

The Educational Character of Children's Science Fiction Texts ***Concepts Resulting from the Study of Greek Children's Science Fiction Literature***

Papadatos, John

Lecturer

Aegean University

1 Demokratias, Rhodes, 85100

Greece

Papantonakis George

Associate Professor

1 Demokratias, Rhodes, 85100

Greece

Abstract

In our paper we aim to prove that Greek children's science fiction includes pedagogical ideas in a frequency more than other Greek texts for children. We write this paper exactly for the reason that Greek children's science fiction has not been estimated by Greek researchers, though we know that it is due to the fact that Greek children's science fiction is not systematically cultivated. We also have to note that Greek readership has not yet accept science fiction, and encounter it in reservation as it is conservative. Therefore, the study of Greek children's science fiction that refers to space travels, from its pedagogical viewpoint prove that the texts of this category of Greek children's literature may be didactically used, because these texts contain pedagogical ideas which are identified very often and in much more quantities compared with other types of texts. The teacher, choosing the appropriate text for reading or teaching, has the chance to help the children to enrich their vocabulary (special vocabulary), to develop their fantasy which conveys them to fantastic worlds, to realize the value of justice, friendship, solidarity, consistency of the group, cooperation, peace, accuracy, method as well, both loyalty and reliability, to reinforce their self-confidence. Also, very important is the contribution of the illustrated science fiction stories, because they allow to children to develop much more their fantasy.

Key-words: Greece, children's literature, science fiction

1. Introduction

When Lucian of Samosata wrote *Alethes Istoría* (True Story), *Ikaromenippos* or *Uperenefelos* (Ikaromenippus or Hypernefelus) in the second century A.D. (170 A.D.), he could not possibly have imagined that he was actually setting the foundations upon which the Science of Education would be built. Neither could he discern the educational character of these texts. According to Lucian, by his own statement in the introductory chapters, his aim was to write a parody of the especially popular, in his time, travelers' novels such as the one by Iamvoulos, which appears to be full of illusions. In other words, his primary aim was to mock the entire literature of imaginary adventures which was thriving in his time, regardless of the fact that he, too, wrote an unbelievable story. His work could more appropriately be classified as imaginary. The writer transfers all the superstitions and prejudices of his time to the Moon, along with monstrosities and distortions borrowed from writers of the past. Indeed, such monstrosities are sarcastically renounced and overturned by Lucian. He aimed at educating his contemporaries and fellow-writers in order to discourage further exaggerations, shaping a new morality; this assertion confirms the educational value of his texts, although he chose a pattern similar to that of his antecedent colleagues.

It is our belief that this assertion is absolutely necessary since Greek society regarded science fiction as sub-literature. This is the reason for which it has never developed to the same extent as it has in other countries. The study within the realm of children's literature leads to the ascertainment that there is no one writer specializing in science fiction texts for children.

On the other hand, the recorded texts, with few exceptions, comprise a space opera. Indeed, the explanation is a simple one, taking into account the self-containment of Greek society, not allowing for the appearance of particularly daring subjects and, the belief that in order to write a science fiction novel one had to be an expert on a science able to manipulate scientific knowledge sufficiently in a text. Besides, after space travel was achieved in the sixties, there was a thrust in the direction of writing texts on the subject of Space. This was reinforced by the belief that Science Fiction is only anything referring to space travel and extraterrestrial beings. All these factors conduced to the exaggerated development of the space opera and neglect of other forms of science fiction, such as its social, psychological and genetic aspects. Literature for adults has certainly been enriched on a larger scale than children's literature. It comprises texts on cyberspace, genetics and other science fiction topics. The reasons for lack of similar topics in children's literature lie in the closed form of society. It was difficult to write on subjects which could have upset a community still preserving its morals rather rigidly and would not welcome subjects considered progressive such as genetics, bio-ethics, bio-medicine, etc. Children are also not considered mature enough to accept such advanced issues.

