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**TRANSLATION PROBLEMS OF THE POSTMODERN LITERARY TEXT**

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*The article reviews general problems of the postmodern fiction translation. The author discusses interrelation between required cognitive base of a translator, appropriate translation skills and excellent knowledge of native language on one hand, and adequate translation of postmodern fiction on the other hand. Translator's difficulties generated by the literary work specifics are analyzed and summarized, and practical ways to curb with them are suggested.*

**Introduction**

Teaching the course *Interpretation Aspects of English Fiction Translation* for 5-year students of the English Philology and Translation Department often provoked a question among students and to me: how deep cognitive base should a translator possess to translate postmodern literary texts? Under cognitive base here we mean a system of phenomenological and linguistic structures.

**Review of Research and Publications**

Actually discussions and disputes with students at the workshops gave birth to the idea of this research, which should be taken only as a first approach to the problem investigation. This first step, that eventually does not claim to be a comprehensive study on the problem, was limited, firstly, by scarceness of translations available, and, secondly, by lacking theoretical works. Both these shortcomings have similar underlying reasons. As of today translations of postmodern authors are very poorly presented in the Ukrainian fiction market. Moreover, those translations even into Russian are not as numerous as one can assume. On the other hand, today Ukrainian society cannot be called an informational society in full sense, and hence, postmodernism, which is a characteristic feature of informational society, in Ukraine preserves its elitist position among literary mainstream and enjoys limited demand of Ukrainian reading public. This partially explains limited number of produced translations of postmodern fiction. Sources for this research include the following: some translations of artistically-valued postmodern fiction from English and Italian to both Russian and Ukrainian; translations in English language of prominent Ukrainian novels that can be classified as postmodern; and research and findings by literary critics, translation analysts and experts, devoted to the most actual problems of fiction translation.

**Task arrangement**

Translation of literary postmodern text is the subject of current research, while translation problems faced by a translator are the object of present article. Objective of the research is to identify the requirements set forth by rather specific postmodern fiction against a translator.

**Why postmodern literary text?**

The most natural question provoked by the proposed problem formulation shall be: why postmodern literary text was chosen for this research? The answer roots in nature and characteristics of postmodernism that drive it far beyond ordinary literary trend correlated with specific period of the society development. Postmodernism was born as counteraction to modernism, as a rupture from its elitist aspirations, aesthetic search, social restraint and profound interest to the stream of consciousness. J.Barth in his article 'Literature of Replenishment' characterizes the 'ideal' postmodern novel, and suggests, that it shall be above the struggle of realism an irrealism; formalism and 'content-ness'; pure art and engaged art; elitist and popular prose. He compares postmodern novel to good jazz or classical music. When you listen to it next time and follow performance by the score you are able to notice nuances, which you omitted during first listening. But for the second time to come, the first one should be so impressive, and not only for experts, that people feel the need to listen once again [1]. However, postmodern literary text reveals its complicated structure, at least owing to its ability of combining inconsistent things and to be a dialectic language work. How is this objective implemented within postmodern literary text? One of possible answers was suggested by Umberto Eco, the most prominent expert and theorist of postmodernism as literary and cultural trend. Particularly, he wrote, that postmodernism as literary trend is peculiar with irony, meta-language game and doubly utterance. That is why while in avant-garde cultural system those who do not understand this game have only option to reject from playing, – in postmodern system actors can play even without understanding the game and taking it seriously. This is major characteristic (and craftiness) of ironic creative work. There always appears somebody who takes this ironic discourse seriously [1]. Summarizing the passage above we would like to point out the following peculiarities of postmodernism: firstly, its universal and comprehensive irony, that is

profound and multi-layer by its nature; it may be either hidden or obvious and usually plays powerful sense-creating role. Secondly, there is always present meta-language game that reflects perception of the world as a text and a text as the world. Probably this last point originates from mentality inherent in informational society on one hand, and from logically applied principle of ironic human existence, on the other hand. Thirdly, derived from irony there is a principle of author's game with a reader, which is implemented only for the readers capable to understand the game, decode hidden author's symbols and senses, and create the sense of their own, participating in the text existence. This is what the theories of modern reader suggest [2].

