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THE CULTURAL MISSION OF UKRAINIAN DIASPORIC TRANSLATORS IN THE PARADIGM OF CULTURAL TRANSLATION

КУЛЬТУРНА МІСІЯ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ДІАСПОРНИХ ПЕРЕКЛАДАЧІВ У ПАРАДИГМІ КУЛЬТУРНОГО ПЕРЕКЛАДУ

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This article examines the cultural mission of Ukrainian diasporic translators through the paradigm of cultural translation, realized not simply as a linguistic shift, but over and above, as a form of cultural mediation and preservation of cultural memory. Using the professional activity of Nadiia Surovtsova (Surovtseva) (1896–1985) as a case study, the article explores the relationship between translation, migration, cultural identity, and historical experience. N. Surovtsova's professional activity, marked by forced migration, journalism, translation, and intellectual activity, illustrates how translation may acquire functions extending beyond the reproduction of literary texts. Her work demonstrates the role of the translator as a cultural agent situated between different cultural spaces and involved in preserving, interpreting, and transmitting culturally significant meanings.

Drawing on the concept of cultural translation and approaches to translation as cultural mediation, the article argues that diasporic translation constitutes a historically conditioned cultural practice in which linguistic mediation intersects with cultural memory, national identity, and the representation of Ukrainian culture. In this context, the cultural mission of the diasporic translator involves not only introducing Ukrainian texts to foreign readers but also sustaining cultural continuity, preserving symbolic connections with the homeland, and contributing to the international visibility of Ukrainian cultural heritage. The case of N. Surovtseva demonstrates how translation can function as a means of maintaining cultural agency under conditions of displacement and political transformation. The study thus contributes to a broader understanding of Ukrainian diasporic translation as a cultural practice that facilitates intercultural dialogue and participates in the reconstruction of Ukrainian identity beyond national borders.

Key words: Ukrainian diaspora, cultural translation, cultural mediation, cultural memory, translator's agency, Nadiia Surovtseva, Ukrainian identity.

Статтю присвячено дослідженню культурної місії українських діаспорних перекладачів у парадигмі культурного перекладу, який розглядається не лише як мовне перенесення тексту, а як форма культурної медіації та збереження культурної пам'яті. На прикладі професійної діяльності Надії Суровцової (Суровцевої) (1896–1985) розглянуто взаємозв'язок перекладу, еміграції, культурної ідентичності та історичного досвіду. Професійна діяльність Н. Суровцової, пов'язана із журналістикою, перекладом та інтелектуальною працею крізь призму вимушеного переїзду дає змогу простежити, як переклад набуває функцій, що виходять за межі відтворення художнього тексту іншою мовою. Її досвід демонструє роль перекладача як культурного агента, що перебуває на перетині різних культурних просторів і бере участь у збереженні, інтерпретації та передачі культурних смислів.

На основі концепції культурного перекладу та підходів до перекладу як культурного посередництва обґрунтовано, що діаспорний переклад є історично зумовленою культурною практикою, у якій мовна медіація поєднується з проблемами культурної пам'яті, національної ідентичності та репрезентації української культури. Культурна місія діаспорного перекладача полягає не лише в представленні українських текстів іншомовному читачеві, а й у підтриманні культурної тяглості, збереженні символічного зв'язку з батьківщиною та забезпеченні міжнародної видимості української культурної спадщини. Приклад Н. Суровцової засвідчує, що переклад може функціонувати як засіб збереження культурної суб'єктності в умовах переміщення та політичних трансформацій. Дослідження розширює розуміння українського діаспорного перекладу як культуротворчої практики, що сприяє міжкультурному діалогу та бере участь у формуванні й відтворенні української ідентичності за межами національного простору.

Ключові слова: українська діаспора, культурний переклад, культурна медіація, культурна пам'ять, перекладацька суб'єктність, Надія Суровцова, українська ідентичність.

Statement of the Problem. Viewed from the perspective of the cultural translation issues, the analysis in this article adds new insights to the existing research on a niche academic area: Ukrainian diasporic translation, which for a long tome considered to be one of the most dynamic forms of cultural resistance. From the purges in the 1920–1930s and the civil rights movement in the 1960s to the Revolution of Dignity and russia`s invasion and illegally occupation of Ukrainian territories in 2010s, efforts of Ukrainian diasporic translators have remained intrinsically connected with the preservation of a distinct national identity focused on national culture, historical memory, and challenged colonial narratives.

