



INTERMEDIAL ALLUSIONS AND THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURAL CODES IN IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVEL "THE SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE MACHINE"

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The article examines the functioning of intermedial allusions and the mechanisms of translating cultural codes in Iris Murdoch's novel "The Sacred and Profane Love Machine" from the perspectives of intersemiotic translation and the theory of intermediality. The point of departure is the understanding of the literary text as a component of cultural memory, in which verbal structures form a complex system of intertextual and intermedial connections with visual art. Special attention is devoted to allusions to Titian's painting "Sacred and Profane Love", which serves as a visual prototext and determines the philosophical architectonics of the novel. The methodological framework of the study includes E. Panofsky's iconological analysis, U. Eco's concept of the cultural "encyclopaedia," and the fundamentals of intersemiotic translation theory. The article demonstrates that the verbalization of the pictorial image in the novel does not amount to a simple description or quotation, but involves a complex process of semantic analysis and the re-accentuation of iconographic elements in accordance with the logic of the narrative conflict. It is shown that the Renaissance Neoplatonic model of the coexistence of earthly and heavenly love is transformed into a modernist psychological and ethical model of the individual's inner contradiction. Intersemiotic transcoding is accompanied by a partial reduction of the polysemy of the visual prototext and by the strengthening of the dichotomous opposition that structures the novel's imagery. At the same time, this opposition functions as a processual model of transition between different modes of Eros. As a result, the translation of cultural codes emerges as a dynamic interpretative process that shapes a new model of meaning-making in the modernist novel and expands the possibilities of translation-oriented analysis of intermedial phenomena. The incorporation of the visual code deepens the semantic density of the images and the reader's receptive competence, transforming the reader into an interpreter of cultural memory. Thus, Murdoch's novel appears as a space of dialogue between different artistic languages, where cultural transcoding is realized through the tense interaction of tradition and modernist reinterpretation.

ІНТЕРМЕДІАЛЬНІ АЛЮЗІЇ ТА ПЕРЕКЛАД КУЛЬТУРНИХ КОДІВ У РОМАНІ АЙРІС МЕРДОК «THE SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE MACHINE»

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семіотична інтерпретація.

У статті досліджується функціонування інтермедіальних алюзій та механізмів перекладу культурних кодів у романі Айріс Мердок “The Sacred and Profane Love Machine” з позицій міжсеміотичного перекладу та теорії інтермедіальності. Вихідною основою стає розуміння художнього тексту як складника культурної пам’яті, у якому вербальні структури утворюють складну систему інтертекстуальних та інтермедіальних зв’язків з образотворчим мистецтвом. Особливу увагу присвячено алюзіям на полотно Тіціана «Любов земна і любов небесна», що слугує візуальним прототекстом, визначаючи філософську архітектоніку роману. Методологічну основу дослідження становлять іконологічний аналіз Е. Панофського, концепція культурної «енциклопедії» У. Еко та основи теорії міжсеміотичного перекладу. У статті доведено, що вербалізація живописного образу в романі не зводиться до простого опису або цитування, а передбачає складний процес семантичного аналізу та переакцентування іконографічних елементів відповідно до логіки наративного конфлікту. Показано, що ренесансна неоплатонічна модель співіснування земного й небесного кохання трансформується у модерністську психологічну та етичну модель внутрішньої суперечливості особистості. Міжсеміотичне перекодування супроводжується частковою редукцією багатозначності візуального прототексту та посиленням дихотомічної опозиції, яка структурує образну систему роману. Водночас дана опозиція функціонує як процесуальна модель взаємопереходу між різними модусами Еросу. У результаті переклад культурних кодів постає як динамічний інтерпретативний процес, що формує нову модель смислотворення в модерністському романі, розширюючи можливості перекладознавчого аналізу інтермедіальних явищ. Залучення візуального коду поглиблює семантику образів та рецептивну компетенцію читача, який перетворюється на інтерпретатора культурної пам’яті. Таким чином, роман А. Мердок постає як простір діалогу між різними мистецькими мовами, де культурне перекодування реалізується через напружену взаємодію традиції й модерністського переосмислення.

