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### **CROSS-CULTURAL PECULIARITIES OF PROVENCE DAILY ROUTINE IN THE NOVEL "A YEAR IN PROVENCE" BY PETER MAYLE**

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*The article deals with the problem of cross-cultural analysis of the features of the Provence daily routine on the material of the novel "A Year in Provence" by P. Mayle. In modern literary discourse there is no clear and unambiguous definition of the concept of everyday life, so this problem is relevant to modern literary criticism. The peculiarities of perception of foreign everyday life are not only the sphere of intercultural communication, but also an interesting object of literary studies. The national comparative literature studies have shown the growing interest to the problem of investigating the features of literary interpretation of mentality and everyday practices in works of foreign literature, involving the methodology of cross-cultural analysis only in the last decade.*

*In his novel "A Year in Provence", P. Mayle creates a unique combination of a travel novel and a description of the Provence life through the interpretation of an emigrant who came there from England. The peculiarities of the daily routine of the locals contrast sharply with the cultures of the tourists who visit it. The cultural differences that are revealed in the everyday things of the characters vividly demonstrate specific features of their mentality and their national worldview.*

*An interesting depiction and constant commentary on traditional daily activities, food preferences, attitudes to time, work and people in comparison with the customs of other cultures allows the reader to form an unbiased attitude to the lifestyle of not only the French but also the English, Germans, Swiss and other nation representatives. The author draws attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the life of the Provence people. He also remains objective in presenting comparative characteristics of different spheres of life of the French and other cultures.*

**Keywords:** cross-cultural analysis, travel novel, gustatory unit, everyday life, P. Mayle.

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## КРОС-КУЛЬТУРНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПРОВАНСЬКОЇ ПОВСЯКДЕННОСТІ В РОМАНІ П. МЕЙЛА "РІК У ПРОВАНСІ"

Ковпик С. І, Єловська Ю. В.

У статті порушено питання крос-культурного аналізу особливостей щоденної рутини Провансу на матеріалі роману П. Мейла "Рік у Провансі". У сучасному літературознавчому дискурсі не існує чіткого й однозначного визначення поняття повсякдення, тому ця проблема є актуальною. Особливості сприйняття чужого повсякдення – це не лише сфера міжкультурної комунікації, а й цікавий об'єкт зображення в художній літературі. Вітчизняне порівняльне літературознавство лише в останнє десятиріччя активізувало наукові дослідження щодо вивчення особливостей художньої інтерпретації ментальності та практик повсякдення у творах зарубіжної літератури, залучаючи для цього методологію крос-культурного аналізу.

П. Мейл у романі «Рік у Провансі» створює унікальне поєднання роману-подорожі та опису життя Провансу очима емігранта, котрий приїхав з Англії. Особливості буденності місцевих мешканців яскраво контрастують із культурами туристів, які його відвідують. Культурні відмінності, що виявляються в буденних речах героїв, розкривають особливості ментальності їхньої нації та специфіки їхнього національного світосприйняття.

Цікаве зображення й коментування традиційних повсякденних занять, харчових уподобань, ставлення до часу, роботи й оточення порівняно зі звичаями представників інших культур дає змогу читачеві сформулювати неупереджене ставлення до стилю життя не тільки французів, а й англійців, німців, швейцарців та ін. Автор звертає увагу на слабкі та сильні сторони життя жителів Провансу, виявляє об'єктивність у порівняльних характеристиках різних сфер життя французів та представників інших культур.

**Ключові слова:** крос-культурний аналіз, роман-подорож, густатив, повсякдення, П. Мейл.

**Setting the research problem.** Daily routine of the character significantly influences the process of revealing his / her personality. Everyday life is usually underestimated and considered in the negative way due to its routine and monotonous habits. However, we should not reject the fact that daily routine in particular is an infinite source of human knowledge. However, there is little national research on the problem of daily routine as a literary category. The majority of these papers focus on the representation of individual writers, and the concept of daily routine is considered within the subject of research. N. Koloshchuk draws attention to this issue, analyzing the research of young scientists in recent years: "*in monographic studies of the works of different literary word masters the problem of everyday life, including through the analysis of subject imagery, usually considered more or less in detail*" [1: 321]. As a result, researchers do not aim to describe daily routine from the

