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## LITERARY TRANSLATION AS A TOOL OF CULTURAL CONTRADICTION

*The article highlights literary translation from the perspective of its social impact on the ideological environment of society focusing, in particular, on Ukrainian 'voice' in translation under the conditions of linguistic and unremitting national language suppression as well as identifies the destructive power of the 'patronage ideology' imposed on Ukrainian translators.*

**Keywords:** literary translation, ideology, linguistic, Ukrainian translators, colonial context.

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**Introduction.** Numerous concepts, reflections, and theoretical assumptions that have emerged in recent years in connection with the philosophy of literary translation emphasize the ideological and cultural nature of this phenomenon. In particular, they emphasize how the imposition of change and the confrontation with the dominant ideology is achieved through translation, which is recognized as a specific area of social life and human endeavor. In this respect, the philosophy we have chosen in the above-mentioned field is closely related to the esthetic issues of conveying the extra-linguistic meaning of the original text, with specific insight into the nature of the translator's social responsibility, rather than a detailed linguistic analysis of the text that reveals the traditional ways of interaction of form and content. Evaluating literary translations within this framework provides an opportunity to reveal and emphasize their strong influence on the fundamental values, principles, and perceptions of society as well as highlight a sharp ideological edge in the socio-cultural environment of a particular period of time.

This is specifically the case with Ukrainian translations of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in which aesthetic resistance was caused by cultural contradictions to the totalitarian 'model of culture' that for long acted as a 'distorted mirror' of the current reality based on the socialist realist mono-doctrine with the superiority of Russian as the dominant language of verbal communication. The problem in question comes to be relevant today in the context of pro-Kremlin disinformation narrative about Ukraine, and Ukrainian nationhood. In this article, we deliberately omit using capital letters to identify 'Russia'-related notions as well as the names of Russian political leaders and anti-Ukrainian propagandists advocating, in particular, for the views of Roman Rukomed, a Ukrainian political analyst regarding his claim "I never write Putin and Russia with a capital letter" (Rukomed, 2022). Hence, literary translations published in Ukrainian appeared to be the key cultural drivers of change that not only affected the ontological status of the Ukrainian language but also responded to the challenges of the "spirit of the time, zeitgeist" (Bellingham, 2013) which further determined translators' artistic choice, strategies and tactics.

The article **aims** to highlight the determinative force of translations performed in Ukrainian in the literary landscape of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as indicate the criteria to define their cultural, aesthetic and ideological context.

**Results and findings.** Multiple theories, concepts and key philosophical assumptions guiding this research are closely related to the issues of power and ideology (Bassnett, 2011; Geertz, 2017; Hermans, 2014; Lefevere, 2004; Pavlenko, 2017; Polishchuk 2008; Wei, 2006), patronage (Shunyi, 2016, Masoud & Bahloul, 2017; Ren, 2021); manipulation (Crisafulli, 2004; Dukate, 2007; Kramina, 2004) and other notions related to the problem in question. In these

findings, they cover a range of aspects via practices and procedures underpinned by theoretical knowledge and relevant practical experience in the field of translation.

**Background.** On viewing literary translation under the spectrum of cultural contradiction one could appeal to the general assumptions of post-colonial theory that revolve around the notion of ‘resistance’ and thus, making the best-known assessments in the field more relevant and appropriate. Rather, through the multiple subject matters highlighted in them, there is a renewed urgency to study postcolonial praxis and recognize postcolonialism in culture as a specific artistic phenomenon of modernity. Produced in response to the outcome of colonial rule, it comes to be reflected in the national literature and transform its figurative meaning through translations.