Introduction. In the British novel of the twentieth century, the problem of the rootedness of human consciousness in the past, both personal and national, is expressed through a system of cultural codes, a significant part of which derives from the tradition of poetic Renaissance culture. For a translation-oriented analysis, it is essential to understand the literary text as a vessel of cultural memory, in which individual images and motifs function as semiotically saturated elements. Particularly productive in this respect is U. Eco’s concept of the text as part of a cultural

encyclopaedia [Eco, 2001], where meaning is generated through the interaction of signs, intertextual relations, and the reader’s cultural knowledge. This, in turn, necessitates not only lexical accuracy but also an awareness of the intermedial nature of such images, since their semantics is formed at the intersection of verbal and visual discourses. The translation of such fragments, therefore, presupposes the displacement of the depicted phenomena beyond social-everyday or purely psychological frameworks while preserving their universal potential.

Iris Murdoch's novels are of particular interest for translation-oriented analysis, as they systematically combine literary and visual codes. The concept of art as a means of ordering chaotic experience and providing a moral interpretation of reality [Murdoch, 1993, p. 8] accounts for the high density of artistic allusions, which, in translation, require an interpretative rather than a literal rendering. As J. Bayley noted, the writer's ability "to contain the whole world of art within her novels" [Bayley, 1998, p. 131] significantly complicates the translator's task, making it necessary to align the verbal text with a broader cultural context. Allusions to painting, in particular to the works of Tintoretto, Hogarth, Carpaccio, and Titian, serve as meaningful elements in Murdoch's novels that shape the philosophical and ethical dimension of the text. In translation, it is important to preserve not only the denotative level of these allusions, but also their symbolic load, which enables interaction between the text and the reader's "cultural encyclopaedia." A notable example of this is found in the novel "The Sacred and Profane Love Machine," where the pictorial allusion is shifted to the paratextual space, thereby requiring an alignment of both the textual and cultural elements during translation.

Within this context, Murdoch's novel may also be interpreted through the framework of the philosophical novel as a genre formation in which conceptual reflection becomes inseparable from artistic representation. The philosophical novel is commonly understood as a narrative modification in which philosophical ideas are not merely discussed but embodied through figurative structures and narrative development, thereby acquiring emotional persuasiveness and experiential immediacy. Such texts tend to subordinate plot dynamics to intellectual inquiry, while characters frequently function as mediators of ethical and ontological positions rather than as psychologically autonomous figures.

As a genre shaped by both objective cultural conditions and individual authorial worldview, the philosophical novel occupies a distinctive position within literary evolution, reflecting the intellectual and aesthetic processes of its epoch. Its narrative organization often involves a dialogic interaction between philosophical reflection and artistic embodiment, allowing the text to integrate multiple modes of perceiving reality and different forms of consciousness into a unified interpretative vision. The coexistence of philosophical abstraction and narrative concreteness thus generates a multilayered structure in which the reader is invited to participate in an ongoing interpretative process.

In twentieth-century fiction, the distinction between the philosophical and the intellectual novel becomes largely conditional, as both foreground

the exploration of consciousness formation and the instability of ethical certainty. This perspective is particularly relevant to Murdoch's prose, where philosophical discourse concerning fundamental ethical dilemmas is embedded within the narrative fabric rather than articulated through explicit theoretical exposition. The resulting interaction between conceptual reflection and narrative form produces a paradoxical situation in which philosophical depth coexists with everyday narrative material, thereby intensifying the reader's interpretative engagement.

In "The Sacred and Profane Love Machine," this philosophical dimension manifests itself through the hidden polemic with contemporary cultural and ethical paradigms and through the focus on the characters' processes of self-knowledge and moral interpretation. The narrative constructs a multi-perspectival reality in which visible events gradually reveal a deeper ethical and psychological structure. Murdoch's suggestion that any situation may be viewed from multiple angles reflects the epistemological openness of the novel and reinforces the motif of concealed reality underlying the apparent surface of the narrative.

Such a philosophical configuration directly supports the intermedial dimension examined in this study. The integration of visual prototexts does not merely enrich the symbolic texture of the narrative but becomes a means of articulating inner contradiction and ethical ambiguity. Consequently, intermedial allusions function as mediators of philosophical meaning, enabling the coexistence of several interpretative planes and reinforcing the dynamic opposition between sacred and profane modes of Eros that structures the novel's imagery and its processes of cultural code translation.

Research Aim and Objectives. The article aims to examine the functioning of intermedial allusions and the processes of cultural code translation in I. Murdoch's novel "The Sacred and Profane Love Machine" from the perspective of intersemiotic translation and intermediality theory. The objectives of the study include identifying the iconographic sources of the novel's visual allusions, analysing the processes of intersemiotic transcoding, and determining how Renaissance visual codes are transformed into a modernist narrative structure.

