THE ROLE OF MASS LITERATURE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: GENRE FICTION AS A DYNAMIC CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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This article explores the role of mass literature as a key medium for intercultural communication, highlighting its adaptability and responsiveness to societal changes. From a comparative perspective, mass literature is analyzed as a phenomenon shaped by social and practical influences. Its use of familiar story patterns and recurring themes allows it to bridge cultural differences, making it accessible and relevant to a wide range of readers. The interaction between text and reader is emphasized, showing how the audience's cultural background shapes literature and influences their perceptions and interpretations. The article further examines how mass literature reflects the values and concerns of a given society and anticipates and shapes reader expectations. It serves as both a cultural artifact and a form of artistic expression, capturing the essence of a particular historical moment while engaging with broader social issues. The translation process is a crucial tool in this intercultural dialogue, allowing literature to cross linguistic boundaries

and enrich the exchange between different cultures. By analyzing mass literature in this broader context, the article highlights its dual function as entertainment and as a means of understanding various cultures. It suggests that mass literature, through its ability to respond to societal shifts and connect with diverse audiences, plays a significant role in fostering communication and mutual understanding across cultural borders. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of mass literature as a vehicle for intercultural dialogue and a reflection of shared human experiences across time and space.

Key words: *mass literature, intercultural communication, genre fiction, formulaic literature, translation.*

РОЛЬ МАСОВОЇ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ В МІЖКУЛЬТУРНІЙ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ: ЖАНРОВА ЛІТЕРАТУРА ЯК ДИНАМІЧНИЙ КУЛЬТУРНИЙ ФЕНОМЕН

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У статті досліджується роль масової літератури як основного засобу між-культурної комунікації, підкреслюється її адаптивність і здатність реагувати на суспільні зміни. З порівняльної точки зору масова література аналізується як

явище, сформоване завдяки соціальним та практичним впливам. Використання у такій літературі знайомих сюжетних моделей і повторюваних тем дозволяє подолати культурні відмінності, зробити її доступною й актуальною для широкого кола читачів. Тут підкреслюється взаємодія між текстом і читачем, вказується на те, як культурне середовище аудиторії формує літературу та впливає на її сприйняття та інтерпретацію. У статті досліджується те, як масова література відображає цінності й проблеми певного суспільства, передбачає й формує очікування читача, адже вона є і культурним артефактом, і формою художнього вираження, вловлюючи суть конкретного історичного моменту та одночасно залучаючи ширші соціальні проблеми. Процес перекладу є ключовим інструментом у цьому міжкультурному діалозі, що дозволяє літературі долати мовні кордони та збагачувати обмін між різними культурами. Аналізуючи масову літературу в такому широкому контексті, автори наголошують на її подвійній функції – як розваги та як засобу розуміння різних культур. Це свідчить про те, що масова література завдяки своїй здатності реагувати на зміни в суспільстві та залучати різноманітну аудиторію відіграє важливу роль у сприянні міжкультурній комунікації. Дослідження підкреслює важливість масової літератури як засобу міжкультурного діалогу та відображення спільного людського досвіду в часі та просторі.

Ключові слова: *масова література, міжкультурна комунікація, жанрова література, формульна література, переклад.*

World integration is a "dialogue of cultures," which results in cognizing "the self" and "the other." As communication and interaction take place at different levels of cultural life, comparative literary studies have become one of the important means of intercultural communication, involving, as E. Kaspersky remarks, the study of "stylistically, linguistically, culturally and ethnically different literatures – through their connections, interactions and collective configurations" and deal with "confrontation and exchange of different – sometimes distant in time and space – literary horizons" [3, p. 518].

The active development of modern society requires a "dynamic" literature. The main reasons for the emergence of mass culture and mass literature are urbanization, unification, industrialization, democratic transformations, etc. Rapid scientific and technological advancements pose new challenges and changes, which allow mass products to expand the boundaries of their influence and enter a new, significantly different stage of their development. The expressiveness and originality of mass literature as a cultural concept are defined by its own cultural context. Mass literature, which, according to Ihor Limborsky, "today … claims the role of "the world" one can no longer be associated with the word "primitive" [4, p. 6], since, as Anna Taranova claims, it increasingly manifests itself as a "universal phenomenon that overcomes cultural, national, political and financial obstacles more successfully than the highbrow literature and at least that is why it deserves attention" [5, p. 53].

