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## ETHNOSYMBOLS IN THE POETRY OF UKRAINIAN SIXTIERS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS BY UKRAINIAN DIASPORIC TRANSLATORS

*The article explores specific features of reproducing the ethnosymbolism of Ukrainian Sixtiers' poetry into English by representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora. The symbolism of nature, historical reminiscences, the Christian motifs, and folkloric codes in the works of the Sixtier poets serve as markers of national identity which, under the Soviet totalitarianism, acquired an additional dimension as signs of resistance and cultural self-preservation.*

*Firstly, a symbol always remains ethnocentric and reflects the cultural code of a people, which complicates its reproduction in another linguistic system. Secondly, the degree of a symbol's «translatability» depends on the proximity of cultures: the more active the contacts between peoples, the greater the chances of adequate understanding and interpretation of symbolic imagery. In this context, the translator functions not only as a mediator between languages but also as a cultural mediator who makes decisions regarding borrowing, adaptation, or compensation.*

*It is significant that translation of ethnosymbolism inevitably generates a «sense accretion» (T. Hermans), since a translated text begins to function in a new cultural environment. This is particularly relevant to the poetry of the Sixtiers, in which such symbols as the viburnum, the poplar, the steppe, the cottage, or the Dnipro combine poetic, philosophical, and national dimensions. In the English-language interpretations of Ukrainian diaspora translators, these images are not reduced to exotic elements but acquire universality through poetic imagery and cultural contextualization.*

*In the translations of diaspora intellectuals (notably those from the USA and Canada), these images were reproduced with a dual purpose: on the one hand, to convey the profound symbolism of the Ukrainian culture to the Western readers, and on the other, to make the texts accessible to a foreign audience. The absence of censorship restrictions allowed translators greater freedom, enabling them to avoid ideological distortions and to present the Ukrainian literature as an organic part of the global cultural process. Their translations not only popularized the Ukrainian poetry beyond the country's borders but also created an alternative discourse in which the Ukrainian culture appeared self-sufficient, open to dialogue, and capable of resisting imperial narratives.*

*The article traces the translation strategies of diaspora translators, ranging from literal preservation of ethnocultural markers to partial adaptation for the English-speaking readers. It demonstrates that the key task remained the preservation of the authenticity of symbols while simultaneously «recoding» them within the global cultural space. The conclusion highlights the unique role of diaspora translators as cultural mediators who preserved and transmitted the national codes of Ukrainian poetry, integrating them into the world literary context.*

**Key words:** ethnosymbolism, ethnosymbol, Ukrainian Sixtiers, English-language translation, Ukrainian diaspora, cultural identity, national code, translation strategies.

**Statement of the problem.** Any research devoted to the problem of reproducing the ethnocultural specificity of literary works in translation emerges not only as a linguistic but also as an ideological statement. The so-called «cultural turn» that established itself in translation studies after the 1990s (S. Bassnett [1], G. Spivak [2; 3], H. Bhabha [4]) became a kind of response to the threat of globalization, the processes of national consciousness awakening, which were simultaneously occurring in several Soviet bloc states, as well as to the apparent desire to show respect for

cultures asserting their niche in the former metropolis by supplying an increasing number of translated works. From this arises the postulate of descriptive translation studies concerning the deliberate neglect of comparative studies in favor of research on the role of translated texts simultaneously present in the target culture.

Translation studies analysis of this layer of Ukrainian literature is not accidental, as it reveals the simultaneously lyrical and patriotic national character of Ukrainian verse, which manifested itself so vividly

after long years of the Stalinist repression and Socialist Realist constraints. It is well-known that this period of Ukrainian poetry represents a testing ground for bold experiments with form and stylistic means, an aspiration to break free from the narrow confines of Soviet provincialism toward world culture.

