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UKRAINIAN CONTEXT IN INCLUSIVE LITERATURE

***Abstract.** The article explores works of inclusive Ukrainian literature that are offered to contemporary readers. It identifies the issues addressed in these works and characterizes the characters of literature oriented towards both young and adult readers.*

***Key words:** literature, inclusion, artistic image, issues, characters.*

***Деркачова О.С., Титунь О.Л. Український контекст в українській літературі.** У статті розглянуто твори інклюзивної української літератури, які пропонуються сучасними читачеві. Визначено проблематику цих творів, охарактеризовано персонажів творів, орієнтованих на маленького та дорослого читача.*

***Ключові слова:** література, інклюзія, художній образ, проблематика, характери.*

Ukrainian cultural space has become increasingly interested in inclusive literature recently. It happened due to important social changes and the desire to create an open space without restrictions, with equal opportunities for all, as well as owing to educational reforms in Ukraine. Literature about People with Disabilities is slowly gaining ground in the Ukrainian literary space, thus necessitating a comprehensive study of the works offered to Ukrainian readers. This underscores **the relevance of our research**.

The aim of our study is to analyze domestic works of inclusive literature that have emerged in recent decades, outline common trends in their development, identify the issues addressed in these books, and characterize the main characters in works offered to readers of various ages.

Presentation of the main material. In a broad sense, inclusive literature is literature on persons with disabilities and literature for persons with disabilities. As this is a relatively new phenomenon, so there are not many researchers on inclusive literature yet. Among existing ones, there is Olena Osmolovska, the founder of the Publishing Centre “12”, which specializes in inclusive literature. She is also the founder of a special award «Inclusive Stories» of the International literary competition «Coronation of the Word» and the author of several materials: «Inclusive literature: whim or necessity» [17], “Inclusive literature: right to life” [19]. Nina Holovchenko, whose authorship belongs to such a research as “Modern Ukrainian literature as a source of formation of inclusive teacher competence through information education”, “The issue of studying modern inclusive literature in the aspect of textbook”, “The role of modern Ukrainian literature in the formation of a tolerant society” [4]; Olga Derkachova, Oksana Tytun, Solomiya Ushnevych [24; 25].

Nina Holovchenko believes that inclusive literature can perform “educational function on formation of the atmosphere of tolerance in Ukrainian society” [4]. O. Osmolovska admits that this literature is oriented towards the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities and the development of positive perceptions of disability and personal diversity” [19]. O. Derkachova, O. Tytun, S. Ushnevych write about inclusive literature as an important part of the modern educational process, as well as the formation of readership interests [25].

There are several classifications of inclusive literature. The first one involves the division of inclusive literature into original and translated one. Besides, inclusive literature can also be classified according to the age of the

reader: literature for the youngest, literature for children and adolescents, literature for adults. Inclusive literature includes fiction and documentaries. It is about the defeats and victories of people with disabilities, their loneliness and their attempts to reach out to the world, their acceptance of themselves and their disability and the cruelty and coldness of the world to them. In the study the most famous Ukrainian inclusive stories for the youngest and teenagers, as well as stories for adults are considered.

