

PRAGMATICS OF THE INITIATION NOVEL

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A type of literature that is intended for teenagers and young adults is the novel of initiation, which is a narrative about maturation, the process of growing up, the loss of innocence and the entry into the stage adulthood. These texts form a separate phenomenon of literature, which acts as a kind of “bridge” from children’s to adult reading and is characterized by a number of psychological characteristics, worldview aspects, a peculiar system of images and motives, themes, aimed at readers of adolescence.

Modern literature turns to the ritual, borrowing certain elements of its structure and aesthetically interpreting them in a literary text. Initiation rites are intended to transfer an individual to another social and spiritual status, i.e. socialization, and therefore they are directly related to various rites of passage. Through the prism of cultural experience, an individual searches for his own outlook and value orientations, which will help him understand himself, the world around him, and his place in it. It is the initiation rite that is the tool for a young person helping to become a full-fledged member of society, performs certain roles.

“Fusion of horizons” (term of H.R. Jauss) of the reading audience with the artistic content of modern literature implies that during reading the reader’s life situations are identified with the circumstances of the initiation rite of the heroes in initiation novels. This process makes possible a kind of initiation of the recipients

of the texts, the result of which is an understanding of the modern social cultural situation, finding answers to questions about the meaning of human existence, gaining experience. In this sense, the reading process has an anthropological meaning, as it satisfies young people's psychological needs for self-awareness, self-affirmation and self-realization in modern world. This is what defines the pragmatics of initiation novels.

Key words: modern literature, reader, teenage audience, reception, literary anthropology.

ПРАГМАТИКА РОМАНУ ІНІЦІАЦІЇ

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Типом літератури, який призначений для читання підлітками і юнаками, є роман ініціації, який є нарацією про дозрівання, процес дорослішання, про втрату стану невинності та вступ в етап гріха та досвіду. Ці тексти є окремим, специфічним явищем літератури, що виступає своєрідним «містком» від дитячого до дорослого читання і відзначається низкою психологічних характеристик, ціннісно-світоглядними аспектами, особливою системою образів та мотивів, тематикою, спрямованістю на читачів підліткового віку та молодь.

Сучасна література звертається до ритуалу, запозичуючи окремі елементи його структури, і надає їм естетичного звучання у художньому тексті. Обряди посвячення мають на меті переведення індивіда в інший соціальний і духовний статус, тобто соціалізацію, а отже, вони безпосередньо

пов'язані із різноманітними ритуалами переходу. У процесі соціалізації людина засвоює певну систему знань, цінностей, норм культури, які дають змогу їй повноцінно функціонувати у соціумі. Крізь призму культурного досвіду індивід здійснює пошук власних світоглядно-ціннісних орієнтацій, що допоможе зрозуміти себе, навколишній світ та своє місце у ньому. Саме обряд ініціації є тим інструментом, за допомогою якого молода людина стає повноправним членом суспільства, виконує певні ролі, спрямований на зміну соціального статусу.

«Злиття горизонтів» (термін Г. Яусса) читацької публіки з художнім наповненням сучасних творів літератури передбачає, що під час читання відбувається ідентифікація життєвих ситуацій читачів з обставинами обряду посвячення героїв сучасних романів ініціації. Цей процес робить можливою своєрідну ініціацію реципієнтів творів, результатом якої є розуміння сучасної соціокультурної ситуації, знаходження відповідей на запитання про сенс людського існування, формування цінностей і світогляду. У цьому сенсі процес читання має антропологічний характер, оскільки він задовольняє психологічні потреби молодих людей у самоусвідомленні, самоствердженні та самореалізації у сучасних соціокультурних умовах. Саме це визначає прагматику романів ініціації.

Ключові слова: сучасна література, читач, підліткова аудиторія, реценція, літературознавча антропология.

Introduction. In modern Ukrainian literary studies, there is a problem considering literature for youth as a separate type of writing and understanding this literary phenomenon in a much broader context than literary criticism can offer, interpreting the works of contemporary writers as examples of mass literature, bestsellers, fashionable cult texts, rather than aesthetically worthy literary works.

The modern initiation novel as a type of literature for young adults is determined by specific age, psychological and narratological features that define the structure and pragmatic aspect of such artistic works. It is the construction of

the initiation novel, its pragmatic features that underlie a special type of reader of these texts.

The aim of the article is to consider literature for youth in comparison with “adult” literature, taking into account its psychological, cultural, and artistic worldview features, and thus to define the pragmatic functions of modern initiation novels on the basis of a peculiar type of reading audience.

