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КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ КОДЫ В ДЕТСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ: ГОЛОСА ИЗ ШОТЛАНДИИ И АРМЕНИИ

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Аннотация: В статье исследуются культурные коды в современной детской литературе.

Целью работы является анализ того, как языковые средства и образность создают и передают читателю культурный код общества или эпохи. Авторы избрали для исследования современную детскую литературу Шотландии и Армении, так как в литературе этих стран есть схожие тенденции: использование неродного языка и культурного компонента в литературе, а также влияние исторического контекста на творчество. Исследование выполнено в двух направлениях: на основе отобранных шотландских текстов рассматривается вопрос передачи культурного кода в мультикультурной среде. Далее, на примере работ Нарине Абгарян, российской писательницы армянского происхождения, исследуются культурные коды детства в мультикультурной среде. Авторы полагают, что, несмотря на тенденции международного книжного рынка, следует развивать детскую литературу, в которой присутствует аутентичная культурная информация. В работе подчеркивается, что современная детская литература способна сформировать идентичность читателя, познакомить его с собственной культурой и при этом стать посредником в налаживании межкультурного взаимопонимания.

Ключевые слова: детская литература, культурный код, код детства, Фрэнк Роджерс, Майри Хеддеруик, мультикультурная среда, мультикультурализм, Нарине Абгарян, ретро-компоненты, символы.

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CULTURE CODES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: VOICES FROM SCOTLAND AND ARMENIA

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Abstract: The article studies culture codes in contemporary children's literature and aims to identify how language units and imagery condense and transmit the culture code of a specific society and epoch. The authors narrow down the research to two countries – Scotland and Armenia – because of the common features of their children's literature: the use of a different language in fiction, the approach to the cultural component in fiction and the influence of the countries' past. The research has two distinct directions: based on selected texts by Scottish writers the paper discusses the issue of transmitting culture codes in a multi-voiced medium. Further, based on the text by Narine Abgarian, a Russian writer of Armenian origin, the culture codes of childhood in the multicultural setting are discussed. It is argued that despite the current trends in the international book market, children's literature containing authentic cultural information should be promoted. Such children's literature performs an important mission toward shaping the readers' identity, raising awareness of one's own culture and facilitating intercultural communication.

Keywords: children's literature, culture code, the code of childhood, Frank Rodgers, Mairi Hedderwick, multi-voiced medium, multiculturalism, Narine Abgarian, retro-components, symbols.

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Introduction

In the era of globalization, when local cultural elements are under threat of extinction or mixing with mainstream cultural tendencies, the question of preservation and transmission of cultural values of a specific nation has become a topical one. There is no denying the fact that one of the reliable means of passing cultural values from generation to generation is literature. Specialists particularly emphasize the need for producing high quality literature, specifically children's literature that aims at transmitting cultural heritage to the younger generation and develop positive attitudes toward one's culture and that of others [16, p. 82].

It has never been easy to define what quality texts for children are. What are the criteria set by publishers, educators, parents and children themselves? This question is extremely hard, because there is no exact definition of children's literature.

Books for children are characterized by the following:

– children's literature is inseparable from folklore genetically and functionally;

– children's literature is inseparable from current historic and social trends and tendencies that are seen in "adult" literature of a certain period and in social life in general.

Children's literature performs several important functions:

– entertaining. A book should be captivating; otherwise, children will soon lose interest in the text;

– cognitive. A book introduces new things and ideas to the reader. Besides, a book for children should expand the reader's vocabulary. It does not involve overloading the text with complex words; but the oversimplified language does not offer a challenge to the young mind;

– educational / didactic. A book should serve as a tool to shape values and teach life lessons without being moralistic.

The culture of society and children's literature are closely related to each other. The culture of a particular society determines the significance of children's literature in society, its subject matter and the requirements it should meet, as children's literature is responsible for the formation of future members of society and future citizens growing in awareness of their identity. According to Kimberley Reynolds, children's stories can be "important carriers of information about changes in culture, present and past" [18, p. 4]. The body of practices, expectations, beliefs, traditions and stereotypes associated with a particular society are transmitted through culture codes, references "to a science or a body of knowledge" as defined by Roland Barthes [8, p. 20]. According to Michel Foucault, the fundamental codes of any culture play a key role in a person's life and determine "the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home" [13, p. xxii].