“Non-jumping Bunny and his Brave Mother” by Oksana Drachkovska (2019) is one of the brilliant books for small readers written after becoming the mother of a child with a disability. Here is the author’s story: “When enrolling in school, my son Nazarchyk (he is 10 years old now, he is in the fourth grade and in a wheelchair) and me arrived there to solve some problems. Because of visiting schools seldom, Nazarchyk was interested in walking along the corridors; he also wanted to go to the library. So, we were walking along the corridors, when the bell rang and the children ran out of the class rooms to have a break, as it turned out, it was the second graders. Being very interested in him, the children surrounded us and started asking questions: “What has happened to him? Why does he have such hands and legs? Is it contagious? Is it cured? Does he get up, or is he sitting all the time?” So many questions and it was unusual for the children. And then I asked them, «Children, have you never seen such a child? » They replied all together: “No!” The situation gave me a real insight into the problem. I realized the situation we are into ... The problem of the disabled is still closed. It suddenly struck me that the educational improvement should be started with the children who do not know about existence of the peers who are disabled. Initially, I had the idea to write something pedagogical for teachers. Then I remembered that I am a writer and decided to write a fairy tale” [9]. The author raises the issue of how comfortable and free the character feels him/herself in the native forest. And it turns out, for example, that Bunny can’t get into school, and the way to it lies through a stream, which you can’t cross in a wheelchair. The Bunny is very upset, so Mother goes to the Chairman of the Forest Authority and demands to repair the road and bridge over the stream. In a few days, Bunny can study with other animals. Later a wooden elevator appears for Squirrel with sick legs as well as a sonic traffic light for blind Hedgehogs and Crooks, who has to study at home before. The teachers at the forest school learn sign language, and the animals with hearing problems are given the chance to become schoolchildren. No one felt alone or forgotten in the forest. Mummy Bunny is elected a

Chairman of the Forest Authority over the years. She moves her office to the ground floor and puts a sign “Welcome ALL” on the door [8]. So, happy end, however without magical or miraculous healing. This tale is about us, we are all different. It is not worth giving up, even when it is difficult or unbearable. It is the fairy tale about passion, understanding and empathy.

The author of “Magda and the Wind” (2017) Iryna Morykvas was inspired to write a book about a girl in a wheelchair by the stories of people who cannot walk, but who motivate others to dream and make dreams come true. For example, the story of Ivan Maslyuk, who conquered Hoverla in a special wheelchair. This is a story about a girl named Magda, who dreams of traveling, but is forced to sit in a wheelchair. However, the reader believes that her dream will come true. The idea to write a book arose during the writer’s walking with her son. They met a girl in a wheelchair, and later came up with a story about this girl: how she imagines that she can fly, dreams of space and Antarctica.

The book “Avia, a bird controller” (2014) by Oksana Lushchevska is about the pigeon Avia, who always wanted to fly freely but has weak wings, so he has to watch the planes and dream: Avia dreamed to fly as masterly as Boeing, Aerobus or any other plane. He imagined flying and enjoyed himself. Then the bitter thought came back: he could never fly as easily and as freely as a plane. For his wings are weak. When Avia was a baby bird, he injured his wings and the owner thought him to be defective. For some time the bird lives in a cage. But the first chance he gets, and he flies away. Since then Avia lives at the airport.

However, Avia does not give up and decides to become a dispatcher to help other birds avoid dangerous situations during their flights. For a new dream, he takes risks and learns practical skills. Having transformed the dream and chosen such an unusual profession, Avia has changed for the better the whole birds’ world in “Boryspil”: “The pigeon does not know anything better than feeling to control the flight of birds, help them skillfully take off between planes and to gain speed. Cut the sky with wings. Set the right course. Get to the place and land successfully. Avia feels that this is his true purpose. And he would never know this joy if he became a sports pigeon” [11]. Now it helps other birds fly.

Another book by Oksana Lushchevska “Guardians for a Giraffe” (2018) combines the topics of environmental responsibility and inclusion. The book

is about how important to take care of the dearest and those for whom we are responsible.

Inclusive books with real prototypes should be singled out. Thus, in the story “The Adventures of Dasha and Shadow” (2017) by Victoria Nadykto there are two main characters - the storyteller Victoria and an eleven-year-old girl suffering from cystic fibrosis, Dasha. Every day the girl comes to the woman to talk about life and tells what happened to her. Many interesting things happen to her: she meets either a Witch or Good Fairy, then decides to exchange places with Fairy. And now Victoria joins the game and tells a fairy tale in which the girl turns into Fairy, meets a good witch who has lost the gift of sorcery, her shadow cat, a kind but greedy spider and a girl named Lina, who washed away her shadow and became invisible herself.

