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Intertextuality in Young Adult Literature: A Study of *Girl Online* by Zoe Sugg

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Abstract

This article explores how intertextuality works in Young Adult literature, a key cultural trend of the 21st century. It focuses on Zoe Sugg's novel *Girl Online,* a popular and representative example of this genre among young readers. The authors of the research aim to examine the features of intertextuality in this novel: they identify and describe the references to other texts and interpret the novel in relation to the cultural heritage of the past and the present. Using intertextual and contextual methods of analysis, they conclude that the novel's potential reader is expected to "recognize" certain texts that are symbolic, "cult" or appealing to young people, and that are used as effective tools for creating a story that follows the parameters of mass culture. This also leads to a hypothesis that some types of texts, related to specific traditions and sources, are more dominant than others in the novel's intertextuality. The study reveals that the novel *Girl Online* draws on, first, the literature of the past (well-known works of English classics that have a "cult" status); secondly, fairy tales; thirdly, products of contemporary, mostly youth, culture (other Young Adult texts, movies, cartoons, etc.); and finally, established narrative techniques that belong to various genres and are not bound by a specific time or place and that are updated by the author. These intertextual links make the novel successful.

Keywords: Young Adult literature, intertextuality, reminiscence, cultural context, literary tradition.

[Sustainable Development Goals: Reduced Inequalities, Gender Equality]

1. Introduction

Zoe Elizabeth Sugg (Zoella) is a popular British blogger, an idol of many teenagers, a public figure, a writer, and the author of a series of literary pieces (*Girl Online*, *Girl Online: On Tour*, *Girl Online: Going Solo*). *Girl Online* (2014) is Sugg's first novel which has won wide popularity among the youth audience; it was acknowledged as a New York Times Best Seller in the Young Adult category. This text's success is phenomenal even considering that Zoe Sugg did not produce it independently but with the support of an experienced editorial team obviously well-versed in the "secrets" of bestselling (Gibson, 2014). It is yet another proof of a huge interest in the personality of Zoella, as well as convincing evidence of the mass demand for Young Adult literature in modern society.

> "Young Adult novel, which was published on Nov. 25 by Atria/Keywords Press in the U.S. and by Penguin in the U.K., sold more than 78,000 copies in its first week, the highest number of sales in the first week recorded by Nielsen BookScan since they began recording information six years ago, according to The Bookseller. First-week sales for Girl Online, which has been billed as a modern-day Notting Hill for teens, have even eclipsed the first-week sales from the debuts of J.K. Rowling, Dan Brown and EL James" (Gibson, 2014).

At the same time, critics accepted Zoella's literary debut unanimously, pointing out both the merits and certain weaknesses of *Girl Online*: accusations of implausibility, and excessive "sweetness" of the story told (Singh, 2014) were expressed alongside positive evaluation (Wyatt, 2014).

Despite the wide public resonance, the novel has not yet become the object of deep and comprehensive scientific research. The external simplicity of the plot, the protagonists' characters, the style of narration, the conscious appeal to the tastes of a mass recipient (mostly teenagers) rather than to those of elite readership, the lack of philosophical/psychological depth, alluding to an interpreter keen on the classics, all these factors may explain why this novel is not as much appreciated by the critics as it is favored by the readership. At the same time, the fact that the piece belongs to the Young Adult literature cannot be considered the reason for such "indifference" of the academic community to *Girl Online*, this phenomenon is recognized as a relevant and promising topic for research: "YA Studies has become a thriving part of academic discourse" (Corbett & Phillips, 2020). Young Adult literature, as one of the phenomena of mass art of the 21st century, certainly does not exist in a cultural vacuum, and all its genre forms (to a greater or lesser extent) are associated with traditions (mythological, folklore, literary, etc.). A "correctly" given reference point in this respect largely contributes to the success of these pieces of literature. Thus, the problem of intertextual connections in Young Adult literature requires close attention and detailed consideration.

