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TECHNICAL PROGRESS, FASHION AND NATIONALITY ("THE WATCH" BY GEORGI ZHIVKOV)

This article suggests an attempt to analyse a literary work from the period of Bulgarian National Revival — the dialogue "The Watch" by Georgi Zhivkov. Its aim is to study some aspects of the technical progress which is unconditionally linked to the following of certain cultural and civilizational models, the removal of the boundaries between the Self and the Other, and the unfolding of human creative potential. However, as with almost everything in life, it has a different side, provoking hesitation, uncertainty, and in some cases, a definite denial. "The Watch" is the text that belongs to that other side with the proviso: the rejection of the technical means not in itself as an achievement of the human mind, but of the replacement through it of basic existential categories the consequences of which affect not only the individual but also the relations with the world. In the article the cultural and literary-historical study and 'close reading' interpretation are used.

Key words: Bulgarian National Revival, technical progress, unreasonable passion for fashions, nationality.

In the development of the genre system in Bulgarian Revival literature, *dialogue* occupies a special place because of its individualization as an independent phenomenon — close to and at the same time not attributable in the exact sense to the ever-expanding literary forms, especially in the period after the Crimean War. Directly related to specific school practical activity (Stefan Izvorski), but also possessing a directly revealing function, dictated by the dimensions of the apparent socio-political reality (Neophyte Bozveli), the dialogue of the 1940s brings out and imposes sustainable ideological-aesthetic concepts through which the native is conceived — repressed, abused, on the one hand, but also desired, on the other, through the potential rehabilitation of its restored image and a palpable presence of value (as a dream, an idea, but also a very real and attainable existential benchmark). These, in turn, will also be among the foundational constructs, artistically developed over time and determining some of the key problematic-thematic searches of the second half of the century. The scope of these searches is too broad and would, by itself, justify the emergence of the necessary

research work to systematize, conceptualise and analyse the aesthetic heritage of the genre of the Renaissance dialogue.

Many writers rely on the benefits of dialogue, relying on more direct receptive paths to it (school/reading room, recitation, scenes, publication in periodicals, spoken vernacular), and more accessible forms of intentional expression. Whether it is a transitional form to drama (Pencho Penev [6, 46–51], Stefan Karakostov [3, 182–202], Margarita Bradistilova-Dobрева [1, 20–45]), a particular artistic form that is divided between specific literary and on-stage manifestations (Tsvetan Minkov [5, 5–14]), or an independent form of publicism (Ilya Todorov [8, 223–234]), the dialogue plays an important role in the gradual individualization of type and genre incarnations of Renaissance artistic thinking. It proves to be a preferred opportunity for ideological and aesthetic expression, mainly because of its well-established form, disallowing thorough transformation, especially in its initial position; because of the language — accessible, understandable, through which an idea or trend is imposed; because of its simplistic character

system, which brings out specific social types, holders of very definite worldviews, which in most cases, in the course of development of the conditional plot, either affirm themselves or undergo a sudden transition.

So, we enter into an artistic world, highly instructive in view of the moral maturation of man, his relations with others in the collective — in agreement or in opposition to the universal moral imperatives, the possibilities for revising one's own inner world.

However, engaging with it will undoubtedly highlight a number of risks — both conceptual and structural-compositional.

We can only resolve to take them on.

This not-so-popular dialogical work is attributed to editor and publisher Georgi Zhivkov (Zhivkin), with no reliable data on it, but rather based on assumptions related to common practice at the time — some of the material ingiven periodic editions, though unsigned, are the work of the compiler/editor. In this case it is „Книжовен имот за децата”: „На месец по една книжка нарежда и изважда на свят Г. А. Живкин. Виена. В печатницата на Л. Соммера и С-ие. 1872.” After P. R. Slaveikov's „Пчелица” (1871), this is another — noble in its idea, but difficult to execute — attempt to assist in the spiritual construction and moral education of the youngest readership. Here again, the leading issue is the moral and ethical, instructive, but Zhivkov's journal fails to fully realize its goals and objectives and is soon discontinued (two published books are known, and a third may exist).

It is in book 2 of „Книжовен имот за децата” that the dialogue “The Watch” is published, the perfectly synthesized but clearly outlined and purposefully developed ideological-thematic line of which, as well as its simplified character system, are subject to the meaning-determining framework of reevaluation and moral transformation of the young man.