Furthermore, pseudo-literature has influenced both the production as well as the acceptance of more progressive texts negatively, working in an inhibitory way as a factor of *literary underestimation*. Virtually, this meant that exclusive science fiction writers would be isolated from the literary world, something no writer desired. Kira Sinou, a Greek writer who, among other things, has also written science fiction texts for children, pointed out to us that "essentially, Greek society still scowls at such subjects. It considers them neither literary nor useful. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions. To my surprise, the Science Fiction Conference held in Ioannina was sponsored by the Church. I did not expect Church to be so open-minded but, during my acquaintance with the metropolitan bishop in charge, I was surprised to see that he was a young man, well-educated and broad-minded. If there were more people like him, the social outlook on the subject could be different. In general, though, the majority is still conservative." At a conference on Greek Science Fiction she discovers that "Greek writers do not dare or do not want to touch such progressive subjects. Science fiction for children is widely associated to fairy tales."¹ Such thoughts, set forth by a writer who has pursued the subject, acquire particular weight as an indicator of the attitude towards this form of literature in the country from which science fiction essentially originated. It is difficult for one to deny this fact. Even before Lucian, Aristophanes introduces and predisposes us to science fiction in *Nefeles* (Clouds) as well as in *Eirene*. (Peace) Meanwhile Icarus and Daedalus are the legendary pioneers of human flight in the skies². Aristophanes, just like his posterior Lucian, was aiming, by means of his comedies, at the education and enlightenment of the citizens of Athens.

These texts were certainly never an essential part of pseudo-literature. People have unreasonably classified them as such in the belief that they were of no benefit at all for their young readers. Moreover, they regarded them as soul-destroying, inspiring a utopian vision which transfers children to worlds existing only in human imagination. Nonetheless, one should only consider the potential benefits from the development of a creative imagination in order to establish the falsehood of classifying such texts under *pseudo-literature*.

2. The pedagogical ideas

2.1. Enriching the vocabulary

We believe that some short studies published during the last few years along with a few science fiction conferences held in Greece and the recently published study of ours regarding children's science fiction have contributed to the removal of science fiction from a place to which it never belonged³. Certainly, there can be no doubt regarding its contribution to the enhancement of Greek language with words invented by the writer.

¹ Sinou Kira, "Science fiction in Greece. The young SF" in *Proceedings of one day conference on Greek Science Fiction*, p. 99.

² Papantonakis George, *An Introduction to the Greek Children's Literature Science Fiction*, p. 34. The view that considers Jules Verne father of science fiction (many attribute this parenthood to Mary Shelley, who wrote Frankenstein in 1818 and to Edgar Allan Poe) is based to the fact that science fiction novel has achieved its final form with Jules Verne, whose first works were published in 1860's decade. Humphrey Carpenter and Man Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, p. 471.

³ This stands at least for children's science fiction, since it has been the focus of our study but, nevertheless, our opinion is that the same stands also for the situation in the adult's science fiction area too.

Therefore, generally speaking, Greek language has been enriched with new words not commonly used but that they could be probably used in special occasions – something that stands for any national language. The navigators use “korallioplana” (coral-planes), “astropiloti” (astro-pilots) are commanders of “diastimakati” (space-craafts), “planitoplia” (spaceships), “astroplia” (star-ships) or “planitoerevnites” (space-explorers) are traveling in “cosmodiastima” (universe-space) assisted by “radiofari” (radio-lighthouses) designed for imaginary “astroplois” (star-voyage)⁴. The beneficial effect, naturally, is associated also to the fact that specific vocabularies – eventually drawn up by linguists and researchers in general – are also promoted and enriched. In this case, a space vocabulary could be probably established followed by the study of the rationale underneath the creation or composition of a vocabulary corresponding to the necessities of a reality still in formulation and by the study of up to what extent space technology development or any other field of science fiction is able to activate the word making ability of a writer, thereby enriching the language of a certain country or even of worldwide community. Another subject of study could be whether these words are simple or composite and what word classes or particular words are preferred and for what reason. The linguistic value of these texts is even greater though, since a child realizes the creative power of language and its ability to invent new words in order to fulfill the necessities of an ever developing technology and science. In this way, children develop their word making ability and linguistic flexibility leading to the improvement of their expressive means and fantasy and, furthermore, to the invention of words, in order to describe the desirable concept.

Besides, many scientists (Cohen, Nagy, Hermann as well as Anderson and Chomsky) strongly sustain the view that the contact of children with worthy literature contributes to their vocabulary enrichment and their syntactic structures improvement. Consequently, a primordial and essential function of such texts is linguistic development of children and evolving human beings, in a way that the instruction of language expands both their linguistic and mental horizons.