Everything mentioned above necessitates pursuits in the given direction in general and defines the aim of this article in particular. So, the objective of this research is to study *Girl Online* as an example of Young Adult literature through the prism of the theory of intertextuality to formulate well-reasoned hypotheses regarding the dominance of certain types of texts, associated with specific traditions and sources, that shape the interests of consumers of such pieces and thus contribute to understanding the nature and the determinants of the intertextuality of such fiction. The tasks set in the article are as follows: to outline the theoretical and methodological facets of the study, to highlight the symbolic reminiscences in the novel *Girl Online*, to characterize the main categories of the texts that form the intertextuality of this novel and that add to its popularity among young people, to point out the significance of the obtained results for further studies of Young Adult literature.

2. Literature Review

Jeffrey S. Kaplan (2005) wrote about the ever-increasing role of Young Adult literature (hereinafter – YA) at the beginning of the 21st C.:

> "Today, we face a plethora of young adult books that represent every conceivable genre and literary style. To be sure, we are on the precipice of reinventing ourselves because our young adult books are constantly in search of the new and revealing so that more

and more young people will find their way to the delectable hallways of good and engaging reads" (p. 11).

Many scientific articles and even monographs are devoted to YA. Convincing evidence of the "popularity" of such literature in the academic environment can be found, among other things, with the YA Studies Association (YASA) and a special journal, dedicated to publishing original and serious scholarship on YA from all parts of the world, "The International Journal of Young Adult Literature" (IJYAL). The results of YA studies regularly appear on the pages of the mentioned periodical, which indicates a great interest in this cultural phenomenon. Articles on YA are also actively published by other scientific journals.

We find that the question of YA's connection with the cultural tradition of the past and contemporary art is to become a separate domain of such studies. This idea is supported by the publication of "Adaptation in Young Adult Novels: Critically Engaging Past and Present" (Lawrence & Montz, 2020) which contains interesting observations on the problems of transformation of classical literature, namely the works by W. Shakespeare, Charlotte Brontë, F. Scott Fitzgerald, etc. in YA: "Re-visioning Rosaline; or, Romeo and Juliet Are Dead" by Fiona Hartley-Kroeger, "Rewriting The Great Gatsby: Questioning Identity and Morality in Sara Benincasa's Great" by Lisa M. Valenzuela, "Jane Eyre in Space: Adapting Brontë's Novel for Young Adult Fans of Sci-Fi and Fantasy" by Tara Moore and others. The necessity of studying intertextuality in YA is emphasized by S. Yearwood (2002):

> "Finally, from the Bakhtinian tradition I take the idea of dialogics or intertextuality as central to postmodern fiction – the notion that texts or narratives set up dialogues with other texts, either other previously-written literary texts or other stories, creating new stories in the interstices and frictions and contradictions of various other stories. These three YA novels are all marked by an ontologically-impelled querying of the past within a densely intertextual narrative structure... Finally, all of them foreground issues of intertextuality or internarrativity. They create realms of intertextual reference where multiple stories affect/reflect/interact as the past is questioned, prodded, retold, recovered, or remade. Interestingly, this postmodern "recipe" for YA literature turns out to be extraordinarily well-suited to raising and exploring some of the oldest themes of the genre: identity, self-fashioning, and self-knowledge" (Yearwood, 2002).

The results of Shannon Kathleen Hervey's dissertation "Coming of Age in Postmodernity: Narratives of Intertextual Becoming" (2015) are of particular importance for our study as the scholar "investigates the act of writing and the role of intertextuality in adolescent subject formation as it is depicted in Young Adult narratives" (p.7). The thesis also presents thoroughly arranged scientific publications important for the study of this subject, considers YA from the standpoint of postmodern aesthetics, and analyses certain texts popular among young people. Focusing on the achievements in the area allows to expand the scope of scientific research and stimulates the further study of YA's intertextuality based on new pieces of literature that have not yet received proper coverage in the context of the relevant topic.

