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**TRANSLATION COMMENT AS THE MAIN TOOL FOR  
PRESERVING THE AUTHOR’S INTERTEXTUALITY**

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***Abstract***

This article deals with the study of the intertextual inclusions on the example of Neil Gaiman’s literary works from the position of translation studies. It is reasonable to distinguish between three sides of intertextuality, being one of the characteristic features of postmodern literature, – the author’s one, the reader’s one and the translator’s one. In the postmodern literature the author lays a certain set of meanings in his writing, and the reader has to decode them by finding out the references suggested and, thereby, correctly interpret the text. This set of meanings forms the author’s intertextuality. The reader can continue reading or searching for the source text. It is important to emphasize that this alternative only exists for the reader, not for the translator. A translator has to implement his task, including finding out the references suggested by the author and giving a comment to help the reader from different culture understand the original author’s intention, without having the same cultural experience as the author. In this situation the ability to see intertextual inclusion and make a comment on it is regarded to be essential for the correct literary translation. Thereby the translation comment is considered to be the main tool for preserving the author’s intertextuality, in the case of postmodern literature. In this respect this paper focuses on such questions as content, structure and role of the translation comment to postmodern literary works.

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**Keywords:** Translation comment, intertextuality, author’s intertextuality, intertextual comment, intermedial comment.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper we will look at a number of author's intertextualisms and translation comments related to their actualization in the texts of modern British writer N. Gaiman on the example of translations of his works into Russian language.

The works of N. Gaiman cover a wide range of genres: from gothic stories, urban fantasy and fantasy for adults to children's fiction, scary fairy tales and author's fairy tales that are close to the parable. One of the characteristic features of the writer's creation can be called the refusal to create new characters, worlds or situations. Taking as a basis canonical motifs, stories or heroes, N. Gaiman puts them in a completely different reality, thereby either forcing the characters to perform in an unusual role, or forcing the reader to look at a familiar story from an unexpected point of view. As N.A. Deryabina states, "in modern literature, mythological communication often debunks existing myths, creating the effect of surprise, when a well-known story is retold in a completely new way" (Derbiyana, 2015, p. 29) (henceforward translated from Russian by S.K.). This is what most of N. Gaiman's literary work is devoted to, since it is more interesting for him to disclose the "potential of already existing mythologems" (Ibid.), than the creation of works according to established canons with predictable characters and plot twists.

The greatest influence both on the personality of N. Gaiman and on his style was rendered by three writers: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and G.K. Chesterton. On the one hand, in his work he reinterprets and shifts the ideas from these writers he liked into a new way, and on the other hand, he acts as their follower, since they themselves often turned to the origins and mythology of English folklore and legends (Lozovik, 2015, pp. 8-9). Among the main features of the literary style of N. Gaiman, in addition to the mythologization and adaptation of myths to modern times, there are reminiscences and allusions, as well as intertextuality.

Intertextuality, being one of the characteristic features of postmodern literature, represents a wide problematic field for research.

## 2. Problem Statement

Intertextuality is of interest to many scholars as a distinguishing feature of contemporary fiction and modern culture (Luchinskaya, 2012; Chotchaeva&Sosnovskij, 2017, etc.). From the position of translation studies, the study of the intertextual category in literary works is possible as an analysis of the strategy of its preservation by the translator and further interpretation by the reader, including the use of a translation comment in particular.

The more difficult it is for an ordinary reader to correctly decode all the meanings put by the author in his works when he or she has a cultural experience that is not the same with the creator of the text, when "postmodern literature has ceased to be 'pure' literature, representing rather a fusion of literature, philosophy, art and science" (Khartung, 2014, p. 114). And the more important for the translator has become the need to get close to the "perfect" reader, during the translation process, who is able in most cases to see into the author's intention.

Intertextuality in the concept of J. Kristeva, which, in turn, appeals to the ideas of dialogism developed by M.M. Bakhtin, is treated as an "intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed

meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context” (Kristeva, 2000, p. 428). In this regard, any text can be considered as a “mosaic of citations”, “a product of accumulation and transformation of other texts” (Luchinskaya, 2012, p. 387). Nevertheless, intertextuality is not reduced to a simple citation which can be considered as only one of many stylistic manifestations of intertextuality. Investigating the postmodern discourse, scientists note its dialogic nature. Dialogueness in postmodern discourse is an attempt to “realize an open work in which interpretation becomes possible at any level of narrative ... The text, and perhaps the author himself, who is also a text, enters into a dialogue with the reader” (Ibid.).