The data for this scientific research were obtained from Ukrainian into English translations by Myrosia Stefaniuk, Michael M. Naydan, Andrii Mariia Freyshyn-Chirovsky, Marta Bohachevska Chomiak,

Yaropolk Lassovsky, Marco Carynnyk, Orysia Liuba Prokopiv-Ferbey, Roman Orest Tatchyn, Olha Kosach-Kryvyniuk (Olesiia Zirka), Oksana Maksymchuk and many other known and unknown names. Given the limited scope of the article, we focus on one Ukrainian diasporic translator, Nadiia Surovtseva (Surovtsova) (1896–1985), whose professional activity illustrates the cultural mission of diasporic translation.

From the very beginning it should be noted that the works of the diasporic translators have many propensities in common, but one of the paramount importance is that – their translations do more than introduce Ukrainian literature to English-speaking readers; they interpret historical experience, preserve cultural memory, and negotiate meanings that emerge between source and target cultures.

This shared cultural mission naturally positions Ukrainian diasporic translation within the broader theoretical framework of cultural translation. The notion of cultural translation has become central to discussions of diaspora because it provides a conceptual framework for understanding what occurs when texts, people, identities, and cultural traditions move across national and linguistic boundaries. As scholars such as Caiwen Wang [1; 2] and Stephen Bochner [3] have argued, however, cultural translation should not be regarded simply as an extension of interlingual translation. The experiences of migration (both forced and voluntary) and intercultural contact involve processes that cannot be fully explained only through linguistic transfer. This perspective unsettle the boundaries between Ukrainian diasporic translation and cultural mediation, and, logically, shed light on the cultural mission of Ukrainian diasporic translators.

The purpose of this article is to conceptualise the cultural mission of Ukrainian diasporic translators within the paradigm of cultural translation and to demonstrate their role as cultural mediators, interpreters of historical experience, and agents of cultural memory. Rather than focusing on the textual analysis of individual translations, the study examines the broader intellectual, cultural, and historical significance of the translators' activities within the Ukrainian diaspora. The research is grounded in the **interdisciplinary framework** of translation studies, cultural translation, diaspora studies, and cultural memory studies, and employs **descriptive, comparative, historical, and interpretative methods** to analyse the cultural functions performed by Ukrainian diasporic translators in promoting Ukrainian literature and preserving national identity in transnational contexts.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. Among the most compelling contributors to the field of diasporic translation are men and women of Ukrainian origin, permanent living not in Ukraine, whose work extend beyond simple translation of Ukrainian literature. Their translating is not merely reactive, and contributes to the formation of new cultural paradigm where translator as a representative of diaspora actively negotiate cultural meanings, preserve historical experience and articulates Ukrainian identity within transnational cultural spaces. By creating conditions for meaningful intercultural dialogue while maintaining the distinctiveness of the source culture, they transform translation into a form of cultural continuity, intellectual responsibility, and even symbolic resistance.

Their work thus demonstrates that the cultural mission of the diaspora translator lies not only in representing Ukrainian literature abroad but also in ensuring the enduring visibility, intelligibility, and relevance of Ukrainian cultural heritage for successive generations of international readers.

In this perspective, translation becomes a mode of cultural knowledge production through which meanings are negotiated, identities are reconstructed, and intercultural communication is continuously redefined. As Wang succinctly observes, “cultural issues are unavoidable in intercultural communication” [1, c. 10]. This seemingly simple statement has significant implications for translation studies because it recognises culture not as an external context of communication but as its constitutive dimension. Every act of translation therefore involves engagement with culturally embedded values, historical experiences, symbolic systems, and collective memories that shape both the source and the target discourse.

One of the most comprehensive contemporary interpretations of cultural translation is proposed by Sara Maitland, who argues that cultural translation should be understood as an interpretative practice rather than merely a communicative one. She defines cultural translation as a process concerned not only with communicating meanings but also with interpreting the world itself as a collection of “source texts” open to multiple readings. As she observes, “My definition of cultural translation is therefore concerned as much with interpreting the objects of the world as “source texts” with which we each can and should engage as it is with the communication of this interpretation towards an eventual audience” [4, c. 10]. Accordingly, cultural translation encompasses a sequence of interconnected processes, including interpretation, reading across temporal and spatial distances, contextualisation within the trans-

lator's sociocultural environment, purposeful transformation of meaning, and the translator's intellectual emancipation as an active reader. Such an understanding significantly expands the role of the translator, who is no longer perceived as a neutral mediator but as a culturally situated interpreter participating in the construction of meaning.