Accordingly, the issues on translation in post-colonial countries are closely related to the search for national and cultural self-identity in the move of what Baker and Maier described as an original shift within the field, from the notions of subjectivity to the language of political movements and positions” (Baker, 2006, p. 462). In the Ukrainian cultural context, it is an explicit political impetus that singles out ‘activist translation’ by assigning certain ethical issues to it. On considering the problem in a broader perspective, one could attribute it to being ideologically motivated both <... “on the macro- and micro -levels” ...> (Wike, 2010) which correspondently regard to the motives that define translators’ choice and optimal decisions of which tactics to use. This sheds light onto the ethical questions that foreground the reasons to recognize and enhance the national status of the Ukrainian language which had for long been under the methodical suppression by the russian empire.

Among the narratives used by russian chauvinists and the apologists of totalitarianism were the ones that assign Ukrainian to “a language of secondary importance”, the one of “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism” and brand it as “politically incorrect”, “a tool for domestic use” and “mainly a rural language”, “the one of janitors and writers” whereas russian being treated by them as “the language of the educated urban society” and the one of “inter-ethnic communication” (Pavlenko, 2017; Strikha, 2020). Such insinuations dating back to tsarist times proved to be so deeply rooted in the minds of russian leadership that they keep conveying in their usual underhanded manner false claims about Ukraine that it is <...> “not a country, but a historical part of Russia”. Dr Björn Alexander Duben, Assistant Professor at the School of International and Public Affairs of Jilin University in his article shared by Katherine Arnold “There is no Ukraine: Fact-Checking the kremlin’s Version of Ukrainian History” provides evidence of the statement quoted above (Arnold, 2020). On raising the question <...> “whether it is historically accurate to claim that it (Ukraine) has never truly been a nation or state in its own right” (Arnold, 2020), the article presents insinuating ideas articulated by kremlin’s ideologist, Surkov who claimed that “there is no Ukraine. There is Ukrainian-ness. That is, a specific disorder of the mind. An astonishing enthusiasm for ethnography, driven to the extreme” and that “Ukraine is “a muddle instead of a state. But there is no nation. There is only a brochure, ‘The Self-Styled Ukraine’, but there is no Ukraine. The only question is whether Ukraine doesn’t exist any longer or doesn’t yet exist” (Arnold, 2020).

Another article “A Specific Disorder of the Mind” published in “Ukrainian weekly” provides the data to confirm the abovementioned idea to which extent russian leaders have rejected the idea that < ... “Ukraine is a separate country, that Ukrainians are a separate nation, that Ukraine’s history is its own”. The narrative was further pursued in putin’s interview (2008) with U.S. President George W. Bush: “Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? Part of its territories are in Eastern Europe, but the greater part is a gift from us” (Arnold, 2020). Other mystical facts regarding these have been articulated in 2014 that “the Russian and Ukrainian peoples are practically one single people,” they are < ...> “one and the same”, “the peoples of Ukraine and Belarus are sub-nations of a single community known as the ‘triune’ or all-russian nation” (Marin, 2021) and that “russia and Ukraine should unite” < ...> “since any integration of Russia and Ukraine, along with their capacities and competitive advantages, would spell the

emergence of a rival – a global rival for both Europe and the world” (Arnold, 2020). Those outrageous claims of ‘an all-russian civilization’ with its “embryonic format for the restoration of a pan-Slavic union” (Marin, 2021) most frequently reiterated by russian political leaders only contribute to the fact that Ukrainians will naturally underscore the impact of resistance and recognition of their national identity. Another narrative that has a similar effect on the Ukrainian progressive opinion was in surkov’s interview, when he stated: “Strangely enough, I’m an Ukroptimist. That is, I think that Ukraine doesn’t yet exist. But over time, it will come into existence. The ‘khokhly’ are stubborn guys, they will do this. However, < ... > how many ‘Ukraines’ will appear are open questions, < ... > and the only effective method in Russia’s relations with Ukraine is “coercion by force into fraternal relations” – a method, as he puts it, that < ... “has historically proven effectiveness in the policy towards Ukraine” (Arnold, 2020).