Presentation of material. The initiation novel is a specific type of literature intended for reading by people of adolescent age. Literature for youth is a separate, specific type of literature, which is a transitional point from children’s to “adult” literature, as it is characterized by a number of psychological features, artistic, worldview aspects, a special system of images and motifs, themes and issues, aimed at a special type of young readership. In recent decades, children’s literature has become the subject of research of literary critics, psychologists, cultural experts and specialists in other fields of science, but the state of study of the problem of literature for children and youth in Ukrainian science still remains insufficient. E. Ohar, O. Papusha, L. Oliander, and M. Slavova made a significant contribution to the consideration of children’s literature. It is also worth noting that in Ukrainian studies of literature for children and young adults, scientists focus on children’s literature, neglecting literature for youth due to the complexity of its definition, as well as taking into account its anthropological and artistic features. Thus, we need to single out literature for youth as an example of an initiation novel from the theoretical literary perspective of literature for adults and children.

Usually, scientists consider literature for children and young adults through the prism of pedagogy, singling out the didactic criterion as the most fundamental for this type of literature. Since it is traditionally believed that children’s literature is intended for a special recipient, supporters of the psychological approach believe that the existence and functioning of this literature is related to both age characteristics and social and worldview changes that occur with the author and the reader during this period. M. Slavova, a Bulgarian researcher of children’s literature, believes that “the age criterion in children’s literature models a special

type of aesthetic communication between the writer and the recipient” [11, p. 12], when the reader himself becomes a co-author of the literary text. The cultural perspective considers it as being between literature and folklore, between “highbrow” and “popular” literature and it is marked by both types of fiction. The methodological positions of the Ukrainian researcher E. Ohar and the Bulgarian scientist M. Slavova relate to the need to consider children’s literature in communicative dimensions, i.e. in accordance with new social and cultural realities, modern ideas about childhood.

M. Slavova claims that it is customary to characterize literature for children and young adults according to such social cultural categories as “the type of culture and the type of aesthetic consciousness”, “center – periphery”, “highbrow – mass (popular) culture”, “literature – non-literature”, “literary existence – book existence” and thus analyze this type of literature within the framework of cultural and anthropological oppositions “adult – child”, “man (boy) – woman (girl)”, “civilized – uncivilized” [10, p. 12].

The features of youth literature are determined by the readers’ age characteristics, i.e. it is addressed to people of certain age groups (teenagers and young adults), and texts for each of the age groups have certain genre, artistic features, themes and issues. As O. Papusha rightly observes, “works for children and young adults, naturally anticipating and accordingly implementing some of their specific social age and aesthetic educational peculiarities, remain primarily works of literature, objectively reflecting the main patterns of literary and artistic process in general” [8, p. 3].

E. Ohar, defining the peculiarities of reading tastes and information requests of the modern teenage audience, believes that “the works for youth should be an independent and essential component of the literary process, which has a number of features and is significantly different from children’s literature” [6, p. 114]. This difference lies in a different thematic orientation and the use of peculiar interpretive techniques. The researcher claims that it would be worthwhile to separate the age category of 16-17 year old readers into an independent group –

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youth – or define it as “the youngest among the “adult” reader categories” [7, p. 33].

“A modern teenager feels a special need for the texts of the so-called existential literature, which deals with the ambiguity of man’s nature and purpose, faith and religion. He is also interested in the problem of death. Topical are the works where the phenomenon of death as an indispensable feature of human existence is amenable to philosophical understanding in an interpretation understandable to “a young adult” [6, p. 112]. The interpretation of the philosophical categories of life and death by modern writers who began their creative career in adolescence or young adulthood is more understandable for young readers, because both the authors and their readers live in the same historical and social cultural conditions. Therefore, it is especially important for young people at the current stage of development to have literature that ”will talk to teenagers in their language, talk about problems that are close and understandable to them, about society, about the changes it has undergone during the last decade” [6, p. 114].

“Even high-quality, adolescent-oriented literature is usually written from the perspective of memory, from the point of view of adulthood. It is rare for authors to look at the border between childhood and adulthood precisely from the perspective of childhood” [6, p. 114]. Fiction texts written by mature authors or from the adult perspective seem incomprehensible and confusing to teenage readers, as they do not correspond to their readers’ requests and desires. Writers’ consideration of the life and aesthetic experience of young readers determines the communicative nature of literary texts and forms their specific structure. As H. Lishchynsky claims, “a teenager begins to look for specific cognitive values in literature, as a rule, related to the definition and description of his own situation, social position, his own personal or psychological drama, his experiences, emotions, his sufferings and his joys <...> the young reader is looking for himself, his own world in the book, and is also looking forward to meeting the Other” [5].

