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THE CHILD'S WORLD IN CHORNOBYL STORIES FOR CHILDREN BY YEVDEN HUTSALO

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In the article, the stories of Yevhen Hutsalo from the collection "Children of Chornobyl" are analyzed, and the peculiarities of portraying the world of a child after the Chornobyl disaster are highlighted. The thematic scope of these works is outlined, which shows the consequences of this tragedy through the forced and irreversible changes that the characters experience and live through. Among them are the loss of their homes, friends, and parents. The following groups of characters are distinguished: those who have lost their world (Palma, Kalyna, Mykolka, Katrya), those who help these heroes (Hrytsko, Liubomyr), and those who are indirectly affected by the Chornobyl disaster (Savka-Savka, Olena, Mariana, Hanna Mykhailivna). It is noted that the past, lost world of the characters is practically unspoken and is mentioned episodically by one or two lines of dialogue from the characters, while the present world is a narrative of losses and loneliness. It is a world without loved ones, who are taken away either by death or forced searches for work. For the youngest characters, it is fragile and fleeting (Kalyna's illness, preparation for Katrya's death, Savka-Savka's death). The conclusions are drawn that the world of the young hero in these works is a world after loss, in which their future is unclear and uncertain. For adult characters, it is a world of fear due to a lack of understanding of possible consequences of environmental disasters. The only salvation and interlude between anxieties and fears is nature, in harmony with which the characters are filled with adventures, quiet joy, and peace. The following works are analyzed: "Mad Chornobyl Dog," "Chornobyl Girl Kalyna," "Crying in the Dark Night," "Rudnya," "Zozulya," "Child of Strontium," and "Christmas Story".

Key words: *Chornobyl, disaster, environmental crisis, child's world, lost world, loneliness, nature.*

In one of the interviews, Tamara Hundorova noted that Chornobyl became a symbolic and global event which social memory developed in several stages: as a part of the struggle for independence, as the aspect of catastrophism, as a symbol of the destruction of the Soviet Union. «Chornobyl destroys totalitarian way of thinking and totalitarian culture. However it reveals

the hollowness of the national culture that has undergone colonization, sharpens the question of what the culture of the nuclear age is, how the splitting of the atom affects the culture, language and image of the world» [4]. According to T. Gundorova, in Ukrainian literature of the 1990 s, Chernobyl is an «apocalyptic imagery. Traumatic shock caused by events that cannot be told coherently, calmly, and objectively» [4].

Writers of the sixties turned to the topic of Chernobyl almost immediately after the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and the realization and understanding of its potential consequences. Works such as «Explosion» by Svitlana Yovenko (1986), «Family of Seven» by Borys Oliynyk (1987), «Chernobyl Madonna» by Ivan Drach (1988), «Maria with Wormwood at the End of the Century» by Volodymyr Yavorivsky (1988), «The Zone» by Leonid Horlach (1988), «Chernobyl» by Volodymyr Shcherbak (1989), «Pain and Memory» by Mykola Lukiv (1997), «Children of Chernobyl» by Yevhen Hutsalo (1995), and others. In their works, Chernobyl became an embodiment of one of the greatest tragedies of modern society and the Ukrainian people, as well as a reactualization of heroic pathos on Ukrainian soil. Among the works of this period, the collection of stories by Yevhen Hutsalo stands out in particular, as these are stories for and about children, whose main characters experienced and felt the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

Research analysis. Y. Serdiuk in the preface to the collection «Children of Chernobyl» noted that Ye. Hutsalo's works are «journeys into the secret of the human soul, encounters with pure and honest natures, searches for good and justice» [5]. Literary critics have repeatedly turned to the texts of this book, studying the tragedy of the little hero as a result of the Chernobyl disaster [2], symbols of the names of the main characters of the collection [8], linguistic and cultural nature of story concepts [3]; the presence of good and evil in Ye. Hutsalo's Chernobyl stories [11].