The reconceptualisation of translation inevitably transforms the understanding of the translator's professional function. Rather than acting as a transparent linguistic intermediary, the translator assumes responsibility for negotiating cultural differences and facilitating intercultural understanding. Katan explicitly equates this function with that of a cultural mediator, arguing that "the cultural interpreter's role is the same as the cultural mediator, and touches on the role of a mediator in any field, from arbitrator to therapist" [5, c. 17]. This comparison underscores the complexity of translational mediation, suggesting that translators continuously negotiate competing systems of values, beliefs, and expectations rather than merely transferring lexical meanings. Their work requires interpretative judgement, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to reconcile divergent perspectives without erasing their differences.

A similar understanding is articulated by Archibald and Garzone, who define translation as an inherently mediatory activity extending well beyond language itself. In their words, "the translator mediates between cultures (including ideologies, moral systems and socio-political structures) seeking to overcome these incompatibilities which stand in the way of transfer of meaning" [6, c. 10]. This definition broadens the scope of translation by demonstrating that cultural mediation encompasses ideological, ethical, historical, and political dimensions. Consequently, translation cannot be regarded as a neutral transfer of information; rather, it represents an active process of negotiating symbolic differences that may otherwise obstruct communication between cultures. Such a perspective is particularly valuable for analysing literary translation, where linguistic forms are inseparable from culturally specific worldviews and collective systems of meaning.

This emphasis on the translator's agency becomes particularly relevant in diasporic contexts, where translation is inseparable from experiences of migration and cultural displacement. Salman Rushdie's well-known statement that members of the Indian diaspora are "translated men" [7, c. 17] has become one of the most frequently cited metaphors of cultural translation. Here, translation does not describe the movement of texts but the transformation of identities resulting from migration. Similarly, Stuart Hall characterises diasporic communities as "cultures of hybridity" that are "irrevocably translated" because they constantly negotiate multiple cultural affiliations and "must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak at least two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them" [8, c. 310]. These observations shift the analytical focus from translated texts to translated subjects, demonstrating that translation constitutes an existential condition of diasporic experience rather than a purely linguistic activity.

The association between diaspora and cultural translation has also been explored from broader sociocultural perspectives. Buden argue that cultural translators should not be understood exclusively as professional translators but also as individuals whose everyday lives involve continuous intercultural mediation, including migrants and local communities negotiating cultural difference [9, c. 196–198]. Nevertheless, such an expanded interpretation has generated criticism from scholars who caution against completely separating cultural translation from interlingual translation. Darryl Sterk, for example, argues that cultural translation should retain its connection with linguistic translation, maintaining that intercultural mediation necessarily involves engagement with language itself. Referring both to anthropologists and migrants, he suggests that cultural translation acquires its explanatory value precisely because it is grounded in actual translational practice rather than functioning solely as a metaphor [10, c. 3].

These discussions are particularly significant for understanding literary translation within diaspora communities. From a diasporic perspective, translation does not simply reproduce cultural difference but creates conditions for its continued development within another cultural environment. Liu Yan-shi argues that translators should not mechanically transplant cultural differences into the target language but instead enable heterogeneous cultural elements to "grow and regenerate in an exotic environment" [11, c. 228]. Consequently, foreignising translation strategies become not merely stylistic choices but deliberate forms of cultural intervention intended to preserve the visibility of the source culture within international literary circulation. Such an approach is especially relevant for diasporic translators, whose work frequently combines linguistic transfer with the preservation of historical memory and cultural distinctiveness, allowing the translated text to remain recognisably rooted in its original cultural tradition.

The relevance of this perspective becomes especially evident in the case of literatures originating from culturally peripheral traditions. Martina Ožbot observes that peripheral cultures are inherently

dependent upon translation in two complementary ways. They require translations from dominant languages to sustain the development of their own literary systems while simultaneously relying on translations into major languages to achieve international visibility because relatively few translators possess competence in peripheral languages [12, c. 36]. She further argues that the absence of translation may profoundly influence the historical development of an entire cultural community [12, c. 40]. Such observations are particularly applicable to Ukrainian literature, whose international dissemination has historically depended upon translators capable of mediating between Ukrainian and global literary systems.

The dynamics of diasporic translation become even more evident when viewed through the lens of cultural negotiation. Rather than functioning as a static transfer of meanings between languages, translation in diasporic contexts reflects an ongoing process of cultural reconstruction in which identities, memories, and symbolic systems are continuously reinterpreted. As Wang argues, diasporic culture should be understood as "an ever-constructing, never-stopping process," while its relationship with the host culture constitutes what Homi Bhabha conceptualizes as a process of "negotiation" [13, c. 14]. Within this framework, immigrant culture selectively adapts to the receiving cultural environment, creating a hybrid cultural space that remains connected to both the homeland and the host society without being identical to either. Consequently, cultural translation becomes not merely a linguistic practice but a mechanism through which diasporic identity undergoes continuous renewal and transformation. This perspective reinforces the understanding of diaspora translators as active cultural mediators who preserve collective memory while simultaneously reshaping it to ensure its intelligibility and relevance within new sociocultural contexts. Their translational choices therefore participate in the ongoing construction of transnational cultural identities, where fidelity to the source culture is balanced with meaningful dialogue across cultural boundaries.

