

DOUBLE IDENTITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN LITERATURE

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The paper "Double Identity And Intercultural Communication In Literature" explores the cross-cultural communication presented in the award-winning young adult novel *Julie of the Wolves* (1972) written by the American writer and researcher Jean Craighead George. The aim of the paper is to analyse the specificity of intercultural encounters taking place on the inter- and intrapersonal levels.

Key words: double cultural identity; monocultural; bicultural; tradition; intercultural communication; cross-cultural encounters; Eskimo; Anglo-American; novel.

Multicultural literary texts in which characters belong to two different cultures have cross-cultural appeal. By targeting readers of several cultural traditions, they have a privileged position among texts addressing multicultural issues. The specificity of multicultural literature that presents characters with double cultural identity is that cross-cultural encounters take place not only on the interpersonal but also on the intrapersonal levels. Such literature, therefore, doubly highlights the issues related to the multicultural awareness, which is considered to be a prerequisite for successful intercultural communication.

Multicultural awareness in the literary characters who belong to two different cultural backgrounds is invaluable. Firstly it is because quality multicultural literary texts are considered to be endowed with the power to help readers see the world through the eyes of literary characters. Secondly, because it is anticipated that the mere fact of viewing two cultures as one's own requires, on the one hand, constant communication at the intrapersonal level, and, on the other hand, demands some degree of critical distance between opposing cultural principles determining the two cultures. Special credit for the fact that literature is still regarded as one of the most promising assets humanity has at its disposal to raise the awareness of the importance of intercultural communication can be, therefore, attributed to books presenting double cultural identity.

Among books that feature main characters who belong to two cultures, the American prize-winning novel *Julie of the Wolves* (1972) by Jean Craighead George, an acclaimed writer and researcher of the Arctic habitat ranks high. By presenting a specific mode of intercultural encounters, the book encourages readers to reflect on the issues related to contemporary life and global society. This paper will, therefore, explore how the protagonist's awareness of two different cultures develops and how her views about the two cultures undergo alterations. Additionally, this paper will put special stress on the struggle of the heroine to determine her personal identity, which leads to her maturation and acknowledgement of her own responsibility for her own personal happiness.

The key concept of this paper, *intercultural communication*, is used in this context in accordance with the adopted meaning recognized by communication theory and practice. Thus the term 'communication' is seen as the process which "requires interaction within oneself and between people", [5, p. 261]. The meanings of the terms 'intercultural' and

‘cross-cultural’, which are used interchangeably, are, consequently, to be understood within the context of identifications of word culture in terms of nation, area, race or religion [5].

The quests of the protagonist to find her own way in the complicated intersections of cultures and her struggle to articulate her own changing attitudes will be thus viewed within the larger meaning of the concept ‘culture’, which embraces both traditions and practices of varied groups of individuals. Since the heroine progressively discovers that culture is not rigid and unchanging, Stuart Hall’s notion of fluidity of culture will be applied. Hall developed his theory on the basis of diasporic situations and explained it in his *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (1996). According to his research, characters who are supposed to belong to two ethnic entities tend to develop a distinctive type of personal culture which is based on a critical distance developed towards each of the two traditions. Hall claims that this is the principal reason why most of those individuals cannot completely fit in either of the two cultures they have grown into. Such a situation, however, is not limited to diasporic individuals since it also arises when characters who by origin belong to one culture live in an environment that fosters another culture. Consequently, Hall’s theory is also applicable to Inuit culture, which can be encountered in various states, in different political frameworks, where the Inuit tradition is confronted with other cultural backgrounds.

Inuit culture is referred to in Craighead George’s novel also as Eskimo culture. In compliance with the author’s usage, the two terms will also be used indiscriminately in this text. The setting, the territory of the USA, underpins the justification of the appellation ‘Eskimo,’ as it is still in general usage outside of Canada to refer to all Inuit peoples [6].

The paper will, furthermore, examine the intercultural encounters in the light of Werner Sollors’ theory on various types of links which determine an individual’s relationship to a particular culture. Sollors’ interpretation of consent and descent appears to be most suitable for the analysis of intercultural encounters. Sollors uses the term ‘descent’ in compliance with the general usage defined in *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as “the fact of descending or being descended from an ancestor or predecessor” [2, p. 643]. Descent relations, thus, reveal a person’s origin. Sollors’ term ‘consent relations,’ on the other hand, expresses the relations that are not determined by nature or birth but by environment and individual choices. These encompass both the ones based on voluntary agreement and those based on acquiescence. Within the context of this paper, consent relations appear to be of particular importance since they are a testimony to the fact that we, humans, are capable of acting “as mature free agents and ‘architects of our fate’” [12, p. 6].

