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## TRANSLATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL REALIA OF THE APOCALYPTIC NOVEL

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*This article explores the theoretical underpinnings of translating nominative units from the apocalyptic novel, focusing on "realia" and "irrealia" as markers of the fictional world. The study examines the context-dependent nature of these lexical units, their categorization across the thematic group of geographical referents, and the unique challenges they pose in apocalyptic literature translation. The study integrates L. Venuti's strategies of domestication and foreignization with A. Popovič's theory of stylistic shifts to address the reconstruction of the fictional world in Ukrainian translations. This article highlights the significance of irrealia as products of the author's imagination and the necessity of special translation tactics such as intensification and substitution to preserve the genre's stylistic features and pragmatic potential across cultures. The conclusions of the research demonstrate that the choice of translation strategy and tactics is functionally dependent on the type of nomination.*

**Keywords:** *realia, irrealia, translation strategy, translation tactics, stylistic shifts, literary translation, apocalyptic novel.*

**Мовчан М. Г. Переклад географічних реалій апокаліптичного роману.** У статті досліджуються теоретичні засади перекладу номінативних одиниць апокаліптичного роману з акцентом на реалії та ірреалії як маркери художнього світу. Розглядається контекстуальна зумовленість цих лексичних одиниць, їхня класифікація в межах тематичної групи географічних референтів та унікальні виклики, які вони створюють під час перекладу творів апокаліптичного жанру. Робота інтегрує стратегії одомашнення та очуження Л. Венуті з теорією стилістичних зсувів А. Поповича для аналізу реконструкції вигаданого світу в українських перекладах. Стаття висвітлює важливість ірреалій як результатів авторської уяви і необхідність залучення спеціальних перекладацьких тактик, таких як посилення та субституція, задля збереження стилістичних особливостей жанру та прагматичного потенціалу в різних культурах. Висновки дослідження демонструють, що вибір перекладацької стратегії та тактики функціонально залежить від типу номінації.

**Ключові слова:** *реалія, ірреалія, перекладацька стратегія, перекладацька тактика, стилістичний зсув, художній переклад, апокаліптичний роман.*

## **Introduction**

Contemporary translation studies reveal a growing interest in the intercultural mediation of word-building elements related to different literary genres. (Salmeri, 2014). In the context of the apocalyptic novel translation is complicated by the necessity of reconstructing a fictional worldview verbalized through a system of functionally modified realia and irrealia. The latter are lexical units of the author's imagination and require effective strategies to ensure their efficient intratextual reproduction (Loponen, 2009).

A rapid development of the apocalyptic genre in World Literature and its popularity among Ukrainian readers trace back to current events such as wars, catastrophes, natural disasters, etc. Since the apocalyptic novel depicts the world in the far transformed future, the translator faces the challenge of rendering realia and irrealia of the apocalyptic society.

Despite the importance of these linguo-cultural features, translators haven't agreed on the interaction between the source and target texts. The principles of rendering realia and irrealia from the apocalyptic novel require systematic organization and standardization to address the significant inconsistencies currently observed in both academic publications and the literary market.

## **Theoretical Background**

In contemporary translation studies the term realia is traditionally associated with the nomination culture-specific objects in extratextual reality. The term "realia" was first used to emphasize the national and cultural distinctiveness of references and their untranslatability. T. Kyiak referred to realia as words that represent the peculiarities of other people's lives (Kyiak, 2008, p. 141). Realia was also defined as lexical units that denote phenomena associated with the specific society's life during a particular historical era. The researchers accentuate national and historical connotations of realia and emphasize their absence in the experience of other communities (Slavova, Borisenko, 2023, p. 136).

Within the scope of this research we will focus primarily on the verbal and ethnical components of realia, which are defined as mono- and polysemantic units, the main meaning of which encompasses the complex of ethnical information traditionally associated with realia and is foreign to the objective reality of the target language (Zorivchak, 1989, p. 58).

