

Sevim Ak's Children's World by Esra Lüle

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Children's literature plays a vital role in today's written world. The best authors of our day write solely for children. Publishing houses that realize that reading habit is gained step by step support authors that write age specific books.

Children's literature requires a great deal of care and attention. An author that writes for children should take into account children, their realm and their education, and focus on these aspects in writing a book. Children's literature should be written to be appreciated both by adults and children. Sever's comments on children's literature are as follows:

"The purpose of children's literature is not only to entertain the reader and depict the beauty of images and language, but also to contribute to introducing children with their inner world as well as life and human nature. Children should interact with the subjective reality of the author through the connection they make with the books." (Sever, 2002)

Everybody knows the importance children's books have in a child's life. If an author hasn't discovered the realm of children, she is doomed to fail, no matter how strong her writing is. This realm is as clear as it is complex, as exciting as it is calm and as creative as it is fragile... We mustn't forget that the largest and deepest realm is that of a child's.

Sevim Ak is one of the children's authors who discovered this grand and deep world. In this piece, I will be focusing on the principle elements of her realm by looking at her books "Puf, Pufpuf, Cuf Cufcuf and Cino" published in 2002 and "Az Buçuk Teo" published in 2005 both by Can Publishing House.

In both of her books, Ak created events that attract children's attention and assisted children in learning about life as well as succeeded in playing a major role in their development. The descriptive power of Turkish language is used in both books. The dialogues that are used are well placed within the plot without a didactic manner.

"*Puf, Pufpuf, Cuf, Cufcuf and Cino*" is built in a fantastical set up. The protagonist of the book is a goose. The geese, dogs and birds in the book talk. The animals and people share the same sentiments: the animals feel pain, love and happiness just like people do.

The plot in this book can be described as such:

A little goose lives in the Red Butterfly Farm in Neversnow Town. The story begins when the little goose gets lost. Berta, the woman who raised the goose is very saddened by this situation. In fact the little goose isn't lost, but has left her home in order to find Bo, a TV producer. The goose has the ability to think like a human. However she can't talk. At last, she goes to Bo's mansion on his birthday with an egg that she just laid. Bo loves this surprise and lets the goose in. Since the goose is in love with Bo, she has different expectations of him. But in the end she is only a goose and Bo is a human. The goose makes two great friends in Bo's garden. These friends help her see the world in a more realistic way. Sea Bird and Yellow Dog... The goose, who realizes that she can't get Bo's attention simply by being cute, decides to improve her voice with the help of her new friends. As a result she begins appearing on Bo's TV show. When Berta sees the goose on TV, she tells the rival TV show called "Missing" that Bo stole her goose. She goes to the mansion and takes the goose back. In the mean time Bo suffers from the loss of his fame after being accused of theft. The goose that is forcefully taken back to the farm gets depressed. She escapes again to go back to Bo's mansion. Her happy days are back again. Bo, wanting to make a surprise for the goose gets her a male goose as a friend. The female goose who has been in love with Bo all this time, finally accepts the fact that Bo is a human and she is a goose. She mates with the male goose. She begins questioning life, herself and marriage. She gives birth to three children. What hurts her the most is the fact that she doesn't have a name. She forms an orchestra with her children.

The children are as talented as their mother. A producer that discovers them calls them the “Floccus Family”. The little daughter of the producer, who recently began talking, calls the mother goose Puf, the father goose Pufpuf, and the children Cuf, Cufcuf and Cino. Puf and her family become very famous. Everybody knows them. Puf’s dreams come true and they live happily ever after as a family.

The book has a strong set up. In order for children to follow the dialogues in the book, Ak ensures that they reach an imaginary and intellectual level.

This book is written in a way that both children and adult can appreciate. It is only through the writings of a talented author like Sevim Ak can life, people and children correspond to what’s being told in a book where the protagonist is a goose.

The theme in the book points out that a life lead by a single dream is unfair to life itself. An individual does not only consist of physical appearances. What makes an individual unique and real is a combination of all her aspects.

The tale of the “poor shepherd” (p. 44 – 45) told by Berta reflects the value of working. The reality of life is described by Puf as such:

“Life is so difficult... You don’t succeed unless you are moving forward...” (p. 45)

Puf is a dreamer. However she changes and evolves through the plot. She matures, just like a person matures through time.

Puf’s journey can be summed up with the following statement: life’s reality and ruthlessness, an individual’s passion, ambition, determination, courage, dilemma, effort and prize...

The book claims that one can’t live life depending solely on physical attributes and can attract other people’s attention through her talents and inner beauty. The virtue of learning and the importance of education and improving one’s talents are clearly stated in the book.

It is also emphasized that abilities can turn into talents with hard work. A human is not an empty vessel. It is filled with many abilities. These abilities need to be improved.

