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LITERATURE AS A SPACE OF HUMANITARIAN SOLIDARITY: EMPATHY, MEMORY, AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

ЛІТЕРАТУРА ЯК ПРОСТІР ГУМАНІТАРНОЇ СОЛІДАРНОСТІ: ЕМПАТІЯ, ПАМ'ЯТЬ І МІЖКУЛЬТУРНИЙ ДІАЛОГ

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In contemporary humanitarian discourse, the category of international solidarity is becoming increasingly prominent, especially in the context of global challenges related to armed conflicts, mass migration, human rights violations, and cultural transformations. Literature, as a specific form of symbolic representation, plays an important role in structuring the experience of intercultural interaction, shaping ethical models of coexistence, and constructing narratives that articulate the humanitarian dimension of solidarity [8]. As Martha Nussbaum convincingly notes,

literary fiction cultivates in the reader a “capacity for moral imagination” and provides a foundation for a global ethics open to otherness [4, p. 95]. This capacity becomes especially significant in an era marked by the intensification of intercultural interaction, shaping ethical models of coexistence and constructing narratives that articulate the humanitarian dimension of solidarity.

The humanitarian dimension of international solidarity in literary studies is primarily associated with the phenomenon of empathy. The theory of narrative empathy developed by Suzanne Keen emphasizes the potential of literary texts to influence social perceptions of other communities and to cultivate the capacity for compassion through mechanisms of identification with a fictional character [3, pp. 14, 18]. In works that represent traumatic experiences – genocide, war, deportations – literature functions as a medium of memory that not only preserves factual material engages the reader emotionally, transforming private stories into universal moral narratives [9]. For example, *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl presents narratives of survival that have become global texts of solidarity, reinterpreted across numerous cultural contexts [5, p. 210]. The continued transnational circulation of such works demonstrates the ability of testimonial literature to transcend its historical situatedness and to function as a shared ethical resource within global memory cultures.

The cultural dimension of international solidarity is linked to intertextual and intercultural dialogues that shape the structure of contemporary world literature. The concept of “world literature,” as proposed by David Damrosch, emphasizes that a literary work becomes part of the global literary sphere not only through translation but also through its capacity to generate new meanings within another cultural context [2, p. 17]. Thus, literary texts serve as instruments for the circulation of cultural experience, where international solidarity manifests itself through mechanisms of reception and interpretation. Such mechanisms demonstrate that global literary exchange is not merely the movement of texts across borders but also the negotiation of shared interpretive frameworks, ethical orientations, and value systems among diverse readerships.

Ukrainian literature of the past decade has shown an increasing prominence of documentary-fictional genres as modes of representing the experience of war and social transformation. The combination of fictional narration with documentary testimony fosters international attention to humanitarian issues and reinforces global discussions about solidarity. This hybridization of genres has proven particularly effective in contexts of contemporary conflict, as it enables national experiences to be communicated with both evidentiary credibility and emotional resonance, thereby broadening their reach to transnational audiences.

The communicative dimension of international solidarity in literature is defined by the structure of the global literary market, the functioning of translation networks, and the dynamics of digital communication. Translation, according to Lawrence Venuti, is an “ethical practice,” as it enables the entry of a local culture into the global context and opens space for intercultural dialogue [7, pp. 82, 267–268]. In the digital age, the role of translation is complemented by online platforms that facilitate the rapid dissemination of literary content and the formation of transnational reading communities. Electronic libraries, literary forums, and social media, in particular, create new mechanisms of humanitarian communication, where acts of solidarity may take the form of supporting authors, sharing texts, or participating in volunteer translation initiatives focused on works about war or human rights. These digitally mediated practices significantly amplify the visibility of marginalized voices and democratize access to narratives that might otherwise remain confined within local linguistic boundaries, thereby enhancing the communicative foundations of international solidarity.

Narratives of solidarity that emerge in literature devoted to contemporary armed conflicts, including the Russian-Ukrainian war, hold particular significance. Reportage literature – such as the works of Oleg Sentsov and other contemporary Ukrainian and international authors – combines documentary accuracy with literary stylization, producing a form of “moral testimony” capable of conveying to an international audience not only factual information but also the existential dimension of lived experience [1]. Such texts mobilize international solidarity by making violations of humanitarian law visible and by activating the global community’s engagement in the defense of human rights. Moreover, by foregrounding individual voices within broader geopolitical crises, these narratives counteract processes of dehumanization and foster a transnational ethics of recognition.

An equally important aspect is the transnational cooperation among writers, literary critics, and institutions. International literary awards – such as the Nobel Prize in Literature or the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade – frequently recognize authors whose work contributes to the reinforcement of humanitarian values and the development of a global ethics of responsibility. For example, Olga Tokarczuk, laureate of the 2018 Nobel Prize, proposes the concept of the “tender narrator” as a humanitarian tool capable of uniting cultures through attentive and ethically grounded ways of seeing the world [6]. Such conceptual frameworks underscore the potential of literary discourse to challenge national and ideological boundaries, offering models of ethical sensibility that resonate across diverse cultural contexts.

Thus, literature functions as a polyphonic space of international solidarity in which the humanitarian, cultural, and communicative dimensions interact through complex forms of aesthetic and ethical experience. A literary-theoretical approach reveals the capacity of the literary text to cultivate global sensitivity, foster intercultural understanding, and mobilize communities in response to contemporary humanitarian crises. In this sense, literature not only reflects global transformations but actively shapes collective orientations toward empathy, responsibility, and transnational cooperation.

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