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN INTRA- AND INTERPERSONAL CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Julie of the wolves, the 1973 winner of the Newbery Medal, is a young adult novel with a multi-layered story which, viewed from various perspectives, allows for various classifications. The basic outline of the action allows the book to be defined as a tale of maturity and a wilderness survival quest story [8, p. 120]. However, the story is also a tale of intercultural encounters. These are of double nature: the usual ones, occurring among individuals belonging to different nations and traditions, and the ones taking place on the level of intrapersonal communication. The complexity of the latter increases drastically during the evolution of the story, since the survival of the eponymous heroine depends on the success of her quest for personal identity, split as she is between American and Inuit cultures.

The book is divided into three sections, each of which sheds specific light on the issue of intercultural encounters experienced by the heroine, who has been confronted with both Inuit and American cultures from an early age. However, as far as her descent is concerned, it is clearly put in the opening section that she is purely Inuit.

Miyax was a classical Eskimo beauty, small-boned and delicately-built with strong muscles. Her face was pearl-round and her nose was flat. Her black eyes, which slanted gracefully, were moist and sparkling. Like beautifully-formed polar bears and foxes of the north, she was slightly short-limbed [3, p. 8].

Even though descending from Eskimo parents, the girl has inherited not only the diachronic link with Eskimo culture but also its consent relations with Anglophone culture. In accordance with Sollors' framework, this may be regarded as a contradiction in itself, even though it may well reflect a contemporary lifelike situation, particularly for the members of minorities in multi-ethnic states. Thus main character's connection with the English-speaking culture has originated from her cradle. Her relation with the culture of white Anglophones, therefore, shares the decisive aspect of involuntary exposure, which is one of the basic features of descent relations. The bicultural relation is also symbolically indicated with her two names: Julie and Miyax. However, even though the cultural climate she grows into as a small girl is bilingual, she considers herself to be an Eskimo, which is also the obvious consent relation of her father Kapugen.

Eskimos from Mekoryuk spoke English almost all the time. They called her father Charlie Edwards and Miyax was Julie, for they all had two names, Eskimo and English. Her mother had also called her Julie, so she did not mind her summer name until one day Kapugen called her by it. She stamped her foot and told him her name was Miyax. "I am Eskimo, not a gussak", she said and he tossed her into the air and hugged her to him [3, p. 80–81].

This sense of belonging to Eskimo culture grows during the years after her mother's death, when she lives alone with her father in the settlement where Eskimo ways and traditions have remained an integral part of life. Not only festivities where life and death, present, past and future are interconnected but also regular storytelling about man's struggle for survival have gradually introduced her in the secrets of her people's existence.

The celebration of the Bladder Feast was multicolored – black, blue, purple, fire-red. The shaman, an old priestess whom everyone called "the bent woman," danced. Her face was streaked with black soot. When she finally bowed, a fiery spirit came out of the dark wearing a huge mask... Later that day Kapugen blew up seal bladders and he and the old man carried them out on the ice. There they dropped them into the sea while Miyax watched and listened to their songs. When she came back to camp, the bent woman told her that the men had returned bladders to seals.

"Bladders hold the spirits of the animals," she said. "Now the spirits can enter the bodies of the newborn seals and keep them safe until we harvest them again" [3, p. 77].

Later, when Miyax had to leave her father in order to go to school in Mekoryuk, she re-entered the environment where Inuit culture intermingled with Anglophone culture. She was called Juliet again and she started to discover gaps between the two ways of life. For instance, when visiting a school friend, she saw for the first time a gas cooking stove, a couch, framed pictures on the wall, and curtains of cotton print. Then Judith took her into her own room. On the table lay a little chain on which hung a dog, a hat, and a boat. This she was glad to see – it was something familiar.

"What a lovely I'noGo tied!" Julie said politely.

"A what?" asked Judith. Julie repeated the Eskimo word for the house of the spirits.

Judith snickered. "That's a charm bracelet," she said. Rose giggled and both laughed derisively. Julie felt the blood rush to her face as she met, for the first but not last time, the new attitudes of the Americanized Eskimos. She had much to learn besides reading. That night she threw her i'noGo tied away [3, p. 85–86].