In terms of modern dictionaries, the code is something which organizes, regulates and unifies our life. A culture code is generally understood as a part of cultural process its semantic core, rather than a description of a cultural phenomenon per se. Clotaire Rapaille [17] defines the culture code as the collective cultural unconscious. However, this definition seems vague. Our understanding of culture is far from being unconscious, it is made up of things we have read, heard, learned. It is passed from generation to generation. Without it, culture will be broken. In the course of time, new symbols, values and images are added to the accumulated bulk of information, expanding our cultural space. National self-identification is closely connected to the culture code. However, it would be erroneous to think that the code of one nation is impossible to understand by representatives of another nation. In the global world, such understanding is becoming essential. It helps to maintain own identity, understand and value the identity of others. The earlier this understanding begins, the easier it will be to navigate in the multicultural context. Children start understanding their own culture code by copying the behaviour of those who surround them. Several codes are learned when children are raised in the multicultural environment. Does it mean that children brought up in the monocultural context are unable to acquire cultural codes? Definitely not, as ways of learning about the world are various. One of such ways is reading. Reading helps to not only understand

the code of the reader's own culture, but also build bridges between universal values across the world.

The language is crucial in children's literature. Language conveys the message of the text, at the same time, it is through the language units that culture-specific information is transformed into codes. Language is a critical cultural feature providing a revealing example that culture and identity are interrelated but not interchangeable concepts. The paper argues that the native language is not a necessary precondition for transmitting authentic cultural information and that culture codes permeate into the text through references to cultural realia and symbols concentrating a huge cultural content. The aforementioned made us choose texts by Scottish and Armenian writers for the following reasons:

- the texts under analysis were produced by the authors writing in the language that is not the main / primary language in their region;
- all the authors have the experience of living in a multicultural environment;
- all the authors successfully cope with the difficulties caused by multiculturalism and see it as an asset, not an obstacle;
- all the texts are based on a combination of culture codes, which makes the texts, on the one hand, easy to understand by readers of various cultural backgrounds, and, on the other hand, trigger the reader to learn more about other cultures.

We aim to discuss how the discussed books look at the problems related to identity, authentic cultural values and multiculturalism and help the young generation to navigate in the world and, at the same time, preserve their own cultural identity.

Voices from Scotland

In Scottish culture, the need for producing authentic literature is highly emphasized. For a small country like Scotland, authentic literature is viewed as a means of shaping young readers' identity and making them bearers of authentic culture codes. It is appropriate to mention that the existence of Scottish children's literature had been questioned for a long time as it was not recognized as a distinct phenomenon in the canon of British literature for a long time. Teresa Breslin, the Carnegie Medal winning author of books for children and adults, in one of her speeches back in the 1990s mentions that in the children's books she read "never

saw herself,” adding that “the children I read about owned ponies, had a cook and gardener, and went on sailing holidays in Cornwall” [10]. It was only in late 1990s when Scottish literary circles started discussions on the problem and voiced the urgency of defining those features that make literature authentically Scottish. The themes on the lives of animals, monsters and fabled creatures, experiences of big cities, social deprivation, exclusion and alienation and traditional Gaelic and Lowland folklore are now recognized as distinctive Scottish dimensions [6]. The problem of defining Scottish children’s literature is not limited to the need for defining the typical themes. The major problem in this respect is the language.

Scotland is a “three-voiced” country [14] and this phenomenon is reflected in the literature comprising writings in Gaelic, Scots and dense English. The promotion of Scots is high on the Scottish agenda and the production of authentic literature can hardly be overestimated in this respect. Writing in Scots is widely supported through national projects. In this respect, the stories by Elizabeth Cordiner, a Scottish Booktrust listed author, is worth mentioning, as the stories are linked into the curriculum of the Scots language in Primary schools. Her collections of stories, “Big Heid anither Ewen stories,” “The Maggie stories,” “The Mingins,” raise various issues about children’s life family, friendship, understanding of self, attitudes and values. “The Ewen stories” is about a young boy living in a Highland village. In each story, readers are exposed to Ewen’s attitudes to his family, friends and the native places. In “Heroes,” for instance, the importance of heroes and role models is emphasized. Inspired by the talk on heroes during the Assembly meeting, Ewen started to think of heroes in real life. To his great surprise, Archie, a wee pal of his, confessed that he wanted to be a hero like Ewen. That day, Ewen, with the help of Archie and with other two wee “wans” (Scottish for ‘children’) saved the dog that had got stuck in the rabbit hole. Little Archie was inspired by Ewen’s courage to save the dog. That deed for Archie was a demonstration of heroism: “Ye’re a richt wee hero” [21]. The events of the day made Ewen think that everyone had his hero, like his dad was a hero for him, he was a hero for Archie and Archie was a hero for the other two wans.