Meanwhile, in literary texts, belonging to genres dominated by fictional worlds, the translator must not only render real cultural elements, but also translate an autonomous fictional reality. M. Loponen (2009), M. Martinković (2022), and S. Pettini (2021) consider the use of the term "realia" to be problematic in the context of literary texts. Speculative fiction texts and their translations, particularly from English, are gradually gaining popularity. Despite numerous attempts by writers and theorists, speculative fiction and its subgenres remain vaguely defined, and their specific characteristics are often even less explored from the perspective of translation studies (Martinković, 2022, p. 73). In his study of translation of science fiction and fantasy works M. Loponen introduces the term "irrealia", which refers to objects depicted in a fictional world. By viewing the fictional world as a semiotic system constructed by the author, translation studies encounter problems similar to those that arise when rendering realia. However, in this case, we are concerned with units that represent culture, time, and space invented by the author (Loponen, 2009, p. 167).

However, M. Martinović suggests that we should not treat irrealia as homogeneous units, but rather distinguish between two types that pose different translation challenges: pure irrealia (or irrealia sensu stricto) and analogical irrealia (rooted in reality but altered). Pure irrealia are figments of the author's imagination and have no referent in the real world, whereas analogical irrealia are real entities with real denotations, but placed within a work of fiction (Martinković 2022, p. 77), such as the names of existing organizations, social groups, or objects of material culture used in fictional contexts.

Accordingly, each type of irrealia may require a different approach to translation. For instance, pure irrealia are not fixed lexical units, since they denote non-existent concepts and objects, and their form may be original and unusual, as a creation of the author (ibid., p. 78). Despite the proposed distinction between "pure irrealia" and "analogical irrealia," within the scope of our study it seems more appropriate to use the terms "irrealia" and "realia". This approach allows a clearer differentiation of the nominal units of the fictional world based on their source of origin and semantic type: "irrealia" denoting fictional units, and "realia" for units with extratextual referents that have been transformed by the fictional world of the apocalyptic novel.

### **Methodological Notes**

Translating realia and irrealia of the fictional world requires not merely a search for equivalents, but a necessary comparison of the intratextual cultural systems of the source and target languages. Therefore, two complementary scientific approaches are employed: comparative and descriptive analysis. Comparative analysis involves a systematic comparison of the original text and the translation, with a focus on differences in linguistic systems. Descriptive analysis is the key to describing the means of nomination of the fictional world, the aim of which is to explain and predict translation phenomena, as opposed to prescriptive approaches (how one should translate). The results of comparative analysis (a comparison of linguistic differences) serve as empirical material for descriptive analysis, which provides a sociocultural and theoretical explanation for these differences. The ultimate goal of descriptive studies is not only to describe but also to identify trends in the rendering of English-language realia and irrealia in translation (Toury, 1995).

The study of translating nominative units representing the fictional world of the apocalyptic novel is inextricably linked to a cultural studies approach, since these terms are culturally marked names for objects, social institutions, important concepts, or fictional phenomena that shape a unique fictional world. Within this approach L. Venuti's theory with its strategies of domestication and foreignization is of particular significance. It allows determining how a translator strikes a balance between preserving the foreignness and uniqueness of the apocalyptic world (foreignization) and adapting it to the cultural horizon of the target reader (domestication) (Venuti, 2001). This analysis is complemented by A. Popovič's theory of stylistic shifts, which changes the focus to the microstylistics of the text. It helps identify and analyze specific tactics (shifts) (Popovič, 1975) that the translator employs at the lexical level to achieve the desired stylistic or communicative effect in the target text when rendering apocalyptic realia and irrealia.

The research material consisted of the English-language apocalyptic novels *Seveneves* (2018) by Neal Stephenson and *The Hunger Games* (2008) by Suzanne Collins and their Ukrainian translations, from which 485 apocalyptic realia and irrealia and their variants in Ukrainian were identified using a comprehensive sampling method.

## Results and Discussion

In literary studies, the idea that the apocalyptic novel is characterized by a number of established features, including depictions of catastrophe and devastated landscapes, the presence of fantastical scientific and technological inventions, rigid social stratification, and so on (Kuleshir, 2014) seems quite effective. However, from a translation studies perspective, such a definition is insufficient, as it does not take into account the specificities of translating either apocalyptic texts or science fiction literature in general (Martinkovič, 2022, p. 76). Therefore, in this context, Western scholars have introduced the concept of irrealia as a relevant category in translation.