theoretical point of view, but perceive it as a simple and clear notion.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Consequently, in the modern literary discourse there is no clear, unambiguous definition of the concept of everyday life. Unfortunately, there is no its commonly accepted structure, nor is there a single framework or a doctrine. Thus, the problem of daily routine categorization is relevant for the modern literary criticism. The process of globalization currently provokes the interest in everyday life of other nations among readers all over the world. People travel; they explore foreign countries, their mentality and culture. All this encourages writers to describe or represent unique examples of daily routine of different nations, in order to learn about other way of living and adapting to it.

**The purpose of the research.** Globalization shifts and opportunities to learn about other cultures reveal the problem of studying the behavioral psychotypes of people and communities

in the context of their mental and cultural characteristics. Searching for common and different traits encourages scientists to intercultural communication, forming the idea of other nations' specifics and mentality peculiarities. The expansion of the communicative space contributes to the diversification of the ways of studying other cultures, as well as nation's everyday practices. These issues are subject matters of research today in the following scientific fields: sociology, cultural studies, philosophy, psychology, management, and literary studies in particular. Therefore, unique behavioral models of representatives of other nations are perfectly illustrated in works of fiction.

**Presentation of the main material of the research and reasoning of the obtained results.** Modern foreign literature of the last two decades is characterized by the tendency of demonstrating the daily practices of one nation in the interpretation of the writer who is not the bearer of its mental code but due to various life circumstances has to live in the foreign country. Being a foreigner, the writer tries to convey the psycho-behavioral models of this nation in the literary way. Among the samples of such interpretations are the novels "The Accidental Tourist" by A. Tyler, "Faserland" by Ch. Kracht and other.

Perception peculiarities of a different everyday life are not only the sphere of intercultural communication, but also an interesting fiction image. In our opinion, the text of a literary work in terms of literary interpretation allows the writer to present unique and specific features of the national lifestyle, behavior, worldview, people and country.

One of the specific genre forms of presenting the concepts of "native" and "foreign" is a travel novel, or a traveling prose, which has been gaining its popularity among the literary critics in recent years. The dissertation research by N. Rozinkevych on the topic: "Ukrainian travel prose in the early 21st

century: themes, issues, poetic style" (2019) is one of those fundamental studies that confirm the status of travel literature of the 21st century.

The travel genre allows an author to comprehend and interpret everyday practices of the inhabitants of different countries in the literary way. It also reveals the ethnopsychological mental features of certain nations. According to M. Shulgun, the value of the travel genre lies in the fact that "dialectics" of this genre is associated with its prospects and universality, the ability to use an adequate form of literature self-reflection and legitimization of national self-determination.

However, the national comparative literature studies have shown a growing interest to the problem of investigating the features of literary interpretation of mentality and everyday practices in works of foreign literature, involving the methodology of cross-cultural analysis only in the last decade. Nowadays in terms of imagology a new phenomenon is the functioning in the foreign literary criticism which is known as the "Provence text".

Peter Mayle is a remarkable modern English writer. In the 1970s he debuted as a children's or, rather, adolescent writer in the field of sex education for teen-agers. When he moved to Provence, the writer simply fell in love with the beauty of that region and radically changed his preferences as he began to write about the unique way of life of Provence people.

P. Mayle built his story about Provence in the form of a trip or a journey, which in time and space lasts twelve months. The story of Provence begins in January, which is fully in line with the European tradition of starting a new calendar year. The writer immediately determines the nature of his story about Provence – it is not just a tourist story, but a description of life from the point of view of an emigrant who came from England.

The first thing the author-narrator draws attention to is the rural lifestyle of Provence and therefore "... *If you happen to be foreign ... you are inspected with more than usual interest...*" [4: 5].

However, it turns out that the trust of the neighbors can be won in Provence with the mediating of previous homeowners, who have made the appropriate recommendation and integrated the British couple into the world of Provence everyday life. According to the traditions of the Provence hospitality, the acquaintance with the neighbors takes place during the lunch time. This way of getting acquainted is traditional for the Ukrainian hospitality as well. The British are incredibly impressed by the luxury of the table and the sense of humor of Provence people. All this contributes to friendly communication between the neighbors and develops the basis for further friendly relations.