Attachment to native places, compassion and tolerance to those outside his immediate surroundings are the themes of the story “Cousin George.” Ewen’s Cousin George, from Glasgow, came to stay at Whinnie (a small village in the Highlands), but was annoyed to know that a small village lacked the entertainments of the big city. Ewen tried hard to make his stay enjoyable, but he could not

understand how the lonely life in the city could be enjoyable. For him, his island was much more diverse and richer than the city. The magnifying glass, handed to him from his granddad, was more precious than any of the entertainments of the city; it was the source of his knowledge and a tool to observe the beauty of his island. Scots in the following passage helps us understand how a child thinks and feels in his culture:

The island wis fu of things that ye could dae. Ye could walk tae the harbour tae see Colin and Murdo bring in the catch in their boat, the Mary Margaret. Ye could look for sea eagles abune the cliffs. Ye could find treasures washed up on the shore. Ye could hide in the wuid. An then there were the rockpools tae explore, the dunes an the creatures that lived there. Ewen showed George his island, whaur tae find the wee hidden creatures, an hoo tae use a magnifyin glass tae see the patterns on a butterfly's wing... [21].

The stories in the collection are of great educational and cultural value. They help children learn to interpret the surrounding environment, events, experiences and concepts, from trivial things up to the inner world of a child. The Scots language, in its turn, is the tool which helps Scottish readers better connect themselves to the story characters and identify themselves as members of the same society with shared values and attitudes.

Despite Government efforts to promote and support Scots, many writers give preference to writing in English exclusively. Maureen Anne Farrel explains this paradox by contending that “while the traditional Scots forms may be valued in the work of Burns and Scott, they can be denigrated in the speech of children” [11, p. 43]. This is largely due to the ambivalent attitudes to the Scots language and culture, which had been generated long ago under the influence of the Scottish Cringe, which emerged as a result of the dominance of English and the Anglocentric culture. Yet, another reason for writers to write in English is that many publishers have seen great impediments for Scots writing as it limits the understanding, and it is not suitable for the international market. Thus, literature in dense English can be regarded as an attempt for internationalizing Scottish literature. The question that arises in this respect is whether literature written in English is able to transmit the cultural content to the full extent.

Indeed, reading children's poetry and stories in Scots is a different experience, as the language is the bridge that immediately binds readers to the culture. However, as it will be demonstrated below, English does not overshadow the cultural content, moreover, it helps writers convey the hidden meanings of the text and directs readers to contemplations at the ideological or symbolic level.

The best demonstration of this is the collection of short stories "The Tartan Rainbow" [20], an anthology of specially commissioned short stories from well-known Scottish writers, hailed by the Guardian as a collection "celebrating the culture of modern Scotland" [12].

One of the bonding elements in the collection is the setting. In almost all the stories the events take place in Scotland, and this is an important medium through which important messages are conveyed to readers. The places where the stories of children unfold and where adventures happen are either in the Highlands or somewhere in Glasgow or other places which are perceived as idyllic places for a child to grow and to experience life.

Another important feature is that the stories tell about the lives of children in family which makes the relations within family a central theme in the collection. Family is central to most children's literature. Children's literature promotes a specific ideology attempting to instil in its readers certain values which dictate how families should be [7, p. 2]. In the collection, a family implies not only the members of the nuclear family, but an extended one, with grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, stepparents and stepsiblings, and even pets. The representation of the family as an expanded institution gives reason to conclude that family is one of the marked cultural values cherished by Scots. In the collection, family is depicted not only as a medium where children grow up and receive care. Typical value features of the Scottish family as shown in the collection, are unity, solidarity, respect, protection, patronage, continuity of generations, affection to all members of the nuclear family and outside, emotional attachment and the support in facing the difficulties. Frequent references to folklore make one see how culture and family penetrate and complete each other. Thus, family is not a mere aggregation of individuals. The values attached to family help set up communication among generations.

All of the stories in the collection are noteworthy for the subject matter of the paper; however, we have singled out the title story "The Tartan Rainbow" by Frank Rogers [23] which touches upon several aspects of modern Scottish society.

According to the author, he came up with the story when the editor asked him to write something about Scottishness. So he “sat down and chewed it over (along, with my Scotch pie and chips and a couple of deep-dried Mars bars)” and came up with “the weather, football, fast food, tribalism and optimism, <...> all dusted with a touch of magic” [20, p. 224].

The story emphasizes the importance of communication between generations which in the story takes place via references to cultural symbols and transmission of values. The conversation between Grandpa and Jimmy, the grandson, is the means through which the culture codes permeate into the text and become the property of readers.