This structural asymmetry has likewise been addressed within Descriptive Translation Studies. Gideon Toury demonstrates that translations occupying a peripheral position within the target culture tend to conform more closely to established literary norms [14, c. 271]. Paolo Di Vico extends this argument from a postcolonial perspective by observing that hegemonic cultures frequently monopolise translation flows, thereby privileging dominant cultural representations while limiting the circulation of texts originating from minority cultures. As a consequence, culturally marked texts are often domesticated in order to satisfy the expectations of Western readerships, reducing their cultural specificity [15, 90–91]. Such asymmetrical dynamics illustrate that translation is inseparable from broader relations of cultural power and symbolic inequality.

From this perspective, cultural translation should be understood as a process of negotiating cultural difference rather than eliminating it. Papastergiadis [16, c. 127] defines cultural translation as communication across boundaries, while Mary Louise Pratt similarly interprets it as the means through which people possessing different cultural histories establish meaningful forms of contact Pratt [17]. Both interpretations emphasise that translation creates communicative spaces where cultural differences remain visible rather than being dissolved through assimilation. This theoretical position directly resonates with the concepts of cultural mediation proposed by Katan [5] and Archibald and Garzone [6], reinforcing the argument that translators actively facilitate dialogue between different cultural systems rather than merely reproducing linguistic forms. Such an understanding is particularly relevant for the Ukrainian diaspora translation tradition, whose primary objective has been not the domestication of Ukrainian literature for Anglophone readers but its representation as an autonomous cultural system possessing its own historical memory, symbolic universe, and national identity. In this sense, Ukrainian diasporic translators perform not only linguistic but also cultural, historical, and ideological mediation, ensuring that translated literature functions as a vehicle of intercultural dialogue while preserving the integrity of the source culture.

Discussion. The theoretical perspectives discussed above provide an appropriate framework for understanding the distinctive role of Ukrainian diasporic translators. While the concepts of cultural translation have been developed primarily within the broader contexts of migration, hybridity, and intercultural communication, they acquire particular significance when applied to the Ukrainian diaspora and it`s transnational cultural space.

Avtar Brah's concept of diaspora space is especially relevant here, as she defines it as "the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them', are contested" [18, c. 209]. Such an understanding moves beyond the perception of diaspora as a dispersed population and instead conceptualises it as a site of continuous cultural negotiation. Within this space, Ukrainian diasporic translators perform a crucial cultural mission: they mediate between cultural systems,

preserving historical memory (often centering on the national tragedies and collective traumas), witnessing about cruelties of the political situation left behind in native country.

For many representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora, translation has also been shaped by a profound sense of victimized national consciousness and historical responsibility towards the native land that for decades influenced on Ukrainian diasporic cultural discourse. As Shymchyshyn observes, "this sense of victimization as a dominant manifestation of Ukrainian national identity has been reconsidered by those generations of Ukrainians who were born and raised on a new soil. They often tried to overcome inherited victimhood" [119, c. 161]. This observation suggests that diasporic identity has never been static but has undergone continuous transformation across generations. Nevertheless, for the earlier generations of Ukrainian diasporic translators, the experience of historical injustice and cultural displacement frequently determined both the ethical orientation of their work and the selection of texts for translation.

This sense of historical responsibility was particularly evident during the 1960s – the period of the Ukrainian Sixtiers Movement. Since the works of many Ukrainian poets and writers were subjected to censorship or prohibited from international circulation in Soviet Ukraine, diasporic translators consciously prioritised authors whose voices had been marginalised or silenced. Consequently, translations published in the United States and Canada became not merely literary achievements but acts of cultural preservation, ensuring that Ukrainian intellectual and artistic traditions continued to circulate beyond the reach of Soviet ideological control. In this context, the translators' choices reflected not only literary judgement but also a deliberate effort to preserve cultural memory and to present an alternative narrative of Ukrainian history to international audiences.

Unlike many migrant communities whose translational practices emerge predominantly from processes of cultural adaptation, Ukrainian diasporic translation has historically developed as a conscious strategy of cultural preservation and international representation. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Ukrainian diasporic translators living in the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland assumed responsibilities that frequently exceeded the conventional boundaries of literary translation. They acted as interpreters of Ukrainian history, advocates of national culture, preservers of collective memory, and mediators between Ukraine and the international community.

