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## VOICE OF A WOMAN IN THE DYSTOPIAN REALITY OF M. ATWOOD AS A TRANSLATIONAL CHALLENGE

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**Key words:** *aesthetics, external speech, internal speech, literary image, original, stylistic means, translation.*

The research focused on the means of reproducing a literary image in translation as part of an artistic reality constructed through an interplay of a variety of different voices, the author wants to be heard. The study was based on “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “The Testaments” by M. Atwood, more particularly on the image of one of the characters who tells a story of a totalitarian theocracy of Gilead. Her representation in translation is all the more interesting since Aunt Lydia is first introduced to the reader in “The Handmaid’s Tale” as a framer of Gilead who is taking every effort for the totalitarian regime to thrive, to make every person living here accept their fate no matter how terrifying and preposterous it was. However, in “The Testaments” the translator faces the need to change the perspective of her readers as well as her own. Here, Lydia acquires her own voice which allows the audience to see all the tortures she went through, all the horrors she witnessed as well as her incredible strength. The striking contrast between her real thoughts and what she allows others to see or hear presents a significant aesthetic challenge for the translator who, basically, has to depict “two Lydias”: a cruel monster feared by everyone in the Republic, Commanders included, and an amazingly strong woman determined to survive in order to put an end to Gilead. The translation as well as the original is filled with vivid imagery, rhetorical devices and pervasive self-mockery which are employed to render every component of Lydia’s image, her appearance, her speech, both internal and external, her actions, etc. Such expressive means provide for a distinctive representation of her self-control, her unrivaled intelligence. These qualities make her every word and even gesture reveal what she wishes to show and nothing more which permits Lydia to achieve one of the highest positions in the society where women were reduced to a status of a national resource. The translator rather masterfully reproduces the means of depicting the image of a woman whose resilience and the ability to subtly manipulate people and events allowed her to send the evidence of the crimes committed by Gilead to Canada and destroy what she was once forced to build.

## ГОЛОС ЖІНКИ В АНТИУТОПІЧНІЙ РЕАЛЬНОСТІ М. ЕТВУД ЯК ПЕРЕКЛАДАЦЬКА ПРОБЛЕМА

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**Ключові слова:** *внутрішнє мовлення, естетика, зовнішнє мовлення, оригінал, переклад, стилістичні засоби, художній образ.*

У межах представленої статті увагу зосереджено на засобах відтворення в перекладі художнього образу як частини дійсності літературного твору, що становить складне поєднання різних голосів, що автор доносить до читачів. Дослідження ґрунтувалося на романах М. Етвуд «Оповідь Служниці» та «Заповіді»; воно присвячене образу однієї з героїнь, яка розповідає історію тоталітарного теократичного суспільства Гілеаду. Репрезентація образу Тітки Лідії у перекладі викликає особливе зацікавлення, оскільки вперше в «Оповіді Служниці» читач знайомиться з нею як з однією із засновниць Гілеаду, яка докладає всіх зусиль для його процвітання, намагаючись змусити кожного в республіці прийняти свою долю, якою б жахливою та протиприродною вона не була. Проте у «Заповідях» перекладачка стикається з потребою змінити погляд читачів, як і власний. Тітка Лідія отримує свій голос, що дозволяє аудиторії дізнатися про тортури, яких вона зазнала, про жахи, свідком яких вона стала, і про неймовірну силу цієї жінки. Відмінності між справжніми думками Лідії та тим, що вона дозволяє побачити та почути іншим, становлять значну проблему з точки зору естетичного сприйняття цільового тексту, оскільки перекладачка повинна змалювати «двох Лідій»: жорстокого монстра, якого бояться всі у республіці (включно з Командорами), та могутню жінку, що прийняла рішення вижити, щоб покласти кінець Гілеаду. Як і оригінал, переклад сповнений яскравих засобів виразності, риторичних фігур та повсюдної самоіронії, які застосовуються, щоб передати кожний складник образу Лідії, її зовнішність, її мову (як зовнішню, так і внутрішню), її дії тощо. Такі художні засоби підкреслюють її самоконтроль та непересічний розум. Ці якості дозволяють кожному її слову та жесту виражати тільки те, що вона бажає, і нічого більше. Так, Лідія досягає однієї з найвищих посад у суспільстві, де жінки – лише національний ресурс. Перекладачка майстерно передає засоби зображення образу жінки, чия витривалість та здатність маніпулювати людьми та подіями дозволила їй передати докази злочинів Гілеаду до Канади і зруйнувати те, що була вимушена побудувати.