The innovative character of the poetry of the Sixtiers is most vividly expressed in its symbolism, in contrast to the traditional Soviet literature, which did not recognize multiple interpretations, any artistic, moral, or ideological ambiguity, depicting both the external world and the inner world of humans in only two colors – black and white. Symbol thus becomes the central artistic element in the Sixtiers' writing: simultaneously universal and ethnospecific, rooted in folklore images, archaic archetypes, and cultural mythologems.

#### **Analysis of recent research and publications.**

The translation of symbols and ethnosymbols has been a focal point in both Ukrainian and international translation studies, reflecting the intricate relationship between language, culture, and identity. In the realm of translation studies, S. Simon [5; 6], O. Matyzkova [7], L. Marchyk [8], O. Kopys [8], A. Kovalenko [9] have explored how translation acts as a medium for transmitting cultural identities and symbols.

**Task statement.** The ultimate objective of this article is to examine the translation strategies employed by the Ukrainian diasporic translators in conveying the ethnic and symbolic dimensions of the Ukrainian Sixtiers' poetry.

**Outline of the main material of the study.** The symbol as a core artistic element in the Sixtiers' poetry is both a simple and complex object of scholarly inquiry. Its simplicity lies in the fact that any ordinary person can intuitively perceive the symbolic nature of a poem, thus adequately grasping it and formulating their own interpretation, which does not necessarily have to be expressed in precise terms. Its complexity stems from its synthetic character at the intersection of language, culture, literature, and consciousness. Consequently, any attempt to explain the symbol as a scientific concept inevitably requires an interdisciplinary approach involving relevant linguistic, literary, cultural, and philosophical data.

It is natural that a scholarly approach to interpreting symbols originated in philosophy, which sees them as a continuation (or generation?) of archetypes, i.e. primary images imprinted in human consciousness, and of myth, i.e. the oldest narrative form explaining the origin of major phenomena through emotive-sensory images.

From the perspective of the literary theory, a symbol is considered an image expressing the essence of a phenomenon indirectly and therefore has much in common with most tropes. However, unlike metaphors, a symbol is determined not solely by artistic factors but «is based on the extra-artistic, primarily philosophical needs for esoteric knowledge» [p. 10].

Cognitive science interprets symbols in two ways. On one hand, all signs of a linguistic system are considered symbols, as their function is to represent objects and states of reality, which are independent and detached from the subject but open to its understanding. In other words, linguistic signs themselves constitute symbolic images: «Thanks to creative imagination, we can invent auxiliary images to symbolize objects and events and represent abstractions <...> any object or event can be symbolized through a certain invented, imagined sign, such as a number or word; such signs can combine themselves into statements or sentences» [11, p. 105].

On the other hand, a symbol is regarded as a specific form of concept existence, based on a process of analogy, similar to metaphor (image-symbol). However, unlike metaphor, the symbol is much more deeply rooted in human consciousness, so identifying its features (interpretations) requires at least an entire text, if not a series of texts. In this sense, the symbol appears on the pages of the reviewed research, and the author's approach of conducting a thorough analysis of as broad a corpus of selected works as possible seems entirely appropriate.

Finally, a few words should be said about the linguistic interpretation of the symbol, which firmly links it to language. Unlike the definitions of image-symbol above, the linguistic paradigm has firmly established the term «verbal symbol» (word-symbol), understood as a binary structure correlating a naming word with its secondary symbolic meaning.

To understand the nature of the symbol, it is necessary to rely on some basic cultural assumptions. Specifically, based on the axiom of the absence of a single universal human culture, one can confidently assume the absence of universal symbols equally understandable to all cultures and language speakers. From this follows the assumption that any symbol will always be ethnocentric and therefore untranslatable. On the other hand, such a pessimistic view in the spirit of W. von Humboldt and O. Potebnia can be contested by virtue of contacts between different groups of people, resulting in formation of a shared set of rules constituting a universal cultural fund. Communication between different ethnic cultures

occurs through mutual adaptation and an effort to understand the cultural specificity of others, leading to the opposite – optimistic – conclusion about the potential translatability of symbols.