Speaking of intertextuality Fateeva, (2012) considers it reasonable to distinguish between its two sides – the author’s and the reader’s. At the same time, the reader can “either continue reading, considering a certain language formula only as a fragment of this text like every other and an organic part of its syntagmatic structure, or for an adequate understanding of this text he has to turn to the source text” (Fateeva, 2012, pp. 16-17). Of course, the misunderstanding caused by the intertextuality of a fiction is sometimes resolved “by establishing multidimensional links generated by the circulation of intertextual elements within the same text” (Ibid.). In this case N.A. Fateeva talks about auto-textuality.

However, it is important to bear in mind that if this alternative exists for the reader, for the translator it is not available. In case of the translator, the need to refer to the source is the only solution for the full implementation of his or her task in the light of the theory and practice of translation. Kuzina draws attention to this fact and also proposes to distinguish one more aspect of intertextuality – a translator’s one, because “a complex of intertextual inclusions in the translated text cannot be identified with either the author’s or the reader’s” (Kuzina, 2016, p. 43).

### **3. Research Questions**

Considering the comment from the position of the text, since in fact it is a text inside the text, the researchers talk about the comment as a secondary formation. A similar formulation is used, for example, by Karasik, who defines the comment as “the genre of hermeneutic discourse”, which “is a secondary text formation” (Karasik, 2009, p. 32). He also defines the task of the comment – “to confirm information, to specify it, to express a critical attitude to the original thesis, to clarify its additional meaning” (Ibid.).

The task of the translator of a fiction is to transmit the author’s intention as precisely as possible, for this purpose it is necessary to take into account the purpose with which the intertextual elements were included in a particular writing.

By enclosing references, allusions, quotes, adoptions, double meanings, etc. in his novels, N. Gaiman invites the readers to unravel the riddles he has suggested, not only so that they can appreciate his writer’s skills and breadth of knowledge, but to show his vision of history. On the basis of comparisons and allusions, he reveals the characters’ behavior more clearly and describes the situations more fully, and using a clever quote or reference achieves not only the whole and complete image but also the approval of the experienced reader.

However, in order to follow all the references and evaluate all the images invented by the author, it is necessary to have the same cultural experience as Neil Gaiman himself, which is literally impossible. In the case of translation, the task of understanding is complicated by the fact that Gaiman is representative of

not only another language (which makes it difficult, for example, to perceive the wordplays), but also another culture that has a large number of its characteristic elements, famous heroes and personalities, to which the author often addresses.

Here to the rescue of the reader comes a translator, who is, as a translator of fiction, well read and has a sufficient breadth of knowledge by definition. The problem can arise when the translator, being the “first” reader of the writing, will not be able to find out all the meaningful allusive units, will not see the reference, or will focus primarily on his or her subjective experience, which may not coincide with the experience of another reader. The difference between an interpreter as a reader and just a reader is that further understanding of the work by a broad audience that speaks the target language depends to a certain extent from the first of them.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

This research is conducted with the purpose to examine the translation comment as a means of preserving the author’s intertextuality in the translation from English into Russian on the example of short stories and novels written by Neil Gaiman.

We consider the translation comment as a reflection of the individual interpretation of the original work by the translator, a method of pragmatic influence on the reader for the purpose of conveying the author’s intention and the main tool for preserving the author’s intertextuality.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methods used in this study are determined by its goals, tasks, and also by the nature of the empirical material being studied. Among them the descriptive method, the discourse analysis, the comparative analysis, the method of linguistic interpretation should be mentioned.

There are several typologies of comments, this study is based on the cognitive-semiotic typology developed by N.N. Korobejnikova (Korobejnikova, 2006). She distinguishes four types of comments:

Type I – Encyclopedic comments,

Type II – Idiolectal comments,

Type III – Intertextual comments,

Type IV – Null comments.

There are many sub-types for each group, but we are focusing on the intertextual type of comments, since they reflect the connections that form the author's intertextuality of N. Gaiman. The intertextual type of comments embraces a broad cultural context, tends to reflect on meanings in a broad context (Korobejnikova, 2006, p. 10). Intertextual comments may be intertextual-proper showing the relationship of the source text with other known texts or phenomena, or intermedial that may be direct, when several semiotic systems are correlated within the space of a single writing (drawings, diagrams, etc.), as well as indirect, when the connection between different semiotic systems is formed through the linguistic semiotic system, but does not occur in the physical space of the text, but in the consciousness of the perceiver (Ibid. P. 12). Thus, the reader not only understands the meaning of the writing better, but also develops his or her intertextual competence.