The author-narrator emphasizes that the weather has a significant effect on the way the inhabitants of Provence think: "*The effect of the weather on the inhabitants of Provence is immediate and obvious. They expect every day to be sunny, and their disposition suffers when it isn't. Rain they take as a personal affront, shaking their heads and commiserating with each other in the cafés, looking with profound suspicion at the sky as though a plague of locusts is about to descend, and picking their way with distaste through the puddles...*" [4: 9].

The writer also pays attention to the fact that the inhabitants of Provence have a clear differentiation of food by seasons – summer and winter: "*The cold-weather cuisine of Provence is peasant food. It is made to stick to your ribs, keep you warm, give you strength, and send you off to bed with a full belly*" [4: 12]. But the menu of the summer Provence food consists of "*the melons and peaches and asparagus, the courgettes and aubergines, the peppers and tomatoes, the aioli and bouillabaisse and*

*monumental salads of olives and anchovies and tuna and hard-boiled eggs and sliced, earthy potatoes on beds of multicoloured lettuce glistening with oil, the fresh goat's cheeses*" [4: 11].

It should be noted that in the description of the French eating practices, the writer highlights the quality of hard-boiled eggs — "*hard-boiled*", this accentuation is not accidental, because the English eating practices are dominated by soft-boiled eggs.

P. Mayel draws attention to the hospitality and sincerity of the Provence people: "*It was a meal that we shall never forget; more accurately, it was several meals that we shall never forget, because it went beyond the gastronomic frontiers of anything we had ever experienced, both in quantity and length*" [4: 12]. The scale of food consumption during a hospitable dinner is astonishing: "*It started with homemade pizza — not one, but three: anchovy, mushroom, and cheese, and it was obligatory to have a slice of each. Plates were then wiped with pieces torn from the two-foot loaves in the middle of the table, and the next course came out. There were pâtés of rabbit, boar, and thrush. There was a chunky, pork-based terrine laced with marc. There were saucissons spotted with peppercorns. There were tiny sweet onions marinated in a fresh tomato sauce. Plates were wiped once more and duck was brought in. The slivers of magret that appear, arranged in fan formation and lapped by an elegant smear of sauce on the refined tables of nouvelle cuisine — these were nowhere to be seen. We had entire breasts, entire legs, covered in a dark, savory gravy and surrounded by wild mushrooms*" [4: 12: 13]. The dinner is not limited to this list, because then there is a rabbit stew, green salad with slices of bread, almond-cream cake. To emphasize once again the amount of everything that the guests can eat during the dinner, the writer uses a stylistic hyperbole: "*That night we ate for England*" [4:13]. The author-narrator

also notes the fact that the British, unlike the French, do not have the habit of eating out, whereas the French spend all their time in restaurants. Moreover, the inhabitants of Provence in particular support the tradition of eating in the restaurants, where the dishes are prepared exclusively according to old family recipes. Usually, the whole family works in the restaurant, so visitors get into an atmosphere of family coziness and comfort.

The writer does not miss the process of organizing repair work by the French builders, which has some differences in comparison with the English one. The narrator notices that the French builders work non-stop for eleven hours with one lunch break. They do everything quickly, without any thought. Observing this process, the author-narrator mentions that the English builders start late and finish early, taking a break for tea several times. In this way, the recipient is able to form his / her opinion about the attitude to work and its quality among the representatives of different nations.

The author-narrator also pays attention to the peculiarities of the time perception and the attitude of the hired workers of Provence, who have their own specific idea of the deadline: "*We learned that time in Provence is a very elastic commodity, even when it is described in clear and specific terms. Un petit quart d'heure means some time today Demain means sometime this week. And, the most elastic time segment of all, une quinzaine can mean three weeks, two months, or next year, but never, ever does it mean fifteen days*" [4: 42]. The above mentioned illustration shows that the writer uses the negative adverb "never ever" to make the recipient clearly aware of the "Provence dimension" of time limits. Finally, the British have adapted to all these subtleties of the Provence time perception, because they have realized that the human qualities such as sincerity and diligence of hired Provence workers are much more

important. Therefore, they developed the habit of waiting for them, as the quality of their work is worth accepting the obvious delay.