2.2. Developing Fantasy

Literature and *Children's Literature* act positively regarding development of children's fantasy and ability to judge, particularly fantastic stories and science fiction. *Science Fiction Children's Literature* improves fantasy because, first of all descends itself from fantasy – penetrated by the principal laws of science, physics basically but not exclusively – because *is* fantasy itself. The writer builds a world of fantasy “existing” now as a literary scenery but which might never existed and probably will not exist in the future. In this world there is space for any kind of improbabilities and fantastic activities. Literature delineates everything a human being could imagine and envision, something encouraging in order to keep up, to shape a more comfortable and technologically advanced world and, ultimately, to escape from an uninspired reality.

Besides, children participate in literary experience, since *literature posses the ability to develop the imaginary views of a person and “project” them upon reality*. Let's not forget that a way to understand reality is to resort in literature which, as an art, describes what is happening in a human being in its effort to determine life conditions. Furthermore, it provides the possibility of identification with the leading character⁵.

Due to its apostolic nature, such leading characters are represented having a more structured point view towards life compared to the one achieved through a real experience and the reader is instructed by means of imitation or adoption of certain viewpoints. In addition, writers seem to choose and highlight these elements in their leading characters attitude that would be appropriate as an example of imitation or avoidance, something evident in a tendency of sublimation, typical throughout children's literature. They interfere, in this manner, to the education of their readers, without manipulating them though, using instead the emotions and the accentuated characteristics of their leading characters personality.

2.3. Esthetical values

Therefore, such texts are confronted like the others examined in the field of Children's Literature, taking always as granted that Children's Literature itself, by its own nature, provides children and young readers with values and models for imitation and that science fiction texts do not deviate from the overall intentions and functions of Children's Literature.

⁴ Psarafi Litsa, *Angels of Heaven*, Athens, p. 27, Pateraki Giolanda, *The creasiest story in the world*, p. 60, and others.

⁵ Hannah Nuba, Debora Lovinsky Sheiman, Michael Searson, *Children's Literature. Developing Good Readers*, p. 19.

The values found in an esthetically approved text for children in our days are mainly social, cultural and universal. Furthermore, the writers of these texts, apart from few exceptions, are “hiding” such systems of values with particular diligence, in order to avoid a tutorial tone whose effect is clearly negative and not pedagogic.

2.4 . Social and moral values

Particularly impressive is the fact that writers of science fiction texts are very careful regarding this matter, with some exceptions though, because they know that moralistic preaching and tutorship in our days have rather opposites instead of the expected results. Nevertheless, they are handling and directing their story, fabricate their heroes, shape their scenery, adjust the plot and unfolding of the story in such a way, that their messages are transmitted in a completely natural manner and the systems of values of their story are revealed free of any provocative tutoring. So, in their way, they are awaking consciousness and shape attitudes, initiating children and youngsters to modern but, however, timeless and universal issues: the problem of energy sources, environmental preservation, Earth’s overpopulation manifested through colonialism and a multitude of other contemporary problems. At the same time, virtues like justice, friendship, solidarity, cohesion of a group, collaboration or the necessity of collaboration, freedom, peace, family life are brought forth. Moreover, these values are left to be perceived through the dramatization of the text itself. Dialogues, narrative intervention of the writer or of the narrator, monologues of leading characters, whether adults or minors, are set to the service of an unmentionable, or even latent, tutorial disposition in order to avoid any chance of provocation.

Evidently, the aforementioned systems of values are connected directly to the *prototypes* given throughout science fiction children’s literature. Surely, it is easy to see that these prototypes are not focused only upon children, redundant in this field, but can be detected also regarding adults, particularly when these later are keeping a proper pedagogic stance. The space trilogy by Nitsa Tzortzoglou consists a perfect example both with reference to Ionas Petridis and other leading characters, especially Alice. The former, in particular, provides moral teachings, when he realizes that the till that day prudent Earth Federation, abandoning its noble objectives and its universal aspirations, for reasons of greediness, is about to search for diamonds in planet Uranus; Ionas Petridis will start at this moment repeating the phrase “cursed diamonds” like a refrain and he will be glad when the diamonds repository will be lost in space during return. The characters of Takis Androutsopoulos are acting in a similar territory in *Gi 2040, m.X* (Earth 2040 A.D).

