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**кафедра іноземної філології, перекладу та методики навчання**



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## **ANTIQUUE REALIA AND MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGES IN THE UKRAINIAN TRANSLATION OF M. MILLER'S NOVEL «THE SONG OF ACHILLES»**

Antiquity continues to exert a powerful influence on literature worldwide. Writers constantly draw inspiration from the myths, heroes and culture of Ancient Greece and Rome. The ancient heritage is particularly popular at present: authors are retelling old myths in new ways, giving a voice to those previously overlooked, and presenting ancient stories through a modern lens of ethics, psychology and society.

To authentically recreate antiquity in their works, authors require particular skills. It is important not to lose touch with the world of antiquity, its realia, culture and mythology, whilst at the same time making the text interesting and accessible to modern readers. Writers therefore strive to strike a balance between historical accuracy and modern storytelling, between the atmosphere of antiquity and the psychological depth characteristic of contemporary literature.

Translating such works is always a complex task. The translator is dealing not only with the original ancient text, but also with how the modern author has interpreted it. It is important to preserve both the ancient spirit, which the author has painstakingly recreated, and the modern style, as well as their personal touch. Furthermore, the translator must consider how antiquity is typically conveyed in their culture, how well readers are acquainted with the ancient world, and whether the language of the translation allows for the accurate reproduction of all cultural nuances.

The novel of the American author Madeleine Miller *The Song of Achilles* and its Ukrainian translation «Пісня Ахілла» (translated by Dariia Taradymenko) was selected for analysis.

The author does not seek to make the language entirely archaic; her texts are not overloaded with Greek and Latin terms, which would require constant reference to footnotes. On the other hand, she employs a selective use of ancient vocabulary, retaining significant names, place names and the names of important events, whilst rendering the rest in neutral modern language. This approach creates a text that is easy to read, without alienating the reader with its exoticism, yet simultaneously reminding them that it belongs to the ancient world. Names from myths that recur in the text serve as markers of antiquity. Names such as *Hermes*, *Athena*, *Prometheus*, *Odysseus* and *Penelope* immediately evoke a range of associations with myths in readers' minds. Place names such as *Olympus*, *Hades*, *Cronus* and *Ithaca* situate the stories within a specific cultural and temporal context.

In the text, mythological names are used as effective markers of antiquity, instantly evoking a sense of connection in the reader. The names of *Helios*, *Perses* and *Aeëtes*, mentioned by Circe, have many symbolic meanings, as well as family and mythological connections. Place names such as *Aeaea* (Circe's island), *Olympus* (the mountain of the gods), *Colchis* and *Crete* lend the story geographical specificity within the ancient world, situating it within a mythological setting. The names of mythical creatures, such as *nymphs*, *titans*, *furies* and *Scylla*, point to the bestiary of Greek mythology, which serves as a shared cultural code for the educated reader. Recreating them is the translator's main task. A study of the original reveals that Miller makes conscious choices about what to retain. She preserves mythological names, important place names and cultural terms, but does not clutter the text with exoticisms. The Ukrainian translator thus has to seek ways to reproduce antiquity in the text so that it sounds natural in Ukrainian and remains understandable to our readers.

The names of gods, demigods and mythical creatures mostly already have established translations in Ukrainian. They are transcribed and partly transliterated, just as in the classical translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: *Achilles* – Ахілл, *Patroclus* – Патрокл, *Circe* – Цирцея.

Place names and geographical terms aren't as straightforward as they seem. Familiar ancient names have long had their Ukrainian equivalents: *Crete, Athens, Olympus*. But with lesser-known names, it is a little more complicated, as their Ukrainian translation, which exists thanks to translations of Homer's original works, still needs to be sought out: *Aiaia – Ея*.

Although the place name is less well-known, the method of translation remains the same: transcription with partial transliteration. The Greek diphthong *Ai* is often rendered as *E*, for example, *Aegina – Егіна*. However, the name of the island *Aiaia* has historically been rendered in Ukrainian as *Ея* to avoid an awkward repetition of vowels. As we can see, for the most part, the translation of proper names does not pose any particular difficulties for translators, thanks to existing established variants.

Miller also frequently inserts words transliterated from Ancient Greek. Let us consider the following example: «*Do you think Aristos Achaion fights in hopeless wars?*» (Miller, 2017: 244). – «*Ви думаєте, що Арістос Ахайон б'ється у безнадійних війнах?*» (Міллер, 2025: 248). Here the translator faces a dilemma: whether to retain this concept or replace it with a descriptive phrase *найкращий з ахейців*. The translator's decision to leave the phrase in transliterated form is justified, as it preserves the author's intention – to give the characters' speech a sacred, almost ritualistic tone. At the same time, it should be noted that the meaning can be understood from the context without further explanation.

Cultural realia are not just objects or items of clothing; they also include rituals, which must be translated with great care. It is here that the translator often has to strike a balance between two extremes: avoiding making the text sound too exotic, whilst also ensuring it does not become too mundane. If Greek words such as *amphora, chiton* or *peplos* are left in the text transcoded *амфора, хітон, пеплос*, it looks authentic. If, however, the translator simply writes *посудина* or *одяг*, then all the distinctive features are lost and the cultural context disappears. The best solution is to leave well-known terms unchanged, and to add a brief explanation to less common ones, for example: «*Вона любила свій пеплос, що вдало відкривав тендітні плечі*» (Міллер, 2025: 174). In

some cases, the use of footnotes is an acceptable option, as Dariia Taradymenko did in *The Song of Achilles*: «Фаланга – в античному війську тісно зімкнутий лінійний стрій піхоти для бою» (Міллер, 2025: 211). However, this should not be done if the meaning becomes clear from the context further on.

Another defining feature of M. Miller's texts is the use of solemn and elevated vocabulary, which must also not be overlooked in translation. If the author uses the word *wrath* instead of *anger*, it should not be translated as *злість*, as *гнів* or *лють* would be better options.

As we can see, when dealing with historical realia, the translator is constantly balancing authenticity and clarity. The translator strives not to lose sight of key markers of the ancient world: they retain mythological names, well-known place names and cultural details, at the same time seeking ways to ensure readers do not get lost in the text. Usually, they opt for a moderate approach to foreignisation: preserving uniqueness where it really matters, and where necessary, adding explanations or adapting phrases so that everything sounds natural. Even if there are occasionally unfortunate choices or something is inevitably lost, this does not detract from the overall sense of ancient flavour.

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