3. Methodology

It is well-known that the term "intertextuality" was introduced in 1967 by the French researcher Julia Kristeva. The theory of intertextuality by J. Kristeva was created as a result of reconsidering

M. Bakhtin's ideas and it opened up broad prospects for scientists, substantiating the possibility of treating pieces of fiction as "spaces" in which "elements", "signs" of other texts coexist. According to "dialogical" text conception suggested by M. Bakhtin (1979), "two statements distant from each other both in time and space ... upon semantic comparison reveal dialogic relations on condition that there is at least some semantic convergence between them" (p. 303). The text is "a kind of monad that reflects in itself all the texts (within the limits) of a given semantic sphere" (p. 282). From the point of view of R. Barthes (1972), each text is an intertext, since "other texts are present in it at various levels in more or less recognizable forms: texts of the previous culture and texts of the surrounding culture" (p. 76). The concept of intertextuality is interpreted by researchers in a broad and narrow sense. In the former case, literary critics appeal to the works by R. Barthes, J. Kristeva, etc., in the latter one they refer to the theory of Gérard Genette (1982), according to which intertextuality is only one of the forms of intertextual relations, i.e. "transtextuality" (actualized with the help of quotations, allusions, and reminiscences) (p. 213).

The intertextual method of analysis involves the interpretation of a cultural product in terms of its connections with the texts of previous eras as well as with those of modern times, "transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another" (Kristeva, 1974, p. 59). This mostly concerns the works of postmodern literature. Most of the research devoted to studying the intertextuality of YA is based on the explicit links of such literature with the fiction of the past (classics), these connections can be traced on the level of the plot and the system of characters (adaptations, parody, etc.). At the same time, the methodology of intertextual analysis can be used to decode the meanings of a wide range of associations (including those with the culture of modernity) created through artistic details and figures of speech. Reminiscences of this nature are more numerous and varied, and they are of great importance for revealing the specificity of the YA intertext. At the same time, "text" is understood not only in a narrow but also in a broader meaning: films, cartoons, etc. are also treated as texts in the cultural aspect.

Particular interesting in this context is the problem of transformation, modernization of the established genre and composition ways of a narrative arrangement, of typical narrative schemes (motives) as phenomena that belong not to specific, individual pieces of fiction but to the cultural tradition as a whole. To study this, it is considered expedient to combine the intertextual method with the techniques of contextual analysis, this permits us to identify the similarities and specificities of some phenomena against the background of others. Contextual research "draws attention to the phenomena of art that allow to confirm the existence of universal values, worldviews, ideas and a tendency towards usage of similar artistic means..." (Nikolova, 2017, p. 134). The complex use of the methods of intertextual and contextual analysis seems practical and promising when it comes to the modern novel.

4. Results

The intertext in Zoe Sugg's novel *Girl Online* is formed by the texts of different categories. At the same time, each of them has its own means of actualization and its function. The first group comprises the literary texts of the past that are well-known due to their iconic, "cult" status. Reminiscences are a means of eliciting relevant knowledge. They are few, but their presence in the novel under study creates an intertextual space accessible to the average teenager, who is pleased to receive proof of their cultural competence. This technique lets the mass reader

feel satisfied with their importance and implicitly evokes sympathy for the "understandable", albeit "intellectual" narrative.

