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## Social Orphanhood in Contemporary Ukrainian Literature for Children and Young People

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The artistic interpretation of the theme of social orphanhood in contemporary literature for children and young people is a reaction by writers to social phenomena affecting the child. In this article, I explore the artistic representation of social orphanhood in contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and young people. I note that the works of Ukrainian writers complement the tradition of depicting orphans in world literature. The paper goes on to analyse the plots of works about children who become social orphans as a result of the labour migration of parents, to define a range of issues raised within this topic considering the images of orphans, and to derive a typology based on an analysis of their behavioural patterns. The common and distinctive features of the poetics of works on orphaned childhood are noted, and images are presented of orphans in Ukrainian and world literature, taking into account the results of research by Melanie A. Kimball, Claudia Mills, and Dirk P. Mattson.

**Keywords:** literature for children and young people, social orphanhood, labour migration, artistic representation of the theme, orphans, behavioural patterns

Contemporary literature for children reflects the social phenomena of the day, directly affecting the child and childhood. Writers raise the problems in which children find themselves, reveal their inner world, emotions, behaviour, describe the circumstances and speak about life events. Childhood can be happy, but it can be unhappy, “lost”, and orphaned as well. In post-colonial countries, including Ukraine, social orphanhood has been spreading rapidly in recent decades. Among the main factors in this trend are the labour migration of parents, crisis in the family, and economic, moral and ethical issues. Of particular relevance in society, and hence in literature, are the problems of the relationship of the socio-psychological atmosphere in the family with the socio-

economic conditions of its existence, children being raised in single-parent families, the problems of children's psychological trauma, experiences, loneliness, growing up, and children's relationships with parents and peers.

Interdisciplinary studies in sociology, psychology, social pedagogy give an idea of social orphanhood as a phenomenon that covers a special socio-demographic group of children left without parental care, even though they have a family. Such findings reveal the features of the artistic understanding of the theme of social orphanhood in literature (including in the context of the tradition of depicting orphans), emphasise understanding of the modern child and childhood in all its manifestations, and stress the importance of discussing the problem with a preventive purpose and a desire to influence the current situation.

In this article I seek to analyse the artistic representation of the social orphanhood of children due to the parents' labour migration, trace the tradition of the images of orphans in literature for children and young people, and consider literary research on this issue. Based on an interpretation of the stories from the collection *Mama po skaiipu* [Mother on Skype] (Savka and Brunner 2013) and stories by Oksana Dumanska, Oksana Lushchevska, and Oksana Saiko, I aim to identify the range of issues raised related to this topic, derive a typology of images of orphans, models of their behaviour in particular, reorientations from the plot, actions on the psychology of characters (cf. M. Nikolajeva 2004), the special construction of space-time, manifestations of the child's "voice" – a social orphan), and note the functional perspectives of the works on social orphanhood for both children and young people.

## Corpus and methodology

The stories chosen for this study are "Ho paura" by Halyna Kruk, "Slavka" by Halyna Malyk, "Nasha velyka vyhadana rodyna" [Our Big Fictional Family] by Oksana Lushchevska, "Yahody" [Berries] by Marianna Kianovska, "Hroshi ne pakhnut" [Money Does Not Smell] by Serhii Hrydin, "Chas ditei" [Children's Time] by Tetyana Maliarchuk, "Navedymka" [Invisible] by Natalia Huzieieva, "Kylym z oleniamy" [Carpet with Deer] by Oksana Lutsyshyna, "Bud moieiu mamoiu" [Be My Mother] by Valentyn Berdt, published within the collection *Mama po skaiipu* [Mother on Skype] (Savka and Brunner 2013), the book *Inshyi dim* [Another Home] (2013) by Oksana Lushchevska, *Shkoliarka z peredmistia* [Schoolgirl from the Suburbs] (2008) by Oksana Dumanska, and the story "Nepravylni" [Wrong], published in a collection by Oksana Saiko (2014). I used two criteria for selection: 1) realistic works written by Ukrainian writers over the last twenty years and, as a rule, addressed to children and young people; 2) children at the centre of the works who have become social orphans due to the parents' labour migration.

The methodological basis of the paper is a number of modern approaches and methods of literary text research (system-analytical, comparative-typological, structural, elements of psychoanalysis).

## **Social orphanhood as a social problem in modern Ukraine and the topic of literature**

The twentieth century became a turning point in relation to childhood as a socio-cultural phenomenon, as a special period of human life. The norm is to understand the early age of human life as the happiest time. However, childhood can be different: happy and carefree, “lost” (as they say about generations of children of war) and orphans. Orphans (biological orphans) are children whose parents have died. They have existed throughout human history. It is relevant to mention that the number of orphans is growing every year, including social orphans who are deprived of parental care, love, and upbringing.

Social orphanhood is caused by the evasion or exclusion of parents from parental responsibilities for an underage child (Nar 2020):

In today’s world, however, it is known that there are millions of children neglected by their parents even though they are alive. The concept of social orphanhood was coined in relation to children suffering from parental negligence. This definition is used to describe the deprivation endured by the child due to parents’ failure to perform their duties. The absence of the family, and therefore the absence of the parent, which is the first and most basic component with a child’s identity formation, causes serious trauma to the child; creating a feeling of forlornness in terms of being loved, respected, protected and supported. Amounting to a state of parental destitution, the condition is referred to as social orphanhood.

In the early 1990s Ukraine gained independence, but has been experiencing a deep economic crisis and a reappraisal of values since then. The existing socio-economic conditions of the country, economic instability, poverty, crime, inflation, unemployment and labour migration are the external causes of social orphanhood. Family conflicts, illegitimate child birth, rejection of newborn babies, poor financial and living conditions, the spread of alcoholism, drug addiction, the imprisonment of parents, and single-parent families are internal causes. Ayşe Hümeýra Kutluođlu Karayel (2019) cites the same reasons. The researcher provides statistics and other data showing that most children living in orphanages in the world are social orphans.