At the same time, we must emphasize that statements like those as well as numerous other ideological constructs which date back to the imperial times highlight the challenges Ukrainian literary translations faced under russia’s constant claim to the ‘status of primus inter pares’ among the post-Soviet republics, and Ukraine, in particular. In the extracts quoted above, no specific value was attributed to Ukrainian as a language for communication whereas as russian proved to be regarded as a medium of intercultural communication. The notion created to recognize this status couldn’t for long throw off its supremacy and limit administrative obstacles to the development of the Ukrainian literary language.

Even during the Soviet era, when the status of the Ukrainian language was officially codified in 1922, it formally occupied an equal position with russian and was included into “generally used languages”. However, it was only the formality, and in practice, Ukrainian was mostly regarded as a rural language with minor status and restrictions. Moreover, the initial phase of Ukrainization introduced in 1920s and early 1930s, was followed by active tendency toward ‘russification’ (1958) that made the study of russian compulsory whereas learning the mother-tongue (Ukrainian) optional or taken on a voluntary base. Ultimately, the russian dominance and direct “linguicide” typical of the ideological atmosphere of the period mentioned, resulted in the “rapid growth of Ukrainian translations that offered a Ukrainian reader the opportunity to understand and interact with literature within global frameworks” (Pavlenko, 2014, p 22). But the ‘way to success’ for Ukrainian translators was not an easy one. They repeatedly became an object of persecutions and suffered from multiple bans constantly announced by the Soviet ideologists. A broad outline of the role of translations in the literary and critical discourse of the second half the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as specific style, lexical and semantic correlations between source and target texts is presented in my monograph “The Author’s Conceptions of Translations in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: A Comparative Aspect (based upon the Ukrainian translations of the English prose)”. The book by Ukrainian scholar Maxym Strikha “Ukrainian Literary Translation: Between Literature and Nation-Making” gives an integrated systematic analysis of Ukrainian translations within the framework of their nation-forming mission from Kyevan Rus to modernity.

The facts about dramatic fate of Ukrainian translators of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hryhoriy Kochur, Mykola Lukash, Rostislav Dotsenko, Yuriy Lisnyak, Anatol’ Perepadya, Dmytro Palamarchuk) reflected the ideological environment of the sixties with severe censorship restrictions on selection literary works for translation (there were very few foreign authors accepted for translation in Ukrainian, however, russian translations were published with no particular limitations). The translations of works that were officially encouraged were those “from the fraternal literatures of the peoples of the USSR” and further on from the literatures of “countries of people’s democracy”, “socialist camp”, as well as “nations fighting for liberation from colonial oppression” (Strikha, 2020, p.220). Such translations were published with no delay and were of the high circulation.

On viewing Ukrainian translations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century within the framework of postcolonial studies, Strikha assumes, that “the Ukrainian Soviet (colonial!) translator had to act

within the view of the colonial discourse, affirming the idea of the current prosperity of the Ukrainian Soviet nation (as opposed to its former decline)” (Strikha, 2020, p.220). But life is never depicted with completely unambiguous phenomena that can enjoy a similar interpretation. Therefore, in view of radical changes in the social situation of the period mentioned, the topic of our research requires a certain periodization. The frame of reference stated above provides a vibrant evidence of the nation-forming effect of Ukrainian translations.

Despite political and cultural oppression in Stalinist camps, Ukrainian translators Kochur, Lukash, Dotsenko, Lisnyak, Palamarchuk made every possible effort to promote Ukrainian translations and ease the target readers’ reception of the translated works. They worked in exile and were further deprived of the opportunity to publish their translated versions in 1970s. Yet, their active engagement in the process of translation contours the homogeneity and diversity of translated practices aimed at promoting the Ukrainian language when its sphere of functioning was deliberately narrowed. It was at the time that Russian literary classics were extensively published in Ukrainian translations. Among those were Ukrainian edition of Gogol in three volumes (1952), “War and Peace” by Tolstoy released in four volumes (1951), a volume of Lermontov’s poetry (1953), collection of Pushkin’s poetry in four volumes (1954), Chekhov’s works in three volumes, etc. The more detailed register is given in Strikha’s book “Ukrainian Literary Translation: Between Literature and Nation-Making”.