4.1 Shakespeare and *Girl Online*

First, one should mention the pieces by W. Shakespeare. A special tribute is paid to Shakespeare's text at the very beginning of the novel: the classmates of the protagonist (Penny) stage a modernized version of *Romeo and Juliet*, an "eternal love story". Penny really likes Ollie, who plays the role of Romeo. The boy himself evidently is fond of the girl. However, Penny is not destined to become a Juliet. Readers' expectations initially adjusted to the love story of a young blogger and the most popular guy in school are not satisfied. In Zoe Sugg's novel Shakespeare's tragedy becomes, on the one hand, a kind of symbol of "theatricality" (in the sense of "insincerity", and "pretense"); modern Romeo (Ollie) and Juliet (Megan) are not capable of deep feelings, they are stupid, hypocritical and narcissistic. The reference to the famous drama, the plot of which has become traditional, seems to make it clear that the novel is, of course, about love, but it is a modern, unconventional, sincere story. It seems as if the author is telling her readers: "You all know how it is told in the books, but you and I understand that in the modern world, it can sometimes happen another way round …". On the other hand, the staging of the play ends with "tragic" events for Penny, due to which it becomes clear to every teenager (but not every adult!) that shame on social networks is more terrible and more disastrous than death. The novel also repeatedly mentions various "interesting" facts from W. Shakespeare's biography. For instance: "does anyone really need to know that Shakespeare was baptized in 1564? Or that he had seven siblings?" (Sugg, 2016, p. 5). They are reported to the heroine by her close friend Elliot, an intellectual dude. One more reminiscence in the analyzed novel is of L. Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland": "Noah beckons me to follow him. By this point I'm not sure what to expect. I feel just ***like Alice in Wonderland when she fell down the rabbit hole***. It wouldn't have surprised me at all to see ***a mad hatter's tea party*** on the other side of the door" (Sugg, 2016, p. 150). This comparison is intended at maximizing the feeling of "fairytale atmosphere" of the events that happen to Penny in New York in another part of the book.

4.2 Fairytales and *Girl Online*

Secondly, fairytales make up the second group of texts referred to in the novel *Girl Online*. Their function is not only to create a special "magical" atmosphere, to enchant and bewitch young addressees prone to romantic feelings but also to support the idea that "everything is possible": "Fairy tales can come true" and every girl can meet her own Prince Charming. This message, typical of mass literature with a love theme, and so important for a teenager is revealed in a fascinating form. The "wonderful" meeting and tender relationship of an ordinary British schoolgirl with a famous American singer are depicted in the best traditions of Christmas stories. Of course, such a plot twist should evoke associations with the fairy tale about Cinderella, loved by many girls. Penny is indeed repeatedly compared to Cinderella. "Well, this week I had a bit of a ***Glass Slipper*** Moment. A ***Glass Slipper*** Moment is the name Wiki and I give to things that happen that are really bad at first but that actually end up leading to something really good–***like when Cinderella loses her glass slipper but it ends up reuniting her with Prince Charming***" (Sugg, 2016, p. 91).

> "It's only three hours till midnight now. As I glance at the ornate clock on the wall, I feel even more ***like Cinderella***–only in my case I'm looking forward to midnight, rather than dreading it" (Sugg, 2016, p. 187).

Penny's "magic" evening with her lover Noah is also a reminiscence of the fairy tale about Cinderella. Vivid in this regard is the "wonderful" transformation of an ordinary girl into a regular beauty with the help of fancy dress though it was given to her not by a fairy godmother, but by her mother, and communication with Prince Charming, i.e. Noah. And, of course, there is a direct comparison: "It's so hard to try to describe how I'm feeling. The best way to put it is that when I'm with him I feel like I've met my matching person.

Like Cinderella and Prince Charming.

Or Barbie and Ken". (Hmm, not sure that's such a great example but you know what I mean)" (Sugg, 2016, p. 229).

To understand the specificity of the novel it is very important to note that the characters of a fairy tale are compared to the representatives of pop culture. The goal is obvious; it is to illustrate the idea of the "perfection" of a young couple who have found each other and to do it in the way, most comprehensible for teenagers. The "fairy tale" intertext of Zoe Sugg's work is also formed by other reminiscences of fairy tale images that are popular among young people, known to them through modern mass culture, and that is through Disney cartoons. These are the characters of Aladdin and the Little Mermaid. "Noah opens the door and bustles me in. It's ***like walking into an Aladdin's cave***" (Sugg, 2016, p. 35). "It makes me feel calm and peaceful. And it makes me feel as if I'm in a ***magical world–as if I'm a mermaid***" (Sugg, 2016, p. 148). "You look ***like a mermaid***," Noah says" (Sugg, 2016, p. 148). There is a firm reason to believe that it is Ariel from the cartoon with whom Penny is compared specifically and not the character of folklore or fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen: it is mentioned in the text that the girl has lush red hair, and this detail evokes strong associations with the image of the heroine of the Disney cartoon. The success of *Girl Online* can be explained by the fact that through such similes it allows a recipient to immerse themselves into the "magical" atmosphere of "childhood", which is well known to them; it makes the plot more exciting, emotionally expressive, and clear to young people.