Summarising different classifications and starting from the causes of social orphanhood as one of the criteria, we distinguish groups of social orphans. These are children abandoned in the maternity hospital, homeless children, street children, children of migrant workers, and children whose parents are divorced and do not pay attention to their upbringing. Sociologists speak of a whole generation of “abandoned children” – children of migrant workers – and psychologists are actively studying such phenomena as the “migrant syndrome”, “Italian syndrome”, “emigrant syndrome” (Pogorila 2009), the emergence of the so-called “disorder of children’s attachment to parents” in preschool children, the development of an inner sense of insecurity, abandonment, uselessness.

Since the 1990s, mass unemployment and the lack of livelihoods have pushed parents to work abroad. Now in Ukraine there is a whole generation of migrant workers’

children, whose parents, either both of them or just one, travel to a foreign country for paid activities, leaving their children under the supervision of relatives, neighbours, acquaintances, friends or others. In fact, such children do not receive proper adult attention (and especially parental attention), which often results in negative risk factors and many problems. They are called “abandoned children”.<sup>1</sup>

Maryna Shevtsova claimed that in 2017, “according to various sources, between 200,000 and several million Ukrainian children have one or both parents working abroad” (2017). In 2021, according to the Institute of Demography and Social Research, the number of migrant workers in Ukraine was 2.5–3 million (*Slovo i Dilo* 2021). Most of them have children who stay in Ukraine. The situation has changed somewhat since the pandemic started, when some parents were forced to return home.

The consequences of social orphanhood in all children are visibly seen in the psychological aspect of their behaviour (the appearance of deep depression, unwillingness to communicate, irritability, aggression, anxiety, lack of trust in the social environment, the emergence of school maladaptation and deviant behaviour) (cf. Kovalenko 2006: 8). And these effects are similar to those caused by biological orphanhood. Hümeýra Kutluođlu Karayel calls them psychological problems, physical problems and diseases, physical and psychological trauma, a sense of worthlessness, feeling unloved and isolated, low self-esteem, interruption of education, decline in academic success, risk of substance abuse, alcohol addiction and committing crimes, anger and aggressiveness, lack of discipline at orphanages and school, risk of being kidnapped and of being a victim of abuse, economic problems, risk of child labour, social problems, and career and marriage problems in adulthood (2019). Parents’ external labour migration is often the cause of children’s maladaptation, their feelings of emotional discomfort, and lack of successful socialisation and communication.

Seeing social orphanhood through the prism of the conceptual and methodological principles of sociology and age psychology makes it possible to understand its essence and also its reflection in fiction. Using the example of individual stories, carrying out a deep psychological analysis of children’s images, behaviour, emotions, writers relay various life experiences of social orphanhood which takes place in reality. They comprehensively cover the processes of socialisation of a child deprived of parental care. I agree with Claudia Mills who claims that “novels about orphan children reveal some deeper truth about how our society views children and how it views itself” (1987: 237).

Such literature serves as a kind of mirror, which reflects the child, childhood, certain social events and phenomena that determine the format of children’s lives, the

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<sup>1</sup> The children of workers are not defined as orphans officially, but they remain alone and become neglected, which is equivalent to orphanhood. On the other hand, parents have a different point of view. According to research by the International Human Rights Center “La Strada – Ukraine”, parents claim that they are temporarily separated from their children for their own good. Thus, 86% of migrants, in their own opinion, earn money for their children’s education, 72% – for the construction and purchase of housing, 69% – for meeting the daily needs of offspring (Skaletskyi & Orobchuk 2013). However, when solving financial problems, parents do not pay due attention to the upbringing of their children.

emotions of the younger generation, and the perception of childhood by society. Rudine Sims Bishop aptly uses the metaphor of books for children as “windows and mirrors” and notes: “One of the reasons literature exists is to transform human experience, and reflect it back to us so that we can better understand it” (1990).

Many contemporary children have a bitter experience of social orphanhood and belong to the generation of the “abandoned” or interact with orphans who experience psychological stress and fear, and who are left alone with their problems. In modern Ukrainian literature, which offers the image of a child in its modern realities, there are vivid examples of loss of childhood and forced adulthood due to orphanhood and social insecurity (*Zlochyntsi z paralelnoho svitu* [Criminals from a Parallel World] by Halyna Malyk (2008), *Mykolchyni istorii* [Mykola’s Stories] by Maryna Pavlenko (2015), *140 detsybeliv tyshi* [140 Decibels of Silence] by Andriy Bachynsky (2015)), and also as a result of the influence of bad company, alcohol consumption, immoral behaviour, and the lack of family upbringing due to parents’ labour migration (collection of stories *Mother on Skype*, and “Wrong” by Oksana Saiko).

The collection *Mother on Skype* has resonated widely, has been translated into German, and has provided impetus for the development of the topic in Ukrainian fiction. Writers confidently give “voice” to child heroes (Thacker 1996) and it is not only the “voice”, but speech as a first-person narrative (McGillis 1991) and, more importantly, emotions experienced by the child in a given situation.

Works of art about the social orphanhood of children of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century continue the tradition of images of orphans in the world and in Ukrainian literature. However, alongside the established aspects of this theme, some new slants on issues, characters, patterns of behaviour, narrative practice, and the space-time plane are given in this paper.

### **Tradition of representation and scholarly understanding of the theme of orphanhood and orphans in children’s literature**

The tradition of depicting orphans goes back to folklore, including folk tales, and is traced in the classics of English, American (Avery 1994) and other national literatures for children (Kimball 1999), and also in contemporary works of art addressed to young readers. The child-orphan appears in Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1838), Susan Coolidge’s *What Katy Did* (1873), Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* (1880), Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* (1900), Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1911), L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), Eleanor H. Porter’s *Pollyanna* (1913), Betsy Byars’s *The Pinballs* (1976), Katherine Paterson’s *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (1978), Philip Pullman’s *Northern Lights* (1982), J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (1997), and others. As noted by Claudia Mills, “novels about orphans may seem more the rule than the exception in classic children’s literature” (1987: 227).

