

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF MYROSLAVA STEFANIUKIN THE UKRAINIAN DIASPORIC TRANSLATION SCHOOL

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The article examines the creative activity of Myroslava (Myrosia) Stefaniuk, one of the leading representatives of the Ukrainian diasporic school of translation, who for more than four decades has been actively engaged in promoting Ukrainian poetry in the English-speaking world. The author analyzes M. Stefaniuk's life and professional trajectory, including her educational, civic, and human rights activities, as well as her translation work. Special attention is paid to her contribution to the representation of Ukrainian culture in the context of emigration and to the distinctive features of her translation style.

M. Stefaniuk's translations encompass works by several generations of Ukrainian poets: from dissidents to contemporary authors. Her work serves as a cultural bridge between Ukraine and the West, fostering a deeper understanding of Ukrainian literary traditions. Within the broader framework of the humanities, translation is considered here as a form of cultural diplomacy, preservation of identity, and intellectual resistance. The study highlights the unique combination of translational mastery and civic engagement embodied in Myrosia Stefaniuk, which renders her an exceptional figure in the history of Ukrainian translation. The article also traces the interconnection between her personal experience of emigration and diasporic life, and the depth of translational insight characteristic of a bearer of two cultural traditions.

Particular attention is devoted to the limits of translational interpretation of ethnosymbolism in the Ukrainian poetic originals and to the set of translational strategies employed by Myrosia Stefaniuk, which shape her distinctive style.

The material may be of interest to scholars in translation studies, cultural studies, diaspora studies, and contemporary Ukrainian literature.

Key words: poetic translation; Ukrainian diaspora; diasporic translator; émigré literature; women's translation; translatorial style.

Романчук Анастасія. Переосмислення ролі Мирослави Стефанюк в українській діаспорній школі перекладу

У статті розглядається творча діяльність Мирослави (Миросі) Стефанюк – однієї з провідних представниць української діаспорної перекладацької школи, яка протягом чотирьох десятиліть здійснює активну роботу з популяризації української поезії в англomовному світі. Авторка статті аналізує життєвий і професійний шлях М. Стефанюк, зокрема її освітню, громадську та правозахисну діяльність, а також перекладацький доробок. Акцентовано увагу на її внеску в репрезентацію української культури в умовах еміграції, а також на особливостях її перекладацького стилю.

Переклади М. Стефанюк охоплюють твори представників кількох поколінь українських поетів – від дисидентів до сучасних авторів. Її робота є прикладом культурного мосту між Україною та західним світом, сприяючи ширшому розумінню української літературної традиції. У контексті загальної гуманітарної стратегії переклад розглядається як форма культурної дипломатії, збереження ідентичності та інтелектуального спротиву. Дослідження підкреслює унікальне поєднання перекладацької майстерності та громадянської активності в постаті М. Стефанюк, що робить її винятковою в історії українського перекладу. Також простежується взаємозв'язок між особистим досвідом еміграції, діаспорного життя та глибиною перекладацького розуміння, притаманного М. Стефанюк як носійці двох культурних традицій.

Особливу увагу у статті приділено межам перекладацької інтерпретації етносимволіки українських поетичних першотворів та арсеналу перекладацьких рішень Миросі Стефанюк, які формують її унікальний перекладацький стиль.

Матеріал може становити інтерес для дослідників перекладознавства, культурології, діаспорних студій та сучасної української літератури.

Ключові слова: поетичний переклад, українська діаспора; діаспорний перекладач, еміграційна література; жіноче перекладацтво; стиль перекладача.

Introduction. The concept of cultural translation has increasingly been employed to illuminate the ways in which diasporic women act as mediators between cultures, negotiating both linguistic and symbolic boundaries. Women in diaspora often assume the role of cultural translators not only in the literal sense of rendering texts, but also in the broader sense of transmitting traditions, values, and collective memories across linguistic and geographical divides. As P. Levitt and N. Jaworsky argue, «researchers considered migration a means of empowerment, enabling women to play stronger roles and fostering new cultural dynamics» [1, p. 135]. From this perspective, women translators in the Ukrainian diaspora can be seen as agents of cultural innovation, whose translational practices are deeply intertwined with processes of empowerment and the reconfiguration of identity in migratory contexts.