One of the problems the story touches upon is the vulnerability of the local culture under the increasing influence of mainstream tendencies imposed by globalization. The emptying chairs of the local café give the symbolic representation of the cultural values under threat of extinction. Jimmy’s grandpa is the owner of a local Cosy Café selling tea, scones and chips, which is no longer attracting the locals (“Not many customers in today, Jimmy” [23, p. 59]). That Grandpa’s words are with a touch of nostalgia and disappointment is evident when he starts picking up the unused serving tongs and absent-mindedly rearranges the scones and apple slices on the counter. In reaction to Jimmy’s remark that the café has been empty for the recent two days, Grandpa mutters under his breath: “Aye, or last month or the month before. It is since those flashy new burger places opened” [23, p. 59].

The flourishing burger place and the emptying local café are the symbolic representations of the era of globalization where the small cultures get engulfed by mainstream tendencies depriving people of their true self and identity. This confrontation could be interpreted as a confrontation of generations too, as Jimmy is the contemporary of the mainstream culture. However, this story does not deal with the clash of generations but emphasizes the emotional and spiritual attachment of the generations and child’s awareness of his identity. Jimmy is feeling sorry for grandpa and is eager to see the café full of customers and grandpa happy: “Don’t worry, things will soon get better” [23, p. 59]. The conversation between the generations confronts the traditional ways of perceiving the problem of parents and children and introduces the code of the family that embraces mutual support and continuation of family traditions.

Another important symbolic image that is used in the story is football, which has been very popular in Scotland for almost 100 years. Football identity

is one of the marked elements of the social and cultural identity of Scots. Scottish football has many distinguishing features (distinct from the English counterpart, too) indicating at the existence of “inherent political, religious and ethnic dimensions” [9]. The game in Scotland is dominated by the Glasgow Rangers (supported by Protestants) and Celtic (supported by Catholics) football clubs, who have monopolized the Scottish game since the late nineteenth century. The Old Firm, as they are jointly called, has brought forth discussions on nationalism and unionism, questions about political, cultural and religious identity. The rivalry, deeply embedded in Scottish culture, has caused a deep segregation especially in Glasgow, which is metaphorically represented as “one city two teams.” This segregation has caused ambivalent attitudes toward the Scottish national football team, too.

Football identity and the segregated Glasgow are reflected in the story, too. The defeat of Scotland’s national team makes Jimmy feel subdued. Jimmy’s comment on the poor play of the team (“Scotland played rubbish last night, didn’t they?” [23, p. 60]) enforces a rueful smile on grandpa’s face, however, he encourages Jimmy not to feel disappointed: “Supporting Scotland is like supporting our local team, Patrick Thistle. <...> You just never know what they are going to do next. One minute they are playing like angels — like heroes — and the next like a bunch of dumplings” [23, p. 60].

The comparison of the national team with the local Patrick Thistle is symbolic. Grandpa considers the wee team “a team for everybody, no matter who you are,” thus the attitude toward the national team is the same. Jimmy is influenced by Grandpa’s position which we see when he tells Grandpa that two boys bully him for not supporting Celtic or Rangers (“<...> two wee neds that live near me. One gives me a hard because I don’t support Celtic and the other does it because I don’t support Rangers” [23, p. 61]). Grandpa, with his support for the local team, stands as the epitome of values dealing with unity. Through the conversation, football, as one of the marked symbols of Scottish cultural identity, transmits the values of unity and solidarity, which sounds the protest to the existing dividing lines in the society.

No less important in the story is the Scottish weather, which is an integral part of the Scottish life. In the collection, the weather is integrated into the plot of the stories and rain is omnipresent in the story under consideration. It portrays the mood of the characters and establishes the atmosphere of the story. It also

represents the discontent of the customers at the café (“There are two seasons in Scotland. June and winter” [23, p. 63]) and gives an insight into the problem of immigration (one of the customers says to Jimmy: “Don’t hang around in this country, son. Emigrate to Australia as soon as you’re old enough. What me and Agnes should have done” [23, p. 62]). Here, the symbolic use of rain is evident as it serves as a point of opposition of values. Grandpa shows objection to what the customers said. For him the Scottish weather is what shapes Scottish people (“makes the Scots tough”). Hence, we may safely conclude that the weather is part of the identity of Scots. Grandpa’s stance of “taking the rough with the smooth” is the guiding principle for tackling the controversies and dilemmas facing the society and identity issues as well. On the other hand, the weather is closely related to the notions of home and homeland and the importance of being attached to the place where one belongs.

Home and being at home is important for Scots; this is what we can deduce when Jimmy, in search of the tartan rainbow (which is believed to bring good luck), meets a homeless brownie. The revival of folklore elements in a modernized text is a powerful device which emphasizes the interconnectedness of culture and family. The episode itself and Jimmy’s consent to give him a shelter emphasizes the mindset of Scots: everyone needs to have home and have a feeling of belonging to a certain place. Jimmy is rewarded for his service as in return for his favour, his dream of saving Grandpa’s café is realized. Thus, the concept of home (implying both a place where one belongs and a shelter) is another cultural code that is made central in the story and which is relevant to the concept of family and the continuation of family traditions. This conveys another important code of the culture: being helpful to those who are in trouble. Thus, the story’s merit is that by emphasizing the key concepts of the culture – family and home – it conveys the importance of breeding respect toward the cultural values by developing a spiritual bridge between parents.

