

**Gender Roles in Ukrainian Children's Literature:
Traditional and New Aspects of the Socialization of a Girl**

The article is chiefly focused on the depiction of the formation of gendered self in Ukrainian literature centered around the figure of a girl as its character and addressee, looking at standards of female behavior supported (or not) by the work of fiction in a certain social and cultural period, and, most importantly, investigating cause-and-effect factors behind these changes in attitude.

The analysis provided within this article, far from being comprehensive and all-inclusive, is based on the works that are seminal for certain defining periods in the development of Ukrainian children's literature – specifically, on the short story *Harytya* written by M. Kotsiubynsky in 1891, O. Ivanenko's fairy tale *Sandals, Full Speed!* (the 1933-1956 edition), V. Blyznets's short novel *Zhenya and Synko*, published in 1974, and *Adventures on the Island of Clavaren* (2011), Iren Rozdobudko's fantasy and adventure short novel.

Kotsiubynsky's short story offers a sufficiently broad and complete view of all traditional aspects of the girl's gendered behavior model and her readiness for socialization. *Harytya*, a "good child" (in the terms of the girl's relationship with her mother), is spiritually mature (she prays earnestly, exhibits mercy and compassion, and is sympathetic with the pain and affliction of others), knows what her household chores are and does them as best she can (she fetches water, cooks meals, looks after her ill mother, tries to reap harvest), and is ethical and respectful in her relationship with other adults (young women or her godfather). In order to understand *Harytya*'s model of behavior (idealized by the author), it is important to note that the girl's transition to another age group is accompanied by the manipulation of her hair (the custom continued even today).

The child's liminal status is overcome during a particular period through physiological changes (in folk tradition, appearance of permanent teeth is the last criterion necessary for the child's "humanization" – since this moment the child is

involved in labor activities) and rites of passage. Manipulation of hair is a strongly marked feature of the initiation rite Harytya goes through – for the girl herself, primarily, the manipulation is a tentative line which defined her as a child. The processes of social change and feminist ideas had by that time affected Ukrainian rural areas. The image of an active, independent and decisive girl is not only a desired role model in a new society – we can presume that it is also used by the author's to state that this kind of upbringing is essential at all times, that such a behavioral model, in relation to Ukrainian folk tradition, is not a novelty but a classical part of it.

The status of Oksana Ivanenko's "curious girl" is not liminal: this state is dismissed by the author at the very beginning. Her heroine is a priori equal with all adult members of society, she does not have to undergo any ritual practices, either real or symbolic. Due to cardinal changes in the perception of woman and her role in social life the process of socialization experienced by the heroine of Oksana Ivanenko's fairy tale is in no way focused on the affirmation of her exclusively female status.

New ideological system destroys the old, constructs new concepts of valuable human characteristics and blurs the line between individual and collective. It dissolves individual "self" and constructs collective "we" without any differentiation based on the criteria of age (children and adults) and gender (male and female). Collectivism as core life strategy principle of the member of new society is validated. Desire to change the unjust world is asserted as the global optimistic purpose of this strategy. Readiness of the younger generation to take responsibility for implementing goals is declared.

In the XXth century childhood is considered as a "prolonged" period since receiving adult status constantly shifts up on the age scale. Gender socialization of a girl traditionally occurred through her engagement in the performance of a particular range of duties. All of the child characters in Victor Blyznets' story are pupils who have to study well and go in for sports, so their obligations are not differentiated by gender criterion. Leveling gender roles in the process of socialization, society still maintains the dominance of men and supports gender inequality. Implicit gender

inequality becomes the basis for Zhenya Tsybulko's internal conflict and explains the freak of a "swarthy girl at the first desk" pretending to be a boy. This game of gender role identification is ongoing. The writer gives his character a gender-neutral name and qualifies Zhenya's gender conflict according to the ideas of gender role formation and training. Society is tolerant toward a girl who displays masculine traits and condemns a feminine behaviour in a boy. The character's dual status is overcome and minimized through trials and intrareception that facilitate the process of her self-identification and understanding of the inner need to suit new androgynous model that includes best features of both gender roles.

In our opinion, it is Iren Rozdobudko who asserts the importance of androgynous individual both for the subject and society. We regard gender in Judith Butler's terms of "implicit standard".

Further literary studies in this field can expose the mechanisms of gender system functioning in fiction and define the difference between gender subjects constructed by particular cultural and social environment.