The promotion of a universal consciousness and reconciliation is typical in a large number of texts; an ideology producing, consequently, prototypes of antiracism. This means that the writer is not making any discrimination regarding selection of sex, color of skin or nationality. Heroes-models are boys and girls, Greeks belonging to a universal community, Japanese or Africans in admirable cooperation, mutual understanding and reciprocal support. With no exceptions, they are all working for a common cause, with no hesitation, without the slightest complain, with no sign of prejudice.

It seems though that in the last moment, before the destruction, people understood that, in order to lead a better life, domains should become one and fight together the insidious enemy. Therefore, all Europe, East and West, the countries of Africa, the states of South America and the entire South-East Asia coalesced in a great Federation. Governments have settled several revolutionary projects to protect mankind and environment, applied severely by all.

Litsa Psarafi, *Me tin Andromeda sto Galazio Planiti* (Along with Andromeda in the Blue Planet), p. 14

A common goal, a common aspiration, a common fate have been proven to consolidate people with unbroken cohesive bonds. Such an equal handling of male and female, of Greek-citizens of the world and citizens of other nationalities worldwide obviously corresponds completely to the spirit of our era and promotes both equality among sexes and among nations. At the same time, it infuses to children the awareness of being citizens of a universal village and engraves on them awareness of a worldwide community.

Besides, it should not be forgotten that these texts have been labeled as the last resort of morality. This alone could convince that the characters acting and unfolding the plot constitute models to imitate or examples to avoid, as for instance Marcos in *Moon Here*, repelling due to his anti-fraternal, arrogant and treacherous behavior or as the spy of planet Tefthra in *Ora miden* (Zero Hour) by Toula Kakoulli, a spy who does not hesitate to sacrifice his life to save the young “guinea pig” from Earth.

- *The child, said the space officer, must be saved at all costs. I couldn't accept that he might get hurt even slightly. So, I've decided that I shouldn't let this experiment to reach its final stage.*
 - *I don't understand, said the chief rigidly. It has been a while that we are trying to achieve something very important. And you are one of the main partakers of this effort. Now, you, my companion and most significant assistant, have decided suddenly to mess with your planet's research in a strange way. You are interfering at the most crucial point destroying months and months of preparation. It's inexplicable!*

Toula Kakoulli, *Zero Hour*, pp. 101-2

Besides, models cannot be imposed by means of preaching or by any other means. Only their behavior, their reactions, their thinking and the judgment of others are registered. Children are left free to decide.

2.4.1. Self-awareness

These texts are consolidating self-awareness and reinforcing self-esteem and self-comprehension. Teachers, family and children themselves are able to develop self-comprehension assisted by the subjects developed in literary texts; children could identify their own weaknesses and strengths. Many books are emphasizing children's abilities. Besides, children reach self-awareness and self-esteem only if they accomplish their targets, since then they feel more self-confident. Family and school can also help the realization of this goal by selecting appropriate literary texts.

2.4.2. Self-confidence

Furthermore, science fiction helps children to acquire self-confidence. With some assistance children could see by means of literature their competent self, because they compare themselves with heroes and heroines. Linda and Richard Eyre⁶ consider *self-confidence* along with *dynamism* as main values of being and suggest ways for their development both at a preschool and elementary school stage and teenagers as well. Science fiction texts, due to their nature which requires dynamic presence and active participation, emphasize in particular children's *individuality*, because it serves the tale, and readers find themselves in front of heroic prototypes accentuating *self-confidence*, regarded as a dynamic value. Moreover, those endowed with self-confidence are helping others to be responsible and shape a better world of moral values and ideals.

- *You're right! Absolutely right! We have been greedy. We've reckoned that since this was the first and last flight to Uranus, we should profit as much as we could! We were wrong! We apologize! All treasures of space mean nothing compared to a human life! You've given us a lesson and we are grateful...*

Nitsa Tzortzoglou, *Uranus Here*, p. 120

Besides, there are many texts of science fiction that could be used for the achievement of this goal. For example, the trilogy by Nitsa Tzortzoglou *Edo Selini* (*Moon Here*), *Edo Kronos* (*Saturn Here*), *Edo Ouranos* (*Uranus Here*) consist of magnificent samples of reference, since children's participation alone in extraterrestrial journeys requires increased *self-confidence* and *dynamic confrontation* of circumstances. Furthermore, when teachers do not reject the viewpoints that children set forth and praise moderately their students, in combination with a lack of discriminations, are able to enhance a child's self-confidence. A teacher can also reinforce children's self-confidence by rewarding their essays in literature and approving them either by means of comprising them in the class album, where all students' essays are going to be published for that purpose, or posting them on bulletin boards placed particularly for this reason in every classroom.