The concepts of “home” and “family” are closely related to food, yet another cultural symbol which is often employed in children’s literature. According to Ann Alston “the function of food in the family – where it is eaten, its importance, its constituents and its effects” [7, p. 5] constitutes one of the family-specific spaces. It can help develop the idea of an ideal family at the same time revealing the family conflicts and highlighting the ways of settling them. “Family at table is a strong cultural signifier representing stability and prosperity” [7, p. 125], while:

“<...> the image of a happy family round the table has remained static, fixed in the culture, as something that should happen, something that is essential to the well-being of both the family and the nation” [7, p. 125].

It goes without saying that the representation of home and food in children’s literature deals with the relationships between children, parents and other members as well. Food and its central role in family life invoke a sense of belonging, too. According to Diane McGee [15, p. 15], the choice of what is acceptable to eat plays a major role in defining the culture – whether of a nation, a tribe, a class, or a family. Thus, one of the first things that a child learns is what is eaten in the family to which he or she belongs, and this is one of the formative experiences in childhood, which contributes to the development of the individual and defines his / her belonging to the group [15, p. 15]. By conforming to their family food culture children learn to identify themselves as one of the members of the group. It is not surprising that, when the child becomes an adult, he / she often returns to the memory of childhood food with some nostalgia, as for a child, home and family are associated with certain types of food. Another symbolic meaning for food is that of identity.

Food takes a key place in Scottish children’s literature, too. One of the demonstrations of this is *The Big Katie Morag’s Storybook*, by Mairi Hedderwick [22], telling about Katie Morag’s adventures on the Isle of Struay, a fictional place off the West coast of Scotland. The Isle of Struay has a population of 25 people, ferries work 3 times a week and the weather is variable, with winds and precipitations always on sight. Despite this, islanders and the visitors enjoy their life on the island.

One of the overriding images of the book is food that brings to mind the ideas of family, hospitality and traditions. In the chapter “The Baking Day Secret,” readers are introduced to one of the traditions, as Friday is a baking day on the island. It is a well-observed tradition for islanders and on this day people cook sweets and share them with their neighbours. Sharing of food is a bonding ritual for the island people and the observance of tradition on every Friday affirms the continuity of the tradition and the people’s wish to stick close to each other, in this way expressing their common identity.

At the end of the tour for sweets Katie gathered a bogie full of packages with all sorts of ‘fabbydoo’ chocolate cakes, meringues, syrupy porridge, doughnuts, shortbread. When they turned back home, Katie hid the bogie round the

corner of the house. After they entered the kitchen, they found it in a terrible mess. Mrs McColl, Katy's mother, is all in tears and at a complete loss, as the biscuits were burnt, pancakes and sponges were spoiled for the tea they organized for the new teacher and his wife. Suddenly, Katie Morag exclaimed that they had lots of baking from the islanders. Katie, though she wanted to keep the day secret from Liam, shared one of the sacks of sweets and the tea party was saved. The party with the new teacher and his wife was a great success and that night they got a special treat of Nurse's supper, syrupy-sweet porridge. In this context, sharing food is part of hospitality that expresses the warmth of the domestic hearth where families contained in harmony are ready to share home-cooked meals.

The episode ends with a picture of Katie and Liam eating sweets in their bed that demonstrates the joy of sharing the food.

This episode is followed by the "Recipe for porridges" illustrating the recipe of a traditional porridge and a picture of Katie, her brother and cat in the kitchen making porridge. It captures Morag in a very happy mood when she is busy stirring the bowl of ingredients and Liam helping her. The two Chapters are woven all around the idea of sharing; island people share food with Katie, she shares it with her mother, then they share the food with the guests and then she shares the food with Liam and shares the recipe with the readers. This chain captures a significant cultural attitude, which is indicative of the warmth of the house, trust in relations and hospitality. Through the symbolic reference to food sharing the potential of food to be a means of reconciliation is established, which we see in the illustration, capturing Katie and Liam sharing food together in bed.