Irrealia are the product of the author's imagination. If the fictional world is entirely invented by the author, irrealia are defined as elements of that fictional world that have no referents in reality, for example, *Flivver*, or *Flexible Light Intracloud Vehicle* – Лемолит – Легенький Мобільний Внутрішньохмарний Космолит, *Siwis* – Плази, *Grabbs* – Хану, *Buckiies* – Баки. These are the names of robots and vehicles that are fictional concepts created by the author and have no real-world referents.

Despite the existence of a real referent in reality, realia acquire the status of elements of the fictional world through a change in their function or a specific characteristic. We consider it inappropriate to refer to them as "irrealia," since their recognizability to the reader is based precisely on their connection to reality (for example, a spacesuit, social media). However, in a fictional text, they function as nominative markers of a fictional space, mirroring the structure of real society. Such examples as *Space Suit* – Космічний скафандр, *social media* («Spacebook») – соцмережі «Спейсбук», *projectile weapons* – зброя вогнепальної дії are realia that represent the fictional world, but have referents in the real one.

Realia and irrealia are not viewed in opposition but rather represent types of nomination within the fictional world of the apocalyptic novel. Based on subject areas, the nominations of the fictional world in the apocalyptic novels denote individual and collective, geographical, artifactual, ethnic, sociopolitical, and intertextual referents (Pettini, 2021).

Geographical nominations in the apocalyptic novel play a key role in constructing the fictional world and determine the text's genre and stylistic features. They function as genre markers that signal to the reader what type of catastrophe they are dealing with (technogenic, natural, cosmic) and what

emotional tone will dominate. The group of geographical nominations in the fictional world of the novels under study comprises 485 items.

As part of this study, the category of geographical nominations is interpreted broadly, in accordance with S. Pettini's classification (Pettini 2022: 127–128). It encompasses not only features of the physical landscape, but also celestial bodies, meteorological phenomena, as well as flora and fauna. This combination is due to the fact that in the apocalyptic novel, these elements function as a unified set of environmental markers, defining the spatial boundaries and conditions for survival in the fictional world (Pettini, 2021).

It is important for a translator to distinguish how the author constructs a new apocalyptic world: by relying on the existing one or by inventing something entirely new. Objects that have prototypes in the real world but have been altered by a catastrophe are represented by realia, such as *Kuiper belt* – *Пояс Койпера*, *Crater* – *кратер*, *new islands chains* – *нові ланцюги островів*. They are altered but recognizable. Irrealia represent objects that have no direct referents in our reality and are created by the author's imagination, such as *White Sky* – *Біле небо*, *a dome of fire* – *вогняний купол*.

Of the total number of geographical nominations irrealia account for 138 units, grouped into the following thematic categories:

- names of the catastrophe and its consequences: *Hard Rain* – *Злива*, *White Sky* – *Біле небо*, *Agent* – *Агент*, *seven giant rocks* – *сім велетенських каменів*;
- names of new natural zones and landscapes: *Antimer* – *Антимер*, *the Ashwall* – *Димна Стяга*, *sublunary realm* – *підмісячний світ*;
- names of dwelling types: *Arklets* – *Човники*, *The Eye* – *Око*, *Cradle* – *Колиска*, *Gnomon* – *Гномон*;
- names of mutated animals: *Mockingjay* – *Переспівниця*, *Jabberjay* – *Сойкотун*, *Mockingbird* – *Пересмішник*;
- names of new time scale: *Zero* – *Нуль*, *A+0.0.0* – *A+0.0.0*, *Day 52* – *52-го Дня*, *FIVE THOUSAND YEARS LATER* – *П'ять тисяч років потому*.

To render geographical irrealia, the following stylistic shifts were employed: stylistic correspondence – 74 (53.6%); stylistic substitution – 12 (8.7%); stylistic weakening – 6 (4%); stylistic intensification – 44 (31.9%); stylistic elimination – 2 (1.5%).