Translations of three books written by N. Gaiman into Russian served as the empirical basis for the study: the collection of short stories “Smoke and Mirrors” (translated by N. Ivanov), the novel “Anansi Boys” (translated by V. Guriev) and the novel “Neverwhere” (translated by M. Melnichenko and N. Konch). 87 of 332 provided comments belong to the group of intertextual comments.

Evaluation of the translation comments and their structure helped to reveal the intertextual elements which are involved to build up the author’s intertextuality by the translator. We analysed the role of the translation comment in transmitting the author’s intention to the reader and its understanding by him or her with regard to that we consider the translator to be the first reader of the novel at the same time.

In this study we observed the last step of the “read – translate – comment” chain of actions made by the translator. Considering that the translator has to pass the step of trying to be the “perfect” reader, who is able to understand the author’s intention in full, this study follows the translator’s intertextuality reflected in the each case of comment. Furthermore the ability to see intertextual inclusions and make a comment to the each one is regarded to be essential for the correct literary translation in the case of postmodern literature.

## 6. Findings

It was found that the comments in general are used by the translator to explain quotes, proper nouns, wordplays, terms, unique and most likely unknown to a wide reader objects or phenomena of different cultures.

Intertextual comments mainly explain the inclusions from other fictions (culture-bound items, quotations, etc.), include the reference to a fiction and its author, and may also contain an explanation why this reference is needed. When commenting on quotations, the translator can give a full quote, indicate its author and the writing from which it was taken. There is especially a lot of quoting, explicit or hidden, in the novel “Anansi Boys” (Gaiman, 2011). Often replicas of the characters are suitable for the situation of conversation quotes, so the comments are given as follows: *«Ненастья в жизни есть любовью» – Грэм Коутс цитирует стихотворение «Дождливый день» Генри У. Лонгфелло (1807-1882) в переводе Антона Чёрного.*

On the point of the main character in translation *«Море красное с утра, моряку не ждать добра»* is given a comment: *Red sky in the morning, sailor’s warning – английская поговорка, которая берёт своё начало от евангельского текста (Матфей, 16:2-3): Он же сказал им в ответ: вечером вы говорите: будет вёдро, потому что небо красно; и поутру: сегодня ненастье, потому что небо багрово.*

In the short stories collection “Smoke and Mirrors” (Gaiman, 2014), the action of several fictions takes place in the context of the stories of H.P. Lovecraft, and his mythology is used, translator gives a comment: *Иннсмут (Innsmouth) – вымышленное маленькое портовое поселение. Впервые упомянуто Лавкрафтом в рассказе «Селефаис» (1920). Хотя в рассказе оно расположено в Англии, впоследствии Лавкрафт называл этим именем и выдуманный американский город. С тех пор Иннсмут стал неотъемлемой частью мифов про Ктулху. Or this one on the book Necronomicon: Книга Мёртвых Имён (Некрономикон) – мистическая книга, вымышленная Лавкрафтом; некоторые*

верят в реальное существование манускрипта с таким названием. Согласно Лавкрафту, чтение этой книги опасно для жизни человека, в потому она хранится в библиотеках за семью печатями.

Sometimes the intertextual comment contains only the title of the fiction and its author, without describing any special aspects of the writer's creative work or the details of the story. It seems appropriate to give such a comment to the intertextual elements in the preface to "Smoke and Mirrors", in which the author briefly talks about the history of the creation of these stories, as well as about people or works of art that inspired him, which in part makes the task of the translator a little bit simpler. At the same time, the preface contains a lot of references that need to be explained. A brief intertextual comment in this case is very convenient: «Ловушка» (*Trip Trap*, 1967) – рассказ Джина Вулфа, Трилогия «Память огня» (*Memoria del fuego*; в русском переводе: «Огонь воспоминаний») впервые увидела свет в 1986 г.

The intermedial comment refers not to literary creation, but to other forms of art: visual, theatrical or cinematic, architecture, as well as other non-literary discourses (e.g. law). There are comments that refer the reader to certain musicals: «Парни и куколки» (*Guys and Dolls*) – мюзикл, премьера которого состоялась на Бродвее в 1950 г. Спектакль пользовался большим успехом и завоевал премию «Тони» как лучший мюзикл, or personalities of oral folk art, which in the following case served as a prototype for the character of the musical: Суини Тодд, как и Джек Потрошитель, – излюбленный герой викторианского трэш-фольклора. По легенде, брадобрей Тодд перерезал своим клиентам бритвой горло, а его сообщница миссис Ловетт помогала ему избавляться от тел, делая из них начинку для мясных пирогов. В 1979 г. вышел мюзикл «Суини Тодд, демон-парикмахер с Флит-Стрит», ставший необычайно популярным и получивший десять премий «Тони» (both to the translation of "Smoke and Mirrors" collection).