I. Dzyuba noted that «Perhaps the best way to let children experience another era is to show them the children of that era. Through the childhood world of the first post-war years, they will see and feel all that difficult time, that laid the foundations of their lives. Maybe they will understand their parents better. Maybe they will learn something from their childhood - and there is much to learn...» [6, P. 630]. L. Voronyna noted that the peculiarity of the writer's children's stories is his love for his native land and his interest in the psychology of little dreamers [1, P. 6]. Vitalina Kyzyl'ova wrote: «The appeal to the child's world in the writer's work is not accidental: childhood is the first basis of human life, thanks to the innate instinct to feel good and evil, sincere naivety, emotional naivety and trustworthiness, the ability to see ordinary things as extraordinary, any ideological taboos are destroyed, an opportunity opens up to look at the infinite world, to rise above everyday grayness, moral pollution, highlighting at the same time the contrast between children's and adult worldviews and worldviews» [7].

The purpose of our research is to investigate the peculiarities of portraying the world of a child in Yevgen Hutsalo's Chernobyl stories from the perspective of a lost world, as the Chernobyl tragedy caused the loss of normal life and usual circumstances, and the young heroes find themselves among new people and must adapt to a new life, often fragile and short-lived.

Main material. The collection includes the following stories: «Mad Chernobyl Dog», «Chernobyl Girl Kalyna», «Crying in the Dark Night», «Rudnya», «Cuckoo», «Strontium Child», "A Christmas Story". Moreover, the titles of most of them hint at the subject of the works and accordingly set the recipient emotionally, because Chernobyl is about pain, about losses, about disasters, and not only large-scale, but also personal, but also about humanity, decency, love and an attempt to save fragility of being.

However, the collection begins not with the drama of a person, but with the drama of the dog Palma, who was left tied to a tree by her owners while fleeing Chernobyl: «The people of Chernobyl left her by tying her to a willow tree in the village. Then they drove away from Chernobyl and far from their dog by car» [5, P. 7]. Palma finds shelter and love in a new family of the boy Hrytsk, who does not care that she has «a blind eye and a crooked paw» [5, P. 3]. However, the adults are not so sincere in their love for the new resident of the village: fear that Palma is mad, that she is irradiated and can infect people, fear that Palma's puppies will be born. Hrytsk has another fear: that something bad might happen to his Palma or that grandfather Kyrylo will drown newly born puppies, as he suggested to Hrytsk's mother. «Resorting to the frequent use of the camera's eye effect, according to Navrotska, the omniscient narrator depicts the details of the child's communication with the natural world (...). The microcosm of old Palma and the little boy is an image-symbol of true friendship: both are able to come to each other's aid without hesitation, to protect when there is a threat to life, to save from inevitable loss. The child's world, visualized through the effect of the camera's eye, enlivened by the voices of the characters, materialized in expressive dialogues – an example of kindness, spirituality, the ability to be a Man» [10]. The boy gives her a new world instead of the one she had before the Chernobyl tragedy. Probably better. Kireeva notes that «the main character's name literally means one who does not sleep, watches. We can see the peculiarities of the meaning of a boy's name in his character, behavior, attitude to all living things» [9]. And he watches over Palma, the wounded birches and the world of which he is a part and which Palma becomes a part of.

The story of the first and, unfortunately, dramatic love is touchingly depicted in the story «The Chernobyl Girl Kalyna». The girl Kalyna talks about herself like this: «We came here from Chernobyl, I now live with grandma Yavdokha, and my parents went somewhere to earn money, because there is no work for them in this village» [5, P. 23]. In fact, this is all we know about the lost world of Kalyna. She does not tell how they lived with their parents,

about their former home, friends, and toys. But the girl finds herself alone, her former world is irretrievably lost, but an even more terrible loss lies ahead – the girl is terminally ill. This loneliness is repeatedly emphasized by the author: she is always alone, but she never complains or complains. Lubomyr and his mother try to support and help her. The boy also tries to introduce the girl to his, and now her, world: duck nests in the reeds, swans by the river, the prophet Elijah on a chariot, a chestnut tree that bloomed in autumn. However, she refuses: «It's a pity for him that the summer will soon pass, it's already passing, and she won't see anything like that, because it's time to drag her out of the house» [5, P. 31].