Melanie A. Kimball (1999) traces the patterns of the image of orphan characters in children's literature, from folklore to contemporary writings. She counts 50 fairy tales about orphans, which are characterised by a certain unfolding of the plot and by the image of the orphan as "Different". Orphans experience loneliness, have hostile attitudes towards themselves, go through quests, and face challenges for the sake of finding their own identity and self-affirmation. There is a number of traditional obstacles in the way of the orphan-hero. The author also traces the development of the standard orphan's story in children's literature, in particular in Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel *The Secret Garden*. She claims (Kimball 1999: 567):

It is from the folkloric elements previously outlined that the standard story of the orphan developed: the outcast main character; the secondary characters who affect the orphan for both good and evil; the task or quest that the orphan must perform; the usually happy resolution with the orphan finding success through marriage, wealth, and position; and the punishment of those who mistreated the orphan. Each of these elements has a parallel in literary orphan stories.

Novels about orphans targeted at female readers published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are analysed by Joe Sutliff Sanders (2008). The author examines the evolution of this segment of literature, starting from the sentimental tradition and notes that "these orphan girl novels exist in a literary-historical continuum with women's sentimental novels of the midcentury" (Sanders 2008: 42), but "orphan girl novels at the turn of the century rejected the old model that girls must happily sacrifice themselves in order to fix the adults around them without any hope of reward to themselves" (ibid.).

Various aspects of the depiction of orphans in works by Charles Dickens have repeatedly become the subject of scholarly reflection. This can be explained by the fact that "[o]rphans and orphanhood are everywhere in Dickens" (Hochman and Wachs 1999: 11), and "the development of his work is toward an evermore fierce critique of the world from within the perspective of that child, or of the adult who cannot separate from that child" (ibid.).

Images of orphans in English and American literature drawing on examples of the heroes of the works of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain are analysed and compared by Hana Wirth-Nesher (1986). This researcher argues that the orphan narratives of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain are emblematic of the national and cultural identities of the time (1986).

Dirk P. Mattson (1997) offers an interesting interpretation of stories about orphans through the prism of the critical theory of the comedic, romantic, mimetic, and tragic "modes of literature" that Northrop Frye develops in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Mattson observes and considers the main stages of the plot in stories about orphans, which can be found in various books: (1) losing the parents; (2) establishing the orphan; (3) confronting the enemy; (4) finding apparent peace; (5) providing help to others; (6) rejecting one life for another; and (7) being claimed by another (1997: 17–21).

The work of Claudia Mills is important. She analyses the changes in the image of orphanhood during the twentieth century (1987: 228):

The effervescent, exuberant orphans of the century's early years give way to the passive, polite orphans of the 1940s and early 1950s, culminating in the angry, bitter "orphans" (often actually foster children) of more recent fiction.

Ukrainian fairy tales and literature also represent artistically the theme of orphanhood.<sup>2</sup> Orphans are the main characters of folk fairy tales, the poems of Taras Shevchenko ("Meni trynadtsiatyi mynalo" [I Was Thirteen] (1847), "I zolotoi i dorohoi" [Golden and Dear] (1849), "Na Velykden na solomi" [On Easter Day Upon the Straw] (1849)), the stories of Borys Hrinchenko ("Sestrytsia Halia" [Sister Halia] (1885), "Sama zovsim sama" [Alone, All Alone] (1885), "Dzvonyk" [The Bell] (1897)), Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi ("Malenkyi hrishnyk" [Little Sinner] (1893)), Stepan Vasylychenko ("Prybluda" [Wandering Stranger] (1925)), novellas of Volodymyr Vynnychenko ("Kumediiia z Kostem" [The Comedy with Kostia] (1910)), Oles Donchenko (*Lisnychykha* [Forester] (1947)), Yurii Zbanatskyi (*Kurylovi ostrovy* [Kuril Islands] (1963)), Valerii Shevchuk ("Divchynka, yaka shukala mamu" [The Girl Who Was Looking for a Mother] (1990), "Panna kvitiv" [The Lady of Flowers] (1990)), and others.

The first wave of popularity of this theme in literature also falls in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second wave covers post-war literature (the 1920s and 1950–1960s). The third wave is contemporary literature (from the 1990s into the 21<sup>st</sup> century) with an emphasis on the problem of social orphanhood. The typology of orphans is related to social change, attitudes towards children and childhood, and socio-economic conditions. The proposed classification of Claudia Mills can be conditionally applied to Ukrainian literature for children with one condition: the last stage concerns not the end of the 1960s–1970s, but the late 1980s–1990s.

Based on an analysis of these theoretical works, it is possible to generalise on the common and distinctive features of works about orphans in classical literature (mostly English and American) and modern works of Ukrainian authors on social orphanhood. Quite typical is the demonstration of the loneliness, abandonment, psychological trauma of an orphan, the unfolding of the problem of non-acceptance by society, bullying, and at the same time the need of the orphan for self-affirmation and the search for identity, and for his or her own home (literally and figuratively). A new aspect in Ukrainian literary discourse of contemporary literature for children about orphans is the emphasis on social orphanhood and two types of plot: (1) one based on the desire of children to return to the lost family and to establish communication with the parents; (2) the other on the demonstration of anarchic behaviour, ignoring moral and ethical values, and the negative attitudes of social orphans to their migrant parents.

<sup>2</sup> Orphans are the main characters of the folk tales and short stories "Funny Thing with Kost" by V. Vynnychenko, "Wanderer" by Stepan Vasylychenko, "Forester" by Oles Donchenko, "Kuril Islands" by Yuri Zbanatsky, "Pervinka" by Mykola Vingranovsky, "Girl Who Was Looking for Mother", "Lady of Flowers" by Valeriy Shevchuk, and others.