The book has two parallel storylines: a real one, where Victoria takes care of her family, communicates with friends and works as a psychologist: “In Kyiv’s not fairy-tale life, I am a mother, wife, psychologist, daughter, and I have much less time for fairy tales than it seems in my stories. After work, I check Ilia’s English, the youngest son, listen to my dad talk about his health over the phone, cook dinner at the same time, and make lemon tea for Borys, my eldest son”.

In this reality, Dasha is terminally ill, and her mother and many other mothers are fighting every day for life: “Yulia and Dasha have returned from a conference on orphan disease, and a friend wants to share her impressions with me. I guess which ones. The worst monster I had ever invented would freeze in horror when confronted by an official who was afraid of losing his post. Greed, indifference and fear are the qualities that quickly turn a person into a wrinkled dragon” [14].

The second plot line is a fairy tale about Dasha, who exchanges bodies with Fairy and finds herself in the center of shocking adventures: “Lina, the girl without shadow and I were collecting fairy tales, dreams and lullabies thrown out of spider lace. They were like strands of tangled threads. You won’t believe it, but when we cleaned the balls and rewound them, the magic began to come to life”. In this dimension, Dasha does not feel her illness; she is not forced to fight it every day. Instead, she fights the spider, its web, helps the Witch to restore her charms and the shadow to Lina.

“The Thirty-First Meridian” (2018) is a story about a 14-year-old boy named Petryk from Semenivka and a 16-year-old girl Olia; they met at the Book Arsenal. Dmytro Ruzhevych was the prototype of the hero, a pupil, who

was the youngest director of the library. The children are taken to Trypillia for excavations, and the reader travels around Ukraine with them, getting acquainted with historical monuments, as well as the past of Ukraine and the work of archaeologists. The thirty-first meridian is the meridian that passes through Kaniv. There is a sequel to this book “Seven Adult Days” (2019). This time Petryk is participating in an international research program in the Atlantic. It also deals with travel by air and sea, new places and new friends.

In inclusive literature, a character with a disability can play the role of a leader, a mentor who forces the heroes to look at the world and themselves differently, who talks to them and shares the wisdom of life. Such a character is a woman Polina from the story “Marta from St. Nicholas street” (2015) by Dzvinka Matiash. The book describes a year and a month from the life of a young artist Marta, who feels lonely and helpless in life. Later, she meets a pianist Polina who is in a wheelchair and becomes different, more attentive to those around her.

Marta also reflects on how open the world is for people with disabilities: “Because Polina does not walk and moves only in a wheelchair. Although “moving” is the wrong word. In her apartment, she goes in a wheelchair like a hurricane. But she can’t go out by herself, because the stairs in their house are not adapted for wheelchairs, and it is unlikely that this will ever happen” [12]. Acquaintance and friendship with Polina give the girl the opportunity to understand that our life is what we are, that to love it or not to love is our choice, that it is important to appreciate what you have and be grateful for it.

These books are created for younger pupils, as well as the book by Larysa Nitsoi “Two grandmothers in an unusual school, or Treasure in a wheelchair” (2016). It deals with shocking adventures at school of a boy in a wheelchair. The story raises several important issues: the attitude of society to people with disabilities, the destruction of historical architectural monuments and modern family education. The main character Olezhka is forced to study at home due to the unsuitability of school for children with problems, but this does not prevent him and his friends from revealing a terrible secret and finding a treasure. The main characters of Olena Osmolovska’s fairy tale “The Sun in Your Lake” (2016) are a child of the Sun (Aida) and a child of Rain (Anatoliy). The main characters are introverts; they perceive the world differently. They would never have been able to communicate with each other if not for the magical creatures Sunny and Lake: „That’s who you can learn to be practical! He was always self-confident and rarely hesitated. Lake tried to

follow the rules, was tolerate to both victories and defeats, without shaking his emotions” [18]. But Sunny was different with emotions. She throws herself from doubts to complete adoration, from joy to absolute sadness, from restless chatter to dumb dreaminess.