**Introduction.** The anthropocentric approach in Translation Studies has drawn attention of researchers to the individual as a creator of the text and the literary character as an aesthetic embodiment of his/her beliefs. Thus, the methods of recreating artistic images of characters in translation have become the focus of numerous studies where they were investigated as an expression of the author's individuality.

One of the principal functions of the literary text is an aesthetic and emotional impact on the reader. Appealing to the emotions of the audience, the author depicts vivid literary images acting

as his/her "spokespersons". The writer connects with the readers at an emotional level in order to impart the intended ideas. The sphere of emotions is incredibly complex, every person reacts to the received information differently, even within a single culture. When it comes to translation, the emotional response of the target audience is even more difficult to predict. Thus, the translator as an expert in both cultures has to anticipate the response that a literary work will potentially evoke taking into account different backgrounds of the readers of the original and translation.

The research focused on the utterances embodying the key elements in the image of a literary character as its *object*. The *subject* of the study covered the methods of rendering such utterances in translation depending on their functional features both in terms of the meaning of the original message and its stylistic specifics.

The research was *aimed* at establishing the means of recreating the principal components of a literary image in translation and revealing discrepancies in the perception of the same image from the perspective of different narratives. The *material* of the study was represented by “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “The Testaments” by M. Atwood and their translations into the Ukrainian language. In order to achieve the aim set, the following *tasks* were resolved: 1) to define the concept of a literary image and its components as well as their relevance in literary translation; 2) to single out the principal elements in the image of one of the main characters and means of their verbalization; 3) to consider the means of rendering utterances which embody the most prominent features of her personality and their role in the general aesthetic perception of the character.

**Overview.** The problem of interpretation of a literary text, its aesthetic value has attracted significant attention for a long time [1; 2; 3]. Currently, scholars in the field of Translation Studies are also taking interest in the ways to preserve the aesthetic impact of the original in the target text [4; 5; 6; 7] which requires a more careful reproduction of literary images that eloquently express the ideas and values of the author. At the moment, there is no generally accepted definition of the image of a literary character. V. Ye. Khalizev determines such functions of an artistic image as iconic, aesthetic and communicative. The iconic function is fulfilled through creating an “iconic” artistic image which represents a full-fledged social and psychological portrait of a character. The function of aesthetic expression is performed as the artistic image refers to a specific person important for interpretation of the entire story which provides for the desired aesthetic effect of the literary work as a whole. The artistic image is a product of the author’s creativity intended to convey his/her ideas which provides for the communicative function inherent in artistic images [8]. The image of a literary character is mainly based on his/her portrait, actions, patterns of behavior, description by other characters, etc.

The linguistic means employed to create an artistic image fall into implicit and explicit ones [9; 10]. The first category covers additional background knowledge necessary to interpret the artistic image as well as stylistic devices used to make every image bright and believable. The explicit means of constructing a literary image refer directly to the description of the character (his profession, nationality, etc.). If the second group normally presents no difficulties for a

translator, the first one requires both extensive culture-specific knowledge and linguistic creativity required to balance intercultural differences and preserve the unique stylistics of the literary work. The two categories are intricately linked, thus, the translator shall successfully reproduce both in order to create an authentic, consistent image in the target text.

M. M. Bakhtin in his works states that “a person speaking in a novel is always an ideologist, to an extent” [11, p. 146]. The aesthetic function of a work of literature is essential, however, unlike other objects that are simply beautiful, literature shall make the reader better and spiritually richer. Thus, the literary work also performs an ideological function aimed at influencing the worldview of the audience. The character’s ideological position is expressed in his/her actions and, of course, his/her speech which constitutes one of the most expressive components within the image of a literary character. The author does not have to resort to the entire range of elements that can be part of the artistic image but the character’s speech is its indispensable component.