The establishment and reinforcement of self-awareness and self-confidence have been mentioned already. It is easy to understand that the enhancement of self-awareness and self-confidence is closely related to self-esteem, which is largely influenced by the reaction of others towards someone. Therefore, children are shaping an impression for their worthiness from the way in which persons particularly weighting in their life, like their parents, teachers, fellow students and others are treating them.

Science fiction maintains a positive stance against children, it encourages them, verifies their worthiness and helps them to build a positive image of themselves.

⁶ Linda and Richard Eyre, *Teaching your Children Values*. Also William Kilpatrick and Gregory and Susanne M. Wolfe, *Books that Build Character. A Guide to Teaching Your Child Moral Values Through Stories*.

Negative characters are functioning in the same way; they are repellent due to their behavior challenging therefore the questioning of children, who voluntarily from this point and on proceed to their positive choices, even though there might be an eventual deviation. For instance, Marcos in Nitsa Tzortzoglou's *Edo Selini* (Moon Here) is a negative example.

2.4.3. Collectivity and individuality

Science fiction literature promotes the concept of collectivity, without harming individuality. The idea that each one is unique can be found in every book and at all levels. Marcos, for example, in Nitsa Tzortzoglou's *Edo Selini* (Moon Here), thinks that he is particularly competent. Of course, it should be explained that such an accentuation of his personality, recognized to a certain extent even by Earth Federation, serves the plot of the book, since he will not accept his exclusion from the mission to the Moon, he will react secretly and desert to the enemy and then an attack against the mission to the Moon will follow; in this way adventure and suspense are triggered off increasing children's interest and at the same time provoking feelings of aversion against Marcos and of sympathy for the six-children solid group struggling to save mankind. Therefore, the pedagogic function of these texts is identified in the archetypical dichotomy *good vs evil*.

2.4.4. Some other qualities present in Greek children's science fiction

The values that can be identified in these texts are the same cited by Linda and Richard Eyre. Honesty, courage, pacifism, self-confidence and dynamism, self-discipline and temperance, confidence and purity, loyalty and dependability, kindness and friendliness, and, finally, justice and mercy, qualities present in abundance throughout Greek science fiction children's texts either stressing the appropriate attitude towards others or, as they are offered as a present to others, determining consequently who we are.

Look, try to understand! We are not going to serve your dark plans, ever! We'll cooperate, of course, but only in technology and science. Planet's colonization, way of life and terms of how the new human society is to be organized belong only to us! We aren't going to ask you and we'll not permit you to express any opinion at all...

Takis Androutsopoulos, *Earth 2040 A.D.*, p. 176

Therefore, in order to teach children *honesty* and how they could implement it in their lives we could give them to read the space trilogy by Nitsa Tzortzoglou *Moon Here*, *Saturn Here* and *Uranus Here* where not only honesty but consistency, cohesion and cooperation among people could be highlighted as well, and children could realize these values without the impression that part of the instructive process has been converted into preaching.

-Don't think about it, my children! Enough blood has been shed for this matter since the beginning of our century. Now people have grown up. They don't kill for petroleum or anything else. Life is sacramental now and it'd be better to return to our primitive stage than disregard respect for our fellow-men.