P. Mayle also describes the organization of tourism in Provence. There are certain national categories of tourists. One them are German travelers, who are usually accepted extremely negatively by the inhabitants of Provence. It is explained by the German habit to come with their tents. Local Provence people are also dissatisfied as Germans do not buy anything but bread, because they bring everything with them. Furthermore, Germans massively buy housing in Provence, so real estate prices are considerably raised, becoming unaffordable for the local French. These and other routine problems of the inhabitants of Provence make up the essence of their lives. That is why the writer depicts, explains and comments them in detail. Such a detailed description is indicative of the author's desire to present specific mental practices of other nations' life as thoroughly as possible.

The peculiarity of each region of France in terms of everyday life can be traced when it comes to food, "*certain areas have the reputation for producing the best ...*" [4: 56]. That is the way the French try to celebrate and appreciate every corner of their country and emphasize its importance in the system of national branding: "*...the best olives from Nyons, the best mustard from Dijon, the best melons from Cavaillon, the best cream from Normandy. The best truffles, it is generally agreed, come from the Périgord, and naturally one pays more for them*" [4: 56].

Another important feature of the daily life of the Provence people is the enormous cost of food: "*the French spend as much of their income on their stomachs as the English do on their cars and stereo systems, and we could easily believe it*" [4:66]. The scale of purchasing products from the French is impressive. For example, one family can buy food in

quantities equal to the regiment supplies. The French have a special attitude to the Sunday lunch, which is a family tradition, during which no Frenchman thinks to call on business. Speaking about this way of organizing everyday practices, P. Mayle sincerely admits that the British, unfortunately, do not have such a cult of a family dinner.

It should be noted that the writer constantly compares some life situations of Provence people with similar ones in other nations. Presenting certain forms of daily practice, he tries to reveal both strengths and weaknesses of their lives: "*Comparison with London is a sure way of justifying any minor extravagance in Provence*" [4: 57]. In this way, everyday life of the French is not idealized, but presented objectively and impartially.

From May to September, Provence becomes a region where one can meet tourists from all over the world. The observant author-narrator says that the impressions of tourists from this region of France are diverse. For instance, Australian students complain about the temperament of the Provence peasants, claiming that they are too economical, they are suspicious of food, and the landscapes of this region seem to them cramped compared to the Australian ones. It is worth mentioning here that the linear type of narration allows the writer to express his own feelings and emotions, to evaluate certain phenomena: "*They were the only miserable Australians I had ever met, and it was depressing to hear a place that I loved being so thoroughly condemned*" [4: 83].

The defining feature of the gastronomic preferences of Provence inhabitants is the quality of dishes that depend on the skill of the chef. Preferring gourmet dishes, Provence residents can visit far restaurants being many kilometers away from their home. This is due to the fact that by nature the French have a high level of gourmet food, and the gastronomic art of this nation is

world famous. When choosing a restaurant, the French are guided by the principle of food quality and taste characteristics of dishes, but the price policy of the restaurant, unlike with Ukrainians, is not taken into account. "*One of the characteristics which we liked and even admired about the French is their willingness to support good cooking, no matter how remote the kitchen may be. The quality of the food is more important than convenience, and they will happily drive for an hour or more, salivating en route, in order to eat well. This makes it possible for a gifted cook to prosper in what might appear to be the most unpromising of locations, and the restaurant we had chosen was so isolated that on our first visit we'd taken a map*" [4: 87].

Speaking of the gastronomic art of Provence, P. Mayle skillfully uses the gastronomic vocabulary, inspiring the text of the novel with gustatory characteristic descriptions. He emphasizes the quality of dishes, their attractiveness, the shape in which they are served: "cold mussels", "fragrant tabouleh", "bread had a thin crispy crust", "pink slices of lamb", "wine with shoulders", "incredibly strong taste", "wine as nectar" and others. In gastronomic descriptions, the writer uses such an expression as "rolling his eyes", which means the highest degree of enjoyment of eating a particular dish.