## Social orphanhood in contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and young people

In Ukrainian contemporary literature for young readers, the most developed theme is that of social orphanhood caused by the labour migration of parents. In his story "Money Does Not Smell", Serhii Hrydin writes about the complicated social realities and employment of the mother abroad as a way to resolve the financial problems of the family. The writer covers several episodes in the life of the main character, 14-year-old Mykola, and his family. Changes in society result for the Moroz family in the mother's retirement, and thus in the loss of her job, leading to a difficult financial situation. The mother decides to go abroad to earn a living, but the son is indignant. They hardly communicate before her departure, and then he ignores her phone calls. However, this was just Mykolka's outward position; in fact, he was suffering greatly from being separated from his mother. He "remembered mother quite a different person" when she was working in the hospital's accounting department, she was always smiling, stroking his head, and he really wanted his mother to be there. Instead, the teenager received a cell phone and money as a birthday present. For certain financial benefits they had to pay too high a price: Mykolka was deprived of maternal affection and care and felt that he and his mother were moving apart from each other.

Authors choose different plots and developments of events that take place in families where parents become workers abroad. Tanya Maliarchuk, with ironic pathos on behalf of the children of migrant workers, thanks all the countries where the parents went for the "children's time", the "time of eternal summer. Eternal holiday" (Savka and Brunner 2013: 105). Children are not sad; they have complete freedom of action without any teaching or upbringing. Their parents send them money for various needs, and they grow up prematurely, feeling like "kings of villages, masters of themselves and their untroubled days and endless nights" (Savka and Brunner 2013: 103). The absence of one or both parents negatively affects the formation of the children's psyche and personality, as evidenced by the heroes of this story.

The fate of the social orphan Sofia, whose mother first went abroad, and then lived an immoral lifestyle and completely stopped communicating with her daughter, is covered in the story "Invisible" by Natalia Huzieieva. The story of the little girl is dramatic and even scary. Frau Daihovski appeared in Sofia's life, supporting her hopes that her mother would return, and they would be together. She communicated with the girl in messages on behalf of her mother. This continued even a few years after Sophia's mother died of an overdose.

Waiting for a mother is one of the most common motifs of works about orphans. Sofia from the story "Invisible" by Natalia Huzieieva is also in constant expectation of meeting her mother or at least communicating with her. And this expectancy intensifies the feeling of the mother's presence, giving her hope (Savka and Brunner 2013: 99):

I tried to imagine my mom's life using Skype options. A green oval means she's home. An orange one – she's gone, she went to work. Red with a white strip – she asks not

to bother her; she's working at home. However, whatever the colours, I always had the mother I was waiting for. Let it be mom on Skype, let it be on the telephone line, let it be on the cover of an envelope – still you feel your mom is on this earth. No longer your mom, but your feeling of mom protects you. At that time, my mom had not yet become invisible... I have always been waiting for her...

Oksana Lutsyshyna's story "A Carpet with a Deer" is a perfect addition to the various plots united by the theme of social orphanhood and labour migration. The author emphasises the problem of family breakdown, the increasing alienation of a daughter and mother. Zoriana's mother, the main character of the story, goes abroad to earn money for new accommodation. Her father decides to remarry, justifying himself with the idea of caring for his daughter's future, saving money for her education. The 14-year-old girl is having a hard time and cannot tell her mother everything, but makes up stories about her neighbours and hopes that her father will admit everything himself. Remorse and feelings of betrayal turn into cries and sobs. However, the mother understands her daughter (Savka and Brunner 2013: 174–175):

In the room, Zoriana turned to look into her mother's face and burst into tears, fearing that now mom would break down crying too, and hell knows what would turn out from this appointment, and then mother would definitely hate her. Mother instead was only repeating, "My darling, sweet, dear girl..." Then, when Zoriana calmed down a bit, she asked, "How are you, my dear?" And then Zoriana could only reply: "Oh, mom, you don't know anything! But if you knew, you... you'd say you don't want such a daughter!" "Don't say that, my dear little girl, you know..." mother said, "everything will be fine, I will come, we will have a small house – the one I was..."

Family chatting via Skype brings them closer and prevents them from losing trust and the connections between them. Lutsyshyna writes about labour migration, the crisis of the family institution, social orphanhood and its consequences for the child. According to a similar scheme, Oksana Dumanska unfolds the plot of the story *Schoolgirl from the Suburbs*. The main character lives with her grandmother, because her mother works abroad, and her father has a new family. The problem of loneliness is closely interrelated with that of socialisation and maturation, and thus the choice of the life path after school: to stay in Ukraine or to study and live in a foreign country. The mother, caring for her daughter's future, fictitiously marries a foreigner.

Personal interests (self-realisation as a specialist), the crisis of family values, and not the need to financially support the family, push the mother in the story *Another Home* by Oksana Lushchevska to become an emigrant, to start another family with a foreigner and not return to Ukraine. The story from the perspective of Polia and Artem, abandoned children, very subtly conveys the children's experiences, feelings and interpretations of all the events that happen to them. They also need a mother to talk to about everything, with whom to share joys and pains, and to ask for advice.

With the parents' physical absence, what is important is how close the communication between the child and the mother is. Nelia, the character of Halyna Kruk's story "No paura", is very concerned that her Ivasyk will be left alone with

problems and there will be no one to protect him. However, what disturbs her most is that “he grew up, without me having enough time to be his mother” (Savka and Brunner 2013: 14). But what is more, not all mothers care about this. Wadi’s mother, the hero in Marianna Kianovska’s story “Berries”, went to Italy and even stopped calling him. The mother left her children Lilya and Nadia, who are described in Oksana Lushchevska’s work “Our Great Fictional Family”. The girls were first taken care of by their aunt, and then they ended up in a boarding school.