The combination of sun and water creates a fun world in which the children meet. Important in this book is the wisdom of love: “Do not be afraid! Never be afraid of anything. Just accept that this is happening to me. And then it will no longer be scary. Uncertainty is always scary. And you know: no matter what, everything will be fine. And ... you have to know that someone is holding you” [18].

About the idea of writing the book “140 decibels of silence” (2014), Andriy Bachynsky says: „... The idea of writing this book was in the air for a long time. I come from Kalush, where there are two such boarding schools. I have encountered such children since my childhood. This issue bothered me for a long time. Two years ago, I visited a boarding school, which is a prototype of a boarding school from my book. Among those interesting, cool and cheerful children, I saw a very sad girl. It was obvious that a cloud was hanging over her. She is deaf-mute from birth. I was told that as a child, her father hacked her mother to death in front of her eyes, and after that, she ended up in that boarding school”. The main hero, a young musician Sergii loses not only his parents, sister, but also hearing in a car accident. He has to learn a sign language and gets used to living in a new boarding school, which is not easy for him. However, the author does not mourn the fate of his hero, but throws him into a whirlpool of dangerous adventures and puts him in front of a difficult choice.

The main character of the novel “Salt for the Sea, or the White Whale” (2017) by Anastasia Nikulina is a 14-year-old girl named Lisa, who cannot find a common language with her parents and classmates. She bites her problems with sweets and chips. She communicates with the sea and someone who is hiding under the nickname White Whale in the social network and with Anna, who happened to be in a wheelchair. The latter tries to explain to the girl that the main thing is what you have inside, not external. However, Lisa does not trust her very much. However, she believes the unknown White Whale, who tries to convince her that death, that is, suicide, is the best way out of her life situation. Much space in the story is devoted to the problem of bullying. Lisa suffers from overweight and harassment of classmates: „Fat penguin, cow, pig, hippopotamus, fat - she has to get used to it. Then why was it so

painful? Why did they choose her? No one is around to protect? Why did touching words always catch up and make you cry? All the right answers that could put the torturers in place came to mind only when she had already cried and almost calmed down?” [15]. In difficult moments of her life, the girl runs to the sea. Once Lisa meets a woman in a wheelchair, Anna, who tries to convince the girl that her main problem is that she does not love herself, but Lisa does not trust her.

“Butterflies in Ice Shells” (2015) by Oksana Radushynska is a story about a teenage girl chained to a wheelchair after a car accident that killed her parents. Yaryna feels a sharp injustice, because her happy life suddenly ends, but later she stops feeling sorry for herself and starts living. She dares to learn to dance - it’s hard and exhausting work, but the girl does not give up. And thanks to dancing she manages to raise the necessary amount of money for treatment.

“Francesca. The Queen of trajectories” (2018) by Dorzh Batu is a story about the cosmic everyday life of the author and his colleagues, and especially his partner – Francesca. The prototype of the main character is a real girl Francesca, who works at NASA and has autism. However, there is not a single word in the book about Francesca’s autism. Only at one of the first presentations, the author told about this feature of the main character. The aim is for the reader not to think about her illness while reading the book, but to enthusiastically follow the cheerful and incredibly talented girl with whom something constantly happens.

The hero of the psychological story “To the Grey Mountains” (2015) is a 15-year-old girl named Yaska, a half-orphan, who is thought about to be crazy in the village where she lives. She often suffers from bullying as well as from indifference and cruelty of adults. Therefore, the girl is often silent and avoids people. She dreams of reaching the gray mountains, where, as she believes her mother to have gone after the death. No one sees Yaska’s vulnerable soul and her crystal clear, wise heart but everyone sees just physical defects. Yaska’s life changes for the first time when her father brings her stepmother home. The stepmother convinces Yaska’s father that the girl can make money by begging. Yasya is incredibly ashamed of begging people, and even more painful to listen to the comments about her injury. Later, she meets Mykhail, who is also different, that is why they understand each other. The man convinces the girl that there is nothing wrong with the fact that you are not like others.