The level of translatability versus non-translatability of ethnosymbols is regulated by the relative proximity or distance of cultures: the closer the ties between peoples, the more likely their representatives can adequately interpret them. In this light, the role of the translator as a cultural mediator becomes particularly significant, as they should make an important decision: to reproduce, replace, or omit. Evidently, there are no ready-made scripts, and the choice in each case, as the author demonstrates, is determined by a set of extralinguistic and linguistic factors.

For the Ukrainian diaspora translators working on the Sixtiers' poetry in English, the key challenge was preserving ethnosymbolism in a cross-cultural space. Symbols referring to the Ukrainian land, nature, history, or spirituality often lack direct equivalents in the English-speaking culture. Thus, the translator must act as a cultural mediator, choosing between the strategies of calque, adaptation, or compensation. As a result, «sense accretion» occurs (Theo Hermans) and the translated text begins to function in a new cultural context, enriching both the original and the target literature.

In this process, the problem of interpretation is crucial: can a symbol remain ethnospecific while gaining universality? The Ukrainian diaspora translators demonstrate that this duality is possible: a symbol rooted in the national tradition can become comprehensible to a foreign culture through contextualization and preservation of poetic imagery. Thus, the ethnosymbolism of the Ukrainian Sixtiers in the English translations is not reduced to an «exotic element» but functions as a bridge between cultures, maintaining the continuity of Ukrainian poetic tradition while integrating into the global literary space.

Examples of poetic translations by the Ukrainian diaspora translators illustrate the intent to preserve ethnosymbolism while making it accessible to the English-speaking readers. In Vasyl Stus' poetry, ornithological ethnosymbols are frequent (sparrow, swallow, magpie, lark); they are traditional poetic images imbued with ethnosymbolic meaning. The poet most often uses the swallow, featured in the poems «Спокій» (1958), «Скорбний хоралі за стіною» (1959), «Вчися чекати» (1969).

In the poem «Вчися чекати», V. Stus depicts a balanced world of the past, free from suffering and

self-preservation. The translator must delve into the metaphorical fabric of ethnosymbols to convey the integrity of ethnosymbolic meaning of the original. Example: Ластівки на електричних дротах, / почорніли од сині неба / ще слухають стумні струни землі [12, p. 42] (translation by Yaropolk Lassovsky: Swallows perched on power lines, / blackened by the blue of the sky, / still listen to the dusky strings of earth [12, p. 42]). The literal translation of the animated image of the swallow is successful. The translator conveys the meaning of the original without difficulty. According to the Ukrainian folklore, the swallow is a «pure bird» and conveys a meaning of bearer of joy [14, p. 664].

In Vasyl Symonenko's poetry, **the bee (or bumblebee)** acquires a personal significance and may be interpreted differently by the translators. To begin with, symbol of a bee is traditionally rooted in the Ukrainian cultural consciousness as a sign of labor, order, and spiritual vitality. In V. Symonenko's poem, however, the white and stinging bees gain new metaphorical power, intensifying the melancholic tone of the poem. Here, the bee becomes a carrier of nostalgia for the poet's homeland – a space where time has seemingly stopped. Instead of referring to the heralds of spring, the poet envisions white and stinging bees, i.e., snowflakes, which evoke sorrow and longing [17].

In the poem «З вікна»: «Лапаті, білі і колючі бджоли / Неквапно кружеляють понад ним...» [13, p. 74] (translation by A. Freyshyn-Chirovsky: The white and the stinging fat bees take to flight, / Around it they sluggishly circle and swell... [13, p. 75]). The translator enhances the image of a calm and slow-moving winter through expressive clarifications (sluggishly circle and swell). Overall, the translator reproduces the artistic imagery of the original but for minor micro-semantic shifts (fat), preserving stylistic color and semantic content. However, the introduction of the optional adjective fat narrows the semantic range of the poem, limiting its metaphorical scope.