The analysis of the plots of these works gives grounds to claim that they are not characterised by those “typical stories of orphans”, which appear on the basis of folklore elements and which Kimball (1999: 567) traces. In contemporary Ukrainian prose about social orphans, there are no stages of the plot development recorded by Mattson (1997) in works for teenagers. This is explained by the fact that we are talking about another type of orphanhood. Child-heroes have a “connection with the family unit”, they are not figures that can be built from scratch without inherent prejudice against preconceived perspectives, they “do not belong to even the most basic of groups, the family unit”, as Kimball writes (1999: 559).

Instead, I single out three plot components that are present to a greater or lesser extent in contemporary works by Ukrainian writers about social orphans:

- 1) statement of the fact of social orphanhood by showing the child and the circumstances of the “here and now”;
- 2) retrospective elements (memories of the time when the child had a complete family, and was together with the parents) and an explanation of the cause of social orphanhood;
- 3) projection of future developments.

The coverage of each component is due to the author’s vision and the features of the genre. For example, the stories focus on the first component, and the other two components are revealed sporadically or in strokes. In longer stories, all three plot components are expanded. It is worth noting that a happy ending is not necessary either. Serhii Grydin’s story “Money Does Not Smell”, Marianna Kianovska’s “Berries”, Oksana Lushchevska’s “Our Fictional Family”, Oksana Dumanska’s *Schoolgirl from the Suburbs*, Oksana Lushchevska’s *Another Home*, Oksana Lutsyshyna’s “Carpet with Deer” have open endings. Tanya Maliarchuk’s story “Children’s Time” and Halyna Kruk’s “No paura” end dramatically, and Halyna Malyk’s story “Slavka” ends tragically.

The writers, as a rule, emphasise the psychological and social aspects of childhood and choose the two-dimensionality of the space-time plane of the work. This is manifested in the clear division of the time and space of the described events and of the hero before and after the departure of a relative: with the family and without the family; experiencing events here (at home) and there (abroad).

## **Analysis of the artistic representation of the theme of social orphanhood**

The theme of social orphanhood, covered in contemporary Ukrainian literature for children and young people, unfolds based on the attention given to a range of interrelated issues: (1) relationships between parents and children; (2) loneliness of the child; (3) the moral and ethical choices and behaviour of the child; (4) the socialisation and social activity of adolescents; (5) relationships with peers; (6) growing up and becoming an individual.

### ***Parents and children: dialogue or communication gap***

The problem of the relationship between parents and children has long been characteristic of literature for children and young people. The representations, professed values, and the worldviews of different generations often come into conflict. The relationship between the child and mother, the child and father, and the family atmosphere are the starting point for the formation of a young personality, for the formation of character. This is why it is so important for there to be successful dialogue between parents and children, in which the interlocutors hear and understand each other. Verbal, visual, and emotional contact is important. This aspect of the problem is clearly covered by Halyna Kruk in the story “No paura”.

The mother communicates with her son Ivasyk via Skype, but this is not the kind of communication that gives harmony. It only increases the anxiety of the son and mother. Ivasyk is concerned that his mother might act like his aunt Vasylyna, who “gave birth to new children and left the old ones” (Savka and Brunner 2013: 12), and the mother constantly repeats in Italian “No paura” which in English means “I’m afraid”. Nelia (the mother) is afraid of losing touch with her son. It is not just about not interrupting the conversation via Skype, but more about the distance and time that changes the child’s attitude towards the mother. “On the one hand, he is still a child, and on the other he sometimes shows something completely not childish, sharp and prickly, like a hedgehog” (Savka and Brunner 2013: 13–14). Halyna Kruk, using an internal monologue as an artistic means of self-characterisation and self-analysis of the hero, conveys the thoughts of the woman and her explanation of her son’s behaviour. Nelia seeks sincerity in conversations with her son, a warm relationship she never had with her mother. She wants to know “what he thinks about when he wakes up or falls asleep, what he dreams about”. In her memory, Ivas remains a 4-year-old boy, and now he has grown up, but she has never had time to be his mother. “On Skype, he is often business-like and apathetic – he wants to look like an adult, to impress her, to assure her that they are doing fine. But she would like him not to keep it all to himself, to share it with her, as before” (Savka and Brunner 2013: 16).

The story is narrated by the mother, and such a narrative presupposes a double address of the work where the intended readers are both adults and children simultaneously.

Another model of the absence of dialogue between the children of migrant workers and parents is the one in which the child seeks a connection with a mother

who ignores its needs, has no maternal feelings and is obsessed with her own life (for example, "Invisible" by Natalia Huzieieva). Little Vadka from Marianna Kianovska's story "Berries" is deeply concerned about his mother's departure. He misses her, even though he has "almost taught himself to live without his mother", and he loves her, although he thinks he will never see her. He cannot calmly look at her photos and possessions. The "voice of a child" prevails in this story (Thacker 1996), although the writer uses a heterodiegetic type of narrative.

"While younger children only ask for their mother's return, older children can interpret leaving for work as an insult and betrayal" (Meletych 2013). Mykolka from S. Grydin's story "Money Does Not Smell" hardly talks to his mother before she leaves and he does not answer her phone calls. He suppresses his emotions, although in fact he wants to "get up, catch up, hug and, as though in childhood, cling to his mother and just stand by her, silently feeling their connection not through some empty words, but through something much stronger and lasting" (Savka and Brunner 2013: 99).

Often, the restrained emotions of children and parents can forever break the connection with the dearest person. This is the message of such stories. Mykolka does not accept a gift of money. The donated banknote "had rather a sharp and bitter smell. The smell of loneliness, resentment and something irretrievably lost..." (Savka and Brunner 2013: 101). However, he is waiting for his mother's birthday greetings. The open ending of the story promises that everything in this family will be fine.