The article **aims** to examine the significance of mass literature as a tool for intercultural communication; to explore how mass literature, with its adaptability and familiar story

patterns, helps bridge cultural differences and engage a broad audience; to emphasize how mass literature reflects societal values, addresses social issues, and fosters mutual understanding across cultures by analyzing the interaction between readers' cultural backgrounds and literature.

Genre fiction, as a subset of mass literature, is often structured around recognizable conventions that both reflect and shape reader expectations. As John Cawelti defines it, genre fiction is closely intertwined with the concept of literary formulas. "In general, a literary formula is a structure of narrative or dramatic conventions employed in a great number of individual works" [10, p. 5]. These formulas consist of conventions for portraying certain characters, settings, or situations, alongside broader plot structures. "The first usage simply denotes a conventional way of treating some specific thing or person," while the second refers to "larger plot types" [10, p. 5–6].

One key aspect of formulaic literature, which heavily influences genre fiction, is its reliance on archetypal story patterns that resonate across different cultures. As J. Cawelti notes, "these general plot patterns are not necessarily limited to a specific culture or period... they are examples of what some scholars have called archetypes or patterns that appeal in many different cultures" [10, p. 6]. This idea underscores the ability of genre fiction to transcend cultural boundaries, making it a powerful tool for intercultural communication.

While genre fiction is often perceived as adhering to strict formulas, J. Cawelti argues that "the concept of a formula... is a means of generalizing the characteristics of large groups of individual works from certain combinations of cultural materials and archetypal story patterns" [10, p. 7]. This process is crucial for identifying cultural and historical trends, as formulaic literature mirrors the collective fantasies shared by large groups of people. Thus, genre fiction becomes a lens through which we can observe shifts in societal values and expectations.

Formula and genre might be best understood not as denoting two different things, but as reflecting two phases or aspects of a complex process of literary analysis [10, p. 7]. According to this view, genre fiction often begins as formulaic literature, shaped by established conventions and reader expectations. "In most cases, a formulaic pattern will be in existence for a considerable period of time before it is conceived of by its creators and audience as a genre" [10, p. 8]. Over time, as these formulas evolve, they solidify into distinct genres, such as romance, fantasy, or crime fiction.

However, for a work within genre fiction to have lasting artistic value, it must not simply adhere to the formula but also introduce elements of uniqueness. J. Cawelti suggests that "to be a work of any quality or interest, the individual version of a formula must have some unique or special characteristics of its own, yet these characteristics must ultimately work toward the fulfillment of the conventional form" [10, p. 10]. This balance between innovation and convention is what distinguishes high-quality genre fiction from formulaic repetition.

In genre fiction, three key literary devices – suspense, identification, and the creation of imaginary worlds – are used to engage readers and enhance the narrative.

Suspense, as J. Cawelti describes, is the "ability to evoke a temporary sense of fear and uncertainty about the fate of a character we care about" [10, p. 17], making it especially prominent in crime fiction and thrillers. Identification allows readers to connect with protagonists who often reflect an idealized version of themselves. The scholar explains that "formulaic literature creates a different sort of identification... confirming an idealized self-image" [10, p. 18], central to the appeal of escapist literature. Finally, genre fiction frequently transports readers into "imaginary worlds... sufficiently far from our ordinary reality" [10, p. 19], especially in fantasy and science fiction, where these settings foster escapism and deeper immersion. Using these devices, genre fiction creates a space for readers to engage emotionally, while offering an escape from their own realities through familiar yet captivating narrative structures.

In sum, the intersection of formula and genre in genre fiction allows for the exploration of universal themes through familiar narrative structures, while also providing space for artistic innovation. By combining these elements, genre fiction serves as both a reflection of and a response to its time's cultural and societal values.

The complete dependence of mass literature on its reader makes it a pragmatically determined phenomenon. Readers' tastes are changing, and accordingly, the emphases in this kind of literature should immediately be adjusted. Mass literature, firstly as a social phenomenon and only then as an aesthetic one, can become especially important for studying the context of intercultural relations due to its ability to respond instantly to the public's relevant problems. As Anna Łebkowska notes, "any literary work, even the most primitive one, is of great importance for anthropology as a document of time. As the time distance increases the value of such a work increases" [14, p. 16]. From our point of view, not only anthropology but the entire humanitarian consciousness may benefit from the works of mass literature because they can provide a holistic picture of certain cultures at a definite historical period.