### **Translation problems**

As one could logically conclude from the peculiarities of postmodern text described above, these are irony, language game and meta-text that are able to create specific difficulties for a translator as language specialist. Translation experiments undertaken in workshops for master students of translation department (Linguistic faculty of the National Aviation University, group 501) and analysis of masterful translations of prominent novels produced by talented and experienced translators revealed the following requirements to translator set forth by postmodern fiction.

### **Encyclopaedic knowledge and ability to recognize quotations and references to other authors**

Literary work of modern authors involving a reader into interpretation game always are inherent with language and cultural 'traps', either hidden or obvious. These traps for ignoramus translator may be represented by author's allusions to national literary text, some literary protagonist or by any kind of open quotation that generally could be called precedent utterances. Thus, in the Romance 'Possession' by A.S.Byatt [3] the reader meets with frequent references to poetry by Robert Browning, imaginary poet of mid-19th c. Randolph Henry Ash, who actually is stylistic twin of Robert Browning; poems by Elizabeth Barrett (later Elizabeth Browning) and Christina Rossetti, including integral stylistic twin of those two poetesses in the novel are represented by a character of Cristobel La Motte. Knowledgeable reader can also find lots of allusions to the entire corps of English literature, beginning with John Donne and ending with Oscar Wilde.

Quotations from prominent literary works, allusions to them, masterfully performed stylizations for literary figures—all these charades require intensive interpretation activity, decoding efforts and sense-

creating work from knowledgeable reader; it also creates rather mystical and highly intellectual atmosphere of the novel. On the other hand, a reader who does not distinguish between real literary works and simulations, and who does not notice precedent utterances, still enjoys the language cantilena and intriguing plot of the novel even remaining unaware that he/she has lost something.

This 'democratism' of postmodern literature in reality contributes many difficulties to translator's work. On one hand a translator has to produce translation preserving author's images, styles, national colour and tonality (neither exaggerating nor diminishing the ironic power, for example). On the other hand the translator has to recognize the author's cultural references and traps, decode them, interpret and add to the fabric of his/her own translated text; those operations should be done very carefully without distortion of the author's ideas. There is much space for mistakes. Umberto Eco ironically noticed that one hundred times from one hundred when the critics consider his hero expressing too fashionable ideas actually they're speaking about literal quotations from 14th-c. texts [1, p. 642].

### **Stylization and mastering both style and vocabulary of the translator's native language to the same extent as the author does**

This separate issue about stylization and mastering vocabulary fits closely to the first point about general knowledge competence and ability to decode precedent utterances. A requirement to make stylizations and reproduce the author's style in translation applicable to translation of any fiction appears to have some peculiarities in translation of postmodern texts.

The language games create major problem, which we mentioned earlier. Moreover, those language games are based on text stylizations to different times, authors, different language application sphere and different social registers; while all those kind of stylizations may coexist within one chapter or even one page of the text. To illustrate this statement one could mention novels by Umberto Eco (*Il nome della rosa* [1], *Il pendolo di Foucault* [4]) and novels by Julian Barnes (*The world history in 10 1/2 chapters* [5], *England, England* [6]) and mentioned above novel by Anthonia Byatt (*Possession*).

Sometimes stylizations play not only powerful sense-creating role, as with A.Byatt when she pretends to quote critique and social works of late 20th c. alongside with treatises and diaries from middle 19th c., and when Umberto Eco mixes real and imaginary quotations from Roger Bacon, and gives big

pieces from *Song of the Songs* and 13–14th c. theological treatises like thoughts and words of his characters. In some postmodern literary works stylization is applied as fundamental principle and for a translator it is crucially important to understand this phenomenon and follow the original as much as possible. Elena Kostiukovich, famous Russian translator of Umberto Eco once stated that when “Il pendolo di Foucault” was first published in *Inostrannaya Literatura Magazine* a mistake with fonts occurred, and in a result of it the passage that had to look like a dialog of the author with a computer turned into stream of the author’s consciousness. Thus the primary Eco’s intention to demonstrate his fundamental principle of dialogue and particularly a dialogue with computer as new writing method - failed. It is a great loss, as Eco consistently applies this new method in his writings, adding a plenty of facts and details to the original idea, which multitude requires only computer databases for collection. This new method requires then too much gradual and précising work from a translator [1, p. 647].