Stylistic correspondence is used to reproduce the name of the disaster and its consequences. In examples such as *the White Sky* – *Біле небо*, *dead planet* – *мертва земля*, *fantastic bubbles of flame* – *фантастичні полум'яні бульбашки*,

*a dome of fire – возняний купол* the structure and semantics of irrealia are preserved, ensuring a similar perceptual effect within the structure of the fictional world: *We are going to witness an event that I am calling the White Sky. It'll happen over hours, or days. The system of discrete planetoids that we can see up there now is going to grind itself up into a vast number of much smaller fragments.* (Seveneves, 2018) - *Ми станемо свідками події, яку я називаю Біле Небо. Вона триватиме лічені години, можливо, дні. Та система окремих планетоїдів, яку ми спостерігаємо зараз, сама себе перемеле на безліч дрібніших шматочків.* (СІММІС, 2018). Since descriptions of disasters are fundamental to the construction of the fictional world of the apocalyptic novel, preserving their original structure ensures that the author's vision of the end of the world is reproduced without subjective distortions.

Stylistic intensification clarifies and explains the meaning of irrealia to the target reader, for example, *A+5000 – П'ять тисяч років потому* helps decipher the code so that the reader can better understand the chronology within the constructed apocalyptic world. Translation of the phrase "*the rubble cloud*" is also an example of stylistic intensification: *<...> which kept a high-resolution feed of the rubble cloud running around the clock.* (Seveneves, 2018) – *<...> в надвисокій роздільній здатності транслювалася хмара пилу та каміння, що оберталася за годинниковою стрілкою.* (СІММІС, 2018).

Stylistic substitution is used to replace neutral words with emotionally charged ones, for instance, *wreckage – румовище, the Earth's fractured crust – порепана земна кірка*: *<...> spreading to envelop vast areas before they burst and disappeared, leaving behind wreckage that looked like it had been beaten with sledgehammers and doused with napalm.* (Seveneves, 2018) – *<...> вкриваючи величезні території, перш ніж зникнути в останньому спалаху, залишивши за собою румовище землі, яку наче потропили відбійними молотками і випалили напалмом.* (СІММІС, 2018). Instead of the neutral noun *уламки* in the meaning of "*broken and disordered parts or material from something wrecked*" (Merriam-Webster) more emotional and archaic noun "*румовище*" is used.

Stylistic intensification through translator's commentary is often used to explain unreal elements based on technical terminology, for example *geostationary orbit – геостаціонарна орбіта* (*Кругова орбіта, при якій супутник завжди розміщений над однією і тією ж точкою земної поверхні (можлива при нульовому нахилі до екватора, висоті 35 786 км над рівнем моря та нульовому ексцентриситеті (тобто при ідеальній круглій орбіті).*

*Відрізняється від геосинхронної орбіти, для якої неважливий нахил площини орбіти відносно екватора.*). Such a detailed explanation provides the necessary cognitive support for the target reader to adequately interpret the fictional elements and helps them navigate in the fictional world.

However, there are instances of stylistic weakening that make the meaning of unreal elements simpler, for example *Simulated Earth landforms – земний ландшафт*. The Ukrainian translation omits the word "simulated," which refers to the robotic nature of these natural zones. Stylistic elimination in the case of *coy-dogs, coy-wolves, wolf-dogs – койдоги, вовко-собаки* may indicate an effort to avoid semantic redundancy.

Translating irrealia that are names of mutated animals requires the translator to preserve the biological logic and reproduce the stylistic effect. To render the irrealia *jabberjay* the translator employs stylistic substitution *сойкотун*. The verb "jabber" means "talk rapidly, indistinctly, or unintelligibly" (Merriam-Webster), and "jay" refers to a bird. Accordingly, the translator used the root "сойк-" and the productive suffix "-тун", which in Ukrainian denotes the performer of the action: *One was a special bird called a jabberjay that had the ability to memorize and repeat whole human conversations. They were homingbirds, exclusively male <...>*. (The Hunger Games, 2008) – *Одним із видів були сойкотуни, наділені вмінням запам'ятовувати й відтворювати цілі людські розмови. Це були домашні птахи, виключно самці <...>*. (Голодні Ігри, 2010).