The impact of ideology in translations highlight the issue of misappropriation of foreign language texts, thus being closely related to translator’s national and cultural self-identity. The key idea regarding this, is “to determine the patterns caused by colonial situation” (Pavlenko, 2017, p.100). emphasized, in particular, by Lada Kolomiets, who argues that the idea of a totalitarian myth around “historicity of translation is based on the historically determined model of the colonial worldview, where certain features come to be universal for all colonized peoples, and <...> the Ukrainian literary translation of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has a clear ideological subtext” (Kolomiets, 2011, p.23). The latter forms a totalitarian myth around the concept in question: according to Kolomiets, <...when representing the original “colonial translator” saturates it with his “otherness”, thus reproducing the conservative stereotypes of his own culture through the spectrum of metaphysical ideas about the state of his national culture, its “past prosperity / modern decline” or “past decline / modern “blossom”, that is to say <...> “that the colonial context ‘subjectivizes’ translation, placing it in a multifaceted influential control structured by the power” (Kolomiets, 2011, p.23).

This logic of relation, where the self is fertilized by the mediation of the other, <...> collides with the profound resistance within the ethnocentric structure of every culture, which seeks to conserve its self-sufficiency through a return to the same” (Baker, 2006, p. 9). The assumption quoted above, clarifies the idea of ‘ethical’ nature of translation with the appeal to “work towards a systematic view of past and present forms of injustice, oppression and violence, as part of a larger effort to bring about their obsolescence” (Hulme, 2018, p.7). The latter comes closely related to the commonly recognized issues of the influential effect of translations in the evolution of literature and society. The abovementioned assumption is empathized in the seminal work of the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz “Ideology as a Cultural System”, in which the researcher, when investigating the depth of contact between literature and ideology, proves that <... these “components of creativity should be considered in a close relationship” and adds that the process involves <...> “symbolic transformation”, “a system of symbols with mutual action” (Geertz, 2017, p. 17). Ideological influence determined by the obvious imperative of ‘supervising the world corresponds to a certain extent to the expectation of the individual and society in each specific situation (which was specifically the case with Ukrainian translations). The literary analogy of Geertz’s concept regarding in particular the perception of metaphors, comes to reveal the issues of certain coincidence of ideology and literature, as he puts it, <...> “on the basis of ‘expanding the boundaries of thinking’ (the term implied by Jose Ortega-y-Gasset) through artistic images capable of representing social categories and relations

and amplify subjective perception. According to Geerts, “in a metaphor, there is a stratification of content: the discrepancy of meaning at one level resulted in growth of meaning at another. <...> The power of the metaphor is provided precisely by the interaction between simple meanings, which symbolically affect the overall conceptual scheme, <...> provoke “internal resistance, which necessarily arises in anyone who perceives this semantic positivity, as <...> “metaphor transforms a misleading identification <...> into an appropriate analogy “(Geertz, 2017, p. 19).

In this regard, Polishchuk’s argumentation comes to be especially relevant. The researcher states, in particular, that “literature comes to be a field for the approbation of ideology” (Polishchuk, 2008, p.366). The author gives special consideration to the praxis of totalitarian regimes, when literature is forcibly involved in such ideological symbol formation, and with an ambivalent effect” (Polishchuk, 2008, p.75). Thus, ideological censorship of the 1960s and 1980s, that monitored and controlled not only the content of literary works and their general compliance with standards and political requirements of the former Soviet totalitarian regime, but also in a way tested almost every artistic image, checking it for compliance with the prevailing ideological doctrine, extended to translations, which also had to meet the literary “norms” imposed by the power. Of course, such destructive restrictions amounted to “anecdotally distorted interpretations of artistic images, when translators outlined other phobias they had, more or less connected with specific literary texts” (Polishchuk, 2008, p.366). The objective of the “totalitarian literary ideology” to absolute dominance in society reduces all possibilities of diverse readings <...> of “symbolic figures to unambiguous formulas” structured by the leading power, and, therefore, practicing an attempt to <...> “exploit the figurative function of literature or to use it as successfully in all ways possible (Polishchuk, 2008, p.76).