4.3 Modern YA Texts and *Girl Online*

The third group of texts in the intertextual space of the novel under consideration is represented by the products of modern, mainly youth culture. First of all, these are other English-language YA texts, also designed for "recognition", which gives adolescents the pleasure of confirming their own competence in the cultural sphere and contributes to the establishment of "special relationships" between the author and the reader, based on the awareness of belonging to a common cultural continuum. Reminiscences of the novels about Harry Potter by J. K. Rowling and "The Fault in Our Stars" by J. Green that have become widespread (as well as fairy tales!) through cinematography are the "signs" of this. The "Twilight" movie saga, popular among young people is also mentioned here:

"It's the point at the start of a movie where something happens to the hero that changes their lives forever. ***You've seen Harry Potter***, right?"

I nod.

"Well, the inciting incident in that movie is when ***Hagrid tells Harry Potter he'll be a great wizard someday and gives him the invite to Hogwarts***."

"Oh, right."" (Sugg, 2016, p. 162).

Talking about those famous fictional characters whom they would like to invite to the picnic, Penny mentions "***Augustus Waters from The Fault in Our Stars***", at the same time Noah remembers a "sappy guy from ***Twilight***".

In addition, the intertext of the novel is formed by reminiscences about famous cartoons and comics, created by mentioning the names of their characters:

> "Well, like **Batman** says, 'To the Batmobile, Robin,' and **Judge Dredd** says, 'I am the law.' "...
>
> "And the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** had 'Cowabunga' and **Lobo** has 'Bite me, fanboy.' "...
>
> "How about 'Here I come to save the day'?" Elliot asks.
>
> "Whose catchphrase was that?"
>
> "**Mighty Mouse**."...
>
> I know the catchphrases of every single superhero from **Captain America** to **Wonder Woman to Wolverine**» (Sugg, 2016, p. 98). ""You need to be thinking more along the lines of the theme from **Dirty Dancing** . That always goes down really well at weddings. Did you guys get **Dirty Dancing** over here?"... "Yeah, we got **Dirty Dancing** over here," he says, but his voice is a lot softer now, almost like he's trying not to laugh. "It was actually made in America"" (Sugg, 2016, p. 116).

It seems that such "infantile" references are used in this case solely as a comic technique. However, in our opinion, everything is somewhat more complicated. Firstly, light "childish" humor, adjacent to the drama of the "adult" situation (when Penny must overcome her fears and change herself), satisfies the recipient's need for a wide range of emotions, which traditionally contributes to the entertaining narration: "emotional swings" (from fear for the heroine to immediate laughter at her friend's jokes) is one of the best remedies against boredom. And secondly, the use of "children's texts" in the novel about "adult feelings" is quite consistent with the wishes and psychology of teenage recipients who are in a rather dubious condition: striving for adulthood and not yet breaking ties with the world of childhood.

A special role in the novel *Girl Online* belongs to the British historical drama television series "Downton Abbey". At first, Penny and Elliot are just fooling around addressing each other as "Lady" and "Lord".

> "I hear Elliot's feet pounding up the stairs and the door flies open. "Lady Penelope!" he cries. He's wearing a vintage pin-striped suit and braces and a bright red pair of Converse – this is him dressing down.
>
> "Lord Elliot!" I cry back. (We spent most of last weekend watching ***Downton Abbey*** box sets)" (Sugg, 2016, p. 18).