The children that read this book will understand that life doesn’t only consist of dressing up, taking trips, falling in love and dreaming. They will realize the importance of hard work, determination, improving oneself as an individual, having goals and accepting simple facts of life.

Nothing is placed randomly into this book. There is a purpose for each and every character and event. The characters and events help Puf understand the facts of life and set realistic goals for herself.

On the other hand we have the story of Teo. His journey begins in the Palas Pandıras building in the Palas district. Teo is introduced to the reader through the eyes of a child character, who is also the narrator, as such:

“The new tenant arrived with a wheelbarrow filled with scrappy stuff and a leather suitcase. His appearance stated that he didn’t care about the world... It was hard to tell his age. His hunchback said he was sixty, his hoppy walk said thirty and the thickness of his broken glasses said fifty.” (p. 8)

Teo is an interesting individual. He lives with his dog Nuriye. Superficial things like money, property, outfit, appearance don’t mean anything to him. Everything in life should be enough to cover the needs. He didn’t like too much of anything. He didn’t talk too much, eat too much or share his business with anyone. One day as he walks down the street a flower pot falls on his head and he loses his memory. However Teo must gain his memory back. He is about to give life-time scholarship to the poor winner of the competition he had just started. The people in the neighborhood ponder over the issue. All they knew about Teo is his love for numbers and reading. They have to find a way to give him back all his knowledge. Everybody gathers in the library. They clean his house, cook and bake, and take care of Teo and Nuriye collaboratively. Teo enjoys the smell of food and sound of people in his house very much, which helps him forget about his loneliness. He finally gains his memory back, but chooses not to tell the neighbors until they notice. He doesn’t want to lose the food, the

cleanliness and the company provided by them. They finally figure out that he is healed. However Teo doesn't want to stay alone. Everybody in the neighborhood now enjoy scientific books and articles as he does; they all are a little Teo now. People don't gossip in the grocery store and the barbershop anymore. Instead they talk about useful subjects, discuss things and share new information with each other.

All of these events are described by the little boy who is also Teo's neighbor in the Palas Pandiras building.

The narrator and his friends are also characters in this book. The narrator, who yearns to form a music band, and his friend Polat make up a different layer of the journey. The narrator, Polat, Sinem, Toprak, Erkin, Buse and many other children characters reflect the children's world to the reader. Each one of these young characters is unique and realistic.

The narrator is a good observer as well as a curious boy. He is interested in Teo and his life. He is different than others. He is in an effort to adapt to his friend Polat. He is in love with Buse. The narrator describes himself as follows:

"I was an insignificant, boring loser." (p. 27)

Furthermore, our narrator wants to be rebellious and sharp tongued like all the others. However what he wanted didn't match his inner values, thus his desire never became his reality.

The dialogues between Teo and the narrator are also significant. Teo emphasizes the value of numeric intelligence as well as usefulness of what's thought at school.

Polat is a leader type. He wants to be a great singer. He has an importance place in the narrator's life. He likes to dress quirky, shape his hair peculiarly and read about artists' biographies. He cares about big brands, his friends' houses, their parents' jobs and the way they dress an awful lot.

Buse is the beauty. She is the love of the narrator. Buse evolves through the plot. Being an ordinary girl, turns into a crazy character once she enters the band of Polat and the narrator. The fact that Buse shows interest in Polat hurts the narrator deeply. He expresses his pain like a poet:

"The leaves of the tree within were falling abundantly and continuously." (p. 137)

Erkin enters to band for a short while as a soloist. According to the narrator, Erkin is a stuck up, tall, dark haired who always wore very little. In the end, Erkin leaves the band in mid way.

The part where Teo determines the kids that are poor and smart through a competition in order to give them lifetime scholarship is significant. In life money is not a purpose, but a tool. More money than needed doesn't actually matter. If everyone spends as much as they need, and the remainders we used to make the lives of others easier, there is no doubt that our world would be a more pleasant place to live.

The lives of the children that enter Teo's competition are also portrayed very successfully by Ak. Some of the kids care a great deal about the exam where as others dream about the candies and fancy pencils their parents will buy them.

Teo emphasizes very often that wasting money and life would be a great mistake.

The book describes humans as social beings. Life is a team play, and those who can't form a team are destined to be alone. Teo is a good example for that. Luckily a flower pot that falls on his head saves him from his loneliness. The unexpected mishaps can teach us the value of life. The important thing is to be able to learn from our experiences and move along in the right path.

CONCLUSION

There are many components of children's world in both books. Ak is an artist who does not only realize that essence of writing children's literature, but also understands the children's realism, depth, imagination, curiosity, adventurous soul.

The characters that take place in Ak's world are not childish. In the contrary, they are characters that are realistic and human.

In conclusion, based on these two books, it is safe to say that Sevim Ak takes into consideration the principles of contemporary children's literature in her writings.