On the other hand, translated literature, producing symbolic contents and introducing them into general circulation, must be co-responsible for the ideological environment of society. Accordingly, creating metaphors, writers and translators <...> “symbolize the reality by providing it with certain order and organization and further putting forward to society” (Polishchuk, 2008, p.76). In this way, metaphor as a literary technique reveals the nature of ideological influence, significantly determining the changing orientations of society and the dynamic forces of its development. In this regard, Polishchuk dwells on the functions of ideological influence and singles out the following ones: 1) implying meaning to the word; 2) ‘mastering’ a person’s presence via his imagination; 3) basic component of social communication; 4) individual reconciliation with the actual state of affairs, with the social order, often due to the establishment of transplanted ideas and stereotypes; 5) unification of the image of the world, in particular in totalitarian societies (Polishchuk, 2008, p.74). The last two functions prove to be typical for Ukrainian model of ideology, when the awareness of the nature of human behavior gives reasonable grounds to believe that it determines <...> “the permanence of the request for symbolic images of reality” “(Geertz, 2017, p. 29). This is especially evident in a situation of instability, when traditional ideological models turn out to be helpless and thus, unable to explicate new realities.

It is in such conditions that Ukrainian literary translations come to prove their national value, when the thriving of their literary creativity arose against the background of cultural and social decline, thus, responding to the social challenges of the epoch. The internal independence of translators whose <...> “individual ‘voice’ correlates with the concept (‘metaphor of reality’) of restructuring existing social norms (Pavlenko, 2017, p. 101) according to which the abstract principle of building mature socialism was declared ethically motivated and hence, the interpretation of art as ‘a reflection of reality’ according to the method of socialist realism came to be regarded as the only possible technique. It was under these conditions that the artistic consciousness of Ukrainian translators of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century was formed and that was realized through a complex of aesthetic coordinates and creative intentions determined by the dynamics of their artistic thinking. Firstly, it is related to the feeling of inner freedom, which is revealed

through individual authorial self-expression (translation concepts) and regulated by ethical and artistic guidelines (ideals, personal interests, norms, canons, sociocultural experience, etc.). Secondly, translation as a ‘medium’ <...> “between literature and nation-forming” (Strikha, 2020) expands the boundaries of the translator’s artistic consciousness, <...> “transforming it into a more general horizon, which not only preserves the ability of the former for constant renewal and creative self-realization, but also enriches it with new meanings via forms of narrative deployment of national content” (Hermans, 2014, p.147).

The ideas articulated by them decode the hidden senses implied in the “metaphor of reality”. Thus, Lisnyak viewed translation as a “field of struggle”, “fight for the revival of the nation through the mobilization of the potential resources of its language”, Dotsenko implies the metaphor of “spiritual quintessence” and rejects the idea of presenting Ukrainian translations through the “russian colonial mirror”. Their translations openly contradicted with the adopted by Soviet science approach to literary translation restricted to the comparison of linguo-stylistic structure of the original and its ‘new artistic version’. Furthermore, such functioning was based on the notorious theory of ‘convergence of languages’, which never meant a real mutual convergence. This process was exacerbated by the fact that the majority of translations of the works of world-renowned writers were quite often carried out by those who had a very naive idea of the theoretical principles and techniques of translation. These ‘artistic examples’ were strictly criticized by Maxim Rylsky and a series of critical articles about ‘translator’s misunderstandings’ were written by Hryhorii Kochur, Rostislav Dotsenko, and Yuriy Lisnyak.