The neologism "сойкотун" sounds natural in Ukrainian, reminding of traditional names for birds, and retains an ironic undertone: it is a spy bird that eavesdrops and passes information on. Thus, adding the suffix to the root allows the meaning of the neologism to be revealed without compromising its intratextual autonomy.

Geographical realia, as a type of nomination within the artistic world, are represented by names that have a direct prototype in reality but have undergone certain changes. They are grouped into the following thematic categories:

- natural zones and landscapes identified by toponyms *Houston – Г'юстон, Baikonur – Байконур, Washington – Вашингтон, Detroit-Windsor – Детройт-Віндзор*;
- natural phenomena: *Gravitation – Гравітація/тяжіння, Eruption – виверження, Tsunami – цунамі*.
- celestial bodies and planets: *Meteorite – метеорит, Bolide – болід, Moon – Місяць, Amalthea – Амальтея*;

- flora and fauna: *reptiles* – *рептилії*, *hyaenas* – *гієни*, *shark* – *акула*;
- dwelling: *the squat gray houses* – *приземкуваті сірі будиночки*, *Remake Center* – *салон краси «Ремейк»*, *Launch Room* – *стартовий комплекс*.

This thematic group comprises 347 realia, which are based on real-world prototypes. To render geographical realia, the following tactics are identified: stylistic correspondence (301 (86.7%)); stylistic substitution (28 (8%)); stylistic weakening (7 (2%)); stylistic intensification (11 (3.1%)).

Stylistic correspondence is the most common tactics to translate proper nouns (toponyms) and internationalisms: *Houston* – *Г'юстон*, *Vaikonur* – *Байконур*, *Peru* – *Перу*, *Odessa* – *Одеса*. This tactics ensures the accuracy of the setting and the scientific authenticity of the world depicted within the text.

Stylistic enhancement achieved by adding explanatory words used to clarify the image *Remake Center* – *салон краси «Ремейк»*: *I've been in the Remake Center for more than three hours and I still haven't met my stylist.* (The Hunger Games, 2008) – *Я провела в салоні краси під назвою «Ремейк» понад три години, але досі не познайомилася зі своїм стилістом.* (Голодні Ігри, 2010)

The noun "center" in English has a broad semantic range and in this context refers to "a facility providing a place for a particular activity or service" (Merriam-Webster). Adding the description "салон краси" is an example of explication, which adapts the semantics of the irrealia so that the reader can understand it without losing its specificity. This helps the target reader identify the function of the establishment: changing the character's appearance before going out in public.

The tactics of stylistic weakening is used in the example *launch room* – *стартовий комплекс*, where the translator replaces the source term "room", which has a narrow semantic scope, with the broader term "комплекс." This allows the technical description to be adapted to the scale of the object in the fictional world.

Conclusions and Perspectives. The analysis of the depiction of geographical realia and irrealia in the apocalyptic novel demonstrates a comprehensive approach aimed at preserving the genre's distinctive features and adapting the science fiction world for Ukrainian readers. The distribution of stylistic shifts indicates that the choice of translation strategy and tactics depends on the type of nomination.

The strategy of foreignization predominates in the depiction of realia through the use of stylistic correspondence (301 instances). This preserves the intratextual structure of place names and common terms, thereby creating a sense of reality and making locations recognizable.

The strategy of foreignization is also widely employed to render a significant number of irrealia, which is crucial for the apocalyptic genre, where the strangeness of the landscape is a key feature (64 instances of the stylistic correspondence). Stylistic intensification (56 instances), in turn, enables the interpretation of irrealia within the fictional world.

When working with irrealia as specific markers of the fictional world, the tactics of stylistic substitution (15 instances) replaces a foreign image with one that is understandable to the target audience, while preserving the emotional impact and stylistic nuance. These tactics implement the strategy of domestication when it is necessary to avoid losing meaning or emotional impact.

**Prospects for further research** include translation analysis of other thematic groups of realia and irrealia of the apocalyptic society, as well as expanding the scope of the study by incorporating Ukrainian translations of other English-language apocalyptic novels to test the universality of the identified trends.

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