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BIBLIOTHERAPY OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY WAR BY MEANS OF FANTASY LITERATURE

The **aim** of this study is to highlight the aspect of bibliotherapy in helping children and young people affected by war. The study consists of an analysis of selected texts, extracted from fantasy literature, which are helpful in trauma overcoming. The author briefly analyses *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by Clive Staples Lewis, *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) by Joanne Kathleen Rowling, *The Witcher* (1992-1999) by Andrzej Sapkowski. *The Hunger Games* (2008-2010) by Suzanne Collins and *Shadow and Bone* (2012) by Leigh Bardugo. It is assumed the use of reading books to regenerate the nervous system and psyche of a traumatized person.

The research **method** is content analysis and modeling working with the text. The author draws attention not only to the implication of fantasy literature in helping to unravel one's own moral problems, but also to experience and cope with the difficult emotions that accompany reading. Additionally, she to take notice of such ways to work with text as: the possibility of understanding one's situation, gaining distance from difficult affairs, working through the problem, changing one's way of thinking and gaining hope for a better future.

Results. The author is particularly attentive to the young reader's identification with the main character, experiencing emotions and ultimately experiencing catharsis, which symbolises the shedding of emotional tension. All this leads to insight, full understanding and acceptance of a difficult situation.

Conclusions of the study are intended to confirm that fantasy literature is able to stimulate reflection, help people understand and accept the difficult situations associated with war. Although the world created by the writers is a fantasy place, there are mechanisms familiar to our world such as violence, pain, suffering and the contest between good and evil. The young reader can be equipped with tools to help win over traumas.

Keywords: bibliotherapy; fantasy literature; children; help with traumas; analysis texts.

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БІБЛІОТЕРАПІЯ ПОСТРАЖДАЛИХ ВІД ВІЙНИ ДІТЕЙ ЗА ДОПОМОГОЮ ФЕНТЕЗИ-ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

Метою цього дослідження є висвітлення методу бібліотерапії для надання допомоги дітям і молоді, які постраждали від війни. Дослідження складається з аналізу вибраних текстів, узятих з літератури фентезі, які допомагають у подоланні травми. Наводиться стислий аналіз творів «Лев, відьма і шафа» (1950) Клайва Стейплза Льюїса, «Гаррі Поттер» (1997–2007) Джоан Кетлін Роулінг, «Відьмак» (1992–1999) Анджея Сапковського, «Голодні ігри» (2008–2010) Сюзанни Коллінз, «Тінь і кістка» (2012) Лі Бардуго. Пропонується використовувати читання книг для регенерації нервової системи та психіки травмованої людини.

Метод дослідження – контент-аналіз та моделювальна робота з текстом. Авторка звертає увагу на те, що література фентезі допомагає не лише розібратися у власних моральних проблемах, а й пережити прочитане і впоратися зі складними емоціями, які супроводжують читання. Крім того, описуються такі способи роботи з текстом, як: можливість зрозуміти свою ситуацію, дистанціюватися від складних справ, пропрацювати проблему, змінити спосіб мислення та отримати надію на краще майбутнє.

Результати. Авторка особливо уважно ставиться до того, щоб юний читач ідентифікував себе з головним героєм, відчував відповідні емоції і врешті-решт пережив катарсис, який символізує скидання емоційного напруження. Усе це сприяє досягненню інсайту, повному розумінню прочитаного та прийняттю складної ситуації.

Висновки дослідження покликані підтвердити, що література фентезі здатна стимулювати рефлексію, допомагати людям зрозуміти і прийняти складні ситуації, пов'язані з війною. Хоча світ, створений письменниками, є фантастичним, у ньому діють ті ж самі механізми і сили, що й у нашому, реальному, світі, такі як насильство, біль, страждання, боротьба між добром і злом. Юний читач дістає відтак на озброєння інструменти, які допоможуть йому перемагати травми.

Ключові слова: бібліотерапія; література фентезі; діти; допомога з травмами; аналіз текстів.

Introduction. Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz once said: "our relationship with reality is constantly shaped by literature" (Miłosz, 1987). The poet meant that due to literature we are able to understand the world around us. Furthermore, it is widely known that books can have a calming, therapeutic effect, alleviate suffering caused by illness (Szulc, 1984), and even trauma experienced during war. The significant influence of literature is particularly felt in the realm of fiction. It is an archive of human experiences, a deep source of knowledge about human beings, an arsenal of psychological fears (Gostyńska, 1977). It is through books that readers can understand and accept the world around them, and cope with trauma.