Intercultural and interliterary negotiations become possible owing to translation. Lieven D'hulst asserts that being a "dominant means of communication" between different spheres of one or many cultures, translation "can be considered a privileged object of study for comparative literary studies" [11, p. 95] as it provides a wider artistic background for successful intercultural communication. Translation as an important component of comparative studies was thoroughly investigated by Susan Bassnett [8; 9].

The study of a literary work as a means of the communication process involves the investigation of its pragmatic function, i.e., adherence of a text to the audience's tastes. In our opinion, considering the pragmatic features of verbal communication, it is worth mentioning the role of receptive aesthetics which became a communication theory in the 1960s and 1970s. Wolfgang Iser emphasizes the important role of the reader in decoding the meaning of the literary work. The scholar notes: "The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is a realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader – though this in turn is acted upon by the different patterns of the text. The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely

pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader" [13, p. 279].

According to W. Iser, in close interaction with the text, it is the reader who gives life to the work and makes it "dynamic," "and this very process results ultimately in the awakening of responses within himself" [13, p. 280]. Subsequently, the scholar identifies "three important aspects that form the basis of the relationship between reader and text: the process of anticipation and retrospection, the consequent unfolding of the text as a living event, and the resultant impression of lifelikeness" [13, p. 296]. Yuri Lotman views the text-reader relationship almost similarly: "Text and readership, as it were, seek mutual understanding. They 'adapt' to each other. A text behaves like a partner in dialogue: it re-orders itself (as far as its supply of structural indeterminacy allows) in the image of the readership. The reader responds likewise, using his or her informational flexibility for the restructuring, which will draw him or her closer to the world of the text. At this pole, there is a relationship of tolerance on each side" [15, p. 80]. The scholar also contends that "[w]e should not, however, forget that not only understanding but also misunderstanding is a necessary and useful condition in communication" [15, p. 80]. More to the point, misunderstanding may be the driving force that makes text alive and "dynamic."

As an essential feature of mass literature is its appeal to its addressee, in the process of creating a text, the writer should focus on a particular reader, taking into account his tastes and preferences. However, Umberto Eco, in the introduction to the book *The Role of the Reader,* says that "the only one not to have been "inflexibly" planned is the reader" [12, p. 8], and tries to find the ideal type of recipient that would serve an author a kind of "signpost" in the heterogeneous cultural reality. We consider the complex image of the reader depicted by the Italian scholar worthy of a more detailed analysis.

U. Eco distinguishes between the two types of readers: "naïve" (interested only in a one-time reading of the work and a happy ending) and "critical" (whose work is meaningful, trying to reach the deep meanings of the work). The scholar supports the idea that "the reader is strictly defined by the lexical and syntactical organization of the text: the text is nothing else but the semantic-pragmatic production of its own Model Reader" [12, p. 10]. Yu. Lotman's viewpoint is that "[t]he text is not only the generator of new meanings but also a condenser of cultural memory. A text has the capacity to preserve the memory of its previous contexts. … The sum of the contexts in which a given text acquires interpretation and which are, in a way, incorporated into it may be termed the text's memory. This meaning-space created by the text around itself enters into a relationship with the cultural memory (tradition) already formed in the consciousness of the audience. As a result, the text acquires semiotic life [15, p. 18].

U. Eco endows his "Model Reader" with the ability to "deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them" [12, p. 7]. Constant writer's consideration of his ideal addressee's opinion and the system of his possible codes, allows the latter to create a communicative text, able to acquire memory.

Thus, the text is no longer a simple message expressed by means of a particular language but a complex semiotic structure with its inherent codes, actualized by the reader's perceiving consciousness. The logical result of such various communication processes should be the semantic consensus between the author, the text, and its recipient, due to which the text would acquire a new status – "the literary work."