**Conclusion.** The fact that literary translation comes to be regarded as a tool for resistance and cultural contradiction has been exemplified by dramatic experience of Ukrainian translators whose creative activity in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century announced the revival of Ukrainian translations that regarding the assessment of quality and its competitive impact proved to adequately withstood the competition with russian translated versions. Ultimately, their choices applied to the extend in which they had to interact not only with the original texts, but also to actively function and succeed in the russian-dominant reality.

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## **ХУДОЖНІЙ ПЕРЕКЛАД ЯК ЗАСІБ КУЛЬТУРНОГО ПРОТИСТОЯННЯ**

*У статті окреслено художній переклад з позиції його соціального впливу на ідеологічну ситуацію суспільства другої половини ХХ століття, висвітлюються причини виникнення протестної реакції і культурного протистояння (український художній переклад VS російський) в умовах насильницького звуження простору функціонування української мови і культури.*



*Художньо-естетична практика українських перекладачів, спалах творчої діяльності яких припадав саме на цей період, стала частиною глобальної суспільної трансформації, спричиненої кризою світогляду доби. Отже, осмислення українського художнього перекладу під таким кутом зору активізує увагу на його мотиваційних алгоритмах, «заангажованості і дії», що обертаються навколо понять «опору» і «протистояння». Відповідно, криза світогляду доби, що спричинила наростання соціальної напруги в суспільстві, зумовила необхідність оприявлення суб'єктивної «авторської правди», зокрема через переклади. Проте заборонена публічність антиімперських текстів, шаблонне уодноманітнення інтерпретацій художніх творів, регламентованих владою, виступило мотивом творчого усамітнення українського художнього перекладу, який зазнавав чисельних заборон або міг існувати в дуже обмеженому обсязі.*

*Нейтралізація впливу іноземної літератури на національну свідомість українців відбувалась через масове просування перекладів творів російських авторів як результат «мовно-культурної асиміляції українців», нав'язаний радянським тоталітарним режимом. Потужний креативний потенціал українських перекладів, їх онтологічна сутність увиразнюється через використання концептуальних метафор: «протистояння» («resistance»), «задіюваність» («engagement»), «переклад як поле боротьби» («field of struggle») за відновлення нації через мобілізацію потенційних ресурсів мови» («fight for the revival of the nation through the mobilization of the potential resources of its language» – Юрій Лісняк), «духовна квінтесенція мови» («spiritual quintessence»), «російське колоніальне дзеркало» («russian colonial mirror» – Ростислав Доценко) та ін.*

*Окреслюючи світоглядні виміри, через які переклад потрапляє в різні сфери соціокультурної взаємодії, як спроби скорегувати те, що було втрачене в результаті культурної експансії (драматичний досвід українсько-російського «єдиного культурного» простору, наслідки якого спостерігаємо й сьогодні). Невипадково, що у часи, коли партійна цензура контролювала зміст художніх творів щодо відповідності політичним інтересам влади, тестуючи чи не кожен художній образ, особливої ваги набували переклади. Саме через переклади надавалася «актуальна пропозиція символотворення», коли перекладач через вихідний текст впроваджує наявні в ньому символічні смисли до загального обігу.*

*Отже, метафора розкриває образну природу ідеологічного впливу, який, за Я. Поліщуком окреслюється такими функціями: 1) надання сенсу світові; 2) впорядкування в уяві людини як «освоєння» її присутності; 3) базова складова соціальної комунікації; 4) узгодження індивіда з дійсним станом речей, із суспільним порядком, нерідко за рахунок утвердження пересадних уявлень та стереотипів; 5) уніфікація образу світу, зокрема в тоталітарних суспільствах. При цьому, проєктуючи останні на поширені в українському суспільстві уявлення про ідеологію, дослідник акцентує на четвертій та п'ятій функціях.*

*Осмислення культурної взаємодії за посередництва перекладу актуалізує націоцентричну місію «резистентних» перекладів, вихідним регулятивним принципом яких постає рішуча деколонізація національної культури.*

**Ключові слова:** художній переклад, ідеологія, лінгвоцид, українські перекладачі, колоніальний контекст.