The topic that interests us is bibliotherapy. In 1966, the American Library Association created an official definition of bibliotherapy. It is "the use of selected reading materials as therapeutic aids in medicine and psychiatry; also counseling in the solution of personal problems through directed reading" (Rubin, 1978). In the process of bibliotherapy, conversation and discussion are also important in order to achieve a therapeutic effect. Sometimes psychodrama techniques are helpful, which help readers "take on a role" and distance themselves from personal experiences. This allows the participant to see themselves and their problems and also think about them without excessive, harmful emotions, which helps in working through the problem, drawing conclusions and establishing helpful rules of conduct for change (Borecka, 2001). Bruno Bettelheim's publication, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* from 1985 is well known. The author used fairy tales not only to shape children's attitudes and character but also to help young people find meaning in life. A modern variation on this theme is fantasy literature, which derives from the world of fairy tales.

Currently, there is interest in stories at the intersection of myth, fairy tale, knightly romance, adventure novels, and swashbuckling stories in popular culture. A syncretic creation of this type is fantasy literature (Trębicki, 2014). Stories about brave heroes, magical creatures, and many worlds have accompanied humans since the beginning of time. Originally, fantasy was aimed at young readers. However, contemporary postmodernist literature, due to its diversity, intertextuality, and changing conventions, can be targeted at both children and young adults (Kucharska 2010). For these reasons, over the centuries, the fantasy genre has continued to grow, resulting in new variations and subgenres. Through this process, it has correlated with other conventions unique to literature and has been susceptible to various cultural influences. Often, the content presented in books was a response to episode taking place in the real world. That is why fantasy literature is closest to the contemporary reader.

The **aim** of this work is to present selected subject matter from fantasy literature that can help in bibliotherapy for children and youth who have experienced trauma, with a particular focus on war situations.

Methods. The choice of appropriate literature has a significant impact on the success of therapy. Therefore, it is worth following the models of bibliotherapeutic procedures along with proposed fragments of literary texts. We analyze the most popular text worldwide known and still arouse the interest of young people for developing the illustrations for 4 stages of bibliotherapeutic using of the texts in the context of psycho trauma: identification, projection, catharsis, insight.

Results. Theoretical attitudes and stages of the bibliotherapeutic process come from psychological sciences. Caroline Shrodes (1978) considered that there were parallels between aesthetic experience and psychotherapy. Both fields seek a way back from dreamland to reality.

The proposed texts are very popular worldwide and still arouse the interest of young people, especially through numerous films adaptations. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by Clive Staples Lewis is a story about the four Pevensie siblings. The children pass through a magical wardrobe to a mysterious land and face the terrible White Witch. *Harry Potter* (1997–2007) is a series of books by Joanne Kathleen Rowling, telling the adventures of a young wizard. He experiences plenty of adventures and ultimately defeats the Lord Voldemort, the personification of true evil. These are obvious bestsellers; another well-known book series worldwide is *The Witcher* (1992–1999) by Andrzej Sapkowski. The Polish writer described the adventures of a monster slayer and his adopted daughter. The young girl is involved in the fate of her world as a successor to the throne and heir to magical power. Another series is *The Hunger*

Games (2008–2010) by Suzanne Collins. She wrote a story about a girl who fights for survival in a dystopian world. Last but not least is *Shadow and Bone* (2012) by Leigh Bardugo. The book is breaking popularity records and tells the story of a cartographer, orphan Alina Starkov. The girl also has magical powers that can help bring peace to her world. She is one of the elite magicians. Some people want an end to war, but there are also people who profit from discord between people. Young people can come across all these books every day. In Poland, for example, three of them: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, and a collection of short stories about the *Witcher Sword of Destiny* are optional books read in school for Polish language classes.

Identification

In models of bibliotherapy, the first step is often identified as identification with the main character. This involves expressing emotions towards the protagonist, agreeing or disagreeing with their opinions, concern for their fate, and a desire to be like them. By identifying with the hero, the reader is able to talk about their own feelings. In fantasy literature, there are many idols that young people can identify with, particularly those who have experienced war.

For example, the Pevensie siblings leave their home in London due to the bombing of the city during World War II, and seek refuge with their uncle in the countryside. Harry Potter becomes an orphan because his parents were killed by an evil wizard during the wizarding war. The princess Ciri, a character in *The Witcher*, also becomes an orphan at a young age and must cope with a cruel world ravaged by war. Katniss Everdeen, a teenage participant in *The Hunger Games*, must take care of her entire family, and while her world is at peace, it is a place full of social inequality, poverty, and totalitarianism. Finally, Alina Starkov in *Shadow and Bone* is also an orphan with a unique power that allows her to change the fate of her world.

Literary characters experience the same dilemmas as children affected by war in the real world. Not only can they escape danger, but they can also participate in a world full of brutal events and inequality. Experiencing vicariously raises the threshold of tolerance for frustration and allows one to experience suffering. Such an experience is not as costly as a real one, but it prepares a person for the worst. Even when the worst happens, it allows them to cope better. Young people do not have to face their problems alone, and they can see that other children have similar problems.