Kalyna's ability to run, to enjoy life, to be the same as her peers, remained somewhere there, in April's Chornobyl, just like the little girl Katria from the story «A Christmas Story», whom aunt Onisya calls «the Chornobyl girl»: «If your mother were alive, she would have dressed you, but the hearty passed away. And the father joined the mother. And why did people start dying like that after Chornobyl? And they were not there, but it does not matter. So healthy, they could have lived, but left you for grandfather Ilko» [5, P. 99]. The Chornobyl disaster bursts into the girl's life, making her an orphan.

And the real drama begins when the girl refuses to wear new clothes, because they are things that she prepared for her death. «At first, the aunt pretends not to hear what was said, then she slowly stands up next to the chest of draws and, biting her lip, looks straight at Katria. Did you hear it or not? No, I didn't feel like it. And she is afraid of what she heard. However, in a few minutes he pretends that he did not hear anything, that the girl did not say anything» [5, P. 100]. «Such children don't die». Aunt Onisya tries to convince herself and Katria. Once again, we are faced with a lonely girl whose past life we only know that she lost her parents and that one of her friends is terminally ill.

And again she is by herself, as well as Kalyna. Kalyna lives with her grandmother, Katria with her grandfather, but they are not present in the story directly, so children's loneliness is perceived more sensitive. As in the previous story, Katria is brought into the world in which she was forced to be, to face it, and she agrees, but very unwillingly, being convinced, to stay not long here.

The role of coloristics plays an important role in this story. The girl is surrounded by dark colors, despite the fact that it is winter, embraced with snow and Christmas: «Black waters of black night will not hide, the distant star does not throw a dim ray in the abyss of the cold» [5, P. 93]; «behind wide windows of the house the forest darkens» [5, P. 93]; «they are not visible between black trees»; «Katria is looking into the deep and gloomy wood, where she has just seen an elk between the dark trees ...» [5, P. 103]; «And bowing their heads away from the wind, they go a bare walking road through the woods, that sinks in the black waters of the day's dusk...» [5, P. 103]. And therefore, such contrast appears in colors of clothes that the girl prepared for

death: red blouse, blue wool jacket, green pantyhose, white cap. By the way, the blue color is present in the story «the Chernobyl girl Kalyna» – the mother of Lubomyr buys a blue kerchief for Kalyna. It is believed that this color symbolizes tenderness, loyalty, and even a reachless heaven, air, water and health. The health was so needed for the main characters of these stories. Dressed in a blue shirt Savka-Savka (hero of the story «Rudnia»), dies tragically on the swamps of Rudney.

Left alone with a new world Mykola is found, whose parents «went to work in a collective farm, and he is left with his grandmother, who is seriously ill: «E-e, how much that night, and I want to rest all the time. My hands are sore as well as the legs and the head. – She is looking carefully at her black palms. – All that is radiation, just look». «If such terrible hands are, maybe, radiation has become a reality?» [5, P. 67]. «Radiation has taken granny's both strength and memory, – Mykolka thinks bitterly. – She is constantly beating the air. But it is not her fault that she behaves in such a way». Later the reader finds out that Mykolka's family has been relocated from Chernobyl: «From the brick house where they live, Chernobyl settlers, along with other similar brick houses, which are also full of settlers from Chernobyl, Mykolka runs to the village outskirts passing the building of collective farm-feeding» [5, P. 69]. Eugene Gutsalo does not show Mykola's lost life, but shows his present reality where it is not easy, because everything here is strange, and peers also laugh.

« – Why do you need a cuckoo? – asks the girl. – Haven't you heard the cuckoo, don't you know how it crows?

- I heard, – Mykolka answers.

- Aren't you a migrant?

- A Settler.

- Oh, then everything is clear.

- What is clear? – he mumbles.

- The Settler.

- And if a settler, so what?

- If you are a settler, you're running after a cuckoo.

Mykolka's anger comes from somewhere – and at this green-eyed girl who is standing over the ditch where the ducks and drakes are swimming, and at something else, and at something else!

- Do you know why I'm chasing a cuckoo?" he shouts.

- I know.

- What for?

- Because you are a migrant! – laughs the girl, flashing jagged teeth.

- But I... But I have...

Mykolka wants to say a lot for all their wrongs, and first of all, for the sick old granny Oryshka, to whom the cuckoo has hooted so little today, in fact only once. But somewhere all the words disappeared, only fists are

clenched from anger. He is ready to rush at the offender, but the girl instantly jumps up – and she is already running through the garden, and already around the house, and is already hiding in the house.