But in the future, the significance of the series is enhanced. It is the desire of an American couple to have a Downton Abbey-style wedding that makes it possible for Penny's family to travel to the United States, where the girl meets her true love. "Every couple of weeks Mum changes the display to feature our newest theme. At the moment it's ***Downton Abbey*** so the bridal mannequin in the window is wearing a white ruffled long sleeved dress with a collar so high it looks more like a blouse" (Sugg, 2016, p. 37). ""But then we saw your adorable display in the window," the woman continues. "I just love **Downton Abbey** . . . we're all in

love with it in the States."" (Sugg, 2016, p. 38). ""Yes, they want a **Downton Abbey** theme. But they need it mega quickly. They're meant to be getting married just before Christmas but their original wedding planner ran off with the bride from his last wedding."" (Sugg, 2016, p. 40). A trip for a tiara, which is absolutely necessary for a "British style" wedding, becomes an important moment in their relationship as it brings Penny and Noah closer.

Scenes of the wedding in the "Downton Abbey style" occupy a special place in the novel as they are a background for the main part of the love plot development. "With the portraits on the walls and plush carpets and antique furniture, it looks just like the set from **Downton Abbey.**

> Mum puts her to Have and to Hold planner down on a small table by the door and I instinctively turn my camera on. She's put the planner right next to a beautiful antique table lamp, which seems to perfectly sum up the theme of the wedding. I zoom in close enough to pick up the lettering on the planner and take the picture" (Sugg, 2016, p. 112).

> "As the guests start to arrive, the suite becomes more and more like **Downton Abbey**. The men look so handsome in their black and grey dress suits with their hair all slicked back. And the women look stunning. Every twenties style dress is a work of art, made from satin and lace and the most intricate beading, all in the most beautiful muted shades like lavender, emerald, and plum. Even the children are in costume, looking just like china dolls in their ruffles and buttoned up boots. I can't help feeling a bit wistful as I look down at my own servant's costume–a plain, starchy black A line dress with an even starchier white apron over the top of it" (Sugg, 2016, p. 185).

These reminiscences perform not only a conceptual but also an aesthetic function. A detailed, factual representation of the "British atmosphere" of the famous movie gives a special charm to the love story. "Beautiful Picture" should contribute to the successful promotion of the novel, aimed at a youth audience that perceives the world through the prism of Instagram.

Immersion into the world of modern culture is also facilitated by mentioning the names of famous people:

> Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Beyoncé, etc. ""Jeff says we're like **Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt** in that movie they did together – you know, when they first fell in love." Megan looks at me and gives me another of her tight little smiles. "Ollie tells me everything, you know."" (Sugg, 2016, p. 46). ""What you need," Elliot says to me as we take a seat in a café in the departure lounge, "is your own personal Sasha Fierce."…"Sasha Fierce," Elliot says. "You know, **Beyoncé's** alter ego, her stage persona." (Sugg, 2016, p. 94).

Thus, Zoe Sugg's novel organically fits into the cultural context of the 21st century.

4.4 The Canonical Texts and *Girl Online*

At the same time, the novel can also be viewed against the backdrop of the literary tradition, with the view of the use and modernization of well-established methods of narrative organization that are immanent to various genre forms and not limited to a particular era or country. "Girl Online" can be interpreted in terms of its "dialogue" with contemporary art as well as with the culture of the past. So, for example, in the second case, attention is drawn to the adaptation of the genre and compositional features of the epistolary novel to the requirements of a young audience. The epistolary novel is one of the varieties of the novel that became widespread in European literature in the 18th century (*Robinson Crusoe* by D. Defoe,