The interrelation between migration, language, and identity has been examined from multiple perspectives. As Y. Yildiz observes, «the unsettling disjuncture between ‘language’ and ‘ethnicity’ that such speakers expose is often warded off by denying nativity to them while claiming it for others on the basis of perceived congruence between the categories ... these language patterns mark the aftermath of migration» [2, p. 170]. This argument underscores how linguistic belonging is contested and renegotiated in the post-migration context. A similar concern is articulated by Heather Robinson, who emphasizes that «for diasporic people, making a home in the new places often relies on holding onto aspects of this distant, mythic home, creating counternarratives ... while negotiating engagement with the dominant culture and language» [3, p. 6].

Furthermore, since «the languages of immigrant communities are nonetheless imaginatively associated with specific land bases ... if the people move, then the language also moves and changes, sometimes being nurtured and cultivated, and sometimes being let go or altered beyond recognition» [3, p. 7], it becomes evident

that language both reflects and constitutes the dynamics of displacement. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that migration does not merely dislocate individuals geographically but also reshapes the symbolic nexus of language, ethnicity, and cultural identity, with translation operating as both a means of adaptation and a reminder of persistent asymmetries of power.

Within the field of Translation Studies, such dynamics acquire particular resonance in the work of diasporic women translators, whose dual position as both cultural mediators and members of marginalized communities amplifies the gendered dimension of linguistic negotiation. As R. Fairus and A. Fauzi note, «women try to translate themselves into the men’s language and immigrants also struggle to translate their past experiences into the present time ... marginalized groups use translation as a tool to include themselves in dominant groups’ culture and language» [4, p. 277]. This observation highlights how translation, far from being a neutral linguistic activity, becomes a site where women in diaspora articulate their agency, resist cultural erasure, and inscribe alternative narratives of belonging. In this sense, the contribution of women translators from the Ukrainian diaspora demonstrates how gendered experiences of displacement intersect with the politics of language, positioning translation as both a practice of survival and a mode of cultural innovation.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in the intersections of migration, gender, and translation, the figures and translation contributions of many women translators from the Ukrainian diaspora remain largely unexamined. At present, there exist only a few Translation Studies articles, devoted to the Ukrainian diasporic translators. Among them is work of N. Rudnytska [5], who examines literary translations by representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora in Brazil since WWII, providing valuable insights into the cultural role of translation in a specific migratory context. Similarly, M. Vardanian [6] addresses the issue of translating children’s books from the Ukrainian diaspora, thereby drawing atten-

tion to an understudied field where questions of language, identity, and cultural transmission intersect.

These pioneering studies, though limited in number, underscore the urgent need for a more systematic scholarly engagement with the contributions of Ukrainian diasporic translators, whose work has often been marginalized within both national literary histories and the broader field of Translation Studies, resulting in a significant gap in the critical understanding of how diasporic women have mediated the Ukrainian culture for international audiences. This absence not only obscures the diversity of translational strategies employed by these women but also limits our grasp of the ways in which gendered experiences of displacement inform their approach to the language and cultural transfer.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the figure of the translator Myrosia Stefaniuk and her translatorial output through the prism of dominant features of her translational style. By focusing on M. Stefaniuk's contributions, we aim to shed light on the creative strategies employed by a representative of the Ukrainian diaspora, thereby addressing the broader lacuna concerning the role of women translators in shaping the reception of Ukrainian literature abroad.

Results and discussion. Myrosia Stefaniuk is widely recognized as a leading figure in the Ukrainian diasporic school of translation. Her work in promoting the Ukrainian poetry among the English-speaking audiences spans over four decades, encompassing both creative and scholarly endeavors. This study offers a comprehensive portrait of M. Stefaniuk, whose contributions extend beyond translation to include civic, literary, and educational engagement. Particular attention is given to her translational treatment of ethnosymbolism in the Ukrainian poetry.

