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AFTER THE APOCALYPSE: THE REPRESENTATIONS OF INTOLERANCE IN MCCARTHY'S "THE ROAD"

The representation of tolerance and intolerance in McCarthy's novel "The Road" is studied in the article. The notion of tolerance has been of great interest for philosophers and writers, who aim to reveal true human nature and get to the depth of human soul. Even nowadays, this concept attracts attention of politics, authors and just ordinary people as the way to reach understanding and acceptance in the fast developing world. Philosophers consider tolerance as an inseparable part of a personality believing that people are naturally patient towards other human beings and try to treat them with respect, acknowledging their individuality. In fiction, this notion has been investigated as opposed to intolerance that can take various forms such as moral or physical oppression, unacceptance of people's individuality, prohibition of free expression of opinions etc., which can come from the government or the society. On the contrary, tolerance is seen as acceptance of a divergence of opinions, lifestyles or else and can be mostly encountered in children's literature. Cormac McCarthy, a well-known American writer, whose works make readers think about the essential questions of human existence, in the post-apocalyptic novel "The Road" examines the relationships of the main characters (the father and his son) with each other and the strangers they meet on their way. McCarthy explores whether in the almost completely destroyed world, where everyone is forced to fight for existence, there is still room for kindness and humanity. Meeting other characters, the protagonists do not always remain tolerant and understanding because the survival of their group (the family) depends on their choices. In McCarthy's text, a character is tolerant until it does not hurt his or her own interests.
Key words: *tolerance, intolerance, Cormac McCarthy, American literature, post-apocalyptic novel, existentialism.*

In the society, life greatly depends on interaction with other people. Communication plays a key role in achieving individual goals and fostering progress of the whole civilization. Despite the fact that humans are not the same, as they differ in their appearance, age, education, and way of thinking they learn to coexist tolerating other people's individuality. In the modern world, the notion of tolerance acquires a new meaning in the context of tolerating not only what people say but also how they look and what they do. Thus, there should not be any prejudice concerning sex, nationality, profession, lifestyle, and so on. Living with other people involves accepting them who they are. The issues of human communication and borders of toleration were and still are of great interest for philosophers and writers. They perceive them as a cornerstone of personal wellbeing and a necessary condition of peaceful life. Thus, nowadays, in the times of global changes such as natural disasters, world pandemic, economic crises, and endless conflicts it is so important for the humanity to reach understanding and be tolerant to each other, which makes the study quite urgent.

In the light of the reflections on the nature of tolerance this study **aims** to reveal and analyse the representations of in/tolerance in McCarthy's novel *The Road*. The **tasks** are: 1) to define the term "tolerance" from the point of view of existentialist philosophy (we strongly believe that McCarthy's texts are deeply existential); 2) to explore the depiction of tolerance and intolerance in fiction; 3) to analyse the novel *The Road* and reveal the way in/tolerance is represented in it.

The term "tolerance" comes from the Latin word "tolerable" and is viewed in philosophy as endurance of what we dislike or what we disagree with. In short, it is forbearance without interference (Witenberg, 2019, p. 2). In existentialism, the notion acquires slightly different meaning. Philosophers consider tolerance as the principle of preservation of the human race (K. Jaspers), the internal regulator of an individual's attitude to other people (J. P. Sartre), a means of overcoming alienation (A. Camus) (Глинська & Скляров,

2019, с. 44). Exploring the religious and existential dimensions of this phenomenon Marcel concludes that tolerance is intrinsically immanent to human beings (Marcel, 1976). In his work *On Liberty*, Mill defines tolerance not only as the reason of existence of freedom but also as the perquisite of individuality. Tolerance secures individual's liberty from state interference in his or her private life and ensures diversity of the world (Mill, 1859; Сулятицька, 2011, с. 37).

From the ontological point of view, tolerance is an inseparable part of an individual that is closely connected to the existence, and it is also the main condition of coexistence with others (Глинська & Скляров, 2019, с. 44). Hence, tolerance helps to overcome strangeness of another person and the world as a whole. It is a form of transcendence which assists to establish the connection with the world. Tolerance includes freedom of thought and free expression of feelings. Therefore, everybody who follows this principle has the right to individuality. Moreover, the very essence of tolerance lies in freedom of existence of an individual who strives to find answers to the key existential issues (freedom, fear, death, absurdity of life etc.) Thus, it is possible to assume that tolerance is based on a free choice of an individual to treat another person as an equal despite a divergence of opinions, values and lifestyles on condition that it does not bring any harm to another person's health and liberty (Баева, 2009, с. 17–18).