In the poems «Спокій» (1958) and «Скорбний хоралі за стіною» (1959), V. Stus vividly illustrates his poetic fascination with the swallow: «Скорбний хоралі за стіною: / діти розплакались. / За вікном ластівки / точать вечора ультрамарин, / поспішаючи, поки дощ / землю не змочить» [12, p. 8] (translation by Y. Lassovsky: «A sorrowful chorale next door: / children are crying. / Outside the window / swallows peck at eve's ultramarine / hastily, before the rain / will wet the earth» [12, p. 9]).

The translator's insufficient attention to the culture-specific semantics of the source text in

this particular example resulted in the attenuation of the animated ethnosymbolic image of the swallows. The literal rendering (swallows peck at eve's ultramarine) sounds somewhat awkward to an English-speaking reader. It would be more appropriate, in our view, to apply pragmatic adaptation and concretization, for instance: at the blue evening sky.

Another example may be cited: *«Люблю дозвілля степове безкрає, / і запах чебрецю, і жайворонів крик, / могутні м'язи рідної землі, / і ластівок тривогу»* [12, p. 122] (Y. Lassovsky's translation: «I love the boundless freedom of the steppes, / the mighty muscles of my native land, / the scent of thyme, the skylarks' call aloft, / the swallows' fretfulness» [12, p. 123]).

In this translation, we observe a microsemantic shift (the swallows' fretfulness), which distances the target reader from the ethnosymbolic meaning of the original. For the Ukrainian reader, it is clear that the anxiety of the swallows is connected to a change in weather rather than to the emotional tension or restlessness, as implied by the English version.

Equally interesting from the perspective of ethnosymbolic transfer is the image of a magpie. Let us analyze the adequacy of rendering the ethnosymbolic semantics of the old and wise magpies in the following fragment from V. Stus's poem «Я знаю – ми будемо ще не раз бродити з тобою» (1962): *Я знаю / ми будемо ще не раз / бродити з тобою, / слухати ліс притихлий, / старих і мудрих сорок* [12, p. 18] (Y. Lassovsky's translation: «I know / we'll roam together, time and time again, / we'll listen to the forest hushed, the magpies, old and wise» [12, p. 19]). In the Ukrainian folklore, a magpie is traditionally viewed as a harbinger of misfortune. According to the ancient beliefs, «this bird was created by the devil and serves him as a horse; therefore, a magpie that has been shot is tied to the ceiling in stables to prevent the evil spirit from riding horses and instead make it cling to the magpie» [14, p. 149]. It should be noted that in the Ukrainian mythological tradition, the magpie carries an even more nuanced meaning: «It brings news on its long tail, and when it chatters on or near a house, it means that the host will either be scolded or receive some message».

In the Western symbolic culture, however, a magpie is associated with greed, idle chatter, and witchcraft. It is often interpreted as a messenger of fate, sometimes invisible [15, p. 265].

A similar symbolic dimension is found in the European art, for instance in Claude Monet's «The Magpie», Pieter Bruegel the Elder's «The Magpie on the Gallows», and Hieronymus Bosch's «The Prodigal Son», all of them reflecting the magpie's ambivalent status within the European symbolic worldview. By contrast, Chinese linguocultural tradition endows the magpie (hsi ch'iao) with positive connotations, associating it with joy and festivity. A magpie's nest on a plum tree – a symbol of spring – represents the happy arrival of spring or joyful youth, while a pair of magpies (shuang hsi), literally “double happiness,” symbolizes marital bliss [16]. To render the ethnosymbolism of old and wise magpies adequately, Y. Lassovsky employs the lexical equivalent the magpies, old and wise, which successfully conveys the cultural markedness and symbolic connotations of the original image.

**Conclusions.** This study demonstrates that ethnosymbols in the poetry of the Ukrainian Sixtiers act as key artistic elements and complex interdisciplinary categories, combining linguistic, cultural, literary, and philosophical dimensions. Their ethnospecificity makes translation challenging, as symbols appeal to the deep layers of national culture, collective memory, and archetypes. Simultaneously, this complexity opens the possibility for creative translational solutions and “sense accretion” in the process of transferring images to another cultural context.