Thus, cooking and eating nourish not only the body but nourish people spiritually. Food sharing is a tangible expression of how one feels towards the others. The sharing of the traditional recipe of porridge is also an expression of cultural identity. Food is a communication tool between parents and children and among children themselves. The choice of the recipe for porridge is not accidental. The ingredients: butter, oats, sugar and syrup are considered wholesome products typical of regions living in the north. Porridge and sharing of the recipe are important for preserving the food culture of the location. Though the islanders are cut off from the mainland they are not immune to foreign influences and the islanders sticking to traditional food is important to withstand this penetration. When Granny Island fell ill they all feasted on "mince and tatties and mashed

tumshie.” Granny Island’s “I can’t stand tagliatelle stuff of Granma Mainland’s” is the protest against the progressively modernizing food culture.

Thus, we can see that making food and sharing food are forms of human expression that is blended with the environment, the mindset, and culture of people. In this sense in the Scottish children’s literature food can be seen as a representation of a child’s identity or the identity of the group where he / she belongs.

Armenia: the mix of codes and images

Narine Abgaryan, a Russian writer of Armenian origin, has never described herself as a children’s writer. Yet, children are often central or important characters in her prose.

The title that enjoys popularity among the readers from ten to ninety-nine is, undoubtedly, a trilogy, “All about Manyunya.” Set in the small Armenian town of Berd in the 1970s, the book covers a wide range of topics that would be equally interesting for both children and adults.

The trilogy is characterised by the highly multicultural context. However, unlike many other texts set in the multicultural environment, Abgaryan’s book shows that despite tragic events and life difficulties, multiculturalism is an asset, not an obstacle. Her books seem to have all five codes identified by Barthes [8]. The cultural code, however, stands out in Abgaryan’s books. The use of this code requires a set of common elements known to all the readers. Abgaryan boldly introduces elements of other cultural codes in her text and, surprisingly, these elements do not hinder understanding; on the contrary, they enrich the text and make it unique.

Narine Abgaryan’s books are all about Armenia, but she writes in Russian. However, she admits that this fact does not make her an entirely Russian writer and adds that whenever she writes she understands that the wording of many sentences, although grammatically correct, differs from the way it would be done by a native Russian speaker. She explains that she still thinks in Armenian, which is seen through her choice of vocabulary or the sentence structure [4]. The choice of Russian as the language for her books is determined by better chances to enlarge the readership. From this point of view, she can be compared with Dina Rubina, whose books are written in Russian, but whose topics and, more importantly, *views* are a mix of several cultures: Jewish, Russian, Uzbek etc. Therefore, the book chosen for the analysis is a good example of how a writer coming from

another culture successfully uses the means of another language to produce a highly captivating text and raise issues that are both culturally specific and internationally understood.

She moved from Berd to Moscow in the 1990s, fleeing the zone of the Karabakh war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the status of Nagorny Karabakh, tried many jobs and finally found her first publisher in Moscow. She started experimenting with writing in *Live Journal* where she posted recollections of her childhood in Berd. Soon she had many followers and the stories about three girls – sisters Narine and Karine and their best friend Manya (or Manyunya) – attracted the attention of the publisher. The stories were organised in three books that were first published separately (in 2010, 2011 and 2012) and then – as a single volume, “All about Manyunya” that has been reprinted several times.

The book is partly autobiographical. Each book consists of a series of ridiculous or memorable episodes from the life of the three girls, their families and neighbours. Berd is shown in the book as a mixture of ethnic backgrounds. Narine and Karine are Armenian, but their maternal grandmother is Russian, which makes the sisters (and the other two sisters who are secondary characters) bilingual. Their best friend, Manya, is Jewish (or Armenian-Jewish). The teacher of music is Georgian, one of the neighbours is Ukrainian, another – Lithuanian. “Aunt Biruta was the only Lithuanian in the town and within the twenty years she spent in Berd, she learnt to cook local dishes and speak the language as aptly as Berd housewives” [1] (the translation is ours. – E.Z., M.S.). Narine’s Russian grandmother prays to Jesus; Manya’s grandmother speaks of him ironically. However, this does not prevent the two women from being on friendly terms – even more than just friendly. Manya often goes to Azerbaijan where her mother moved after the divorce from Manya’s father. On the bus, they see a praying man and Manya’s father explains to the girls about Islam. The meeting with a Molokan girl (Molokans are sometimes referred to as Russian Protestants) expands the religious horizons even further. Narine Abgaryan claims that her childhood that gave her inspiration for the book also enabled her to feel comfortable among people of all religions: “You can congratulate me on Christmas, Hanukkah, Ramadan...” [1].

This is where the reader sees a unique cultural code of her childhood: multinational, multireligious and at the same time so Armenia-specific.