It is symptomatic that in the early 70s — a period of ever-increasing radical social sentiment — in its own way, a trend from the beginning of the century is continued: Enlightening-edifying strategies for the construction, modeling of the “modern” man, which, of course, is dictated by the specifics and needs of the audience of this text, but also not without significance is the conditioning of the primal role of the completion and ordering of the inner world of the individual, and then — inevitably in view of the external circumstances — focusing on categorically effective self-expression. In this respect, especially with regard to the genre of dialogue, G. Zhivkov should very reasonably fit into the already initiated by J. Hadzhikonstanti-

nov-Ginot („Разговорили прави човек”, „Седум возрасти человеческий”), P. R. Slaveikov („Парите и науката”) and D. Voynikov („Разговор между трима ученика: Боян, Мирчо и Драгни връх учението на българчетата в народното училище”, „Разговор между трима ученици връх учението”) school-enlightenment tradition in the education of the young. Here, too, the author undertakes to satisfy one basic requirement — the unfolding and exposing of a relevant negative social phenomenon (a meaning-defining center, which found its most pronounced manifestation in the real Revival comedialogy a year earlier — “The Phoney Civilization”), to which the young adopter of the new and modern, still lacking clearly defined values, can easily fall prey.

G. Zhivkov applies a well-known, well-established model of organizing the artistic situation and, accordingly, of designing the active self-expression of the characters therein — two characters defending opposing viewpoints regarding a specific object or phenomenon, which could also be considered as an individual case of specific worldviews and attitudes. And the ultimate goal is *persuasion* through a series of arguments that facilitate the transition from delusion to insight, from whim and vanity to humility and obedience, from evil that corrupts the mind and heart, to the good that ennobles man and restores / builds his value foundations. However, with G. Zhivkov, a strictly moralizing semantic layer is absent and the artistic suggestions, without any compromise with universal moral and ethical landmarks in the world, are achieved in a moderate explanatory tone in the context of the everyday life.

Technical progress is unconditionally linked to the following of certain cultural and civilizational models, the removal of the boundaries between the Self and the Other, and the unfolding of human creative potential. However, as with almost everything in life, it has a different side, provoking hesitation, uncertainty, and in some cases, a definite denial. «The Watch» is the text that belongs to that other side with the proviso: the rejection of the technical means not in itself as an achievement of the human mind, but of the replacement through it of basic existential categories the consequences of which affect not only the individual but also the relations with the world.

The very simplistic mise-en-scene in G. Zhivkov's dialogue is organized around the “young Raina” — a capricious and naive girl, too insistent on adhering to fashion (expressed in this case through a material acquisition: “a gold watch

decorated with small diamonds”) — and her father, “Mr. Bogdan” who “loves her very much” and “was very concerned about seeing her sad as never before”. The brief prosaic introduction, which adds new touches to the poetics of dialogue — with its explanatory, contextualizing function, clearly identifies the reason why Rayna is so “lost in thought, downcast, low-spirited”, thereby placing the generative ideological-thematic center in the work: beautiful and expensive watch gifted to Mr. Ralev’s girl by her uncle. Going out with her friends this time is not a sign of oneness and empathy through innocent laughter and play, but rather of measuring, self-positioning among the common, but through well-being, possession (clothes, the watch). This, respectively, provokes a spontaneous sense of injustice in the girl, proceeding from the understanding of some kind of correlation between intellect and material gain: “Their fathers (...) showered them with gifts, made them look pretty, though none of them, not to brag, can compare to me in science and in talent.” The other’s item, which increasingly acquires, theoretically speaking, the status of a kind of, albeit imaginary, character in the text, begins to categorically determine revised values and active self-discovery.

The clock marks the inevitable new in the unstoppable course of time.

The watch — as something unknown and different — awakens a legitimate interest based on a suspicious desire (“What a joy it would be for me to have such a nice watch!”).

The watch becomes a specific embodied test of the established patriarchal order, of the individual’s willingness to comprehend and accept the symbols of a modernizing life, of individual skills to preserve the defining roles of the traditional from the substituting functions and manifestations of the present.

In this semantic direction, the presence of the father, manifesting himself as invariably connected with life experience, sober judgment, wisely fulfilled parental responsibility, is crucial. With a moderate but certain educating tone, Bogdan properly describes the consequences of the discrepancy between the directly visible and what lies beyond it, between unhealthy desire and real need, between the temporary and the permanent. In the spirit of folk-fairy-tale poetics, having adopted the image of the sage, who balances and ennobles the world, he is again recognized as a steadfast life and moral orientation against which Rayna reorganizes her values. His speech is calm but persuasive, imaginative, rhetorical, in order to provoke his daughter, to encourage her to think and reassess:

*The thing is, you want people to say when they pass by: “Oh! Oh! Look what a nice watch this little girl has! She must be very rich.” Tell me, then, is there great glory in presenting as richer than others and showing off shiny things before people’s eyes? Have you ever seen a smart man honor a child for the great wealth of their father? Do you worship those richer than you just because they are rich? **When you see an expensive watch worn by some girl you don’t know, instead of saying, “That’s a very valuable person wearing that watch,” you will say, “That’s a very valuable watch she’s wearing.”** If a watch can bring honor, then only to the watchmaker who, assembled it with skill. And whoever wears it, I’d think them irrelevant and petty if they try to show off with it. (emphasis by me — V. I.)*

It is interesting how Bogdan proves to Rayna that the desired watch is not a real need (as the girl awkwardly tries to convince him), but a whim, a fashionable vanity aimed at equaling, paralleling others. The old watch, left over from «my father’s age», which he takes care of for memory’s sake, is the material sign in time — of family empathy and continuity, but also of the past. To him, Rayna not only refuses to self-identify, but she resolutely distinguishes herself, distances herself, because otherwise she would be ridiculed (“What! Those ancient bowls from which he might have fed his dog.”). So obvious is the fact that a given reaction is not the result of a subjective need, but of a hasty and reckless consideration of the external circumstantial pattern (“...what people will say when I show it on me.”).