A variety of linguostylistic means makes each character unique and memorable due to a distinctive way of speaking as well the ideas behind every single word. The wording that a person chooses for verbal communication reveals his/her social, cultural, ideological, psychological characteristics. The character’s speech is usually subdivided into external and internal. They are closely connected, however, if external speech is intended for participation in a communicative act, internal speech shall not be heard by others. In a literary work, internal monologues of characters serve a different purpose in comparison with real-life communication. Other characters have no access to such personal internalized thoughts, but they are used for describing the inner world of the characters, their emotions, their beliefs. Interestingly, the internal and external speech can show the character from two completely different perspectives. The latter is for other people to hear and interpret while the former reveals true feelings and opinions of the person. The two can be rather different and still they play a major part in the construction of a literary image both in the original and the translation.

The translator’s task is to show a complex interplay between the way a character is seen by others and his/her real personality. As each work of literature is unique, there are no ready-made recipes for successful reconstruction of an artistic image in translation. Nevertheless, the necessary precondition for an adequate representation of the character is a comprehensive interpretation of the original by the translator and a careful approach to every element of the artistic image.

The present research is based on two novels by M. Atwood and their respective translations. Written

in 1985, the dystopian novel by M. Atwood, “The Handmaid’s Tale”, has recently become a prominent cultural phenomenon both in the Canadian society where it originated and in those cultural environments where it was later introduced. As an object of translation, the novel represented a significant challenge from the cultural point of view due to the need to balance social perceptions of gender-related issues in the source and target cultures. However, “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “The Testaments”, its sequel released in 2019, are unique in that they present extremely complicated, controversial literary images constructed using vivid imagery. The author artfully plays with the voices readers hear at each point. Sometimes all it takes to change our judgment is to hear a different voice. This is the challenge the translator faces with Aunt Lydia whose image undergoes remarkable transformations from one novel to the other.

**Results and discussion.** The reader first meets Aunt Lydia as an ardent believer of the new totalitarian regime whose mission is to convince the Handmaids – women who have not lost their fertility due to man-made environmental disasters – to submit to violence for the benefit of the state, moreover, to consider it a supreme honor. In “The Handmaid’s Tale”, Lydia’s image is mainly depicted through the eyes of the main heroine, Offred, for whom the head of the Red Center provoked nothing but anger and hatred. The reader of the original as well as the translation sees Lydia torturing young women, distorting the Bible, taking charge of executions.

The aim of the dystopian literature is to inspire fear, to warn the society against the worst possible scenario the current trends may lead to. For this reason, they need a character they will be able to empathize with, a person oppressed, deprived of any individuality or rights. Such a perspective allows the author to establish an emotional connection with her readers. Since the translator initially acts as a receiver of the original message she inevitably adopts Offred’s perceptions. Reproducing the image of the main character, the translator vividly describes cruelties of the totalitarian regime, Aunt Lydia being one of its institutors. However, it is the narrator who determines the story. Thus, “The Testaments” is told on the part of three women. Two of them are Offred’s daughters. One grew up in Gilead, another one – in Canada. These young girls are the ones who contribute to the fall of Gilead, and it is Aunt Lydia who makes it possible. The third line of narration belongs to her. Having received her own voice, Lydia uses “The Ardua Hall Holograph” to tell the reader how it all began.

In “The Handmaid’s Tale” Aunt Lydia speaks with biblical quotes, closely rendered in translation. Both in the source and in the target text she sounds convinced of the blessings that Gilead has brought,

ensuring women’s safety, returning them to their original purposes. The image of Aunt Lydia depicted in “The Testaments” is radically different from what she appeared to others. The reader sees an image of a woman who was forced to make a deal with Commander Judd, the one who remained strong enough to achieve a high post in the Gileadian society. Lydia considers her agreement with Commander Judd a pact with the devil, the price she had to pay to survive and to ruin the corrupt regime from inside. Lydia’s writing abounds in bitter irony, mockery of her own might. Such irony associated with numerous epithets, metaphors, rhetorical figures, word-play creates an unmatched image of a woman who nurtures no illusions, who is ready to give up her life if she succeeds in taking down Gilead.

Lydia first appears as the head of the Red Center, teaching women to be obedient, to be grateful for the world where they will be able to fulfill their destiny, bearing children for the Commanders. After leaving the Red Center, the women were supposed to become Handmaids and be reduced to a position of things, even worse than that... They still remembered the world of before and the freedom they enjoyed. Aunt Lydia, however, was making them believe that now they were safe, protected, that finally they could fulfill their true purpose.