The deepening of the communication gap is also explained by the gender nature of the mother-child relationship. Boys are more likely to be introverted, although in reality they are hurt by the absence of their mother and miss her care and warmth. Girls cannot contain their emotions and express them. For instance, we can compare the episodes of the arrival of Vadka's mother ("Berries") and communication with Slavka's mother ("Slavka" by H. Malyk). Vadka does not recognise his mother when he sees "some strange, tall, thin-faced, as if unhealthy, woman with a big bag on her shoulders and a big suitcase on wheels" (Savka and Brunner 2013: 74) coming into the yard with her aunt. Halyna Malyk pays more attention to family relations after the mother's arrival. "Slavka, suffocating from feelings that came from somewhere in the depths of her soul and squeezed her throat, rushed to her mother and hugged her very tightly" (Savka and Brunner 2013: 27). However, her joy did not last long, because her mother, persecuted by her fellow villagers, commits suicide, and her father sets himself on fire in the church.

Labour migration at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has deepened the problem of the communication gap between parents and children. This is confirmed by the conversations of Polia and Artem with their mother in Oksana Lushchevska's story *Another Home*. Polia cannot confess to her mother that she was beaten in the street, she cannot share the joy of her first romantic experience, she cannot ask her mother about her brother and her feelings. In the context of talking about the end of the world, the girl thinks that it has already happened in their family: her mother has another home, she gets married, they will soon have a brother.

The problem of lack of understanding between parents and children, the need for attention, daily care, and hugs which migrant workers have “converted” into things, into money, is highly relevant, as conveyed by the authors of the considered works.

### ***The loneliness of a child and the dream of a happy family***

The loneliness of the child depicted in stories drawing on social orphanhood is due to the lack of parental care, maternal affection, family, and home. The problem of loneliness accompanies the literary tradition of any orphan stories, from fairy tales to modern texts. As Kimbal points out (1999: 559):

Orphans are a reminder that the possibility of utter undesired solitude exists for any human being. Orphans are at once pitiable and noble. They are a manifestation of loneliness, but they also represent the possibility for humans to reinvent themselves.

In the story “Our Big Fictional Family”, Oksana Lushchevska shows Nadia and Lilia, children from the orphanage who go to the bus station every day to play an interesting game. The story is told from the perspective of the oldest girl Nadia, who describes the essence of this game, understanding its frivolity: “from the passengers who arrive at the bus station, the sister chooses a family, a fictional family” (Savka and Brunner 2013: 52). However, the younger, seven-year-old Lilia sincerely hopes that they will have a family, a home of their own and that someone will take care of them.

The desire to have a family is typical of most orphan-heroes of literary works. In the story “Berries”, Marianna Kianovska conveys the emotional state of Vadka who longs for his mother and feels lonely and abandoned. He constantly thinks about his mother and asks why his mother had not taken him with her. Is he as useless as the things left in the attic? Did she find a new little boy in Italy? Vadka’s immediate thoughts, presented in the form of a stream of consciousness, convey the pain of a child’s soul, loneliness (Savka and Brunner 2013: 67):

“Why did she stop calling them? She won’t do it today either. Not today, not tomorrow. Aunt calls, but mom does not. Aunt says she knows nothing about mother. Pavlo says she found someone there. But can she just find a child there, in Italy?” Vadi wanted to cry.

The text uses the artistic techniques of fragmentary associative representations, desires, wishes and plots of the dreamy visions of the main character.

Polia, the main character of the story *Another Home* suffers from loneliness and constant thoughts about her mother. Given that the work is based on alternate stories by Polia and Artem, the reader has the opportunity to learn about children’s experiences and to look at the depicted events from the point of view of a child (a girl and a boy, which makes the work suitable for readers of both sexes). The diary form of the story best illustrates the inner world of children, their feeling of sadness for their mother, and loneliness. Polia admits: “I wanted to touch her when I saw her on Skype. I wanted her warm...” (Lushchevska 2013: 39). “I wanted to see my mom. Snuggle up to her. Sit on the couch next to her and nestle up against her. Why is it like that? Why?” (70).

The problem-thematic basis of the work “requires genre design, specific composition and architectonics, combining the components of the work into a single structure” (Kovaliv 2007: 472). The confessional manner of the story, the girl’s openness, helps us better understand the psychological state, emotions, feelings of joy, sadness, doubt, confusion or anxiety of the main character of the work by Oksana Dumanska. These texts are dominated by psychologism, images of the inner world and experiences of the child. This indicates a change in the poetics of orphan stories in terms of redirecting emphasis from the plot to the psychology of the characters. Maria Nikolajeva noted that this phenomenon is typical of literature for children in the late twentieth century (2004).

The lonely main characters of such literary works add peculiar drama to the interpretation of social orphanhood.

### ***Among peers: friendship and misunderstanding***

The problems related to the socialisation of children and their relationships in the school community are the consequences of parents’ labour migration. The analysed works provide an opportunity to identify several basic models of relations of social orphans with peers: (1) friendship and mutual support; (2) leadership / outsiders’ behaviour in the school environment; (3) grouping for the sake of brawling and anarchic behaviour. These models can relate to both the main and minor characters of the work; changes during the development of the plot and events; other modifications; comparisons and contrasts in one work. We choose for consideration the works where each model is most vivid and clear.

A perfect demonstration of children’s solidarity and friendship is the relationship between Liza and Volodko from Oksana Saiko’s story “Neprosti” [Uneasy] (2014). Volodko Petrenko is a social orphan (he did not know his father and his mother was abroad), a difficult teenager whom his classmates were afraid of, who was scolded by teachers, and criticised and called “the wrong one” by his neighbours. The excellent schoolgirl, Liza, in spite of her parents, made friends with Volodko and understood him. For her sake, the boy was ready to change his behaviour, attend classes, give up smoking, and stop lying.

An example of an outsider’s behaviour in a teenage team is given in the story “Slavka” by Halyna Malyk. The girl becomes a victim of bullying. She is laughed at and called “Senora” because her mother works in Italy. Polia struggles with the same problem when the teacher condemns her mother and contemptuously calls her an emigrant (in Oksana Lushchevska’s book *Another Home*).