The Ukrainian diaspora translators served as true cultural mediators, balancing the preservation of symbols' authenticity with accessibility for an English-speaking audience. Their activity relied on a balance between the literal reproduction of ethnocultural markers and pragmatic adaptation, avoiding the reduction of Ukrainian poetics to an exotic level.

Finally, the translations universalize Ukrainian ethnosymbols: swallow, steppe, forest, and bee continue to function as national markers while gaining new connotations in a global cultural context. This confirms that a symbol can remain ethnocentric while transcending cultural boundaries.

Thus, translations of the Ukrainian Sixtiers by the diaspora representatives not only popularized the national literature abroad but also contributed to forming an alternative cultural discourse. The Ukrainian poetry emerged as both unique and universal, capable of engaging in an equal dialogue with the world literatures and resisting imperial narratives.

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**Романчук А. А. ЕТНОСИМВОЛІКА В ПОЕЗІЇ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ШІСТДЕСЯТНИКІВ В АНГЛОМОВНИХ ПЕРЕКЛАДАХ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ДІАСПОРНИХ ПЕРЕКЛАДАЧІВ**

Статтю присвячено особливостям відтворення етносимволіки поезії українських шістдесятиників англійською мовою представниками української діаспори. Символіка природи, історичні ремінісценції, християнські мотиви та фольклорні коди у творчості поетів-шістдесятиників виступають маркерами національної ідентичності, що в умовах радянського тоталітаризму набували додаткового значення як знаки опору та культурного самозахисту.

По-перше, символ завжди залишається етноцентричним і відображає культурний код народу, що ускладнює його відтворення в іншій мовній системі. По-друге, рівень «перекладності» символів залежить від ступеня близькості культур: чим активніші контакти між народами, тим більше шансів на адекватне розуміння й інтерпретацію символічних образів. У такому контексті перекладач виступає не лише посередником між мовами, а й культурним медіатором, який приймає рішення про калькування, адаптацію або компенсацію.

Важливою є думка про те, що переклад етносимволіки завжди спричиняє «прироцненню смислів» (Т. Германс), оскільки текст у перекладі починає функціонувати в новому культурному середовищі. Це особливо актуально для поезії шістдесятиників, у якій символи «калина», «тополя», «стен», «хата» чи «Дніпро» поєднують поетичне, філософське й національне значення. В англomовних інтерпретаціях українських діаспорних перекладачів ці образи не редукуються до екзотики, а набувають універсальності через поетичну образність і культурну контекстуалізацію.

У перекладах діаспорних перекладачів (зокрема представників США та Канади) ці образи відтворювалися з урахуванням подвійної мети: з одного боку, донести до західного читача глибину символіку української культури, з іншого – зробити тексти зрозумілими для іномовної аудиторії. Відсутність цензурних обмежень дозволяла перекладачам діяти вільніше, уникати ідеологічних спотворень і представляти українську літературу як органічну частину світового культурного процесу. Їхні переклади не лише популяризували українську поезію за межами України, а й створювали

альтернативний дискурс, у якому українська культура поставала самодостатньою, відкритою до діалогу та здатною протистояти імперським наративам.

У статті простежено перекладацькі стратегії діаспорних авторів: від буквального збереження етнокультурних маркерів до часткової адаптації для англомовного читача. Показано, що ключовим завданням залишалося збереження автентичності символів і водночас їхнє «перекодування» у глобальному культурному просторі. Зроблено висновок про унікальну роль діаспорних перекладачів як культурних посередників, що зберігали й транслиували національні коди української поезії, інтегруючи їх у світовий літературний контекст.

**Ключові слова:** етносимволіка, етносимвол, українські шістдесятники, англомовний переклад, українська діаспора, культурна ідентичність, національний код, перекладацькі стратегії.

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