Diasporic men and women engage with cultural values and maintain connections to the homeland in distinct ways, thereby supporting community activities through diverse roles [7, p. 271]. Among women translators, a notable trend is the simultaneous enactment of multiple social functions, as cultural mediators, educators, and community activists. M. Stefaniuk exemplifies this multidimensional role, combining her work as a lecturer in political geography, a researcher of the Ukrainian immigration in Michigan, and a creative practitioner in poetry and translation. This pattern reflects a

broader phenomenon: many Ukrainian diasporic women, navigating between cultures, preserve their national identity while transmitting symbolic meanings, including archetypes and ethnocultural motifs – into new linguistic and cultural contexts.

Personal interview with M. Stefaniuk has provided insights into her private life and generational experiences. With her consent, this information is presented here for the first time.

Born in Zhydachiv, Ukraine, in 1943, M. Stefaniuk left Ukraine at the age of one. Her family initially resided in a displaced persons camp near Landeck, Austria, before settling in the United States, first in New York, then in Detroit. Immersed in the Ukrainian community, she actively participated in «the Plast», «the Ridna Shkola» (Ukrainian Saturday School), a dance ensemble, a choir, and a literary group. M. Stefaniuk earned a bachelor's degree in literature and geology, followed by a master's degree in political geography, focusing on Ukrainian immigration in Michigan. She taught at Wayne State University, contributed to the Ukrainian Saturday School, and participated extensively in the community and cultural initiatives, «including teaching rhetoric to children and adults» [8, p. 854].

During the 1960s and 1970s, amid the arrests of Ukrainian dissidents, M. Stefaniuk engaged actively in the human rights movement. She joined the Committee in Defense of the Persecuted in Ukraine (Detroit), established in 1972 by educator and activist Vira Andrushkiv.

In 1976, she co-founded the Committee for the Helsinki Guarantees for Ukraine in Washington (9, p. 319). She represented the Smoloskyp publishing house at international events, including the UN World Conference in Copenhagen, serving as translator for Nina Strokata-Karavanska, preparing press releases, and translating the Ukrainian poetry and prose for human rights forums.

M. Stefaniuk translated from Ukrainian into English the poetry of Mykola Horbal, Mykola Vorobiov, Vasyl Holoborodko, Ivan Malkovych, Natalka Bilotserkivets, Raisa Lysyha, Tadei Karabovych, among others, published in collections and anthologies including «Wild Dog Rose Moon» [10], «From Three Worlds» [11], «The White Chalk of Days» [12], «A Hundred Years of Youth» [8], «Shifting Borders» [13], and «Details of an Hourglass» [14]. Her work stands as an important bridge between Ukrain-

ian literary heritage and the English-speaking world. She is also author of the following books: «Ukrainians of Detroit» (1979) [15], «At the Edge of Mirror Lake» (1999) [16] and «Dibrova Diary» (2018) [17].

A few vivid examples of M. Stefaniuk translator style through the prism of ethnic and archetypal symbolism rendering based on Vasyl Holoborodko and Mykola Vorobiov poetry are worth examining. V. Holoborodko's poetry is deeply rooted in folk imagery, mythopoetic thinking, and archetypal symbolism, where nature is imbued with sacred meaning and ordinary objects are transformed into cultural signs. M. Stefaniuk, in her English versions, faces the challenging task of transmitting this culturally saturated symbolism into a linguistic environment that lacks the same ethnopoetic resonance.

Let's analyze the first example, «На прощання подарую співучого листка».

На прощання подарую співучого листка
А ти думай що то пташка
Яка живе на самому вершечку дерева
І прив'яжи до бильця за ніжку ниточкою
щоб співав тобі перед сном і не втік
Крихтами його не годуй
але я навчу тебе його відв'язати
коли він співати перестане [18, p. 233]

Going, I leave you a singing leaf
pretend its a bird
who lives in a tree top
tie it to stalk with thread
so it cant escape but sings you to sleep
I caught it for you
dont feed it crumbs
I'll teach you to untie it
when it stops singing [8, p. 470].