In fiction, a number of works have been dedicated to the questions of tolerance and narrow-mindedness, as the borders between the two are not always quite distinct. The themes of intolerance, which include the situations of exile or ostracism, can be traced in *The Man Who Laughs* (1869) and *Les Misérables* (1862) by V. Hugo. In these novels, the main characters are outcasts because they differ in either moral values or appearance; therefore, they have to assert their right to exist. In his play *The Blind* (1890), M. Maeterlinck locates handicapped characters not accepted by their community on an island. Being excluded from the society, they gradually lose their way and die in the complete darkness of indifference and incomprehension. There are the texts representing governmental or regime intolerance, for example the trilogy *The Hunger Games* (2008–2010) by S. Collins where protagonists have to fight against the state in order to gain freedom and prove that their lives matter. Another relevant piece of fiction is I. Bahrianyi's *The Garden of Gethsemane* (1950) with the main character exiled from his homeland and thrown into prison where his whole existence is questioned. Consequently, he either could fight to the death or lose his identity. The themes of tolerance can be largely observed in fairy tales which are designed to edify in young generation the best human qualities. In *Pollyanna* (1913) by E. Porter, for example, the main character follows the principle of seeing only good in any event that happens with her and treats everyone with respect, tolerating even their unpleasant behaviour. The inference is: only having acknowledged other people's individuality and freedom you may expect them to accept yours. The same issues can be seen in O. Henry's short stories *The Gift of the Magi* (1905) or *The Last Leaf* (1907) in which characters show sympathy and tolerance to other people's feelings and opinions.

The modern American writer Cormac McCarthy questions the limits of tolerance in his works, a few of which have been already filmed. His post-apocalyptic novel *The Road*, awarded the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, narrates about an on-foot journey of a father and his son (who stand for the multiple protagonists) across America (in some distant future). The journey can be considered as a metaphor for the American historical experience, which is based on the belief in finding a dreamland, a place of big opportunities and infinite happiness. However, in the novel McCarthy refutes the notion of America as the land selected by God to be a paradise where everything can be achieved without toil (O'Sullivan, 2014, p. 225–226), describing it as a vast barren terrain covered with ash: "*Everything paling away into the murk. The soft ash blowing in loose swirls over the blacktop*" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 5). Although the world has lost its old form, the protagonists keep going, adhering to the road; they are moving towards the seaside in hope not only to escape from cold and find new sources of food but also to discover a place in which they would not be afraid for their future. Since the world is destroyed and no living species are left except humans, people are forced to fight for food supplies. This new reality unleashes cannibalism, slavery and prostitution. Thus, to stay alive the father and his son have to avoid any contacts with other people.

In such a harsh world, it is quite difficult for the protagonists to remain humane and tolerant, especially for the father. He belongs to the lost generation, to those people who grew up in the world of comfort and prosperity. He is rational and understands that to satisfy their needs people may do horrible things. However, his son is different, being born after the catastrophe and seeing nothing but a grey barren terrain, he still trusts people and tries to understand them. Therefore, when the man and the boy meet an old skinny man in shabby clothes, the boy persuades his father to share their food with him, they accept

old man's decision not to tell his name: "*I don't want anybody talking about me… I mean you could talk about me maybe. But nobody could say that it was me*" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 125). It can be considered as an example of collective tolerance, when a group of people, in our case the family, shows endurance to another human being. In contrast to the individual tolerance, the collective one can be achieved only if two or more people agree to abide by something. So, when the social order with all its values has collapsed because of unknown catastrophe, the family remains the only social institution, which is still based on ethical principles of cooperation and toleration. Thus, adopting the rule not to eat people: "*We would ever eat anybody, would we? No. Of course not*" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 92), the father and his son try to re-establish the former moral values and save what is left from the past civilisation. Their road is foremost the way to understanding themselves and the world around. The father is a guide for his son, who attempts to facilitate the boy's adaptation and socialization. He teaches him the difference between good and evil gradually laying the foundation of a new society (Нагачевська, 2013, с. 304). The society in which kindness and humanity are valued and people are tolerant to each other.

Individual tolerance as a patient attitude of one person to others can be observed on the example of the boy's meeting with an armed man, who notices the boy's despair caused by his father's death and accepts his individuality and eccentricity: "*You're kind of weirded out, arent you?... Yeah… That's okay*" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 207). Not everyone can remain sane on the road, where cruelty and death are common things, where people hopelessly move to the south: "*Creedless shells of men tottering down the causeways like migrants in a feverland*" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 21). But even if the world looks like hell there are still things that keep people living. Therefore, the main characters try to be tolerant to other human beings and finally they find those ones who are forbearing to them.