The Sorrows of Young Werther by J. W. Goethe, *Julie, or The New Heloise* by J. J. Rousseau, etc.). "Girl Online" uses first-person narration, it helps to reveal the main idea of the text and that is to show the inner world of a teenage girl. However, the traditional epistolary form (a novel in the form of letters or the hero's diary) is modernized: at the very beginning of the story, Penny emphasizes that she will write a blog rather than a diary (this is not for her). Thus, the novel becomes clearer and closer to teenagers who are used to talking about their feelings and love on social networks, sharing them with other people who are often complete strangers to them, and seeking support and sympathy from them. The protagonist of a classic epistolary novel is self-sufficient, immersed in the world of their emotions, the commitment of their feelings to paper is often considered to be a way of self-reflection, a path to self-knowledge. The heroine of the novel, written in the form of a blog, acts in the spirit of modernity. Like most young people of the Internet era, she does not imagine her life outside the public domain, she is not afraid to reveal her soul to a large audience. For most teenagers, their life in the virtual space is no less significant than the events happening outside of it.

"I've decided to start **a blog.**

This blog.

Why, you might ask?...

I have so many things I want to say fizzing up inside of me, but I don't have the confidence to say them out loud.

My dad once told me that I should start writing **a diary**. He said that keeping a diary is a great way of expressing our innermost thoughts...

I did try, though–writing a diary. I managed about three entries before I gave up...

The thought of writing stuff to myself in a diary seems a bit pointless really.

I want to feel like someone, somewhere, will be able to read what I've got to say.

That's why I've decided to give this blog a go–so that I have somewhere I can say exactly what I want, when I want and how I want–to someone . And not have to worry that what I say won't sound cool or will make me look stupid or lose me friends" (Sugg, 2016, p. 2).

The traditions of epistolary prose link the novel to the relevant literature of the past, while its modernization makes it attractive to young people.

Another significant factor in terms of considering the novel *Girl Online* through the prism of the cultural tradition and the "dialogue" with the fiction of the past is the use of a fairly common motive, a typical plot situation, which can be figuratively defined as "a person of importance who stays incognito in his relationship with a girl". In many pieces of world literature and folklore, the plot is focused around a noble, rich, famous person (often a ruler) who pretends to be a commoner in order to find his love, meet a girl who will love him not for money or a big name, but for his human qualities. For more details, see the monograph by O. Nikolova "Pseudomorphic Characters of Ukrainian and Russian Literatures of the Late 18th – 1st half of the 19th Centuries (in the Context of European Tradition)" (Nikolova, 2017, p. 52).

Noah in Zoe Sugg's novel meets and communicates with Penny, concealing from her the fact that he is a public person, a famous singer. The girl treats him as an ordinary "Brooklyn Boy" and, having no suspicion, she talks about him in her blog. Noah is pleased that the young

British woman is not one of his numerous fans, that she is interested in his personality, not his fame and money. In the finale, everything becomes clear and, despite all the obstacles, the lovers find mutual understanding. So, an entertaining love story with sharp intrigue is created on the basis of a modernized traditional motif. It is noteworthy that such plots are attractive to young recipients, whose circle of interests is formed (according to research), by stories of comic, adventurous, and romantic content (Pehoiu, 2018, p. 178). Films are meant here, but this trend also indirectly indicates thematic preferences in general. In addition, the typical plot situation envisages the involvement of the novel "Girl Online" in the "dialogue" with the cultural tradition.

5. Conclusions

In recent years, as is convincingly shown by E. Corbett and L. Phillips, "YA Studies has become a thriving part of academic discourse" (Corbett & Phillips, 2020). This article is a significant contribution to solving the question of the features of YA relevant to modern science: attention is focused on the problem of its intertextuality (based on Zoe Sugg's novel *Girl Online*). This piece of literature, popular among young people, can rightly be considered one of the brightest examples of such fiction (Gibson, 2014). The complex application of intertextual and contextual methods allows us to draw conclusions about the main cultural and literary beacons, offered to the potential reader, due to their iconic, "cult" status they are designed for "recognition" by the youth audience and are used as effective techniques for creating a narrative, attractive to young people, in accordance to the mass recipient's demands. The needed associations are actualized through reminiscences in the form of comparisons.