### **Creative approach to translation of proper names**

When translating proper names of people a translator needs not only applying his general knowledge about the transcription or transliteration rules established in Ukrainian or Russian language for reproduction of foreign names. A propos, Ukrainian rules in this issue are still experiencing constant changes due to various scholars’ discussions on the subject. In translation of postmodern literary text translator faces the problem even at a stage of preliminary reading and choosing his strategy as to reproduction of proper names. Here the translator faces two approaches to choose from: ‘domestication’ vs. ‘foreignisation’ of the text through proper names, which are currently extensively discussed among Western translation experts [7]. This issue is of crucial importance for postmodern fiction since in language games with a reader proper names often represent a strong sense-creating component. To provide an example we could mention protagonists from “Il noma della rosa” – William from Baskerville and Adson.

Obviously, this is transparent and ironic sense-playing with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes and doctor Watson, stylistically adapted to European middle-age names. In Russian translation Elena Kostiukovich followed Russian tradition of presenting middle-age European names and thus appeared *Вильгельм Баскервильский* – an analogue of *Эразм Роттердамский* (Erasmus from

Rotterdam) and *Фома Аквинский* (Thomas from Aquina locality), etc. Nevertheless rather often the authors use proper names for not simply sense-playing with a reader but for introducing additional senses that interrelate with plain text of the novel and create polyphonic sense-playing within one abstract or even one sentence. Under these conditions old principles of domestication and foreignisation acquire new quality and prove their inability to be applied consistently and in full amount.

To illustrate such a situation let’s take ‘Possession’ by A. Byatt. Here protagonists’ proper names bear great sense-creating load. Thus main male hero is called *Ash*, which is later supported in the text by allusions to a tree of definite species, an ash in the Hell, and to Egdrasil, the tree of life from Scandinavian mythology. All these images are of great importance for general interpretation of the novel, and should be preserved in translation.

With these considerations translators of the novel invent their own game. They start from the tree of life and a species of a tree, using explanation that *an ash* is a tree with pinnately compound leaves [8, p. 796].

They follow this ‘pinnately compound leaves’ and find Russian *остролист*, that is holly or ilex, which is present at nearly all Western-European Christmas cards and is associated with this optimistic and light holiday. Ilex has other Russian name *Ладуб*, which pretends to sound rather English-like. Thus *Randolph Henry Ash* turns into *Рандольф Генри Ладуб* in translation. Still the Hell-like ash meaning totally disappears diminishing all the senses related to this meaning within the novel.

The same approach was applied to all the rest sense-making names in the novel. To compare: *Blackadder* (literally, „чорний дописувач”) – a name of the scientist, who devoted all his life to research and interpretation of literary heritage of famous writer, is turned into *Аспидс*, while *Cropper* (literally „той, що збирає по крихтах”), who is tireless manuscript-hunter and scholar, becomes *Собрайл*, etc. All those names also looking rather English-like are absolutely transparent for Russian-speaking reader. Heroine *Miss Glover* (literally, *Рукавичка*) is reproduced as *Miss Перстчетт*, which is a requirement of the text when the author starts sense-playing with Glover as a name and gloves, notifying that the main heroine Miss La Mott wrote a series of lyrical poems devoted to gloves, thus making hints to special relationship between these two women [9, p. 48–49]. This passage is very important within broad context of the novel where issues of feminism, unisexual love and sexual relations are a subject of serious discussion masked with multilayer irony, language game and great number of characters.