The multicultural environment in “All about Manyunya” is manifested, primarily, through the language. The names of dishes, kitchenware, and plants, as

well as swearwords, are Armenian with occasional Persian borrowings and references to Russian history. (For example, one of the most horrible names for an old woman is *Nikolai boz*, which means a prostitute so old that she was in the profession at the times of the Russian tsar Nicolas II.) It should be noted that the book comes in two editions, one of which is 16+. *Nikolai boz* appears only in this edition. Another swear word, *Zakhrmar*, comes from Persian “*zakhre mar*” ‘snake’s poison,’ and is used to refer to a difficult person or a situation. It is also worth mentioning that sometimes, when the expression is difficult to figure out, the author explains its etymology, as in the case with *Nikolai boz*. In most cases, though, the author prefers to keep the original names, written in Russian letters. This has often triggered criticism from some readers who think that children will have difficulties reading the text. In our opinion, though, the occasional use of such words develops imagination and linguistic prediction as well as metaphorical and logical thinking. If a character takes pickles out of a clay *karas*, the purpose of a *karas* is clear and the word does not hinder the reading process. If a reader – young or adult – wants to find out more about a *karas* (size, shape etc.), Internet search engines are always at hand and will provide the reader with dozens of images. In our opinion, stimulating readers’ curiosity is exactly what makes a book suitable for children. Deducing the meaning of the word from the context is considered an effective strategy of language learning and vocabulary acquisition. According to Sidorova [3, p. 248], the mix of codes and switching between them not only portrays the character in the most convincing way, but also demonstrates a variety of ways to produce speech. Besides, the main characters, living in the multicultural community, do the same every day and sometimes struggle with new or unusual words. For example, they try to deduce the meaning of the Russian polysemantic word “*nabor*.” They know it in the meaning ‘a set of things,’ e. g. *nabor* of pens. But they are puzzled to see it in the advertisement written in Russian “*nabor* of girls to a dancing class,” i. e. in the meaning ‘enrolment, admission.’ The fact is also an indirect proof of the multiculturalism of Berd – why write an advertisement in Russian? The only explanation is that as an official language of the USSR, Russian is used to address a multicultural group.

The use of Armenian words in the text expands the readers’ knowledge about the country or about the Armenian diaspora in Russia. Besides, Armenian or other non-Russian words are often used by the author to create a humorous effect or, on the contrary, make the episode touching. Together with

the main characters, the reader has to discover double meanings of words and names and decode the implications. The following episode serves as a brilliant example of this linguistic work of the mind. Uncle Misha, Manyá's father, takes his mother and the girls to the mountains, where they meet two frightening old women, Katynga and Olynga. The women give them cottage cheese and a candle to heal Narine's bad dreams. Katynga sits down together with Misha's mother who starts crying and singing in an unfamiliar language. Taken aback and puzzled, the company returns to town. On the way, Misha understands that Katynga and Olynga are distorted Russian diminutives *Katen'ka* and *Olen'ka*, children versions of the names Ekaterina and Olga. Who gave them Russian diminutive names? Where do their prophetic abilities come from? How could an ancient Armenian woman make a Jewish woman remember a song in *jidi*, the Judeo-Persian language of her childhood? The episode takes two pages in the book, but it is packed with cultural references, foreign words and the thrill of meeting the Unusual.

Other similarly loaded episodes may produce a humorous effect, e. g. a goat named Maniac that turns out to be a traditional Armenian female name, and not a serial killer. Armenian translators of the Manyunya trilogy found, however, that it was next to impossible to translate such episodes into Armenian — what sounded funny or touching in Russian (with Armenian words included), sounded neutral in Armenian. The problem was solved by N. Gijjalryan who translated the Russian text into Armenian, and Armenian words in the text into the Shushaband (Berd) dialect to create the defamiliarisation effect (*ostranenie*, estrangement), which enabled her to preserve the language-based humour.

Another device employed by the author to arouse readers' curiosity is the use of retro-components [2, p. 37]. Abgaryan uses two types of retro-components — lexical and situational. Lexical components are words used to denote Soviet realia, e. g. "*fartsovschik*" 'a black marketer,' who illegally sells deficit goods. Situational components are descriptions of situations familiar to every person in the USSR — e. g. concerts organised for those who worked on collective farms (*kolkhoz*), summer camps for children, Labour Day demonstrations on 1 May. The cultural collective memory becomes panchronous.

Therefore, Abgaryan's trilogy does not simply use another cultural code: it employs the mix of several codes, which makes the book so valuable for children. It serves as a trigger to learn more about other cultures and about the past; teach-

es to analyse and compare; develops the imagination, language skills and historic knowledge of young readers.