Nitsa Tzortzoglou, *Moon Here*, p. 22

It is mandatory to familiarize children with *pacifism*, another primordial value of life, for the additional reason that mankind has a bitter experience of war. Pacifism, naturally, could be infuse also by means of space texts, since there are texts in Greek children's prose where extraterrestrials are interfering having purely peaceful intentions, in order to save Earth. Indeed, recourse in such texts is particularly fruitful, because they shatter the legend that extraterrestrials are hostile. Especially suitable is the work of M. Kontoleon, *O EE apo ta astra* (Ee from the stars). Evidently, there are space texts where extraterrestrials are inimical, as in *VATAPRUF* of Agheliki Meimari or *Ora Miden* (Zero Hour) of Toula Kakoulli⁷. The character of *VATAPRUF* is clearly allegoric, something that the writer herself points out at the end of the book. The invisible extraterrestrial, perceivable after a heavy downfall of temperature, represents the alienating forces and the anxiety persecuting people every day. For this reason, those fighting the extraterrestrial, those struggling to override him and release themselves from modern stressing conditions are children. On the other hand, *Eisvoli sti Myrmigkana* (Invasion to Mermigkana) of Marios Berettas consists an ideal text in order to introduce children to Democracy and prompt them to detest any tendency of imperialism.

⁷ Kakoulli Toula, *Zero Hour*, Nicosia 1990. On the contrary, in *Angels from Heaven* of Psarafti Litsa, extraterrestrials teach values to the people of Earth, represented by children.

Essentially, this book is a fairy-tale where characters are insects, ants and locusts in their space version, which, without really casting out their biological features (labor and song, respectively), are used as symbols the former of a leviathan form of absolutism and the latter of a refractory democratic society, and during their fight the democratic fairness of life subdues the loathsome absolutism and the blind and merciless submission to authority.

The child-reader when reading scientific science texts and in particular space opera, will realize that *self-discipline*, and more generally *balance*, is required in order to achieve their goals. Both N. Tzortzoglou's space trilogy and *Gi 2040 m.X* (Earth 2040 A.D.) of T. Androutsopoulos, and evidently many others, are good examples for the awareness of these values, since it is indispensable for children-heroes to be self-disciplined in order to accomplish their mission, escape from Earth and indwell Mars, in a peaceful environment free from pettiness, prejudice, mercenary attitudes and colonialism attributed to adult Earth inhabitants.

-Since we'd decided this trip, we've kept wondering about the meaning and the objectives of our venture. Because you must all understand that we haven't seen it as a game. For us, no matter if you think it doesn't fit youngsters, this is a journey of life, a new beginning, a brand new start of a society not depending upon your mistakes, mistakes that haven't taught you, adults, anything. We are sending you, then, a poem of Nikiforos Vrettakos titled "The prayer" which is our purpose of life and we wish you to do the same, you the adults, for mankind's benefit.

Takis Androutsopoulos, *Earth 2040 A.D.*, p. 170

Precision and *modesty* are also values that could be infused through the texts of this category. Space texts, in particular, due to their nature are highly appropriate for children to realize by themselves that every human act, if it is going to be successful, requires absolute *precision*, *coordination*, *cooperation* and *method*. Focusing on *Edo Selini* (Moon Here) by Nitsa Tzortzoglou, it is easy for children to understand that at first without *precision*, *cooperation* and *cohesion* the six young heroes would not have been chosen for the journey to the Moon, becoming afterwards saviors of mankind since they discovered "thorgians" and were transferred to the post-petroleum "thorgian" period, where the problem of energy resources has been resolved.

Purity or *modesty* through its discernable dimensions outlines its own presence, regardless of its frequency. For instance, a hypocritical attitude is not promoting purity, as in the case of Marcos in *Edo Selini* (Moon Here) by Nitsa Tzortzoglou; he, upon enrolling the sideliners team, becomes furious, bursts out, but does not let anyone understand what he intends to do next. The readers, nevertheless, are able to detect purity and innocence, and unconsciously adopt them, avoiding thus to be "accused" of imitating their heroes. This reference is made to texts, like for instance *O Ee apo ta astra* (Ee from the stars) by Manos Kontoleon or *Lydra, to asteri tis siopis* (Lydra, the star of silence) by Demetra Paizi-Prokou, where extraterrestrials are trying to help people of Earth to solve certain problems. Of course, there is not any evident disposition of helping in the latter book, nevertheless the wish to communicate with terrestrials is sincere and innocent.

However, values like *loyalty* and *dependability* may be particularly difficult, since in this case children should overcome themselves and give something of their own to others, nevertheless Greek children's literature comprises in its textual corpus texts by means of which values like *loyalty* could be brought forth. *O mousafirismou o Totos* (My guest Totos) by Nitsa Tzortzoglou could be used as text-stimulus for conversation, in order to inculcate feelings of *security* and *dependability* in children. Totos, an extraterrestrial, a being from space, arrives at the most crucial moment, a time of total and urgent financial need, and feels secure only in the hands of children's mother, Mrs. Macri, when he becomes subject of American laboratory researchers⁸.