The **object** of the study is I. Murdoch's novel "The Sacred and Profane Love Machine" as a literary text structured by intermedial and intersemiotic relations. The **subject** of the study comprises the intermedial allusions to Renaissance painting, primarily Titian's "Sacred and Profane Love," and the mechanisms of cultural code translation through which visual iconographic elements are transcoded into the novel's verbal and narrative structure.

Results and Findings. Awarded the Whitbread Book Award, the novel “The Sacred and Profane Love Machine” may be interpreted as a modernist reworking of the medieval legend of Tristan and Isolde. However, for translation-oriented analysis, what matters is not only the intertextual connection to the legend but also the semantic structure of the title, which combines the mechanistic metaphor “machine” with the Platonic opposition “sacred” / “profane.” In the context of the novel, this opposition should not be viewed as a rigid contrast between the “sacred” and the “profane,” but understood through the interaction of several semantic layers that are activated simultaneously. The construction “love machine” refers the reader to the conception of the human being as a kind of mechanism governed by a hidden inner logic and subject to repetitive patterns of behaviour, habit, determinism, and the inertia of human desire (Julien Offray de La Mettrie). The ironic charge of the metaphor “machine” neutralizes the elevated tone of moral choice by emphasizing the automatism of human relationships and, at the same time, shifts the title into the sphere of a philosophical understanding of love as a phenomenon with both bodily and spiritual dimensions. This twofoldness makes it possible to interpret the title in terms of the Platonic dichotomy of earthly and heavenly love, balancing the view of human behaviour as a mechanism with an understanding of love as a force that can both shape and destroy the personality. The polysemy of the title leads to a reading of the novel not as a “story of an inner split between the sacred and the profane” [Conradi, 2001], but rather as a model of the inner contradiction of human relationships, which gives rise to a multilevel interpretation of the text and outlines the further development of the imagery system, particularly through references to Renaissance cultural and visual codes. Pictorial allusions thus emerge as a form of intersemiotic transcoding that inevitably shifts the focus. The visual image, when integrated into the verbal discourse, “loses its immediate sensory visibility and instead acquires a symbolically mediated character” [Mitchell, 1994], undergoes “a semantic reorientation in accordance with the dominant interpretative framework of the novel” [Rajewsky, 2005], becomes subordinated to the logic of the narrative conflict, and “unfolds primarily in ethical and psychological dimensions” [Panofsky, 1939].

Within the structure of the novel’s intermedial narrative, the Renaissance visual code, represented by Titian’s painting “Sacred and Profane Love,” functions in Murdoch’s novel as a kind of “secondary text” that conveys a complex system of medieval symbols and philosophical conceptions of love’s nature. The contrast between the elegantly

dressed, worldly lady and the naked female figure is read in the verbal discourse as an opposition between two modes of love, which correlates with the Neoplatonic idea of the archetype and its earthly reflection, a concept prevalent in the culture of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. However, in the textual framework of the novel, this idea is intermedially transcoded into a more transparent ethical opposition.

The numerous and at times mutually contradictory interpretations of Titian’s painting [Wethey, 1969] testify to the openness of its symbolism. In the iconological tradition, the canvas is associated with the Neoplatonic theory of love and is interpreted as a depiction of two Aphrodites, Urania and Pandemos [Panofsky, 1939, p. 150–160], who represent different modes of Eros in ancient and Platonic philosophy. It is important to note that this is not a matter of a rigid opposition between the “heavenly” and the “earthly,” but rather of a complex interaction between two principles, each endowed with its own ontological and ethical value. In Murdoch’s novel, this multilayered iconological structure is not reproduced in its entirety. Of decisive importance are only those iconographic details of Titian’s painting that prove to be meaning-generating for the novel’s verbal discourse. The compositional structure of the canvas is defined by the female figures and the figure of a child positioned beside a fountain in the form of a sarcophagus, which combines the symbolism of life and death. One of the women is depicted as an elegantly dressed worldly lady, wearing a white gown with a red sleeve typical of a sixteenth-century Venetian bride, with a myrtle wreath on her head and attributes of the marital union. The other is nude, enveloped in a halo of light drapery, holding a vessel from which smoke rises. The visual similarity of the two female figures, despite the differences in dress and gesture, creates an effect of mirroring which, in the Neoplatonic tradition, may be interpreted as a correlation between a prototypical form and its earthly representation. In the process of intersemiotic transcoding, this dichotomous yet at the same time symmetrical structure is integrated into the imagery system of Murdoch’s novel. And although the verbal text does not reproduce in detail the iconographic attributes of the painting (the myrtle wreath, roses, vessels, the sarcophagus), it preserves the opposition of the two female figures as different modes of love, interconnected by a shared “mechanism” of Eros. As a result, visual symmetry and the motif of duality are transcoded into the narrative structure of the novel, where they are realized through the system of characters and their relationships. Of particular significance in this transcoding is the motif of doubling, since the