Migrant workers’ children, the heroes of Tanya Maliarchuk’s story “Children’s Time”, resort to grouping together and outright anarchic behaviour. One phrase from the work gives a clear idea of the lives of the main characters: “Perhaps in solitude, one of us would seem to be the weak link, but united we were an unscrupulous fighting machine that destroyed everything in its path” (Savka and Brunner 2013: 106). Analysing this model of relations with peers, the author tells us a story in the voice of the main character, who says for everyone: “We did not miss our parents, we were

proud of them” (Savka and Brunner 2013: 104). Older people condemn the behaviour of the adolescents, and the children laugh in their faces. Such provocative behaviour and brawling lead, among other things, to problems with the law, early sexual experience, alcoholism, and end tragically for the Grinkovs. The authenticity and realism of this story is provided by the narrator, who belongs to the generation of abandoned children.

### ***The problem of early maturation and the choice of a life path***

Migrant workers’ children are doomed to premature adulthood and independence. The heroes of the works are not static. They grow up and try to understand and achieve their potential. While they do so, a worldview, a position in life, and beliefs are formed.

The works of Oksana Dumanska and Oksana Lushchevska describe the events of one school year, the period lived without a mother. Polia writes in her diary: “A year without a mother is a lot. A year without her is eternity” (Lushchevska 2013: 39). Circumstances and time change children who interpret their parents’ behaviour differently, and who rethink their own. Only when Polia and Artem fall in love and begin to build dreams for the future do they accept that their mother has changed in another country, in another house, and has managed her personal life. Social orphanhood encourages these children to grow up faster and set priorities for themselves.

Oksana Dumanska’s schoolgirl also makes a hard choice when she decides to accept her mother’s offer to study abroad. But her father with a new family and her grandmother stay in Ukraine. She has to decide where she wants to live: in Ukraine, with her relatives and friends, or abroad, with her mother, but where everything else is foreign to her.

### **Typology of images of children deprived of parental care**

Artistic images are one of the planes through which the author conveys the idea, unfolds the theme of the work, and highlights the issues raised. The behaviour, thoughts, and emotions of the child are the engine of plot development, the basis of the image of the character. The actualisation of the theme of social orphanhood in fiction is closely connected to the external and psychological portrayal of the child – a social orphan. Lidia Matsevko-Bekerska notes that “the maximum impact on the consciousness of the child-reader can be achieved in the complex ‘relevant topic – a lifelike character – accessible language – understandable emotions and issues’” (2011: 23). There is a kind of process of initiation, the child’s acquisition of new emotional and life experiences, and it is the characters who lead the reader through the initiation, and the child-heroes “distinguish literature for children and young people from the general context” (Kachak 2018: 46). The child-heroes – social orphans – by social status are not characters with whom readers identify. However, their inner, spiritual world, and their experiences, emotions, feelings of loneliness, abandonment, insecurity, and outsider behaviour are often close to the recipients. Dirk P. Mattson also writes about this: “We are attracted to orphans in literature because they are the ‘common people’. Orphans are heroes and heroines for us. We can identify with them, recognizing their feelings of insecurity as our own” (1997: 17).

Based on the above-mentioned range of problems and models of character relationships, as well as taking into account different classification criteria (character, behaviour, social status, etc.), I identify the main types of images of children in the analysed works of literature on social orphanhood: lonely, abandoned children, difficult adolescents, children as outsiders, “little adults”.

### ***Lonely children***

Lonely children are a type of image of children in contemporary literature for young people – children who are constantly in this condition, regardless of whether they remain alone and with their own thoughts or are surrounded by other people. Psychologists note that loneliness is considered in two aspects: as a psychological state (internal emotional experience) and as a characteristic of physical relationships with other people (external alienation from people) (Galanaki and Vassilopoulou 2007: 455–456):

Children and adolescents themselves define loneliness as a distressing emotional experience, associated mainly with sadness, boredom, stemming from quantitative and/or qualitative deficits in their relationships, from the inadequate satisfaction of basic interpersonal and social needs.

Vladko's loneliness (M. Kianovska's “Berries”), as well as Mykolka Moroz's (S. Grydin's “Money Doesn't Smell”), Sofia's (N. Guzeeva's “Invisible”), and Slavka's (O. Saiko's “Neznaiomka z trynadtsiatoi kvartyry” [Stranger from the Apartment 13] (Saiko 2014) is primarily due to external factors, namely the absence of a relative, the mother. These children lack communication with their mother, kindness, love, care. Their loneliness is linked to the status of a social orphan or “abandoned child”, a child of migrant workers.

Mykolka Moroz could not imagine life without his mother. He went to school, but almost did not communicate with classmates (Savka and Brunner 2013: 99):

[...] during breaks he no longer ran on horizontal bars, did not discuss the football match with classmates, and thoughtfully sat at the desk, staring out of the window and without noticing anything there in the street.

Mykolka's behaviour testifies to his loneliness. The boy's real feelings were longing and sadness for his mother, and he kept her picture under his pillow.

The portrayals of the lonely children are often psychological or dynamic. Monologues of the main characters, “stream of consciousness” or first-person narratives become the means of demonstrating the inner world. Children's pain, longing, sadness, lack of family warmth and a sense of security become the prevalent tone of the analysed stories.

### ***“Difficult teenagers”***

One of the typical images of orphans is the image of a brawler or a problem child, a difficult teenager. Almost every story by Oksana Saiko has the character of a “difficult child”, but the author does not provide a deep description. The episodes on which the plot is built testify that behind the challenging, anti-social behaviour, the child hides

genuine characteristics, feelings, kindness, mercy. This is how Volodka Petrenko behaves (in O. Saiko's "Wrong"). The author shows a boy who has been living with his aunt for six years, because his mother went elsewhere to earn money and is not involved in his upbringing. Her "presence" in Volodya's life is money and "meaningless gifts". "Maybe that's why he behaved like that – as if to the detriment of everyone: rudely, defiantly and brazenly? He often started fights, disrupted lessons" (Saiko 2014: 153). However, in his heart he was different, and this is well understood by his classmate Lizka.