The materialistic culture and the spiritual culture of Eskimos have given way to White American gadgets and to the Western perception of the world. The heroine desires not to be

laughed at and in her wish to be like others, accepts the changes as something she should get accustomed to. Such a standpoint enables her to make an important step towards building her consent relations with Anglophone culture. Her positive attitude towards Americanized ways is strengthened when she gets a pen pal. Amy's letters from San Francisco become such an important part of Julie's life that, being in serious trouble, she decides to accept Amy's invitation to come to her. She escapes, planning to leave the Arctic by finding the way southwards to California. She believes she knows where she is heading because "she could imagine the arched doorway, the Persian rug on the living-room floor, the yellow chairs and the huge window that looked over the bay" [3, p. 98].

However, when she gets lost in the snow, she has to admit that she is no more in a position to find the shortest way possible to reach her destination. For some time she continues to dream about the life awaiting for her in the south, seeing herself as "Miyax, daughter of Kapugen, adopted child of Martha, citizen of the United States, pupil at the Bureau of Indian Affairs School in Barrow, Alaska" [10]. Her vision of her life with Amy's family is in striking contrast to the austere reality of her Alaskan existence, so it becomes one of the sources that give her the power to survive. She has refused her Eskimo part, her name Miyax which "stands for whatever is related to the Inuit lore" [10, p. 50]. As Julie, she can see herself continuing her schooling and enjoying the same luxuries as her friend living in a prosperous part of America. However, when she is in such trouble in the Arctic that her very existence is endangered, she discovers that simple objects she need to survive, for example, tiny needles, are more precious than the huge symbols of American prosperity like airplanes and bridges. Thus her dream starts losing some of its enchantment. Moreover, when she reflects about the qualities that Eskimos traditionally identify as signs of wealth, fearlessness, intelligence, and love, she becomes increasingly convinced that it is the Eskimo richness that makes a person happy. The attraction of the faraway society further diminishes when her eyes open to the importance of the ability to communicate with animals, especially with wolves, and to the beauties of the environment that her journey leads her through. Nature with its beauty, associated with the world of Eskimos, finally pushes the American civilization from the pedestal. Julie consents to admit that Eskimo culture is worth admiring.

"The old Eskimos had changed the harsh Arctic into a home, a fact as incredible as sending rockets to the moon. The people at seal camp had not been as outdated and old-fashioned as she had been led to believe. No, on the contrary, they had been wise. They had adjusted to nature instead of to man-made gadgets" [3, p. 121].

The final blow to Julie's vision of life in the non-Eskimo world comes from her witnessing the slaughter of the wolf that has saved her life. Understanding that they killed him for the pure pleasure of hunting, she knows that she cannot accept the culture that has created this sort of sport. She would like to live like an Eskimo. She starts cherishing a new dream. However, she does not sever herself completely from her western heritage. From time to time she tries "to spell Eskimo words with the English alphabet (as) such beautiful words must be preserved forever" [3, p. 153].

This unconscious premonition that Inuit culture can survive only if related to the American expression or it announces another much more radical compromise Julie will have to make later in the story. Her great plans for an independent life according to the ancient traditions receive a serious blow when she realizes that even her father has changed his way of life. He has married a white woman, speaks English, has his house equipped with modern household equipment and even uses a plane to help white hunters on their pursuit of large animals. Miyax understands that he has turned his back on several of the ways determining Eskimo traditions. Despite her deep need to live in the community and particularly near her father, her first reaction is to renounce her father whom she used to

regard as a living example of fidelity to Eskimo culture. She cannot understand how he could have accepted a culture that does not respect what Eskimos have always cherished. However, after having realised that she cannot survive alone, she decides to join her father and to accept the new ways of life the Eskimo community has adopted.

CONCLUSIONS

The novel *Julie of the Wolves* illustrates how the main character's awareness of her double identity develops through the changing perception of the two traditions which represent the roots of her personal cultural identity. The book thus offers a story about the search for cultural identity of the main character who is a citizen of the country where the majority of the population belongs to another ethnicity, race and tradition. Her American citizenship is a component of her personal identity that is not questioned; the rest of her cultural identity, on the other hand, undergoes serious scrutiny, which results in changing consent relations. Before providing the summarized overview on the various stages that the protagonist's personal identity goes through, it is necessary to underline that Miyax never questions her double identity, even though her descent is clearly monocultural. This will also be the main reason why the seeds of two traditions, sown due to the encounter between the indigenous and the Anglo-American cultures, seem to develop harmoniously until the point when the author positions one culture in the forefront: when Miyax's mother dies, the first severance of ties with Anglo-American culture takes place. Her father enables her to nourish her Eskimo identity. Miyax's early memories are thus impregnated with Eskimo culture only.