similarity of the female figures makes it possible to interpret them not as two autonomous images, but as different modes of a single principle.

In the verbal system of the novel, this principle of doubling is realized in the figure of Harriet, who correlates with the clothed figure in Titian's painting. Her appearance, manner of behaviour, and value system embody that mode of love which, in the Renaissance tradition, is associated with the virtue of marital union. Like the worldly lady in a white dress with a red sleeve, Harriet embodies stability and spiritual restraint, which, in the narrative space of the novel, transcodes the Neoplatonic motif of heavenly love into an ethical model of self-sacrifice and endurance. The heroine's "romantic" beauty and her Victorian attire further accentuate the symbolic nature of her figure as an embodied ideal of moral completeness, while the system of nominations appealing to mythological and sacred semantics ("lady," "angel," "goddess," "priestess," "prophetess") brings the heroine closer to the sphere of the timeless. Thus, the verbal image of Harriet corresponds to an idealized model of love that marginalizes bodily and chaotic dimensions.

Analogously, the figure of Emily functions as the verbal equivalent of the nude figure in Titian's painting. Her appearance in the narrative space of the novel is associated with corporeality, sensuality, and the elemental energy of Eros in the Neoplatonic and Renaissance traditions. Emotionally and intellectually at once, Emily challenges Harriet's stable and morally ordered world, pushes love beyond the bounds of legitimate normativity, and transforms it into a space of risk and self-disclosure. In her portrayal, Murdoch combines passion with intellectual provocation. The "earthly" heroine introduces into relationships a sexual-ritual dimension that is suppressed within the framework of "heavenly" marriage. Such an interpretation of the character corresponds to the treatment of the nude figure in Titian's painting, where nudity symbolizes not sinfulness but openness to nature and to the elemental force of Eros. Harriet's image in the novel is not negative; rather, it functions as a "complementary element in the structure of intersemiotic doubling" [Bal, 1997], revealing the hidden inner conflicts of Blaise. Particularly telling in this respect is the hero's confession: "<...> why must one love automatically exclude the others? He was a man of two truths, since both these lives were valuable and true" [Murdoch, 2003, p. 78], which articulates the inner contradiction of Eros.

At the same time, Harriet's image, symmetrical with that of Emily, is reinforced by an additional intersemiotic shift, an allusion to the iconography of the Virgin Mary in Tintoretto's painting "The Annunciation." Like the Virgin Mary, Harriet

embodies self-sacrifice and spiritual submission, interpreting the destructive events of her own life as a form of higher vocation: "she's the sacrificing type and in the end she'll see it as her duty. She couldn't be happy really without that sacrifice." [Murdoch, 2003, p. 357]. However, unlike the evangelical narrative, where destruction brings glad tidings, in Murdoch's novel, it does not acquire a transcendental meaning: "Only Harriet was not glorified by ruin. Her house was destroyed indeed." [Murdoch, 2003, p. 151]. Harriet thus appears as a "sacral victim," destined to release Blaise from his inner dilemma and at the same time to open the way for Emily to take her place. This interpretation is reinforced by visual allusions to the clothed figure in Titian's "Sacred and Profane Love." Recent studies indicate that the woman's original garment was red and considerably more modest, which brought her image closer to the traditional iconographic canon of the Virgin Mary [Goffen, 1992, p. 138]. Moreover, the symbolism of sixteenth-century Venetian fashion allows the red sleeve to be interpreted as an additional marker of Marian semantics [Boucher, 1967, p. 204]. A comparison with Titian's "Madonna of the Cherries" and "The Annunciation" likewise confirms the visual affinity between the image of the clothed woman and the iconography of the Virgin Mary [Hope, 1980, p. 34].