In addition, the Ukrainian researcher of the reading phenomenon Mariia Zubrytska notes, "the process of perfect mutual understanding between the author and the reader is quite dangerous for literature, as its result will be complete exhaustiveness of the text" [2, p. 222], in fact, undesirable and impossible for the existence of a highly artistic "open" text. However, this situation takes on a completely different axiological meaning within mass literature, which "is based on an obvious pragmatic author's intention to win over as many critical masses of readers as possible" [2, p. 189] and lead them, as U. Eco writes, "along a predetermined path, carefully displaying their effects so as to arouse pity or fear, excitement or depression at the due place and at the right moment" [12, p. 8]. In contrast to the "open" highbrow literature, U. Eco defines pragmatically predetermined texts as "closed" ones because they contain simplified code systems of the author and the reader. However, within the limits of even such, at first glance, simple samples of literary texts, according to U. Eco, there still exists a possibility of mistaken decoding [12, p. 8]. This becomes especially evident, in our opinion, in the process of translation.

Translation is a complex phenomenon, thus being always topical and relevant. Representatives of practically all possible scientific fields have tried to elucidate this notion. All of them posit the communicative nature of translation and its obligatory presence in the negotiations of cultural semiospheres or their internal components. It should be of paramount significance for the translator to keep in mind while working on the translation that his text should meet the readership's horizon of expectations and render the original message, thus creating pragmatically equivalent target text.

Equivalence is an integral feature of translation in its traditional manifestation. There are mainly two types of equivalence among the different approaches to understanding intertextual equivalence as a means of intercultural communication: semantic and functional. Often such a dyad of assimilation levels of the original and its translation finds an excellent terminological interpretation in the works of various researchers of intercultural studies. In particular, we find such substitutes for the above features in foreign translation studies, as "equivalence of the signifier" and "functional equivalence" (U. Eco), "formal" and "dynamic" (Eu. Nida), "non-functional" and "functional" (Al-Rubai'i Alya'). Ukrainian scholars, such as O. Cherednychenko [6] and T. Havryliv [1], mostly use the term "equivalence" to denote the semantic correspondence between the source and target texts, and, in case of the same reactions of the other-cultural readership to the text, define the translation as "adequate".

The comprehension of a work of mass literature can be complete only through a comprehensive analysis of both internal and external elements. This is especially true of bestsellers. The translator, "the other" recipient and a potential comparatist, must

maximize his cultural comparative competence in order to preserve in translation all those features that made the original enter the book market and at the same time gain its popularity, retaining its artistic value. The desire to read light "dynamic" mass literature is inherent in readers of almost all modern cultural traditions. Thus, translation is the most important means of intercultural communication, which directly affects the quality of such negotiations: whether "the other" addressee will get a mass literature work (a bestseller), or a domesticated, slightly embellished version of the original text with disguised characteristics mass product.

Pragmatic stimuli that draw readers' attention to mass literature works, in our opinion, can be divided into *external* and *internal*. External factors in the mass sector of the literary market play a primary role, as they should attract the attention of "their" reader and make him/her buy a book. Here the author's first assistant is his editor, whose role in the modern marketing world is to "capture" as many readers as possible. Readers' recognition and commercial success are achieved as a result of compromise cooperation of the mentioned types of mass fiction's producers.

External pragmatic "stimuli" for readers of mass literature can, in our view, be the author's name, the publication format, its series production, the title which often indicates the genre of the work, a brief summary of the plot collisions (synopsis), fragments of positive critical reviews, mentioning of various awards that the book or its author was awarded, etc. All these elements are certain to be found either on the cover or on the first and last pages of the work offered to the reader. We believe that inner pragmatism may be viewed through the choice of the text's narrative techniques, types of characters, raised themes, and language that should appeal to the audience.

To conclude, the intricate relationship between mass literature and intercultural communication reveals that mass fiction, often dismissed as primitive, holds significant value for cultural and anthropological studies. Its reliance on literary formulas reflects universal archetypes that resonate across cultures, making genre fiction a dynamic tool for cross-cultural dialogue. The interplay between authorial intent and reader expectations underscores the communicative power of literature. As such, mass literature transcends mere entertainment to become a meaningful lens for examining cultural shifts and societal values. Its responsiveness to changing reader preferences positions it as an essential component of comparative literary studies and intercultural exchange.

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