Without connection between *Перстчетм* and *Glover* this important compound of the novel plot disappears, and further on the reader will not understand why Miss Glover committed suicide when Miss La Mott fell in love with a man. This method of reproducing proper names can be called ‘playing charades’.

Marko Pavlyshyn’s translation of Carnival procession list from ‘Recreatsii’ by Yuriy Andrykhovych is another good example of skilful translation of proper names represented by the author in ‘long lists’ that are so typical for postmodern text. That is what Mark Andryczyk notes about it: ‘Andrukhovych assembles lists both for stylistic reasons and as a means of communicating his interpretation of what he believes constitutes the Ukrainian identity today. *Rekreatsii* contains one major list, which counts off the participants in a masked procession, during their march through the center of a town, as part of the festival's activities. This list (one of the novel's most remarkable moments) coagulates the names and titles of various ethnic groups, professions, animals and other figures, from several periods of time, who in the author's mind constitute the Ukrainian spirit. Some entries in this list are included for phonetic purposes. Collectively, these words form a list, which is a rhythmic march through various centuries and layers of society. Pavlyshyn wisely foregoes the virtually impossible task of attempting to replicate the cadence of the original passage but instead digs up English terms for the over one hundred Ukrainian names in this list. In the end, he is successful in recreating the sense of carnival that permeates the tone of Andrukhovych's novel.’ [10, p. 120].

Його звали Стах Перфецький і Карп Любанський, і Сом Рахманський, і П’єр Долинський, і Птах Кайфецький. Але його також звали Глюк, Блюм, Врубль, Штрудль і Шнобль. До того ж він був Йона Риб і Жора Кур, і Шура Птиць, і Шура Яйць, і Слава Днів. Проте він був також Сильний Перець, Хуан Перес, Друже Перче, Перчило і Ерц-Герц-Перц. Дехто знав його як Персидського, Парфянського, Парсунсь-кого, Профанського і Перфаворського. Найближчі друзі любили його за те, що був він Камаль Манхмаль, Йоган Коган, Будда Юдда, Юхан Бухан і Пу Фу. Однак всі без винятку кликали його Бімбер Бібамус, Агнус Магнус, Авіс Пеніс, Штахус Бахус і Кактус Еректус. Тож ніхто навіть не здогадувався, що насправді він Анти-Ной і Зорро Вавель, і Гамбз/м/бург/х/ер, і Спас Орфейський, і P.S.

In this case it is easy to see that translator applied neither foreignisation nor charade-playing principles and consistently followed the domestication principle. Frankly speaking both approaches were next to impossible in a regard of Andrukhovich’s text as it is impossible to reproduce his language game since it is deeply rooted in Ukrainian historical and cultural realities. Is it possible to translate *Ярослав Осьминіг* and *Козак Джамайка*? Probably not, as the first is an allusion to Prince *Ярослав Осмомисл*, prominent political and national figure of the 13th c., and the second is ironical derivation from *козак Мамай*, legendary generalized image of Ukrainian Cossack, who both are symbols in Ukrainian history. Moreover, there is no sense to translate those proper names and than provide long comments for English-speaking reader about Ukrainian history and culture.

Brilliant approach to resolving the problem with Anrukhovich’s long list of proper names is represented by Michael M. Naidan in his translation of ‘Perverzii’. The protagonist has 40 names, and the translator attempted “to combine the meaning, the sound, and the humor of the original” [11].

