

**BETWEEN HOMELAND AND HOSTLAND: DIASPORIC AGENCY
IN UKRAINIAN POSTCOLONIAL TRANSLATION****МІЖ РІДНИМ КРАЄМ І ЧУЖИНОЮ: ДІАСПОРНА АГЕНТИВНІСТЬ
В УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ ПОСТКОЛОНІАЛЬНОМУ ПЕРЕКЛАДІ****Romanchuk A.A.,***orcid.org/0009-0004-2895-6693**PhD in Philology,**Head of the External Relations Department**Prosecutor's Training Center of Ukraine*

This article explores the unique role of the Ukrainian diaspora in shaping postcolonial translation practices that mediate between the cultural frameworks of the homeland (Ukraine) and the hostland (primarily North America and Western Europe). The study draws upon postcolonial theory, translation studies, and diaspora studies to conceptualize the translator's position as a hybrid and liminal agent who operates within what Homi Bhabha terms the "third space" of enunciation. This space allows for the re-articulation of cultural identity through the act of translation, challenging both the imperial legacy imposed on Ukrainian language and literature and the hegemonic cultural norms of the hostland. Through analysis of selected literary and theoretical translations produced by members of the Ukrainian diaspora, the article argues that diasporic translators actively contribute to the decolonization of Ukrainian cultural discourse. They do so by resisting the Russocentric linguistic paradigm inherited from the Soviet period and by introducing alternative epistemologies that reflect a plurality of Ukrainian identities. The article further investigates how diasporic translators negotiate cultural authority and authenticity, often oscillating between positions of marginality and influence within both host and home cultures. These translators are not merely mediators of text but also creators of meaning, reconfiguring political and aesthetic boundaries through their work. The discussion highlights key case studies, including translations of canonical Ukrainian texts into English and vice versa, which illustrate how diasporic agency can enable the circulation of Ukrainian voices beyond national borders. Special attention is given to the tensions between fidelity to source texts and the necessity of cultural reinterpretation in diasporic contexts. Ultimately, the article suggests that diasporic translators function as postcolonial agents who destabilize essentialist narratives and open up translational spaces for hybridized cultural production. This research contributes to broader debates in translation and postcolonial studies, particularly in the context of small or stateless nations struggling with linguistic erasure and cultural marginalization. By foregrounding the agency of diasporic translators, the study calls for a more nuanced understanding of postcolonial translation as both a political and poetic act.

Key words: Ukrainian diaspora, postcolonial translation, third space, cultural hybridity, translational agency, language decolonization.

Ця стаття досліджує унікальну роль української діаспори у формуванні постколоніальних перекладацьких практик, що виконують посередництво між культурним контекстом батьківщини (України) та країни перебування перекладців (насамперед Північної Америки та Західної Європи). Дослідження спирається на постколоніальну теорію, перекладознавство та діаспорознавство, щоб концептуалізувати позицію перекладача як гібридного та лімінального агента, який діє в межах того, що Homi Bhabha називає «третім простором» висловлювання. Цей простір дозволяє переосмислити культурну ідентичність через акт перекладу, кидаючи виклик як імперській спадщині, нав'язаній українській мові та літературі, так і гегемонним культурним нормам країни перебування. Шляхом аналізу перекладів літературних творів та теоретичних джерел, виконаних представниками української діаспори, у статті стверджується, що діаспорні перекладачі активно сприяють деколонізації українського культурного дискурсу. Вони роблять це, чинячи опір російськеоцентричній лінгвістичній парадигмі, успадкованій від радянського періоду, та запроваджуючи альтернативні епістемології, що відображають множинність українських ідентичностей. У статті далі досліджується, як діаспорні перекладачі утверджують культурний авторитет та автентичність, часто коливаючись між позиціями маргінальності та впливу як у приймаючій, так і в рідній культурі. Ці перекладачі є не просто посередниками тексту, а й творцями значень, переосмислюючи політичні та естетичні кордони через свою працю. Обговорення висвітлює ключові тематичні дослідження, включаючи переклади канонічних українських текстів з та на англійську, які ілюструють, як діаспорна діяльність може посилити вплив української культури за межами національних кордонів. Особлива увага приділяється суперечностям між вірністю джерельним текстам та необхідністю культурного переосмислення в діаспорних контекстах. Зрештою, стаття припускає, що діаспорні перекладачі функціонують як постколоніальні агенти, які дестабілізують есенціалістські наративи та відкривають перекладацькі простори для гібридизованого культурного продукту. Це дослідження сприяє ширшим дебатам у перекладацьких та постколоніальних дослідженнях, особливо в контексті малих або бездержавних народів, які борються з мовним винищенням та культурною маргіналізацією. Виводячи на перший план діяльність діаспорних перекладців, дослідження закликає до ширшого розуміння постколоніального перекладу як політичного та поетичного акту.