Mykola closes his eyes tightly to prevent tears from falling. In this village where they had moved, no one had insulted him like this... green frog. Indeed, she is a green frog, because she has green eyes. A green frog, a green frog!» [5, P. 71-72].

Everything here is not right: there are no friends, no home, and a sick grandmother. And the cuckoo has not sung her long life. At the beginning of the story, Mykolka feels irritation towards his grandmother, but later his feelings change, as his grandmother becomes a memory, a connection to the lost world destroyed by the Chernobyl disaster: «Live, baba Oryshko, for a long-long time, live for a hundred years and another hundred years, and let all the fairy tales you have yet to tell and all the songs you have yet to sing live with you» [5, P. 77].

The world irreversibly changes for the girl Mariana in the story «Child of Strontium»: her brother dies from strontium poisoning, and his wife is too afraid to give birth and has an abortion. «... who would dare to judge you for having an abortion at twenty-three? Oh, it's a pity, who says it's not a pity, but what if the child is born without a hand or paralyzed? Because people talk all sorts of things, oh, all sorts of things about that Chernobyl disaster. Vasyl died from strontium or from cesium (...). And isn't the child from him? Because the child is from strontium or cesium, I don't know» [5, P. 89]. The girl mourns her brother and doesn't understand what happened: «And why is he gone, why? And where did Chernobyl come from, which took our Vasyl? How did it put out that radiation that burned him?» [5, p. 80]. And no one understands. Because at that time, few people understood the true consequences of the disaster.

Conclusions. If for the little heroes of other Hutsul stories the world they had before the Chernobyl disaster is lost and they are forced to seek a new home and new friends, then for Mariana, these losses are of a different nature. Chernobyl invades her life, taking away her brother and unborn nephew, just as it will take away the life of the unborn child of the main character in the story «Crying in the Misty Night», who is afraid that a sick child will be born to her: «I don't want to give birth to a mutant. Even if you don't give birth to a mutant, but a healthy child, a mutant will still be born from them in the third, fifth, or seventh generation. This is inevitable» [5, P. 45]. The world of Olena seems to have not changed, but the fear of the consequences of the ecological disaster is killing her: she wants to escape, she wants to have an abortion.

Environmental disaster ruins the lives not only of those who found themselves at its epicenter. The hero of the story «Rudnya» Savka-Savka is looking for his dog and goes to Rudnya: «There, beyond the hills, you can see

the factory chimneys on the outskirts of the district center, they smoke day and night. When the wind blows here, to Rudnya, and when you sniff - the factory smoke stinks of poisonous corrosive odors (...) In the village, they know that you cannot go to Rudnya, so as not to suffocate or poison yourself with water» [5, P. 57-58]. The boy sees sick and sickly crow, horse, hare, feels suffocation himself, but does not stop, because he needs to find his dog. And finally, he dies on the poisoned swamp. And this is not the end of the tragedy, because «down below, a girl in white runs, and a black dog runs after the girl (...) They run to the swamp. They run to Rudnya» [5, P. 65].

In the collection of short stories «Children of Chornobyl», Yevhen Hutsalo portrays the consequences of the Chornobyl tragedy through the forced and irreversible changes that happen to the young characters: they lose their homes, friends, and parents. And they could lose their lives soon. As Navrotska points out, «In Y. Hutsalo's short prose, we see two ways of perceiving and reflecting reality – lyrical (subjective) and epic (objective)» [12]. The heroes have a sensitive perception of nature, they think of themselves as part of it, and life without it is impossible. That's why the Chornobyl disaster, which destroys lives and human destinies, appears so contrastive. The young heroes seek solace in nature and try to introduce those who have lost their past lives into a new world. They observe nature, which remains the only constant in their lives, their shelter, and comfort.

The children of Chornobyl are not only about those children who are trying to adapt to a new life, but also about those who never were born due to the fears of adults, certain prejudices, and insufficient knowledge of what they had to face. The Chornobyl disaster directly affects some heroes: they become refugees, fighting not only for survival but also for health; others try to help or support them; still others understand that it is important for the survivors to stick together and protect each other. Not only people, but also animals such as the dog Palma, lose their former world, but for her, the new world is better: she finds love and care, gives birth to healthy puppies, and they are taken care of.