A considerable number of texts attempts to serve the objectives of ecological education, mainly environmental protection. Due to the indifference of people for their planet, extraterrestrials interfere to save it in *Ee apo ta astra* (Ee from the stars) of M. Kontoleon or a protesting group of friends, when they understand the reality around them, steel a skyrocket and settle on planet Mars, where environmental conditions are worse.

⁸ A particular aspect of scientific science texts is that they are formulating a scale of values. Values are placed on a castellated construction sharpening as it rises towards the top. Material values and money are placed at the bottom of this construction "in order to maintain living and permit thinking to advance through other successive levels, where we have kept a sequence of spiritual values like knowledge, education and science in order to cultivate the spirit and the senses and motivate everyone up to the last level where love, justice, freedom and other moral values dominate with the power to enrich our annihilated personality and protect people from alienation. In this way, we have prepared a dream for everyone".

But they will find a way to adjust the ambience with the help of Martians who had survived, meanwhile on Earth people continue to live beneath the surface, like they used to do, adherent essentially to their disastrous attitude against their planet. Students could read this protest of children being both leading characters and writers themselves in the text of Takis Androutsopoulos, *Gi 2040 m.X.* (Earth 2040 A.D.⁹). The ecological awareness of children could be reinforced by means of many science fiction texts, some of them laying the foundations of a *space ecology*, as the above cited, with regard to the fact that Earth's environmental problems are threatening other planets too, whose "vital atmosphere" has been destroyed, but usually it gets restored with the help of Earth colonists.

3. Conclusions

The pedagogic importance of science fiction children's book, whether illustrated or not, should be particularly noted. For this reason, teachers, in case they have in their disposal texts anthologized in teaching manuals of whatever grade, should take advantage of their presence and attempt to develop certain abilities of their students (perceptiveness, aesthetics, etc.). These books provide children with information regarding their surrounding world and the relations between persons and objects, comprising thus many facets of life. Furthermore, in case that a scientific book is illustrated, the pedagogic importance stretches to other points too: *illustrated books* motivate children to shape their own images for the promised or illustrated world and in this way their fantasy unfolds creatively, allowing them to undertake initiatives. Besides, they provide, as Children's Literature generally does, models of other styles of life, therefore alternatives when facing various situations. A successful illustration, regardless of the number of images in the book, develops fantasy and optimism, since illustrated books usually present an optimistic viewpoint of life. If readers or teachers utilize correctly a text, granted that it is part of the syllabus, certainly they will fulfill the pedagogic expectations and objectives of the book. Readers, alone or under guidance, could exercise their *perceptiveness* and *comprehensibility*, build their own relation with their infantile environment, shape gradually their ecological awareness and develop a proper social and environmental behavior and practice their linguistic instrument. Particularly eloquent for this purpose are the science fiction fairy-tales of Loti Petrovitch-Androutsopoulou *Treis phores ki enan kairo se ena planiti makrino* (Three times upon a time in a far away planet) and *I oikogeneia tou Iliou* (The family of sun or the novel *Selinanthropoi sti Gi* (Moon-men on Earth) of Giolanda Pateraki.

Furthermore, the necessity of image in texts addressed to minors is mandatory, since, by means of action or circumstances depicted, it provides rules of action and behavior, "models" of life, life itself. From this point of view its function exceeds *aesthetic* and gets transformed into *cognitive*, because young readers are learning world, life itself, through illustrations. Even though this aspect concerns a completely illustrated book, it could be sustained that the *cognitive function* of picture in an informative book or novel has an "assimilating" effect, exactly because it helps consolidation and safer experiencing of the elements of life, projected through an illustration. Besides, it should be noted that illustrators choose not only those parts of text which touch and inspire them but also those that they think they would enable assimilation of the text by means of experience, stressing for instance particular virtues of leading characters or parts of the plot which, by their turn, are unbrokenly connected with the leading characters, the subject, the scenery, etc. From this point of view, it could be said that illustration exercises a *supplementary* function too, since it helps children-readers to shape a more integral perspective.