Projection

Another stage in the bibliotherapeutic process is projection, which occurs through the example of literary characters. This allows for the discovery of the patient's true irrational attitudes. The motives of the character's actions or the relationships between them are then interpreted. Patients can read the moral values conveyed by the author (Rubin, 1978b).

The literature mentioned conveys the values of good triumphing over evil. For example, Susan, Peter, Edmund, and Lucy ultimately triumph over the evil White Witch who brings eternal winter in Narnia. In each part of books, Harry Potter, the protagonist confronts the evil wizards known as Death Eaters and emerges from each battle with minor physical injuries. The protagonist of *The Witcher*, on the other hand, does not engage in a spectacular fight against evil but is instead forced to fend for herself during wartime. Ultimately, she uses her extraordinary power for her own purposes and escapes to another reality. From the Sapkowski universe to our world of the King Arthur tale. Similarly, Katniss isolates herself and embarks on a journey into her own emotions, trusting no one, while Alina only later realizes the extent of her power, having earlier trusted the wrong person who wanted to use its power for their own purpose. Through these stories, the patient can encounter many situations, feel hope for the triumph of good over evil, and attempt to accept the negative moments in human life or devise your own ways out of the situation.

Often, the relationships between the characters are a crucial element. The Pevensie siblings, who exploit Narnia, have each other, despite occasional disputes. Harry Potter attends a magical school where he meets loyal friends who, somehow, replace his family, as does Alina Starkov. It is different for Katniss Everdeen, who, as a suffering person, shuts out those around her by building a wall. Thus, young readers can encounter a range of different reactions to external suffering.

Each character copes differently with the evil surrounding them. The therapeutic effect of the discussed process is to replace the unconscious with the conscious. With the help of a therapist, the patient can discover their own abilities and regain true joy in life (Shrodes, 1978).

Catharsis

The concept of catharsis was introduced by Aristotle. He used it to describe the process of the impact of Greek tragedy on the audience, which involved eliciting feelings of pity and fear, and ultimately releasing the audience from these emotions. Today, the term catharsis is also often used to refer to the process of releasing tension and experiencing emotional release, but it applies to a broader range of emotions and even to pain and suffering in general (Grzesiuk, Suszek, 2011).

The next stage in bibliotherapy is releasing tension and experiencing catharsis. This may involve emotions, including negative ones towards the character or author (Shrodes, 1978). Ultimately, these are just fictional characters who make mistakes. Their behavior may not be liked by readers. For example, Ciri, who was once a delicate princess, becomes a bandit who can kill and manipulate other people. For Katniss, only her own family (her mother and sister) matters, and Alina seems too naive. She doesn't realize how important she is to her universe and how strong her power is. All of this takes place against the backdrop of war or circumstances that threaten the lives of the main characters, and they all share a sense of danger, constant fear, and terror. The patient may experience negative emotions, but later feel relief. They also see that it is possible to emerge victorious from any oppression.

Insight

The last stage is insight. Self-awareness and understanding of others, tolerance, and acceptance occur. This is an insight into the reader's inner world. By getting to know oneself, the reader becomes tolerant of their own and others' flaws (Gillies, 1988). Through literature, patients can be shown their embarrassing and complicated feelings. They are given permission to feel and think about what was previously unacceptable. Young protagonists in fantasy literature are similar to teenagers not only in age but also in their reactions to the external world. They experience the same emotions that the patient can later confront within themselves. Harry Potter, for example, often feels angry, he has temperamental personality. Katniss is distrustful, often replies sarcastically, afraid of getting hurt. These are often complicated and difficult emotions. They also live in difficult times that do not favor proper development. Literary characters can experience emotions and behave in ways that are not acceptable in the real world. Literature enriches experiences and teaches compassion. Additionally, it draws attention to the possibility of understanding one's situation, gaining distance from difficult events, working through problems, changing thinking patterns, and gaining hope for a better future, because a plenty of stories ends good.

Conclusion

G.D. Spache (1978) summed up the bibliotherapeutic process in an original way. According to him, the reader goes from thinking "He is like me" or "I am like him" to "I feel the same way as him" to "I can do it just like he did" or "I can do it too". The final step is "Look, I did it". Fantasy literature not only helps unravel one's own moral problems but also experience and cope with difficult emotions accompanying reading. This type of literature can help in understanding and accepting difficult situations related to war. Although the world created by writers is a fantastic place, it contains drastic mechanisms known from our world, such as violence, pain, suffering, and the struggle between good and evil. A young reader can be equipped with tools that will help them overcome traumas.

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