The presence of an adult in literature for children and young adults cannot be

avoided, eliminated or functionally replaced by a person of a different age. An adult appears here as a proofreader, an editor, a literary critic, a librarian or parents. It is the adult who “produces and identifies values in relation to childhood” [8, p. 16], therefore his function in literary life is definitely important.

According to H. Lishchynsky, a peculiar feature of the adolescent age group is that “a teenager in his search for knowledge follows the path of an adult, not a child: the path of self-discovery, questions and answers, the path of experiences and emotions” [5].

Carrying out an overview of the features inherent in children’s literature, we can single out its following functions:

- 1) entertaining;
- 2) aesthetic (acquaintance with literary texts cultivates the readers’ aesthetic taste. In this process, the role of an adult as a guide and assistant is important);
- 3) cognitive;
- 4) identification of the reader with the hero of the literary work (this feature is characteristic of the adolescent readership, which is determined by the psychological needs of this age);
- 5) compensatory (depending on what a person reads, it is possible to conclude what he lacks in reality).

The reader’s identification with the heroes of the work and compensatory functions seem important for our research, since it is the reader and the process of reading texts of modern literature that has a communicative pragmatic character, manifested in the anthropological meaning of both the reading process and its results.

In connection with nowadays social cultural changes in society and, accordingly, transformations in the worldview, a young person is in a state of confusion, uncertainty in his own future, which as a result affects life choices and the nature of conflict situations with the older generation, especially with parents. In general, the age between 14 and 20 is a favorable period for building a complete picture of the world, forming a generalized idea of oneself, a system of attitudes

about one's own personality. On the basis of philosophical understanding of the general picture of the world and one's place in it the need to create a personal life concept arises.

At the same time, adolescence and young adulthood is a transitional and often crisis age, since its psychological features are "perceived differently by society depending on the level of development of social life that characterizes this society" [13, p. 6]. On the basis of observations and facts, ethnographers conclude that in the primitive societies, problems related to transitional age, sometimes growing up, are completely absent, because people who reach physical and sexual maturity are included in the social life of society without hindrance, having equal rights with adults. This might be regarded as a consequence of the presence in the culture of initiation rites, which regulate the entry of young people into the world of adults, the acquisition of new social roles, contributing to the development of young people's worldview and values.

Scientists also believe that it is at this age that the worldview searches of young people take place. They include social orientation of the individual – the vision of oneself as an element of a large social structure, as well as the choice of the future and ways to achieve it [13, p. 7]. In the process of searching, a person of adolescent age tries to find the meaning of his own existence and the prospects for the development of humanity in general.

In the process of individual socialization, which means "a set of all social and psychological processes by means of which an individual learns a system of knowledge, norms and values that allows him to function as a full member of society" [13, p. 8] and is determined as one of the main characteristics of youth, a young person faces not only a large number of problems, but also the adults' non-acceptance.

Imitation of such external signs of adults as smoking, alcohol consumption, ways of rest and behavior is the easiest and at the same time the most dangerous. The desire to become adults for adolescent individuals is divided into two types of growing-up: first, *social*, being a result of the joint work of a child and an adult,

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and, second, *intellectual*, stimulating adolescents' cognitive activity and independent work. If at this age young people are naturally interested in everything related to adult life, then, accordingly, this is exactly what they would like to see on the pages of books, because reading at this age becomes a kind of experience of the things and events that a person has not yet experienced or has already gained certain knowledge and life practice.

In adolescence, a process of self-awareness and self-discovery, self-determination takes place, leading to the choice of a person's life position. Psychologists note that "the formation of a worldview and a holistic picture of the world, in the process of which value orientations appear as neoplasms" [13, p. 6], is an important period in the life of a young person, whereas the reason for this process is the individual's desire to overcome dependence on elders and become an independent personality. Self-determination passes through the prism of the process of identification as a way of understanding another individual in a personal interaction by assimilating and interpreting actions [13, p. 7] or identifying oneself with a certain social group based on a real or emotional connection with it. At a young age, the identity gaining is associated with group similarity, which is expressed by the young person's acceptance of the habits, norms and expectations of a certain group and the society's and other individuals' acceptance of the system of views and values of this person. According to O. Dovhan, "an identity crisis arises as a result of the aggravation of social psychological contradictions <...> between the capabilities of an individual and his aspirations, goals and those requirements that the social environment puts before him" [1, p. 146]. The change of personal identity in adolescence is a peculiar experience of a young person's internal psychological transformation, which is manifested in the search for one's own worldview and value position in society, awareness of one's own self. Therefore, the initiation novel is a type of youth literature, which is determined by the readers' needs for such texts. Literature for young adults is predefined by a number of artistic and stylistic features, age-related psychological characteristics

and social cultural peculiarities, outlining the pragmatics of works intended for adolescent reading.