#### Additions and reductions in the text

In our opinion it is interesting to look from different perspective at the topic of long lists requiring attentive reading, comprehension, careful interpretation and skilful reproduction from both sense and sound points of view. As we saw above those lists usually create challenge for a translator and each time are designed by the author for different purpose. Earlier we have discussed the problems imposed by Andrukhovich’s lists. The lists

They called him Stakh Perfetsky and Carp Loverboysky and Sheat-fish Saintlymansky and Pierre Fukinsky and High-as-a-kite Birdsky. But they also called him Gluck, Bloom, Vrubl, Strudl and Schnabl. In addition he was Jonah of the Fish and George of the Fowl and Shura of the Fish and Siura of the Balls and Glory of the Days. But he was also Sargent Pepper, Juan Perez, Petey Peppa, PepperoniMAHN, and Ertz-Hertz-Pertz. Some knew him as Persiansky, Parthiansky, Personsky, Profansky, and Perfavorsky. His closest friends loved him for the fact that he was Kamal Manchmal, Johann Cohan, Buddah Judas, Yukhan Bukhan, and Pu Fu. But all without exception called him Bimber Bibamus, Agnus Magnus, Avis Penis, Shtakhus Bacchus, and Cactus Erectus. Therefore no one could even guess that he really was Antinoah and Zorro Vavel and Hams/m/bur/g/er and Savior Orpheusky and P.S.

provided by Julian Barnes create another sort of difficulties for a translator: they require a decision about possible additions and reductions to the text owing to deep involvement to British culture. In his novel 'England, England' there are two such lists composed of words that present definite symbolic meanings for the novel characters or the author. Those lists require very careful and detailed work from a translator as they are combined from general names with attributes and modifiers, selected owing to the stream of consciousness associated with definite theme.

In the English Literature class for 4th year students of Translation Department we attempted to translate this list [6; 8; 9], and this experiment showed the students how difficult it is to understand the inherent

**Barnes J. England, England** [6, p. 83–84].

ROYAL FAMILY  
BIG BEN/HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT  
MANCHESTER UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB  
**CLASS SYSTEM**  
PUBS  
A ROBIN IN THE SNOW  
ROBIN HOOD AND HIS MERRIE MEN  
CRICKET  
**WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER**  
IMPERIALISM  
UNION JACK  
SNOBBERY  
GOD SAVE THE KING/QUEEN  
BBC  
WEST END  
TIMES NEWSPAPER  
SHAKESPEARE  
THATCHED COTTAGES  
CUP OF TEA/DEVONSHIRE CREAM TEA  
STONEHENGE  
PHLEGM/STIFF UPPER LIP  
SHOPPING  
**MARMALADE**  
BEEFEATERS/TOWER OF LONDON  
LONDON TAXIS  
BOWLER HAT  
**TV CLASSIC SERIALS**  
OXFORD/CAMBRIDGE  
HARRODS  
DOUBLE-DECKER BUSES/RED BUSES  
HYPOCRISY  
GARDENING  
PERFIDY/UNTRUSTWORTHINESS  
**HALF-TIMBERING**  
HOMOSEXUALITY  
ALICE IN WONDERLAND  
WINSTON CHURCHILL  
MARKS & SPENCER  
BATTLE OF BRITAIN  
  
FRANCIS DRAKE  
TROOPING THE COLOUR  
WHINGEING  
QJUEEN VICTORIA

logic of associations and to interpret the list positions often submitted without context.

The next related problem is reproduction of those decoded meaning in a form understandable for Ukrainian or Russian reader, and this requires to think carefully about domestication and inevitable additions or reductions to the text.

The following example is provided to demonstrate couples of translated expressions, where the translator added or omitted some words of the original for the sake of general sense and perception by Russian-speaking reader. This example demonstrates how frame-structures of the meanings could be applied for this purpose [More broad discussion about frame structures could be found in 12, p. 161–176]:

**Барнс Д. Англия, Англия: Роман/ Пер. с англ. С.Силаковой** [13, с. 114–116].

Королевская семья.  
Биг Бен/Здание Парламента.  
Футбольный клуб «Манчестер Юнайтед».  
**Сословия/Лорды и дворецкие.**  
Пабы.  
Малиновка на снегу.  
Робин Гуд, его Веселые Стрелки и Шервудский лес.  
Крикет.  
**«О, Дувра белые утесы...»**  
Империализм.  
**Флаг «Юнион Джек».**  
Снобизм.  
«Боже, храни Королеву/Короля».  
Би-би-си.  
Вест-Энд.  
Газета «Таймс».  
Шекспир.  
Домики с соломенными крышами.  
Чай/Чай со сливками по-девуширски.  
Стоунхендж.  
**Прямая спина/Флегматичность/ «Темза, сэр!».**  
Магазины.  
**Пудинг.**  
Бифитеры/Лондонский Тауэр.  
Лондонские такси.  
Шляпа-котелок.  
**«Джейн Эйр» и другие классические телесериалы.**  
Оксфорд/Кембридж.  
Хэррод.  
Двухэтажные автобусы/Красные автобусы.  
Лицемерие.  
Садоводство.  
Ненадежность/«Коварный Альбион».  
**Архитектурный стиль «фахверк».**  
Гомосексуализм.  
«Алиса в Стране Чудес».  
Уинстон Черчилль.  
«Маркс-энд-Спенсер».  
«Битва за Британию»/Подвиги англичан во Второй мировой войне.  
Фрэнсис Дрейк.  
Вьнос знамен — парад в день рождения Королевы.  
Пессимизм/Нытье.  
Королева Виктория.

**BREAKFAST**

BEER/WARM BEER  
EMOTIONAL FRIGIDITY  
WEMBLEY STADIUM  
FLAGELLATION/PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
NOT WASHING/BAD UNDERWEAR  
MAGNA CARTA

**Conclusion**

Summarizing discussion about difficulties faced by a translator due to the nature of postmodern literary text we would like to emphasize that these are the problems of stylistic, ideological and poetic nature.

Unfortunately owing to the limited size of the article we had to skip discussion of irony reproduction in translation of postmodern fiction. Paying tribute to great importance of irony and humour in postmodern fiction and taking into consideration to specifically national character of irony and humour we would propose to undertake special research on the topic.

Coming back to the problem about cognitive base set at the beginning of this research we would like to draw some conclusions about translation problems and required translator's efforts.

The first thing required from a translator is capacity to interpretation, and, hence, strong literary interpretation skills. One of the interpretation theories –hermeneutics - provides a comprehensive nature of understanding and making sense as fundamental principle of human existence, where translation is only one aspect in attributing senses to all the things and phenomena grasped by human consciousness [14].

The second conclusion is about extremely important role of a translator as creative factor, as this is he/she who decodes senses created in one culture and re-codes them into another culture. Problems of decoding and re-coding information are generally considered to be a concern of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, still in our case we believe they depend rather from linguistic, historical and mental characteristics of both involved cultures and on ethno-psycho-linguistic nature of the translator.

**Замки.**

Пиво/Теплое пиво.  
Эмоциональная фригидность.  
Стадион Уэмбли.  
Порка/Частные школы-интернаты.  
Нечистоплотность/Уродливое нижнее белье.  
«Хартия вольностей».

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Проблеми перекладу постмодерного художнього тексту

Розглянуто загальні проблеми перекладу специфічного літературного твору постмодерного періоду, взаємозв'язок між належним рівнем когнітивної бази перекладача, володінням ним прийомами перекладу та знанням рідної мови, з одного боку, та адекватністю перекладу художнього твору, з іншого. Визначено об'єктивні труднощі відтворення постмодерного тексту при перекладі. Зроблено спробу аналізу і узагальнення труднощів перекладу, породжених жанром твору, та показано практичні шляхи подолання цих труднощів.

К.Г. Лашенко

Проблемы перевода постмодерного художественного текста

Рассмотрены общие проблемы перевода специфического литературного произведения постмодерного периода, взаимосвязь между надлежащим уровнем когнитивной базы переводчика, владения им приемами перевода и знанием родного языка, с одной стороны, и адекватностью перевода, с другой. Определены объективные трудности воспроизведения постмодернистского текста при переводе. Предпринята попытка анализа и обобщения трудностей перевода, обусловленных жанром произведения, и показаны практические пути преодоления этих трудностей.