In this article, the authors prove that the intertext of "Girl Online" consists of several main groups of texts in the broad sense of the word which include not only books but also films and cartoons popular among young people. After all, as is justly stated by E. Martin (2011) "intertextuality has been appropriated and adapted by non-literary art forms so that it is not – despite the embedded word "text" – exclusively related to works of literature or other written texts, including virtual texts. And it has a critical function: intertextuality, like influence or imitation, is not neutral and thus hints at its underlying socio-political importance" (p. 149). Thus, it is important to summarize the following components of intertext in Zoe Sugg's novel:

- texts of the literature of the past, well-known due to their symbolism, "iconic" status (*Romeo and Juliet* by W. Shakespeare, *Alice in Wonderland* by L. Carroll);

- fairy tales (about Cinderella, Aladdin, and the Little Mermaid), the images of which are known among the youth through the mediation of modern mass culture, Disney cartoons;

- products of modern, mostly youth culture, YA texts popular due to film adaptations (J. Rowling's novels about Harry Potter, J. Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Twilight* movie saga), cartoons and comics, *Downtown Abbey* television series.

It is proved that Zoe Sugg's novel naturally fits not only into the cultural context of the 21st century but also into the framework of the literary tradition. It uses and modernizes the established methods of organizing the narrative, typical of various genre forms and not limited to a particular era or country. The novel is a kind of adaptation of the genre and compositional features of the epistolary novel to the tastes of the youth audience: the form of a diary is replaced by that of a blog, which makes the piece of literature more plausible and close to

teenagers who are used to talking openly about their feelings and love in social networks. The novel also plays on the traditional motif of "a person of importance who stays incognito in his relationship with a girl": in its modernized version, the hero is not a ruler or a rich man/aristocrat, but a famous singer, a person popular online.

According to Shannon Hervey (2015), "In contemporary YA narratives, intertextuality provides the main means by which protagonists come to understand and navigate the various discourse communities that inscribe them" (p. 1). The authors of this article single out several functions of the intertext in Zoe Sugg's *Girl Online.*

- reminiscences accessible to the perception of an ordinary teenager allow young readers to obtain proof of their cultural competence and to get satisfaction from a feeling of their significance (implicitly evokes sympathy for an "understandable", albeit "intellectual" narration);

- "iconic" references help to establish "special relations" between the author and the reader, based on the awareness of belonging to a common cultural continuum;

- "fairytale" reminiscences create "magic" atmosphere, designed for a youth audience prone to romantic feelings, and support the idea that "fairy tales do come true", making the narrative more exciting, emotionally expressive, and clear to young people;

- certain reminiscences are also used as a comic technique to satisfy the wide range of emotions in demand of a teenage audience;

- associations with "children's texts" in the novel about "adult feelings" are fully in tune with the demands and psychology of a teenage audience that is at the age threshold, striving for adulthood, and not yet breaking ties with the world of childhood;

- reminiscences to *Downtown Abbey* perform an aesthetic function in the novel, designed for a youth audience that perceives the world through the prism of Instagram;

- the epistolary form of the novel helps to reveal the inner world of the teenage girl, making it understandable and close to a potential reader, while the use of a traditional motif enhances the plot's amusing character, and intensifies intrigue, thus grasping the recipient's attention.

Thus, the authors of the article conclude that the novel's intertextuality is one of the factors contributing to its popularity among young readers. Since the present study adds to understanding the interests and the way of thinking of today's youth, its results in its interdisciplinary aspect may be of interest to specialists in the field of literature, cinematography, as well as psychology, and sociology.

6. Prospects

The conclusions of this research provide legitimate grounds for a hypothesis regarding the dominance of certain categories of texts, associated with specific traditions and sources, that form the range of interests of potential YA consumers and therefore can help to understand both the sources and determinants of the intertextuality of such literature. The further study of the specificity and functions of YA intertextual connections, related to the consideration of the role of "iconic", "cult" texts of classical literature, fairy tales, products of modern mass

culture, and "dialogue" with the traditions of the culture of the past (their adaptation and modernization) is promising and has broad perspectives.

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