The first moment of tuning in to cultural history of which she is aware comes when she is separated from her father in order to enter school. Even though this separation brings the confirmation of her Eskimo consent, it leads to the severance of ties with the culture she has been growing into. The flashbacks of the story clearly position the start for her schooling as the trigger of the process of "de-Eskimozation" which will result in Julie's rejection of Eskimo culture. When she is later confronted with the unconfirmed news of her father's death, she finds herself in the position of an orphan. Even though legally her status is amended by an adoption, on a symbolic level the loss brings her independence with regard to the creation of her cultural identity. It is up to her not only to determine her consent relations but also cope with the culture shock. Her self-esteem drops drastically, and she strives to develop an image of herself as she would like to be and as she would like others to see her [5]. She shows her growing maturity and flexibility by deciding to integrate into the "Americanized" Eskimo environment, but on the other hand accepts the fact that culture is not static and its active components undergo changes. The second change in her attitude to her double identity brings also a critical response to whatever is Eskimo. A new consent relation to Americanized Eskimo culture, which fortifies above all the Anglo-American part of her identity, is also kept in another Eskimo cultural context that she moves out of her own free will. Her increasing maturity and critical distance enable her to take a radical decision and to decide in favour of Anglo-American culture where she expects to be given the respect and opportunities that she cannot experience in her native environment. Her consent to cultural affiliation has undergone the third change.

The fourth change occurs when the Anglo-American source of the protagonist's double identity is scrutinized. When Julie is confronted with a few harsh aspects of Anglo-American culture, her quest for the life offered by the non-Eskimo civilization ironically pushes her toward the tradition of her ancestors. However, the image of life according to the old Eskimo ways reveals itself as another illusion that needs rectification. It is the fifth alteration in her consent relations that reveals her maturity through sacrifices of parts of both her identities in order to defend her right to live. She will be able to survive as an

individual responsible for her own happiness and as a member of a larger community in Americanized Eskimo culture, which is a fluid and not self - enclosed entity.

The intermingling of changes observed on the protagonist's personal level, which are the result of her efforts to determine her own cultural identity, is accompanied by the image of changes occurring in the Eskimo society. Consequently, readers can easily draw parallels between changes occurring in the life of the protagonist and transformations taking place on a larger scale in the community to which Miyax relates. Thus *Julie of the Wolves* encourages readers to think about the role of intercultural encounters in the process of identity formation and shaping of cultures.

Another quality of this novel is that by the end of the narrative it clearly shows that, despite her double cultural identity, the heroine's personality is not split. By illustrating the maturation that results in the main character's inner stability, the narrative seems to be persuading readers not to be afraid of facing multicultural issues of the contemporary world. Last but not least, a distinctive feature of the book is that it offers a reference point both for the increasing number of young readers with bicultural identity and for all those monocultural readers who are curious about challenges faced by people rooted in two cultures.

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ПОДВІЙНА ІДЕНТИЧНІСТЬ ТА МІЖКУЛЬТУРНЕ КОМУНІКУВАННЯ В ЛІТЕРАТУРІ

Дар'я Мазі-Лесковар

Полікультурна література, що подає персонажів з подвійною культурною ідентичністю, має привілейоване становище серед текстів, присвячених полікультурним проблемам. Особливістю літературних текстів, головні герої яких належать до двох різних культур, є те, що міжкультурні зустрічі відбуваються не тільки на міжособистісному, а й на внутріособистісному рівнях. Тому така література двояко висвітлює питання, пов'язані з полікультурною свідомістю, яку вважають передумовою успіху в міжкультурному спілкуванні. Серед творів, які зображають головного героя – спадкоємця двох традицій, важливо назвати роман *Julie from the Wolves* (1972) американської письменниці Джин Грейгед Джордж. У статті досліджено, як головна героїня стає свідомою своєї належності до ескімоської та англо-американської культур і як еволюціонують її погляди щодо цих двох культур. Крім того, у статті особливо відстежено боротьбу, яку веде героїня-символ задля визначення власної тотожності – того, що веде її до дозрівання і визнання власної відповідальності за особисте щастя. У статті також зазначено, що читачі можуть легко провести паралелі між змінами, які відбуваються в житті головного героя, та перетвореннями у спільноті, до якої належить Міякс. Цей роман заохочує читачів до роздумів щодо ролі міжкультурних контактів.

Ключові слова: подвійна культурна ідентичність; монокультурний; двокультурний; традиція; міжкультурне спілкування; міжкультурні контакти; ескімоський; англо-американський; роман.