*Where I am is not a prison but a privilege, as Aunt Lydia said, who was in love with either/or* [12].

*«Це не в’язниця, це привілей», – казала Тімка Лідія: вона обожнювала формулювання «або-або»* [13, p. 14].

The example above shows the ideas that had to be embedded in the women’s minds. The original message is based on the stylistic device of antithesis which is successfully rendered in translation. The target message becomes even more brisk due the fact that *Where I am* is replaced by a simple «це» as well as due to the translator’s choice of punctuation which emphasizes the contrast between the reality of Gilead and the delusive happiness that Aunts meant to inspire.

In “The Handmaid’s Tale” the reader meets Aunt Lydia only occasionally and still grows to dislike her as she appears to be one of the heralds of the oppressing regime. However, in “The Testaments” she received the opportunity to tell her own story describing the tortures she was subject to in the early days of Gilead. She saw so many innocent people suffer inhumane treatment and then die. The woman realized that she had only two options: die herself or submit or at least pretend to. Nevertheless, she became not just one of devotees of the theocracy. Having turned into Aunt Lydia, she stood at its origins. While all the women in Gilead lost any possible rights seemingly inherent in a human being, Aunts acquired power almost equal to that of Commanders.

*I will record here that, some years later – after I had tightened my grip over Ardua Hall and had*

*leveraged it to acquire the extensive though silent power in Gilead that I now enjoy – Commander Judd, sensing that the balance had shifted, sought to propitiate me* [14].

*Зауважу, що через кілька років по тому, вже після того, як я вчепилася в Ардуа-хол і зробила так, щоб наша організація отримала ту обширну, хоч і мовчазну владу в Гілеаді, якою я насолоджуюся нині, Командор Джадд відчув, що баланс децю змістився, і спробував здобути мою прихильність* [15, p. 155].

Over the years, Lydia's influence grew, making her a paragon of virtue for those truly loyal to the dominant regime and a person most feared by anyone who dared to entertain a single idea to disobey. In the original, Gilead is compared with a mechanism that needs to be controlled through careful manipulation, the metaphor being based on such verbs as *tighten* or *leverage (the grip)*. However, the imagery of the source text is partially lost in translation as the translator replaces them with neutral equivalents, namely, «вчепитися», «отримати». Lydia has, in fact, become so powerful that even Commander Judd who once offered her the status is now apprehensive of her. Her new position is emphasized through the use of epithets – *extensive* («обширна»), *silent* («мовчазна») – which reveal concealed and yet omnipresent nature of Lydia's influence. The metaphor of machinery continues to unfold in the original as the author mentions the shifting balance of power and this time it is preserved by the translator who renders it as «баланс змістився». Still, another stylistically marked unit is, to an extent, neutralized in the target text. The English *propitiate* is transformed into a noun «прихильність» which lacks the formality and the bookish “hue” of the source text.

Once a successful woman in her own right, a respected judge, Aunt Lydia firmly decided to live on and record every crime she witnessed. However, nobody could know what she intended to do. She had to live which meant convincing everyone that she was a believer ready to do whatever it takes in the interests of Gilead. Controlling her every move, every gesture, every word, Lydia turned into a skillful manipulator. Once frightened into submission, she has now become an ultimate threat herself. Lydia got used to hiding her real thoughts, showing as much as she wanted to and nothing more.

*The muscles of my face were beginning to hurt. Under some conditions, smiling is a workout* [14].

*М'язи обличчя почали боліти. За деяких умов усмішка – це фізична вправа* [15, p. 155].

In the example given above, Lydia compares smile with a workout. In the totalitarian society of Gilead, there was no happiness greater than fulfilling your duty. No smile was sincere, even more than that – it could be considered a weakness. The translator fully

renders the metaphorical element of the original message allowing the reader to understand how much self-control and internal strength it required. A certain irony is also preserved in the target text. The one who was supposed to make Handmaids forget the past and embrace the new beginning and their destiny has never accepted hers.

Lydia helped to build and maintain the republic of Gilead and for this very reason she started to pose a threat to the regime. The author depicts how complex and still unmatched Lydia's position is comparing her rule with *an iron fist in a leather glove in a woolen mitten* («залізною рукою у шкіряній рукавиці з вовняною мітенкою»).