It is obvious, therefore, that science fiction Greek texts, and presumably the respective texts of other nations, are excellent tools for the production of instructive material and for the infusion of human and universal values in children and, generally, in an ever developing human being, determining more fully their particular position into universal space and in their relation with their fellow-men. Pushing aside this specie has been a great mistake not only for Greek society but for the literary field too, as well as considering it unworthy, a belief still sustained by some people. It should be mentioned that instruction of science fiction texts to teachers in the context of a special postgraduate course has made them wondering, since they were uncritically thinking that such texts could not offer anything to a child.

⁹ See also Simatou Christina, *The children of Multivolon*, Athens: Eirmos, 1991. These texts contribute in their way to the formation of environmental awareness, since many of them present a completely destroyed ambience, which compels people to live beneath the surface of Earth. Moreover, there is the description of their efforts to repair the damage, and despite the difficulties this goal usually is obtained.

This program is still in process and we do not know yet what would be their final viewpoint, after completion of these texts instruction. What we do know, however, is that fighting against prejudices and literary stereotypes is hard, we hope though that the revulsion of their opinion is a sure fact and that all of them will promote in their own way reading of science fiction texts. The first indications seem rather favorable.

References

Primary sources

- Androutsopoulos Takis. (1999). *Earth 2040 A.D.*. Potamos: Athens.
- Kakoulli Toula. (1990). *Zero Hour*. Nicosia.
- Kontoleon, M.. (1981). *Ee from the stars*. Kastaniotis: Athens.
- Lucianus the Samosateus. (1983). *Ikaromenippus or Hypernefelus*. Ypsilon: Athens
- Lucianus the Samosateus. (1983). *True Story*. Ypsilon: Athens.
- Meimari Agheliki (1987). *VATAPRUF*. Athens: Denmark.
- Paizi-Prokou Demetra (n.d.). *Lydra, the star of silence*. ASE: Athens.
- Pateraki Giolanda (n.d.). *Moon-men on Earth*. Athens: Doricos: Athens.
- Pateraki Giolanda (2000). *The craziest story in the world*. Minoas: Athens.
- Petrovitch-Androutsopoulou, Loti (1997). *Three times upon a time in a far away planet*. Patakis: Athens.
- Petrovitch-Androutsopoulou (1998). Loti, *The family of sun*. Patakis: Athens.
- Sakellariou, Charis (1998). *A mad, mad little robot*. Dodoni: Athens.
- Simatou Christina (1991). *The children of Multivolon*. Eirmos: Athens.
- Stathatou, Francis. (1986). *Robot dearest*. Heracleitos: Athens.
- Tzortzoglou, N.. (1993). *Saturn Here*. Kedros: Athens.
- Tzortzoglou, N.. (1987). *Uranus Here*. Kedros: Athens
- Tzortzoglou, N.. (1993). *Moon Here*. Kedros: Athens.
- Tzortzoglou, N.. (1989). *My guest Totos*. Spathis: Athens.
- Psarafiti, L.. (2001). *Angels of Heaven*. Patakis: Athens. (1st edition Astir 1981)

Secondary sources

- Eyre, Linda and Richard. (1993). *Teaching your Children Values*. Rockefeller Center: New York.
- Glazer, Joan I.. (1997). *An Introduction to Children's Literature*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.
- Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard. (1999). *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*. Oxford UP: Oxford & New York.
- Kilpatrick, William & Wolfe, Gregory and Susanne M. (1994). *Book that Build Character. A Guide to Teaching Your Child Moral Values Through Stories*. A Touchstone Book. Published by Simon & Schuster: New York.
- Nuba, Hannah Lovinsky Sheiman, Debora, Searson, Michael. (1999). *Children's Literature Developing Good Readers*. Garland Publishing, Inc.: New York.
- Papantonakis G.. (2001). *Introduction to Greek science fiction children's novel*. Kedros: Athens.
- Sinou Kira. (1999). "Science fiction in Greece. The young SF" in Kira Sinou (eds), *Proceedings of one day conference on Greek Science Fiction* (pp. 85-101). Zosimaia Library: Ioannina.
- Tatar Maria. (1993). *Off With Their Heads!* Princeton UP: New Jersey.