For humans, everything is more complex and dramatic: they cannot be protected from themselves. They are not abandoned, but they are lonely and do not feel happy. Happiness is mentioned only once in relation to Palma, who happily looks and smiles, and joy is mentioned only three times: Hrytsko is happy that he has his own dog, while Liubomyr and Kalyna laugh because they find each other's names strange, and Mariyana is happy that her nephew is about to be born. In the latter two cases, joy is short-lived and is replaced by pain and sorrow. For the most part, the characters are depicted in anxious situations: Hrytsko worries about Palma («Mad Chornobyl Dog»), Liubomyr worries about Kalyna («Chornobyl Girl Kalyna»), Olena is afraid to give birth and live in this world («Cry in the Murky Night»), Savka-Savka worries that she cannot find her dog, is afraid of helpless and sick animals («Rudnia»), Mykolka is afraid for his grandmother («Zozulia»), Mariyana experiences the

loss of an unborn nephew («Child of Strontium»), and Katrya has anxious dreams («Christmas Story»).

In the stories we have analyzed, there are three groups of characters: those who have lost their world (Palma, Kalyna, Mykolka, Katrya), those who help these heroes (Hrytsko, Liubomyr), and those who are indirectly affected by the Chernobyl disaster (Savka-Savka, Olena, Mariana, Hanna Mykhailivna).

Yevhen Hutsalo's heroes almost never talk about the past, the lost world, except for outlining it in a few strokes, not comparing it to the new world, but the reader, especially now, can imagine the level of losses and pain from understanding the impossibility of return. Others try to help them adapt to the new realities and conditions, the heroes accept something, something not due to circumstances. This is a world where there are no more relatives (they are taken away by death or forced searches for earnings), and for the heroes themselves, it is transient (Kalyna's illness, Katrya's preparation for death, Savka-Savka's death). This is a world of too fast maturity and change. And also a world of loneliness that permeates every work in the collection, conveying an inexpressible longing for what was and what will never be.

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СВІТ ДИТИНИ У ЧОРНОБИЛЬСЬКИХ ОПОВІДАННЯХ ДЛЯ ДІТЕЙ ЄВГЕНА ГУЦАЛА

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У статті проаналізовано оповідання Євгена Гуцала зі збірки «Діти Чорнобиля» та висвітлено особливості змалювання світу дитини після чорнобильської катастрофи. Окреслено тематичний зріз цих творів. Зазначено, що у цих творах показано наслідки цієї трагедії через ті вимушені та невідворотні зміни які переживають та проживають персонажі. Серед них – втрата рідного дому, друзів, батьків. Виокремлюються такі групи персонажів: ті що втратили свій світ (Пальма, Калина, Миколка, Катря), ті що допомагають цим героям (Грицько, Любомир) та ті, на яких Чорнобильська катастрофа вплинула опосередковано (Савка-Савка, Олена, Мар'яна, Ганна Михайлівна). Визначено, що минулий, втрачений персонажами світ, фактично непроговорений, згадується епізодично, однією-двома репліками персонажів, а світ теперішній є наративом втрат та самотності, він без рідних людей, яких забирає або смерть, або вимушені пошуки заробітку), а для самих маленьких персонажів він крихкий та нетривкий (хвороба Калини, підготовка до смерті Катрі, загибель Савки-Савки). Зроблено висновки, що світ маленького героя у цих творах – це світ після втрати, в якому його майбутнє нечітке та непевне, для дорослих персонажів – це світ страху через нерозуміння можливих наслідків екологічної катастрофи. Єдиним порятунком та своєрідним інтермецо між тривогами та страхами є природа, у єдності з якою персонажі гармонійні і їхнє буття сповнюється пригодами, захватом тихою радістю та спокоєм. Аналізуються такі твори: «Скажений чорнобильський собака», «Чорнобильська дівчина Калина», «Плач у мороку ночі», «Рудня», «Зозуля», «Дитя від стронцію», «Різдваєне оповідання».

Ключові слова: *Чорнобиль, катастрофа, екологічна криза, світ дитини, втрачений світ, самотність, природа.*