*I control the women's side of their enterprise with an iron fist in a leather glove in a woolen mitten, and I keep things orderly: like a harem eunuch, I am uniquely placed to do so* [14].

*Я контролюю жіночу частину їхнього проекту залізною рукою у шкіряній рукавиці з вовняною мітенкою і стежу за тим, щоби все було як слід: наче євнух у гаремі, маю для цього унікальну можливість* [15, p. 53].

In the Ukrainian culture, the metaphor of the iron fist («залізна рука») has become rather conventional, therefore the imagery of the original will not be lost on the target reader. Interestingly, Lydia draws a comparison between herself and a *harem eunuch* («євнух у гаремі») which would have been regarded as heresy if heard in public in Gilead. The translator successfully reproduces the metaphorical nature of the source message, preserving the main images created by the author.

It may seem that Lydia was doing everything to stay alive herself, enjoying her power. And still, for years, she had been helping a clandestine organization fighting against the totalitarian regime. She also made an elaborate plan to deliver all the documents she collected to the outside world. Eventually, she created all the conditions for two young girls to leave Gilead and get her message across. The Republic was taking every effort to make women forget who they are, what they are worth of. But Aunt Lydia would not allow anyone to have so much power over her. The concept of freedom frequently emerges in both novels by M. Atwood and is interpreted in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, in a state of total surveillance, Lydia has some choice. She is ready to die and she will, but it is her who will decide how and what for.

*Right now I still have some choice in the matter. Not whether to die, but when and how. Isn't that freedom of a sort?*

*Oh, and who to take down with me. I have made my list* [14].

Нині я ще маю певний вибір. Не в тому, помирати чи ні, а в тому, коли і як це станеться. Хіба ж це не певна свобода.

*О, а ще – кого забрати із собою. Я вже склала список [15, p. 28].*

The original message is filled with bitter irony and the freedom, she speaks about, has nothing to do with confidence and hope, at least not for herself. The translation quite closely reproduces the original, conveying the image of a woman who does not cherish any illusions but remains determined to bury Gilead even if it means her own doom.

Lydia dies on her own terms, having taken a drug not to afford the Commanders the pleasure to torture her. Hearing the guards coming after her, Lydia ironically remembers one of the quotes by Queen Mary *In my end is my beginning* – «В моїм завершенні початок мій». The girls were already out of danger – now the fall of Gilead was a matter of time.

*In my end is my beginning, as someone once said. Who was that? Mary, Queen of Scots, if history does not lie. Her motto, with a phoenix rising from its ashes, embroidered on a wall hanging...*

*Between one breath and the next the knock will come [14].*

*«В моїм завершенні початок мій», як хтось колись сказав. Хто ж то був? Марія Стюарт, королева шотландська, якщо історія не бреше. Її девіз, вишитий разом із феніксом, що постає з полум'я, на настінному gobelenі...*

*Між одним подихом й іншим пролунає стукіт у двері [15, p. 334].*

The translator vividly depicts the symbolic ending of the “The Ardua Hall Holograph” using the official translation of Queen Mary’s quote and recreating the distinctive background of the embroidery for the motto of one of the strongest women in British history. The phoenix seems an embodiment not only of Lydia but also of the country that will now be reborn.

**Conclusions.** The translation rather successfully reproduces the image of this outstanding woman, the one who created Gilead, the one who destroyed it. Interestingly, the translator who worked on both novels, had to change the perspective herself and reconsider the personality of a character who provoked nothing but repulsion in the reader of “The Handmaid’s Tale”. The translator meticulously renders every detail: Lydia’s unrivaled command of her speech and behavior, her outer virtuousness and loyalty to the governing regime, her face impossible to read. The target text fully reveals the contrast between a hateful, inhumane creature she seemed to be and an incredibly determined woman worth admiration. After all, her skillful manipulations had not been uncovered, until it was too late. The target text recreates the stylistic and rhetorical devices employed by the author as well as unrelenting irony with a taste of bitterness, possibly one of the few things that helps Lydia survive for all these years. Storytelling is powerful – “The Handmaid’s Tale” makes the reader

see a monster in a woman who has never relinquished her freedom, who used all her knowledge and skill of a former judge to sentence Gilead to perish. Further *prospects* of the study lie in a broader exploration of the linguistic and stylistic means used to reproduce various components of literary images.

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