significantly outlined.

The corpus of novels selected for the research, scientifically recorded in its entirety, verified through the source of the Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel from its origins to 1989 (2004) was a set of novels from an ended period, homogenous from a socio-political point of view. The literary field being less affected by the thematic crisis, imposed by the rigidity of the cultural policy of the regime, we identified 331 novels intended for children and youth in the DCRR, for the period of these 24 years, including historical novels, romanticized biographies, autobiographies, SF and detective novels. We could not have covered, through the analysis, such a generous circumscription of texts intended for children and youth, the novels included in the specified selection being presented only as literary phenomena or selectively analyzed, as formative novels. In subchapter 4. 1. 3. we presented the results of the quantitative analysis of the Romanian production and the editorial adequacy that supported the artistic production in this field.

In the diachronic approach of the first chapter, entitled "From writings with pedagogical value to Children's literature", we identified the translated novels and the books from Romanian literature that had maintained a constant position in the study and reading of students, facilitated by recognition and school canon. In a short excursion I

pointed out the cultural context in which the profile of the young intellectual was ideally outlined and I presented the specific editorial collections, the agreeable readings in school and family mentoring, in literary societies, reading societies etc. Starting from the data entering the editorial circuit and with the support of some memorialist writings, we set the benchmarks for an essentially humanist library, novels reprinted over the centuries, which were moved to the European corpus of youth writings. For some of the books, grouped in series of moral-sentimental, historical-heroic and adventure novels, we noted the frequency of their republished in the time interval, selected by our doctoral thesis. In all eight subchapters of the first chapter we have recorded the cultural phenomena of the historically demarcated periods, respectively from the medieval period to the interwar period.

In our research, we opted for the presentation of those exemplary novels from two cultural areas, the Soviet and the Romanian space, which we called novels of the political initiation of youth or novels of "political education" and, through their analysis, we highlighted several concepts and phenomena that had fed and marked the communist collective imaginary, in the second and third chapters.

In chapter 4 we examined the contextual conditions of six Soviet novels which had been promoted by a well-organized propaganda system during the Socialist Realism period and later in Romania and in the communist European countries. The six selected books had been translated in numerous languages and had been published in incredible numbers of amounts. Taking into account an ideological Russian novel (N. G. Cernișevski' *What is to Be Done*) and five of the most published Soviet novels of the Socialist Realism period (Nikolai Ostrovski' *How the Steel Was Tempered*; Mihail Șolohov' *Quiet Flows the Don*; Maxim Gorki' *Mother*; Aleksandr Fadeev' *The Young Guard* and *Street of the Youngest Son* written by Lev Kassil and Max Poleanovski) we tried to detect their artistic value despite their ideological bias.

The methodical constitution of the corpus for research, including only novels about children, teenagers and young people, did not mean only a quantitative decrease, but also an addition of some books which, not having the addressee specified as such, relied on the stories of teenage or young protagonists. The unifying element of our corpus, the age of the protagonist and his specific concerns, coincided with the objective of the cultural policy in the literary field, which credited the books with the character called "the positive hero", the

correspondent of "the new man", respectively the novels with the child hero or teenager hero, in our domain.

In subchapter 4. 5. we proposed a typological contextual structure of novels about children, adolescents and young people, published in the interval selected by our thesis identifying a significant number of novels for each subcategory. The research of the valid stakes of the analyzed novels diverted us from the expected correspondence, of the case studies, from chapter 5, with the proposed typological structure, the stakes of the novels and the directions of the communist formative project prevailing. When I attached to the established corpus some novels, not indicated as such in DCRR, which I considered complementary to the artistic area, I argued the selected exception.

The valorization of the novels from the chosen range depended, in principle on the force of persuasion of a universally valid message established through fiction, not confined in the historical context burdened by political intrusions. We called the dissonant, ideological insertions present in the writings "agitprop samples" and represent our terminological addition to the interpretive grid, through which we try to validate some novels conceived in the communist paradigm. Obviously, the artistic quality of the novels chosen for entering the reading circuit or the school canon was a *sine qua non* precondition.

The subject of our thesis is new in Romanian academical research, the only book we can noted being *An Introduction in Childrens' Literature* (1999) by Adela Rogojinaru. All histories and anthologies of Romanian literature for children edited for the time being had been enumerated in the subchapter nr. 4.2.

We countered the impression established in the collective mind and in a significant part of the interpretive community that the corpus is reduced to Constantin Chiriță's series, *Cireșarii*. Through our valorization, we added other valuable books such as *Adolescenții* by Ioana Postelnicu, *Răul fierbinte* by Alexandru Șahighian and *Toți băieții sunt răi, toți băieții sunt buni* by Ovidiu Zotta. These novels, as well as *Seri albастre* by Costache Anton, *Balonul este rotund* by Eugen Barbu, *Patru copii în marele codru* by Domnița Georgescu-Moldoveanu can be integrated into the corpus of Children's Literature as a type of "Jubilation Literature", a communist national patent, in which the characters entrust

themselves confidently in their protective community, whose justice and solidarity comes true in each fictional case.

We intended to continue our research, studying the other novels for children and teenagers, edited in the last part of Romanian communist regime (1972-1989).

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