The process of identification of the reader's world with the artistic world of the literary text is a complex and multifaceted process of psychological, emotional, conscious and subconscious connections, which can be interpreted in various ways. The problem of self-reading or identification of the reader with the fictional world as a literary theoretical question is devoted to the research of scholars belonging to phenomenological criticism, literary hermeneutics and the school of receptive aesthetics.

H. R. Jauss, in his theory of receptive aesthetics, made an attempt to find a new method of literary historical research, which makes it possible to rethink the connection of literature with history and aesthetic experience. The main notion the researcher introduced is the "horizon of expectations", which is a meeting place of the reader's expectations and the author's ones within the artistic text. The scholar also applies the idea of "aesthetic distance", i.e. the degree of unexpectedness for the reader, which determines the aesthetic value of a literary work. At the moment when aesthetic distance separates the work from its readers, a historical transformation takes place. The distance that indicates admiration or condemnation of the artistic reality of a text can change radically for another generation of readers. This is how the horizon of expectations changes, when the process of assimilation of a text that is immeasurable for one generation of readers becomes understandable for other recipients.

Thus, the essence of the aesthetic experience consists not only in getting acquainted with the unknown, new artistic world of the literary text, searching for a new possible meaning, but also in recalling the long-forgotten by "recognizing the known". As H. R. Jauss claims, "every experience has its own horizon of expectation: any consciousness is always <...> in the horizon of already formed and yet to come experiences. This definition indicates that the roots of the structure of the horizon of experience lie in the temporality of consciousness; it assumes that the known and the unknown determine the experience of the subject to the same

extent” [14, p. 284]. So, the experience is formed at the intersection of the functioning of expectations as a pre-understanding and the realization (satisfaction or disappointment) of these expectations. The process of interaction of the reader’s literary experience with the horizon of expectations of his life experience, formation of the world by the reader through the prism of literary texts constitutes, according to H. R. Jauss, the social function of literature [14, p. 299]. It is the reader’s experience which he acquires under the influence of literature that determines his social behavior.

“Inclusion of the unknown” in the sphere of reading experience, as noted by W. Iser, is the reader’s identification with what he reads, “the process of absorbing the unknown world” [3, p. 274]. By identification, the researcher means establishing a similarity between the reader and what is outside him, “a known background, based on which we can experience the still unknown” [3, p. 274]. The process of identifying the reader with the artistic world of the literary text is a special strategy when the author excites the recipient’s imagination so much that he loses the sense of distance between the textual world and the surrounding reality.

M. Zubrytska states that the process of identification “consists of individual acts that help build a complete picture of identity or similarity between the textual reality and the readers’ real world” [2, p. 197]. This process occurs during the analysis of certain elements of the text, for example, the characters, their traits and the relationships between them. The researcher claims that, by means of step-by-step analysis of separate parts of the work, it is possible to distinguish similarities between the artistic world and the readers’ world. Identification based on the proximity and similarity of the text and the readers is inherent in the general readership, which perceives the validity of the literary text on the basis of certain specific details or by means of direct analogy relating to their specific life experiences. In addition, the text should not only contain similarities and analogies to the recipients, it may contain such things that are not present in the readers’ reality and that will not interfere with their perception of a literary work, because

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“distinctions, and even striking differences, affect the recipients’ sensations and feelings in the process of identification” [2, p. 199].

Literature as a means of communication has accompanied humanity since the very beginning of its historical memory, and it was obviously caused by certain anthropological needs. Thus, it can be assumed that with the help of literary works, a person found the truths of existence, answers to vital questions and understood the essence of his own existence, received value orientations. In addition, a literary work was an effective means of both world knowledge and self-knowledge. Therefore, literature, being “the most powerful art, which is based on the replacement of reality with signs, is able to absorb the images of all human actions and aspirations, and in general, to be a fundamental source of the further existence of culture and knowledge about the man” [15, p. 152].

The Polish researcher of literary anthropology M. Markowski believes that literary anthropology carries certain information about the human nature through literature, as it is thanks to it that a person finds the essence of his own nature [17, p. 27]. Using literature as a means of understanding the world, a person learns about himself, finds new facets of his existence and thus solves problems affecting him and his relationship with the surrounding world. It is easier for a person to understand his own essence precisely through the prism of literature, because this type of art is about the same representatives of the *homo sapiens* species, who love and hate, remember and forget, live and die. By identifying himself with literary heroes, the reader satisfies his own existential needs and receives ready-made recipes for solving important life problems.