Raising a kind of protest, as a response to the circumstances in which the children of migrant workers found themselves, is how the difficult teenagers in Tanya Maliarchuk's story "Children's Time" behave. The author barely describes the personalities but shows the collective image of teenagers united in a "gang" led by the Grinkov twins. Their behaviour is far from just joking around and playing mischief, but is a display of aggression, cruelty and impudence. In this story, the behaviour of "difficult children" has radical signs. The protagonist recalls that time with irony and gives the following characteristics of this gang of children (Savka and Brunner 2013: 105–106):

We were called bandits, scoundrels, bastards, gypsies, riff-raffs, little rascals (we liked this word and sometimes we called ourselves so). [...] We had no conscience either. Maybe one of us was weak in solitude, but as a group we were an unscrupulous fighting machine that destroyed everything in its path.

### ***Children – outsiders***

The phenomenon of outsider behaviour and bullying is common in modern society. Children's aggression, abuse, selfishness, low morals and unethical behaviour are very common in a group of adolescents towards anyone outside this group. Such a child on the outside is called an outsider, "exile", "different", "black sheep", "stranger", "loser". Children who become victims of bullying are well described in world literature (Danielson 2009).

The reason for outsider behaviour in the works considered in this research is the status of the child – a social orphan or a child of migrant workers. In Oksana Lushchevska's story *Another Home*, Polia's teacher and some classmates show prejudice against her because her mother is an emigrant. But the most dramatic example of a child who is bullied by classmates is Slavka from the story of Halyna Malyk. The writer does not talk about it in detail, but describes the girl's dream, her tense emotional condition. She becomes a victim of bullying and harassment, she is ignored, and is called "Senora" because her mother works in Italy.

The obvious functional perspective of such texts is to overcome the silence of the problem of social orphanhood, to start a dialogue, to offer a preventive emotional experience to halt bullying and prejudice against social orphans. In the foreword "Through the Eyes of Children" to the collection *Mother on Skype*, Mariana Savka rightly states (2013: 11):

I do not think that this book can bring parents from abroad back to their children. However, it starts voicing this urgent problem for society. And to speak means to look for ways to solve it.

## Conclusions

Contemporary literature for children and young people reflects relevant issues that directly or indirectly affect the child and childhood. Social orphanhood covers a special socio-demographic group of children who are left without care, love, and attention when their parents are alive. The writers considered in this paper, addressing works to young readers, through the prism of individual stories and typical social events and phenomena, comprehend and artistically represent the problems and social consequences of orphanhood both for the individual child and for a whole generation of “abandoned children”. The literary and critical interpretation of these texts is an opportunity to trace the manifestations of the literary tradition of depicting orphans and the development of the problem of orphanhood in the world literature of different historical and cultural periods. I note that the plots of contemporary Ukrainian works are built on three components (statement of the fact of social orphanhood, retrospective elements, projection of future developments) and differ from the “typical stories of orphans” modelled by M. Kimball as a set of mandatory plot elements. The driver of the plot development is the desire of the child for the return of the lost family and to establish communication with parents, or for self-assertion through anarchic behaviour and the rejection of moral and ethical values. However, it is traditional to show the loneliness, abandonment, and psychological trauma of the orphan. Problems of bullying and outsider behaviour in children’s groups are demonstrated in the background.

It has been found that the most relevant of the range of problems in the analysed works on the theme of social orphanhood are those of parent-child relationships, the child’s loneliness, moral and ethical choices and behaviour, relationships with peers, growing up and personality development.

The writers clearly place special emphasis on the psychological experiences and emotional condition of migrants’ children, the peculiarities of their communication with parents and peers, and the process of socialisation. This shows a re-direction in the poetics of the text from the plot to the psychology of the characters, a tendency noted by Maria Nikolajeva (2004) in children’s literature since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The psychological problem of children’s loneliness is revealed by writers through psychological portraits, confessional and diary-style storytelling, self-characterisation of the main characters through monologues and “stream of consciousness”.

Taking into account different classification criteria (character, behaviour, social status, etc.), a typology of children’s images – the main characters of works on social orphanhood – include lonely children, abandoned children, and difficult or outsider children.

The importance of dealing with the theme of social orphanhood in contemporary literature is noted in research, as these texts reflect urgent social phenomena and problems. Besides, they serve as a tool for forming ideas, they provide moral, ethical and value guidelines, and present social models of behaviour of a young generation of Ukrainians. In so doing, they voice a burning issue, and consequently look for ways of solving it.

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### **Društvom uvjetovana siročad u suvremenoj ukrajinskoj dječjoj književnosti i književnosti za mladež**

Ovaj rad istražuje načine prikazivanja teme siročadi, uvjetovane društvenim okolnostima, u suvremenoj ukrajinskoj dječjoj i adolescentskoj književnosti. Ukrajinski pisci dopunjuju tradiciju prikazivanja siročadi u svjetskoj književnosti. Analiziraju se zapleti djela o djeci koja su postala socijalna siročad zbog migracija roditelja u potrazi za poslom. Određuje se raspon problema koji se tom temom otvaraju i uspostavlja tipologija u osloncu na analizu obrazaca ponašanja dječjih likova. Opisuju se uobičajena i karakteristična obilježja poetika djela o djetinjstvu siročadi u ukrajinskoj i svjetskoj književnosti, uzimajući u obzir prethodna istraživanja Melanie A. Kimball, Claudie Mills i Dirka P. Mattsona.

**Ključne riječi:** dječja književnost i književnost za mladež, socijalna siročad, radne migracije, umjetničko prikazivanje teme, siročad, obrasci ponašanja