Critics, teachers and parents often argue whether books should speak about traumatising events, such as war. Abgaryan does not describe war in the Manyunya trilogy; she does it in *Live On*, the book clearly not intended for children. In the trilogy, she mentions the airport in Berd that “was so close to the border with the Azerbaijani SSR that during the war it would be the first to be shelled.” This is, probably, the only direct mention of the Karabakh war. However, there are subtler hints in the text, and the attentive reader will notice them. One such episode takes place on the bus from Kirovabad (where Manya’s mother lives) to Berd. Manya suddenly starts singing “‘Farewell, Kirovabad, farewell.’ ‘Why farewell,’” wonders Manya’s father who never prevents his daughter from visiting her mother and the new husband: “You should sing ‘See you soon, Kirovabad,’ because you will always be able to come here.” However, Manya keeps saying farewell, and the adult reader understands that in eight to ten years people from Armenia will never ever be able to go to Kirovabad. Can a young reader decode this episode? Probably, not at the first attempt. However, the sad tone of the narration and the atmosphere of the inevitable loss, especially clearly contrasted to the hilarious description of the characters’ adventures in Kirovabad, will be enough to awaken curiosity and ask the question: “Why ‘farewell?’”

Abgaryan laments the loss of internationalism. One of the chapters describes the trip of their Armenian-Jewish company to Adler, Russia, where they stay with a Georgian family. At the end of the chapter, the author directly addresses the reader asking to imagine how great it was not to think of who was sitting next to you – Russian, Armenian, Jewish... In one of her interviews, Abgaryan says that internationalism is not just a plain word: that she genuinely believes in friendship between people of different nationalities. This cultural memory has become for the writer a way of coping with the aftermath of the war. In this way, the writer reaches out to the young reader without describing atrocities.

Abgaryan manages to deal with another traumatising experience – parents’ divorce – equally brilliantly. When Manya’s father, a divorcee, shows interest in another woman, Manya shares this bit of news with her friends and they discuss the possible marriage (which never takes place). Manya wants to soften the impact on her friends; Narine and Karine do not want to upset Manya; Manya does not want to seem weak. All these intricacies discussed by eight- and nine-

year-old girls are intertwined with small talk about everything possible: spices, worms, relatives. The conversation goes on and on, shifting from the dramatic to the comic, and when the girls finally agree that Sofa, Uncle Misha's girlfriend, is tolerable, they are so tired of "adult talk" and have such a relief that they immediately wreak havoc on the attic of the house. By mixing drama and humour, Abgaryan re-creates real life on the pages of her book.

The author uses the same strategy to speak of yet another stressful situation: first love. She shows the events through the experience of a grown-up woman who is sympathetic to the sufferings of the main character, and slightly ironic.

Thus, we may safely say that apart from the national and Soviet culture codes, Abgaryan creates the cultural code of childhood. The feelings of the main characters are easily understood by children, regardless of the period and country. "Stealing" mother's cosmetics, taking apart gadgets to see how they work, burying a dead bird — all these things are done by all children. These small episodes are brilliantly woven into the canvas depicting the time of growing up.

Narine Abgaryan's formula of success is manifested in her words: "You need to remain a child... just a little bit... Cheerfulness and self-irony appeal very much to me" [1]. Even when Abgaryan does not write for young readers, children and childhood are integral elements of her texts, even the most tragic ones. She looks at life challenges with optimism, stubbornness, and hope of a child. Death never triumphs in her books.

Conclusion

By bringing together two distinct cultures, the paper highlights the role of authentic children's literature in the current era of globalization. Authentic stories transmit the key cultural values from one generation to another in this way providing the continuity of a particular society. This function is realized due to the system of codes which builds a reader's knowledge about the society that he belongs to, by making it more understandable and accessible. The analysis of the chosen stories enabled us to observe how culture codes are employed in the text to transmit the present and the past of the cultures in a multicultural setting. There is no denying the fact that identity and language are interconnected, moreover, the use of the native language creates the setting where it is easier for young readers to identify themselves as members of the same community. Nevertheless, based on the analysis of Scottish stories written in English, on the one hand, and a story

written in Russian by Narine Abgaryan, a writer of Armenian origin, on the other, we may conclude that the use of another language does not depreciate the cultural value of the mentioned texts. Culture codes permeate into the text through references to specific locations, origins of the characters and their traits, as well as their attitudes, values and beliefs. The analysis has enabled us to spot several specific features of transmitting the cultural content. Based on the analysis of the Scottish stories written in English we can observe that cultural codes are transmitted via numerous references to local places, weather, family, friendship, home, food, sports and the elements of folklore. In the discussed stories the random use of Scots does not play a significant role in creating an authentic cultural setting and in highlighting the Scottish identity. In contrast, while Narine Abgaryan's book also provides numerous references to local places, family, home, religion, friendship and historical events, the use of Armenian words contributes to creating a typical Armenian context in the multicultural setting.

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