Ключові слова: українська діаспора, постколоніальний переклад, третій простір, культурна гібридність, перекладацька агентивність, деколонізація мови.

Problem statement. The legacy of colonial domination has profoundly shaped the trajectories of Ukrainian literature and its translation. Long marginalized within imperial frameworks—first under the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union—Ukrainian cultural production has often been filtered through lenses that either silenced, exoticized, or subordinated Ukrainian voices. In this context, translation emerges not merely as a linguistic act but as a deeply political and ideological practice.

While postcolonial translation studies have explored the role of translation in resisting or perpetuating colonial narratives, the specific case of Ukrainian literary translation—especially as mediated by diasporic translators—remains underexplored. Diasporic Ukrainian translators, operating between the "homeland" of cultural origin and the "hostland" of political and linguistic belonging, often occupy a hybrid positionality that shapes their translational choices and agency. Their work not only reflects a sense of rootedness in Ukrainian cultural identity but also responds to the demands of new sociopolitical environments, readerships, and discursive regimes.

This tension—between fidelity to a suppressed national culture and the adaptive strategies required in diasporic contexts—raises critical questions: How do diasporic Ukrainian translators assert agency within postcolonial structures? To what extent does their positionality inform the politics of representation in translation? And how does their work contribute to or complicate narratives of decolonization in literature?

By investigating the role of the Ukrainian diaspora in literary translation, this study aims to foreground the translator not merely as a conduit of meaning, but as a cultural actor embedded in complex networks of memory, identity, and power. The problem thus lies at the intersection of postcolonial theory, translation studies, and diasporic cultural production, where the act of translation becomes a site of negotiation between loss and recovery, subjugation and sovereignty.

Review of Recent Studies and Publications.

The intersection of postcolonial translation theory, Ukrainian literary translation, and diasporic agency has become an increasingly fertile ground for scholarly inquiry, particularly in light of Ukraine's ongoing efforts to assert cultural sovereignty and redefine national identity in the wake of imperial subjugation. While global postcolonial translation studies have addressed broader themes of linguistic resistance, hybridity, and cultural mediation, the specific experience of Ukrainian translation—especially as practiced by diasporic translators—has only recently begun to receive sustained academic attention.

Recent Ukrainian and international scholarship has emphasized the role of the Ukrainian diaspora as a pivotal agent in cultural preservation and literary mediation. Maria Shymchyshyn, for instance, offers a close examination of English translations of Lesia Ukrainka's works produced by Ukrainian communities in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada [1, c. 45–60]. Her analysis demonstrates how these translations functioned not only as linguistic acts but also as politically charged interventions aimed at countering Soviet narratives and reaffirming Ukrainian cultural identity in exile. Maria Shymchyshyn underscores the importance of diasporic translators as cultural ambassadors and ideological actors whose efforts maintained literary continuity beyond national borders.

Nataliia Rudnytska extends this perspective through her study of the Ukrainian diaspora in Brazil [2, c. 81–93]. Focusing on lesser-known translators such as Vira Selianska, she emphasizes the ways in which translation served both as a personal expression of national belonging and as a form of soft resistance to cultural assimilation in the host country. Through a socio-historical lens, Nataliia Rudnytska reveals the intricate relationship between translation and identity formation, highlighting how diasporic translators have historically navigated the tension between rootedness in the homeland and adaptation to hostland environments.