Such a historically conditioned cultural mission distinguishes Ukrainian diasporic translators from many other representatives of diasporic translation traditions. Their activity evolved in response not only to geographical displacement but also to prolonged periods of political oppression, censorship, colonial domination, and the systematic marginalisation of Ukrainian language and culture. Consequently, translation became an instrument through which Ukrainian cultural identity could be preserved, legitimised, and communicated beyond national borders.

The cultural mission of Ukrainian diasporic translators

Successive waves of Ukrainian emigration were driven by changing historical, political, and sociocultural circumstances, each contributing to the formation and continual reaffirmation of a distinct Ukrainian diasporic identity. Lopukh distinguishes four waves of Ukrainian emigration: the 1st wave – *economic* (1870–1914); the 2nd wave – *political-economic* (1923–1939); the 3rd wave – *political* (1946–1959); the 4th wave – *economic* (1991 – to the present) [20, c. 193].

In this article, I take an attempt to illustrate an example of Ukrainian diasporic translator who left native land because of political and economical reasons and assumed the cultural mission of preserving, interpreting, and promoting Ukrainian literature beyond national borders through translation. This vivid example of translation activity in forced emigration is Nadiia Surovtsova (Surovtseva) (1896–1985) who was the first woman in Europe to be granted the rank of Ambassador and a Doctor of Philosophy. Unfortunately, her life reflects the tragic fate of many Ukrainian intellectuals who sought to serve their homeland despite exile and political persecution. She was also a writer, lecturer, journalist, editor and political activist, who left Kyiv in 1918 because of the then-current political situation and was forced to live in Austria for more than 7 years.

In 1923, the Vienna publishing house «Chaika» brought out Charles Dickens's fairy tale «The Cricket on the Hearth» with a foreword by Ostap Hrytsai. The following year, 1924, two of Surovtsova's translations appeared: Walter Scott's novel «Ivanhoe» and Frances Eliza Burnett's novel «Little Lord Fauntleroy». Incidentally, works by F.E. Burnett were actively translated in Ukraine. For instance, Varvara Litynska translated the above-mentioned novel «Little Lord» in 1923, and in 1958 this very translation was issued in a new edition revised by another diasporic translator and editor Nataliia Kohunska.

After conducting an advocacy tour across Canada and the United States, where she witnessed the difficult

living and working conditions of the Ukrainian diaspora, she worked as a journalist and translator. Hoping to contribute to the development of Soviet Ukraine, she returned to Kharkiv in 1925, became active in literary and intellectual circles, and collaborated with prominent Ukrainian writers and periodicals.

Her aspirations were abruptly shattered by the Stalinist regime. After refusing to become an informant against her colleagues, Surovtsova was arrested in 1927, falsely accused of espionage, and sentenced to imprisonment and long years of exile, during which «she translated a great deal and studied Italian, Japanese and Turk languages» [21, c. 366]. She endured repeated interrogations, forced labor, and continuous political persecution, while her husband was executed during the Great Terror. Despite immense physical and emotional suffering, she struggled to preserve her dignity and intellectual identity throughout decades of repression.

As we may see, dwelling on the example of diasporic translator`s role, analyzed above, the concept of the cultural mission of Ukrainian diasporic translators emerges at the intersection of translation, cultural memory, and diasporic identity. While literary translation is conventionally associated with the transmission of texts across languages, the Ukrainian diasporic experience demonstrates that translation may simultaneously function as a mechanism of cultural preservation, historical continuity, and national representation. For Ukrainian communities living outside their homeland, particularly during periods when Ukrainian language, literature, and historical narratives were systematically suppressed, translation became one of the principal means through which cultural identity could be maintained and communicated internationally.

Among the most compelling contributors to this tradition are translators of Ukrainian origin permanently residing outside Ukraine, whose intellectual and cultural activities have significantly influenced the international reception of Ukrainian literature.

Conclusions. Viewed from the perspective of cultural translation, these activities demonstrate that Ukrainian diasporic translators should be understood not simply as linguistic professionals but as cultural agents whose work actively shapes the circulation of meanings between cultures. They interpret historical experience, negotiate cultural values, construct new frameworks for understanding Ukrainian literature, and create conditions under which the source culture remains recognisable without becoming inaccessible to foreign readers. Their agency resides not only in individual translational decisions but also in their ability to determine which voices, histories, and cultural narratives become internationally visible.

Their translations function simultaneously as literary achievements, cultural documents, and acts of intellectual responsibility, illustrating that translation constitutes one of the most enduring forms through which a nation preserves its cultural continuity while participating in global cultural exchange.

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