The situation thereby created is productive for the deployment of a particular didactic layer in the text. And that is what G. Zhivkov does. Through Bogdan, the balance in world-view attitudes, the return to the stability of the patriarchal world is already quite deliberate. “A man can do well in this world only if he is grateful for what he has, if he doesn’t get too greedy,” the father firmly states, raising the categorical moral postulate that predetermines the peace and completeness of the individual inner world and regulates community relations, based on agreement and reciprocity. In this line of thought, it is good to note that Bogdan is, in this situation, an ideologically charged character — he aims to listen, discourage, teach and validate very specific patterns of behavior, forms of presence, fitting in with the spirit of universal ethics. Thus, the particular case, taken out of the reach of everyday life, becomes an occasion to look into / integrate into universal human truths about life and the world.

In such a context, the whole of Bogdan’s last remark is constructed, conceptually framing the work and very clearly marking the transition —

in values and worldview — from capriciousness to sobriety, from delusion to knowledge, from recklessness to prudence. Accordingly, Rayna's reaction at the end of the piece is indicative: "No, no, I don't want a watch anymore; and if I had one, I would have given it to you."

The girl's "subtle understanding" is manifested at the right moment — before "stupidity and vanity" determine her youth. The folk-fairy-tale matrix of moral transformation is appropriately applied, the figure of the moral corrective, which must reorganize certain notions, set a clear distinction between the hurtful and the creative — especially in spiritual beginnings, and to lead with the power of experience and wisdom consistently and steadily fulfills its role.

In this way, for the reader and the viewer respectively, the path to reaching one's own truth is open. All that remains is the open senses and the courage to absorb it.

Conclusions

The conclusions that can be drawn from the above observations are related to the clear and definite expression of certain — irreversible and ever more persistent — mental, psychological attitudes towards the world, to the Other, but also to oneself, which can be perceived as a peculiar sign of shaking off the burden of the past and of assuming one's own responsibility in the present, with radical changes in the Revival thinking about oneself, with the rearrangement of the defining order of values on the basis of moral and psychological maturation, development and wholification — a prerequisite central to the posterior *active* self-sacrificial service to the ideal, consolidating the community. In this respect, Georgi Zhivkov in his own way poses and artistically interprets issues of paramount importance — for the long path of change for a man enslaved, but fervently craving freedom and his place in the world.

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ТЕХНІЧНИЙ ПРОГРЕС, МОДА ТА НАЦІОНАЛЬНІСТЬ («Годинник» Георгі Жівкова)

Стаття є спробою проаналізувати твір періоду Болгарського відродження — діалог «Годинник» (1872) Георгі Жівкова. Мета статті — вивчити деякі аспекти технічного прогресу, який безумовно пов'язаний з наслідуванням певних культурних та цивілізаційних моделей, усуненням меж у формулі: Я та Інший, розкриттям творчого потенціалу людини. Але — як майже зі всім у цьому житті — у ньому є інша сторона, яка викликає сумнів, невпевненість, а подекуди й рішуче заперечення. «Годинник» — це текст, який стосується до другого — за умови: відкидання технічного засобу не самого по собі як досягнення людського розуму, а заміни завдяки йому основних екзистенційних категорій, наслідки яких впливають не лише на окрему особистість, а й на її стосунки зі світом.

Ключові слова: Болгарське відродження, технічний прогрес, модні захоплення, національність.

ТЕХНИЧЕСКИ НАПРЕДЪК, МОДА И НАРОДНОСТ („Часовника“ от Георги Живков)

Статията предлага опит за анализиране на произведение от периода на Българското възраждане — диалога „Часовника“ (1872) от Георги Живков. Целта ѝ е да проучи някои аспекти на техническия напредък, който безусловно се свързва със следването на определени културни и цивилизационни модели, със снемането на границите между Аз-а и Другия, с разгръщането на човешкия съзидателен потенциал. Но — както с почти всичко в живота — той има и по-различна страна, будеща колебание, несигурност, а някъде и категорично отричане. „Часовника“ е текст, който спада към второто — с уговорката: отхвърлянето на техническото средство не само по себе си като достижение на човешкия ум, а на подмяната чрез него на основни екзистенциални категории, чиито последствия засягат не само отделната личност, но и отношенията ѝ със света.

Ключови думи: Българско възраждане, технически напредък, модни увлечения, народност.