The gastronomic discourse in the text of the novel is organized in the way of reflections, the content of which consists of comparative characteristics of food practices of certain nations: "*Why was it so difficult to eat well and cheaply in London? Full of easy after-lunch wisdom, we came to the conclusion that the English eat out less often than the French, and when they do they want to be impressed as well as fed; they want bottles of wine in baskets, and finger bowls, and menus the length of a short novel, and bills they can boast about*" [4: 89].

Thus, such a broad cross-cultural characterization indicates the author's ability to be self-critical and objective in assessing daily practices of the nation to which he also belongs. Gastronomic maximalism of the French is observed even when it comes to rewarding blood donors. The writer notes with shame that in England a donor is given a cup of tea and some cookies. In contrast, the description of what a donor is served with in Provence is quite different: coffee, chocolate, croissants, brioche, sandwiches with ham or garlic sausage, red and rosé wine offered in no limit.

In terms of proxemics, communication process occupies an important place, because the distance between the interlocutors affects their "comfort", which is also nationally determined. As we know, the French, unlike the British, are used to communicate at a short distance between each other. The narrator focuses the attention of the recipients on the ways of non-verbal communication of Provence inhabitants: *"It had taken me some months to get used to the Provençal delight in physical contact. Like anyone brought up in England, I had absorbed certain social mannerisms. I had learned to keep my distance, to offer a nod instead of a handshake, to ration kissing to female relatives and to confine any public demonstrations of affection to dogs"* [4: 93]. Over time, adapting to the lifestyle of Provence residents, the author-narrator notes that he sincerely accepts all the nuances of the social ritual of the French. Thus, the narrator mimics the living conditions in Provence, appreciating all the benefits of a comfortable life in this area, as an Englishman he thoughtfully approaches the adoption of everyday practices of Provence.

In addition, the author-narrator highlights that the French blame foreigners for most of their problems. Thus, the Belgians are to be blamed for accidents *"... because of their habit of driving in the middle of the road, forcing*

*the famously prudent French driver into ditches to avoid being écrasé"* [4: 110]; *"The Swiss and the noncamping section of the German population were guilty of monopolizing hotels and restaurants and pushing up property prices"* [4: 110]. As for the British, the narrator is self-critical and does not ignore the nation to which he also belongs. According to his observations, the French are annoyed by the excessive attention of the British to the sewers and water supplies. That is why in restaurants they very carefully check the toilet, and in case of certain inconveniences, leave the restaurant. Here, most likely, one can trace the results of the event, which occurred in London in summer of 1858 known as "The Big Stench". The lack of centralized sewerage and hot summer led to the pollution of the Thames. Diseases spread throughout the city and throughout the country. It was the year the British Parliament resigned.

The author-narrator also notes the fact that during ten months of living in Provence he and his wife changed the concept of consuming bread, which they had been used to for years. As we know, for the French, bread has a sacred meaning, especially the baguette. The French carefully and unhurriedly choose bread, considering which type of bread will taste better for a particular lunch or dinner. The baker's even has a bread menu "Bread card", which states that you can eat with a particular type of bread. For example, aperitifs will taste like small square croutons, and surprise bread, from which the crumb is taken out and small sandwiches are made in the middle, goes well with bacon. The narrator is forced to admit that in the English tradition, bread is a common product, and in France it is not only sacred but also delicious food.

**Conclusions and prospects of the study.** Thus, in P. Mayle's novel "A Year in Provence", the descriptions of everyday practices of Provence residents are very detailed and extensive. The writer focuses on the French lifestyle in



Provence, draws attention to the strengths and weaknesses of their lives. The author tries to be objective in the comparative characteristics of some spheres of life of the French and the British. With special passion he describes the gustatory practices of Provence inhabitants. Showing certain sympathy he tells the reader about the traditions of entertaining guests. We believe that P. Mayle's novel "A Year in Provence" can be an interesting object of study in terms of genre modifications, as well as the peculiarities of organizing the author's narrative and cross-cultural studies.

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