Broader theoretical engagement with postcolonial frameworks in the Ukrainian context has also emerged in the works of scholars such as Svitlana Troian, who maps out the Ukrainian diaspora's adoption of postcolonial discourse [3, c. 102–106]. She focuses on key intellectual figures—such as Marko Pavlyshyn, Myroslav Shkandrij, George Grabowicz, and Serhii Plokhyy—who have contributed to the articulation of Ukrainian literature and history through the prism of postcolonial resistance. Svitlana Troian's work illustrates how postcolonial theory has been adapted to address Ukraine's unique geopolitical position as a formerly colonized yet non-Westernized entity.

The thematic of diasporic cultural exchange is further elaborated in a special issue of *Ukraina Moderna*, which explores Ukrainian literary culture within the Australian diaspora from 1949 to 1991 [4, c. 87–109]. These studies underscore the importance of transnational networks, institutional support, and intergenerational memory in shaping literary production and translation practices within diasporic communities. The issue highlights how diaspora not only preserved Ukrainian culture but also participated in its ongoing redefinition in new geopolitical and linguistic environments.

Alongside this macro-level focus, scholars have also begun to explore the micro-level experiences of individual translators and their internal negotiations of identity, agency, and voice. Iryna Borysiuk, for instance, examines the poetry of Yurii Andrukhovych through a postcolonial lens, analyzing themes of geographic dislocation, symbolic landscape, and linguistic hybridity [5, c. 44–51]. While her primary focus is on original literary production, Iryna Borysiuk's reflections on language, memory, and rootedness offer useful insights for translation studies—particularly in understanding how translators mediate between competing cultural discourses.

Similarly, Sophie Ivanka Shields investigates literary texts produced by displaced Ukrainian writers following the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 full-scale invasion [6, c. 15–20]. S.I. Shields frames these texts within a broader discourse of postcolonial identity and migration, emphasizing the dual processes of loss and reconstruction that characterize diasporic subjectivity. While not focused solely on translation, her work highlights the shifting cultural politics within which translators operate, particularly when they inhabit multiple, overlapping cultural spheres.

The role of translator agency in Ukrainian postcolonial contexts has also been theorized by Taras Shmihir, who applies postcolonial concepts such as hybridity and deterritorialization to the reception of Ukrainian philosophical texts—particularly those of Hryhorii Skovoroda [7, c. 135–146]. T. Shmihir argues that translation in postcolonial Ukraine is not only a linguistic enterprise but a mode of nation-building, and he proposes that quality in translation should be evaluated in part by its ability to express culturally embedded, hybrid identities.

Viktoriia Grivina further explores translator agency in her reflections on the Decolonial Glossary translation project [8]. Writing from a diasporic perspective, V. Grivina discusses her personal negotiation of linguistic norms, ideological frameworks, and inherited orthographic practices—challenging Soviet-imposed conventions and asserting the translator's role as a subject of cultural and epistemological resistance.

Additional studies have examined the reception of Ukrainian literature in foreign contexts, drawing attention to how translation bridges cultural understanding. For example, Oksana Paliy and Olena Pogrebnyak analyze the Czech reception of contemporary Ukrainian literature [9, c. 77–89]. Their research highlights the growing resonance of Ukrainian texts in Central Europe, suggesting that translation not only disseminates literature but also reshapes the geopolitical imagination of readers.

At an interdisciplinary level, the work of scholars such as Barbara Törnquist-Plewa and Yuliya Yurchuk situates Ukrainian memory politics within broader postcolonial frameworks [10, c. 629–645]. Their analysis of contested historical narratives and collective memory practices demonstrates how cultural identity in post-Soviet Ukraine—particularly among diasporic communities—is continually reconstructed through acts of narration, translation, and commemoration.

Finally, foundational theoretical contributions from postcolonial scholars such as Elleke Boehmer provide an essential backdrop for this growing body of research [11, c. 94–101]. E. Boehmer's conceptualization of the postcolonial subject as both hybrid and situated within dynamic transnational flows offers a useful lens through which to understand the complexities of diasporic Ukrainian translation. While not writing specifically about Ukraine, E. Boehmer's theories have been influential among Ukrainian scholars seeking to articulate the particularities of cultural mediation under post-imperial conditions.