In addition to comments on the movies, there are also comments on the quotes from the movies. For example, in "Anansi Boys" the female character Daisy is working in the police and begins to feel like «таким копом, какого только в кино и встретишь: жёстким, крутым, отлично знающим приёмы против лома; таким копом, который хочет знать, считаешь ли ты себя везунчиком, или собираешься осчастливить его, но особенно – таким копом, который говорит "Я становлюсь слишком стар для подобного дерьма"»; cf. "Daisy was starting to feel like the kind of cop you only ever see in movies: tough, hard-bitten, and perfectly ready to buck the system; the kind of cop who wants to know *whether or not you feel lucky* or if you're interested in *making his day*, and particularly the kind of cop who says "I'm getting too old for this shit." (Neil Gaiman, Anansi Boys) (emphasis added).

To the phrases in italics the comments are given by the translator as follows: В оригинале – скрытая цитата из фильма Клинта Иствуда «Грязный Гарри» (1971; *Do you feel lucky?*) and В оригинале – скрытая цитата из фильма Клинта Иствуда «Внезапный удар» (1983; *Go ahead, make my day*). So the words are explained as hidden quotes from the Clint Eastwood movies "Dirty Harry" (1971) and "Sudden Impact" (1983). If the reader is familiar with the role of Clint Eastwood in these films, he or she will easily imagine what a wiser policeman tired of his service and with a very specific attitude towards the work Daisy turned into. Besides, the last part of the above passage is already a direct quote from the "Lethal Weapon" (1987) movie, which tells about very unconventional methods of crime prevention by the fearless to recklessness protagonist policeman. However, no comment is given to it, probably because of

the wide popularity of this quote outside the original film in Russian too, or it is well known by the translator and we have got an example of subjective null commenting here.

If the comments related to the creative sphere – music, cinema or television, occur with a certain periodicity, then the comments related to a completely different discourse are quite rare. Among those that have been given, it is possible to single out a comment to the judicial / law discourse: *Prima facie evidence* (юр.) – *доказательство, достаточно при отсутствии опровержения* (“Anansi Boys”). There is also a single case of comment on the architectural structure in the translation of “Neverwhere” (Gaiman, 2017): *Старина Бейли – Old Bailey – центральный уголовный суд в Лондоне*. It is about the name of the character who is called Old Bailey and the traditional name of Central Criminal court in London. As we can see different translator use different structure of intertextual comment and sometimes give the original name or quote in English, as if they expected the reader to speak English or tend to find the information about these items not only in Russian. The point is that the intertextual comments or the comments on extratextual artistic phenomena preserve the author's intertextuality in the translation text, expand the reader's horizons and can become a starting point for further research of the material that interested him or her.

## 7. Conclusion

The study made allows us to draw the following conclusions. We can talk about the postmodern orientation of N. Gaiman's writings, referring to a kind of “game” between the author and the reader, where the first lays a certain set of meanings in his work, and the second has to decode them – to find out the references suggested by the author and, thereby, correctly interpret the text. This set of meanings forms the author's intertextuality. Gaiman's author's intertextuality consists of elements of citing religious texts, classical English-language literature (Shakespeare), works in the genre of mystical horror which relate to modern literary mythology (H.P. Lovecraft), intermedial links with feature motion pictures, musicals, references to architectural structures, law discourse, historical events and cultural phenomena of Great Britain.

Thus, the comment, as a rule, is used by the translator to explain cultural phenomena such as untranslatable components, culture-bound or context-bound words, as well as to explain references to works of art and their authors for disclosure of author's intention and artistic techniques of the author. Intertextual comments build the reader's intertextual and intermedial competence, linking the space of the text of the writing with the spaces of other “texts” of one or another kind. Understanding of the extratextual space selected by the author for mention in his work provides the understanding of this work by the reader.

The translator's intertextuality is realized in the choice of that side of the intertextual element which description and explanation will correctly reflect the author's intention, and thus contribute to the achievement of the highest possible equivalence between translation and original writing.

In view of such features of the N. Gaiman's literary creation as a high degree of allusiveness, intertextuality, and mythologization, a translation comment seems to be the optimal solution to the problem of possible misunderstanding of the author's intention by the reader and the means of preserving the author's intertextuality.

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