Opposed to this sacralized model of femininity is another pole of the novel's imagery system, the figure of Emily, in whom erotic love, in Murdoch's formulation, "involves with the flesh all the most refined sexual being of the spirit, which reveals and creates spirit as sex, is comparatively rare in this inconvenient world," [Murdoch, 2003, p. 282] and performs an allegorical function of exposing the hidden dimensions of personality, creating "ex nihilo" a male or female spirit that justifies everything. The "earthly" Emily is contrasted with the "heavenly" Harriet and evokes associations with Eve as the figure of the primordial transgression, yet she is not reduced to an unequivocal symbol of sinfulness. The image of the nude woman in Titian's painting may point both to "base lust" and to the "highest spiritual striving toward union with the divine." The sensuality of visual perception characteristic of Renaissance art conditions the appearance of nudity primarily in compositions associated with the theme of marriage, where corporeality becomes a means of aesthetic and ethical provocation (E. Panofsky). This polysemy receives further iconographic elaboration in the compositional structure of the painting, in particular in the bas-relief of the fountain-sarcophagus, which establishes a narrative of the Fall and salvation (the man and woman on the right create an allusion to original sin; the scene of beating represents a variant of the Cain and Abel

narrative [Logan, 1972, p. 224]; the left part may be associated with Paschal symbolism of renewal; the image of the horse, interpreted in the light of the Bestiary [Bestiary, 1993, p. 103], symbolizes harmony, compositionally opposed to scenes of division and violence), thereby embedding the erotic motif into a broader biblical-allegorical narrative. Within the same conceptual field, the metaphor of the “love machine” is formed in Murdoch’s novel. Both sacred and profane at once, it functions as a complex mechanism that preserves depth and purity despite the destructive energy of passion. Confirmation of this logic can be found in Titian’s painting, where the fountain-sarcophagus simultaneously separates and unites the right and left parts of the canvas, symbols of the corporeal and the spiritual principles. The child who playfully interacts with the streams of water is Eros, who effaces the boundary between the bodily and the spiritual dimensions of being. It is precisely this interpretation that E. Panofsky substantiates, treating the painting as a “dialogue-picture,” in which two allegorical figures represent different aspects of a single principle [Panofsky, 1939, p. 154]. Panofsky’s theory became the methodological foundation for a number of subsequent interpretations aimed at conceptualizing the nature of Eros as an intrinsically dual-aspect principle. In the works of R. Freyhan, E. Wind, and R. Goffen, the two female figures in Titian’s painting are interpreted as variations of a single principle unfolding in different modes of existence. In the Jungian perspective, represented by the studies of R. Blakeney, earthly and heavenly love are understood as projections of the archetype of the anima, “when a person seeks to resolve the conflict of opposites within themselves and attains psychological wholeness” [Blakeney, 1987, p. 58]. In such a reading, the doubling of the female images appears not as an external narrative device but as a model of the inner conflict of opposites.

Conclusions. A comparison of Murdoch’s novel “The Sacred and Profane Love Machine” and Titian’s painting “Sacred and Profane Love” reveals a shared principle of harmonizing dynamic oppositions. The image of the “sinful” woman in both texts is not reduced to an unequivocally negative semantics but requires a dual reading. On the primary level, it embodies destructive passion and the experience of inner division, whereas on the secondary level, it acquires a “heavenly” meaning as a vehicle of spiritual transformation. This vision accords with the Neoplatonic model of the world, in which different female figures represent a single ontological foundation in various modes of manifestation. This processual model becomes the basis of intersemiotic transcoding in Murdoch’s novel, where the Renaissance visual code is

transformed into a modernist narrative structure, and “sacred” and “profane” love emerge as shifting states of a single Eros open to transformation.

Prospects for future research. Further research may focus on a broader comparative analysis of intermedial allusions in Murdoch’s novels, particularly regarding the translation of visual and musical cultural codes and their role in shaping narrative ethics. A promising direction also lies in examining the reception and translation strategies of intersemiotic elements in different Ukrainian translations of Murdoch’s works, which would enable the tracing of variability in cultural code transcoding within diverse interpretative frameworks. Additionally, the application of cognitive and reader-response approaches to the study of intermediality may contribute to a deeper understanding of how visual prototexts influence the reader’s interpretative competence and the translator’s decision-making process.

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