In summary, the recent scholarly literature demonstrates a growing awareness of the complex intersections between diaspora, translation, and postcolonial identity in the Ukrainian context. These studies foreground the translator not merely as a neutral mediator, but as an active agent of cultural memory, resistance, and transformation. Nevertheless, important gaps remain—particularly in the biographical study of translators, the comparative analysis of diaspora communities across different host countries, and the close textual analysis of translated works from a postcolonial perspective. This article aims to address some of these lacunae by situating diasporic Ukrainian translation within a broader framework of cultural rootedness and translatorial agency, thereby contributing to the evolving field of postcolonial translation studies.

The aim of this study is to investigate how Ukrainian translators in the diaspora exercise agency in the context of postcolonial translation, with particular attention to the rootedness of their translational choices, their negotiation of cultural identity, and their role in mediating Ukrainian literature across linguistic and geopolitical boundaries. By examining the intersections of postcolonial theory, translation studies, and diasporic experience, this research seeks to illuminate the ways in which translation serves not only as a tool of linguistic transfer but also as an act of cultural affirmation, resistance, and reconstruction in the aftermath of imperial domination.

Main Body of the Study. Ukrainian literary translation in the diaspora presents a unique site for exam-

ining the convergence of postcolonial resistance, cultural rootedness, and translator agency. While the act of translation has often been framed as a technical or linguistic undertaking, in the case of diasporic Ukrainian translators, it acquires a broader cultural, ideological, and political significance. These translators, situated between the homeland they were forced to leave or chose to distance from, and the hostlands where they established new identities, operate within a complex matrix of memory, loss, and national aspiration.

One of the earliest and most prominent examples of diasporic agency in Ukrainian literary translation can be found in the work of Vera Rich, a British translator of Ukrainian descent. Her translation of Lesia Ukrainka's dramatic poem *The Forest Song* [12] was one of the first major attempts to render Ukrainian poetic drama into English while retaining its mythopoetic worldview. Vera Rich's work, while sometimes criticized for being too interpretive, demonstrates a translator deeply engaged with Ukrainian cultural legacy and committed to challenging the invisibility of Ukrainian literature in Anglophone contexts. Her translation approach was rooted not only in linguistic skill but also in a political desire to decolonize Western literary perception.

Another critical example is the work of Canadian-Ukrainian translator Yuri Tkacz, whose translations of Ivan Bahrianyi's *Tyholovy* (*The Hunters and the Hunted*) [13] and other anti-Soviet literary texts functioned both as cultural preservation and political testimony. Published by diaspora presses such as "Path of the Sun" and "Prairie Books," Yuri Tkacz's translations explicitly resisted Soviet censorship and worked to reclaim suppressed narratives. Here, the translator's agency is evident in the selection of texts, paratextual commentary, and contextual framing, which collectively offer resistance to imperial narratives and assert a counter-memory.

A particularly significant pattern in diasporic translation is the emphasis on rootedness—that is, the translator's affective and symbolic connection to the Ukrainian homeland, even when physically distant from it. This rootedness is often reflected in fidelity to national themes, stylistic markers, and symbolic codes embedded in the original texts. For example, the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States, especially through institutions such as the Shevchenko Scientific Society and the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in New York, supported translations that explicitly foregrounded Ukrainian historical and cultural identity. In 1975, Marta Skorupsky's translation of Taras Shevchenko's *Kobzar* was published in New York, with extensive annotations

highlighting the poet's anti-imperial messages [14]. Marta Skorupsky's choice of archaic phrasing and her prioritization of Ukrainian cultural references exemplify the translator's role not merely as mediator but as cultural steward.

These translations also exhibit signs of diasporic hybridity—the negotiation between two or more cultural codes that often results in innovative linguistic and rhetorical strategies. The hybrid position of diasporic translators allows them to engage in what Homi Bhabha has called the "third space" of enunciation, where cultural meaning is reshaped through translation [15, c. 37]. A case in point is the work of Marco Carynnyk, a Ukrainian-Canadian translator and editor who worked on rendering modernist and dissident Ukrainian poetry into English. In his translations of Vasyl Stus, for instance, M. Carynnyk preserved the intensity and philosophical depth of the original while adapting poetic form to resonate with Anglophone readers [16, c. 45–61]. His translations capture the tension between linguistic fidelity and audience accessibility, a balancing act characteristic of diasporic translation.

