

“Kyiv Text” of Ukrainian Children's Prose

Although studies of “Kyiv text” belong to some of the most important research areas in Ukrainian literature, they are rarely focused on children’s literature. However, Ukrainian prose for children has an original system of characters, motifs, urban images and symbols related to Kyiv. Distinguishing characteristics of a recipient and characters of children`s literature imply an entirely different dimension of city images comparing to the description of an urban space in the literature for adults: children`s literature details places in the city which are significant to a child. Moreover, child`s perception of an urban space, society and culture also differs from that of adults.

In this article the author makes an attempt to determine the peculiarities of "Kyiv text" in prose works for children taking into account the recipient`s specifics.

Kyiv as a theme and Kyiv as a place of action in Ukrainian children's prose became especially important after the Second World War. Therefore, the focus of this article is made on the works written in the second half of the XX century by Yuri Yanovsky, Vsevolod Nestayko, Viktor Blyznets , and Lesya Voronyna. (Attention of Ukrainian children's literature to Kyiv is not limited by that period of time, but this article is focused only on the works written in the second half of the twentieth century).

“Kyiv text” is rather a heterogeneous topic, it contains different topoi” says Tamara Hundorova. “Kyiv text” of children's literature of the second half of the XX century is diverse as well.

Since the action of the analyzed prose works is taking place in Kyiv, it is obvious that each of them has its own system of Kyiv loci that create different images of the city. However, in each of the analyzed works can be defined a specific locus, which metaphorically means an author's version of the city. Those metaphors are as follows:

- 1) Kyiv as a children’s theater. It is alive, even when ruined.

2) Millennial tract Honchari as a heart of Kyiv, hidden from the invaders 'by nature itself.'

3) The circus that stands on the site of Jewish market symbolizing Kyiv as the city of laughter.

4) Kyiv as the power site on the slopes of the Dnipro River, which has been blocked by metal armed monster for a long time.

In all these variants of city depiction, an important commonality can be found. It is a mythologem of a city which is reviving, enduring any adverse circumstances without losing its light nature.

In all four analyzed works of children's literature, Kyiv as a city for children appears as a game space. However, each of the four presented gaming practices includes an important symbolic dimension. Each of these games in its own way transforms the city in the mind of the player. In "Kyiv Sonata" by Yanovsky a game of remembering and fantasy transforms charred ruins into the city for children. Zhenya's game (novel "Zhenya and Sinko" by Blyznets) creates hybrid city, Kyiv-forest, and helps to resolve the internal heroine's conflict between city and nature as one of the highest values. Game of time travel and searching for "laughter herb" by Styopa and Chuck ("Mystery of an Old Clown" by Nestayko) socialize the boy in the city and transforms Kyiv into a city of laughter, which gives strength to outlast the troubles and woes. Ironic detective story by Lesya Voronyna is itself a literary game, which involve a reader. It is a game of destruction of gloomy military Kyiv and placing a large playground instead, a game of transforming Kyiv into a city for children.

Transformation of the city that is not completely conducive to a child in a comfortable space is the main goal of all children's gaming practices identified in the analyzed works. All the most important Kiev loci of Ukrainian children's prose compose the image of Kyiv as a city for children, an imaginary city, which it is often implicit, but emerges through the war years and the dominance of military discourse, supported by the folk traditions, history and nature.