In the post-apocalyptic world, where cruelty and primitive instincts rein it is not easy to be always tolerant; and the borders between tolerance and intolerance are unsteady. Sometimes to survive characters put their interests above others. When protagonists' belongings are stolen, they follow and find the thief. Despite the boy's protest the father deprives the man of everything as he commits with them: "*Get away from the cart… Take your clothes off*" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 187). Meeting with other people on the road almost always means death, so the father has to be constantly on guard to stay on the safe side and protect his only child. That is why when the family encounters a member of a gang in the woods, the man does everything to save his son's life: "*You think I wont kill you but you're wrong*" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 48). Here is the moral dilemma since killing does not agree with what the family believes in, with their ethics. For this reason, the father prefers to resolve the conflict peacefully: "*But what I'd rather do is take you up this road a mile or so and then turn you loose*" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 48). However, the gangster refuses to change his opinion, and the confrontation results in his sudden death. Thus, tolerance works only in the situations where it brings no harm to other people. The father has to care about his son, so he just cannot allow the thief to escape safely otherwise they would starve and eventually die. In case of confronting the gang the man's and his son's lives are at stake, so prompt actions must be taken even if it means a murder.

Thus, in the novel *The Road* McCarthy observes the notion of tolerance from a quite interesting perspective. The world deprived of all the benefits of the lost civilisation and even moral principles seems to be hard on everyone who manages to survive. This unpleasant environment uncovers all human flaws, which are not so obvious in normal circumstances. Thus, tolerance here is not only the way to socialise but also the ability to adapt to the existing way of life preserving one's individuality. Moreover, forbearance helps to overcome strangeness and absurdity of the world and remain humane and understanding. Probably, it is one of the human qualities, due to which the main characters continue their journey despite all the hardships and stick together notwithstanding their dissimilar perception of the world.

In conclusion, the study reveals that in existentialism tolerance means accepting a person's individuality and acknowledging divergence of opinions, lifestyles, and the like as long as it brings no harm to other human beings. The limits of tolerance tackled by numerous literary works aim to encompass the nature of humanity. Writers pay special attention to the problem of intolerance that may lead to oppression, exile, humiliation and ostracism from a government or society. As, life in a multicultural world requires endurance to those things (opinions, clothes, tastes, beliefs, etc.) we may disagree with because of our prejudice or values. On the example of the post-apocalyptic novel *The Road* written by the outstanding American author Cormac McCarthy the borderline of in/tolerance is envisioned in the distant future. The main characters treat the strangers they meet differently depending on the circumstances but they always try to accept their opinion and the right to freedom unless it harms their own interests.

Here the family is the embodiment of collective tolerance in the form of responsibility about protagonists' lives (existence of their group) as well as of those people they encounter on their way. While individual tolerance is based on a person's own will to accept uniqueness of another human being or the rules set by the society. Thus, McCarthy argues that tolerance is the virtue that should be nurtured, as only when we accept other people's individuality we may expect them to accept ours.

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ПІСЛЯ АПОКАЛІПСИСУ: ЗОБРАЖЕННЯ НЕ/ТОЛЕРАНТНОСТІ В РОМАНІ «ДОРОГА» КОРМАКА МАККАРТІ

У статті досліджується художнє втілення толерантності та нетолерантності у романі К. Маккарті «Дорога». Феномен толерантності цікавив і продовжує цікавити філософів

та письменників, які ставлять собі за мету розкрити справжню природу людської особистості й проникнути в глибини людської душі. Навіть тепер цей концепт привертає увагу політиків, майстрів слова та звичайних людей як спосіб досягти порозуміння й визнання у світі, що стрімко розвивається. Філософи розглядають толерантність як невід'ємну частину особистості й вважають, що людина за своєю природою толерантна до інших, визнає право кожного на повагу та індивідуальність. У художній літературі це поняття висвітлюється у тісному зв'язку з нетерпимістю, яка може набувати різних форм, таких як моральний чи фізичний гніт, неприйняття людської індивідуальності, заборона вільно висловлювати свою думку тощо, що може бути спровоковано урядом або суспільством. На противагу нетолерантності толерантність частіше трапляється в дитячій літературі й зображається як терпиме ставлення до поглядів, способу життя інших людей. Кормак Маккарті, відомий американський письменник, твори якого змушують читачів замислитися над важливими питаннями людського існування, у постапокаліптичному романі «Дорога» досліджує ставлення головних героїв (батька та сина) одне до одного й до інших персонажів. Письменник прагне з'ясувати, чи ще є місце для доброти та людяності в майже повністю зруйнованому світі, де кожен змушений боротися за своє власне існування. Протагоністи не завжди є толерантними та із розумінням ставляться до тих, кого зустрічають на своєму шляху, оскільки виживання їхньої групи (сім'ї) залежить від їхнього вибору. Таким чином, людина проявляє толерантність до інших, поки це не шкодить її власним інтересам.

Ключові слова: *толерантність, нетерпимість, Кормак Маккарті, американська література, постапокаліптичний роман, екзистенціалізм.*

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