The translator's agency also becomes visible in their explicit paratextual interventions—introductions, footnotes, glossaries, and commentaries—which serve to situate Ukrainian texts within global discourses. Myroslav Shkandrij, a key figure in both Ukrainian diaspora scholarship and translation, provides a paradigmatic example. His translations and studies of modernist and avant-garde Ukrainian literature often include theoretical reflections on the politics of language and empire. In his anthology *Ukraine and the Empire of Russian Myth* [17], although primarily critical, Myroslav Shkandrij incorporates translated texts that undermine colonial frameworks and reposition Ukrainian literature within a postcolonial and global context.

Importantly, diasporic translators also grapple with internal tensions: between the preservation of linguistic authenticity and the need for adaptation; between fidelity to the homeland and the shaping influence of the hostland. In many cases, their translations function as acts of cultural negotiation—reframing Ukrainian literature not only for foreign readers but also for younger diaspora generations who may no longer speak the language fluently. This is particularly evident in bilingual editions published in Canada and the United States, where Ukrainian and English texts appear side by side. These editions, such as *From Three Worlds: New Writing from Ukraine* [18], act as pedagogical and cultural bridges, fostering transgenerational continuity.

Furthermore, post-2014 and especially post-2022 waves of emigration have given rise to a new gen-

eration of diasporic translators, many of whom have been displaced by war. Their work reflects a heightened awareness of both trauma and urgency in cultural transmission. While comprehensive analysis of this group remains forthcoming, early publications and digital translation initiatives suggest a shift toward activist translation practices, where translators assume visible roles in cultural diplomacy, fundraising, and the international dissemination of Ukrainian voices. For instance, the grassroots project Translators for Ukraine, initiated in 2022, features volunteer translations of contemporary Ukrainian essays, poetry, and wartime testimonies [19]. These translators, often multilingual and digitally networked, embrace translation as a tool of resistance, visibility, and humanitarian solidarity.

Taken together, these cases demonstrate that Ukrainian translators in the diaspora are not passive conduits of meaning but active cultural agents. Their work is shaped by a profound sense of responsibility, not only to the text but also to the nation, community, and future readers. Their translational choices are embedded in historical memory, political consciousness, and identity negotiation. As such, diasporic Ukrainian translation must be understood as a form of postcolonial authorship—a rewriting of the cultural self through the lens of exile, longing, and resilience.

Conclusions. This study has explored the role of Ukrainian diasporic translators within the broader framework of postcolonial translation theory, highlighting how translation functions as a form of cultural agency, identity preservation, and political resistance. Positioned between the homeland and the hostland, these translators negotiate complex cultural, linguistic, and ideological terrains, producing works that are both deeply rooted in Ukrainian tradition and attuned to global audiences.

The analysis reveals that diasporic translators—such as Vera Rich, Yuri Tkacz, Marta Skorupsky, Marco Carynnyk, and Myroslav Shkandrij—do

not simply transfer meaning from one language to another. Rather, they participate in a dynamic process of cultural mediation, actively shaping how Ukrainian literature is perceived, understood, and situated within global literary and political contexts. Their translational decisions often reflect a deep connection to Ukrainian historical memory, a commitment to countering imperial narratives, and a desire to maintain continuity across generations of the diaspora.

Furthermore, the concept of rootedness emerges as a key element in diasporic translation. Despite physical displacement, many translators maintain symbolic, affective, and ideological ties to Ukraine, which influence their textual choices and paratextual strategies. These translations are acts of cultural resistance that confront colonial erasure and promote a decolonial understanding of Ukrainian identity.

In addition, the study has shown that translator agency is particularly visible in moments of crisis and transition. The recent wave of wartime translation initiatives following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 demonstrates how translators continue to serve as cultural ambassadors, amplifying Ukrainian voices and mobilizing international support through language. This new generation of diasporic translators builds upon a legacy of resilience, while also adapting to digital platforms, activist networks, and global readerships.

In conclusion, Ukrainian diasporic translation should be recognized not only as a linguistic practice but as a vital cultural and political act. It bridges geographical and historical divides, challenges dominant imperial discourses, and contributes to the re-articulation of national identity in postcolonial and transnational contexts. Future research should continue to examine the biographical trajectories of individual translators, the reception of translated works, and the evolving strategies of cultural mediation in the Ukrainian diaspora.

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