In the poem “На прощання подарую співучого листка” [“Going, I leave you a singing leaf”], V. Holoborodko creates a delicate symbolic gesture, where the “singing leaf” becomes an archetypal gift of farewell. The leaf here functions not merely as a fragment of nature but as a stand-in for the bird, the traditional Slavic symbol of soul, freedom, and continuity of life. M. Stefaniuk renders this image as “a singing leaf / pretend it's a bird”. While the lexical choice is faithful, the conditional “pretend” somewhat diminishes the mystical aura of metamorphosis present in the Ukrainian text. In the

original, the poetic voice suggests an immediate equivalence – *думай що то пташка* – which invokes a childlike faith in the magical transfiguration of the matter. The translator, however, mediates the process through the pragmatic act of pretending, which aligns the image more closely with the Western rationalist modes of perception.

The subsequent lines – “*І прив'яжи до бильця за ніжку ниточкою / щоб співав тобі перед сном і не втік*” – carry the folk undertones of taming wild nature for the sake of intimacy and protection. M. Stefaniuk translates them in the following way: “*tie it to stalk with thread / so it can't escape but sings you to sleep.*” The lexical register here preserves the domestic tenderness but simultaneously introduces a pragmatic logic – control and utility – that subtly shifts the tone. What in V. Holoborodko is a magical folk ritual resembles, in English, an act of pragmatic domestication.

На розі тієї вулиці
виросло дерево року
і вкрилося листям годин
всі чекали щоб прилетіла пташка
і звила на тому дереві гніздо
Всі чекали аби переконатися
що це дерево не мертве дерево
Але коли заходиш до годинникаря
поруч
то бачиш що всі годинники спинилися
і чутно як з циферблатів
сиплеться пісок годин
Тепер усі знали
то мертве дерево [18, p. 251]
On the corner of that street
Grew the tree of the year
And covered itself with leaves of hours
Everyone waited for a bird to come
And weave a nest up in that tree
Everyone waited to be convinced
That this was not a dead tree
But when you go to the clockmaker's shop
next door
And hear the sand of hours
Pour from their faces
Now everyone knows
That tree is dead [8, p. 470].

The second poem, “*На розі тієї вулиці виросло дерево року*” [“On the corner of that street / grew the tree of the year”], is one of

V. Holoborodko's archetypal visions. The "*дерево року*" functions as a cosmological metaphor, uniting the natural and temporal cycles, while the leaves of hours ("*листям годин*") resonate with the agricultural calendar symbolism deeply embedded in the Ukrainian culture. M. Stefaniuk renders this fragment with "*the tree of the year / and covered itself with leaves of hours.*" This is a literal translation, yet in English the metaphor loses its ritualistic density. For a Ukrainian reader, the tree embodies a mythic axis mundi, a cultural archetype bridging together the earth and time. For an English-speaking reader, however, the imagery risks remaining an ornamental metaphor unless accompanied by the cultural context.

A particularly telling moment comes in the contrast between life and death. The Ukrainian text emphasizes collective anticipation of renewal: "*Всі чекали аби переконатися / що це дерево не мертве дерево.*" Stefaniuk translates: "*Everyone waited to be convinced / That this was not a dead tree.*" While accurate, the line misses the incantatory rhythm created by the repetition "*не мертве дерево*", which in Ukrainian echoes the ritual formulae of warding off misfortune. By compressing this rhythm, the English version renders the image more declarative, less incantatory.

The culmination of the poem – "*і чутно як з циферблатів / сиплеться пісок годин*" – invokes both folkloric and Christian eschatological imagery. The falling "sand of hours" functions as an apocalyptic sign, where time itself becomes material and finite. Stefaniuk translates: "*And hear the sand of hours / Pour from their faces.*" The substitution of "*faces*" for "*циферблати*" shifts the image from a material cultural artifact (the clock face) into an anthropomorphic metaphor, which distances the reader from the ritual concreteness of the Ukrainian text.

It should be noted that M. Stefaniuk's translations of the poetry by V. Holoborodko negotiate between fidelity to literal imagery and adaptation to the Anglophone poetic norms. While her versions successfully communicate the surface-level metaphorical content, they frequently reduce the ritualistic, archetypal density that characterizes V. Holoborodko's ethnopoetics. The "singing leaf," the "tree of the year," and the "sand of hours" all carry layers of Ukrainian folk symbolism that resonate with mythic archetypes of life, time, and mortality. In translation, these archetypes are partially domesticated into

individual poetic tropes, thereby weakening their cultural anchorage but enhancing their accessibility to English-speaking readers.