This story is dramatic and even tragic. It is about spiritual blindness, about human loneliness, about the bitterness of the silence, about the understanding that you are not like everyone else, not because of physical defects, but of inner wealth. Mykhail dies, and Yaska realizes that now she is completely alone. She says goodbye to his well, the water in which seems to have the taste of Mychail's sweat, and goes away to the gray mountains, because there are those who understand her.

The autobiographical story of the poet, public figure and volunteer Anton Dubishyn "Special Revelation" acquaints us with the Ukrainian realities of life of people with disabilities. The author describes his traumatic childhood experience, related not only to his own disability, but also to domestic violence: "Unfortunately, the worst and most painful thing was not my father's drinking, but his abuse of my mother. In addition to moral and psychological pressure, beatings and rapes also began. All this horror was happening in front of my eyes. Lying on the couch and watching all these scenes, I wanted to do at least something to protect my family" [7]. The book tells about the first steps of socialization and how difficult they were, about the importance of understanding one's purpose in this world, about helping others. A special place belongs to the author's reflections on the place of a person with a disability in society, on the possibilities of self-realization, as well as on the Soviet negative experience of anti-inclusion. The author says that the secret of his success is the acceptance of himself as he is, faith in his own strength, and thus the acceptance and faith of society in him and his strength. He sees the way out of the existential crisis in accepting yourself as you are.

Ivan Baidaky's book "Invisible" (2021) is also on self-acceptance. It deals with the stories of four people with Vitiligo, Tourette's syndrome, alopecia and hemangiomas. The heroes tell us about their conflict with the world, which does not perceive them because of these external factors, about difficult communication with people who often do not understand the person with physical disabilities, about the crisis of relations with the world and ways out. However, miracles will not happen, the characters are convinced, if you do not love yourself and do not change your internship to yourself: "It seems that in the near future we are the biggest obstacle for ourselves. And the most difficult to master is the art of accepting, understanding, loving yourself. But isn't self-love the best therapy?" [1]. The heroes first took the first steps to understand themselves, then looked at the world, and then the stories of dramas and failures turn into stories on success.

The novel “Klavka” (2019) by Maryna Hrymych will also be interesting for adult readers. The action of the novel takes place in 1947 in after-war Kyiv, namely in the Union of Writers of Ukraine and in Kyiv Writers’ House. This is the year of the Plenum, which is known in history for the defeat of Ukrainian literature, especially the harsh criticism of Yuri Yanovsky and Maxim Rylsky. The main character is Klavka, a secretary of the Writers’ Union. She knows about writers everything, and all actions take place before her eyes. In addition, she finds herself in the center of the love triangle - between a responsible employee of the Central Committee of the CP (b) U and a young writer who has just returned from the war.

The most dramatic is the episodic soldiers’ plot line - the last chapters of the novel, which depict the “cleansing” of Kyiv from war invalids, “samovars”: „There was a line from the car to the train cars: a policeman was standing in the "booth", he took the disabled person by the arms, if they had them, or a leash, if it was a "samovar", and passed it to another, standing at the side of the car, passed him on to the next one - and in this way the cripple moved along the line until the last policeman or soldier who put him in the train car” [5]. Everyone was thrown in the train carriage, including those with awards and medals. The last pages of the novel recreate the Soviet government’s contemptuous and inhuman attitudes to the heroes who defended both this government and their homeland.

Conclusions. Ukrainian inclusive literature has been actively developing over the last decade, embracing both children’s and adult readers. The authors talk about the problems faced by people with disabilities. This is the lack of basic amenities that could make the space open to all, and the society’s rejection of adults or children with special educational needs. The authors raise the issues of bullying, loneliness, rejection, as well as write about success and how to change the world for better by good attitude to the world. If this is literature for the little children, then the authors aim to acquaint children with the inclusive space, to show that the beauty of the world is in its diversity. If it is adolescent or adult literature, it is worth highlighting its acute social nature.

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