Literature, being a kind of medium between a person and the surrounding world, transfers already known elements of usual experience and creates a new special world. M. Markowski calls this function of literature “interpretation of the external world through the creation of structures that weaken its otherness” [17, p. 30]. Thanks to the familiar life details, literature becomes a means for a person to understand his own existence and build his worldview. So, this way artistic texts become original records of human experiencing the world and especially oneself.

Fiction replaces knowledge or experience and is a structure that expands human knowledge about the area that the reader has not yet grasped through his own life experience [17, p. 30].

Another Polish literary critic E. Kasperski in the article “Anthropological discourse. About the anthropology of literature. The first foundations” [15] discusses the “motif of knowing the whole person” as a way to interest human beings in their own nature, destiny and purpose. The scientist believes that literature does not work “in itself and for itself”, but pays special attention to the ways of creating human images and the surrounding world in it. After all, the anthropological significance of literature lies precisely in the interaction of a person or reader and the text itself, the possibility of identifying the recipients’ life experiences with those described in literary works.

Readers who turn to modern literary texts are adolescents and young adults, who are in search of a stable system of values and worldview guidelines for further adult life in current social cultural conditions. The themes and problems of the novels by L. Deresh, M. Nahacz are close to young readers, since literary texts were created for them. Confirmation of this opinion is the answer of L. Deresh in one of the interviews, in which, when asked about the type of reader his works are aimed at, the writer answered: “For not stupid modern youth. Not stupid – I mean the one who knows about Nietzsche and Sartre, but this knowledge does not burden them too much. People with a fresh perspective” [12]. However, the author does not deny that his texts can be interesting for the older generation of readers: “I write for people in their twenties. And my books are read by fifteen-year-olds, and sometimes even thirty-year-olds, as well as those who are already over fifty. People who have already retired <...> are beginning to be interested how young people live” [4]. L. Deresh clearly understands the reason for the sharp criticism of “adult” readers and critics regarding his works: “They perceive it in their own way. Many things are not understood in the same way as my generation understands them, many things remain closed to them, because we are in different cultural strata. But the experience of a young person is interesting for them, as it allows

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them to return to the times of their youth, to better understand modern young people” [4]. Taking into account the thematic and stylistic similarity of the works of L. Deresh and M. Nahacz, it is believed that the readership targeted by the writers when they write their works is modern youth, who are searching for answers to questions of an existential nature and trying to find such literary texts choose their place in current social cultural conditions. They are close to them in terms of issues, topics, and ideas.

Reviews of people who have read the works of Ukrainian, Polish, and American writers can be found on Internet forums devoted to discussing their works. Readers’ opinions are quite unambiguous, as they are mostly positive and favorable. For example, L. Deresh’s novel “Cult” has the following reviews: “Cult” is above all praise” [9], “I’m delighted, I want more. This is something extraordinary. The author has an extraordinary vision, caused by his genius <...> The issues raised are relevant and are revealed extremely vividly with unsurpassed humor” [9], “I’ve read “The Cult” – I couldn’t but keep reading” [24].

Internet users who have read the novels by M. Nahacz express their opinions about the work of the young Polish writer as follows: “Bombel” is the closest to me, perhaps because it depicts my life. The description of what he observes around him every day is full of warmth <...> I must admit that Nahacz beautifully portrayed the protagonist of his book” [16], “The language itself in the ease of writing is what attracted me <...> Nahacz had a natural talent, he was natural; there is none and there will never be another like HIM” [16].

We can conclude from the reviews and comments of users of Internet forums that the works of L. Deresh, M. Nahacz are most attracted by their simple and close language for young people, interesting and relevant problems for their age, depiction of modern social cultural conditions and ways of their perception and understanding by young people.

Conclusions. There is a relationship between literature and its readership, when each literary work is aimed at a certain type of reader. When writing a text, the author orients textually or extratextually to a certain type of recipient of his

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work. The criteria for determining the reader are the age, psychological prerequisites, social cultural environment, etc. The anthropological significance of modern initiation novels is revealed in the process of reading these literary works, when there is self-identification, merging of the readers' horizons of expectations with the textual world. Thus, the pragmatics of initiation novels can be seen in the psychological need of readers of the adolescent age, to whom these works are aimed, in this type of literature, since there are practically no ritual scenarios of initiation rites in modern society. It is the works of young writers that become a tool with which young readers learn about the world, acquire knowledge and gain experience.

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