Thus, M. Stefaniuk's translations exemplify the complex dynamics of diasporic mediation, where Ukrainian cultural symbols are reframed for another linguistic horizon. Her work demonstrates both the gains – clarity, accessibility –

and the inevitable losses – ritual resonance, archetypal depth – of rendering V. Holoborodko's ethnopoetic universe into English.

The third example is a poem by Mykola Vorobiov «На побаченні»:

Квітку купив на розі,
Де з корзиною ліс стоїть.
Прийшов на міст, глянув –
А міст підметений стоїть.

Не було куди поставити квітку;
Не було руки, не було нікого...
Я у воду її опустил
І доторкнувся до тіла річки [8, p.452].
I bought a flower on the corner
where the forest stands with a basket.
When I go to the bridge,
It looked clean-swept.

Nowhere to put the flower,
no hand, no one...
I dipped it in water
and touched the river's body [8, p. 452].

M. Vorobiov's poem «На побаченні» exemplifies his poetics of meditative simplicity, rooted in the Kyiv School's aesthetics. The Ukrainian original unfolds as a sequence of minimal gestures: buying a flower, approaching a bridge, dipping the flower into the river – each imbued with existential resonance. The imagery is spare yet charged: the flower as an emblem of offering, the bridge as a liminal threshold, the river as a living body.

In the English version by Myrosia Stefaniuk, the translator preserves the poem's minimalistic cadence, though certain cultural nuances shift. The Ukrainian «*де з корзиною ліс стоїть*» («where the forest stands with a basket») conveys a surrealist image that fuses nature with the marketplace. Rendered as "*where the forest stands with a basket*", the phrase retains strangeness, but risks sounding more literal than metaphorical in English.

Another subtle displacement occurs in «*A міст підметений стоїть*». In Ukrainian, *підметений* implies both cleanliness and ritual preparation (as if swept before a meeting or sacred act). Translated as “*It looked clean-swept*”, the nuance of ritual readiness is somewhat attenuated.

The final gesture, «*Я у воду її онустих / I доторкнувся до тіла річки*», merges human and natural bodies through the touch. The translation «*I dipped it in water / and touched the river's body*» successfully conveys this intimacy, though the Ukrainian verb *онустих* suggests a more deliberate, almost ritual immersion, which is softened in English.

Thus, M. Stefaniuk's translation captures the meditative clarity of M. Vorobiov's poem, but some ritualistic and surreal dimensions inherent in the Ukrainian text become domesticated. The poem's archetypal symbols: flower, bridge, river remain intact, yet their cultural depth shifts slightly in translation.

Conclusions. Future research could expand the contrastive study scope by examining poetic translations by M. Stefaniuk and other Ukrainian female diasporic translators.

The comparative readings of M. Stefaniuk's translations of V. Holoborodko and M. Vorobiov reveal a distinctive translatorial style that balances fidelity to the semantic core of the Ukrainian text with a tendency toward domestication in matters of cultural nuance. Her translations pre-

serve the linear clarity, minimalism, and imagistic precision characteristic of both poets, ensuring accessibility for the Anglophone reader.

Several stylistic features emerge consistently. First, M. Stefaniuk demonstrates a strong commitment to literal accuracy at the lexical and syntactic levels, often maintaining the original sequence of images and their pared-down structures. This strategy secures the “foreignness” of Ukrainian modernist poetics, while at times flattening culturally specific connotations. Second, her approach to cultural symbolism is one of cautious mediation: archetypal images such as the flower, bridge, and river are conveyed intact, yet their ritualistic or mythopoetic resonance is frequently softened in the English rendering. Third, M. Stefaniuk favors a minimalist, transparent diction that mirrors the poets' meditative tone, though this often entails the loss of subtle layers of ethnosymbolic meaning embedded in the Ukrainian text.

Taken together, these tendencies define M. Stefaniuk's translatorial signature as the one of restrained fidelity: she foregrounds the accessibility of Ukrainian poetry to global readership while sacrificing certain mythopoetic depths. Her output thus occupies an important mediating role, revealing the Ukrainian symbolic imagination to the Anglophone world, even as it inevitably reconfigures cultural archetypes into the more universalized, less context-bound forms.

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