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GENRE-SPECIFIC IRREALIA IN TRANSLATION: CAN IRREALIA HELP DEFINE SPECULATIVE FICTION SUB-GENRES?

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Abstract

Speculative fiction texts and their translation, particularly from English, have been gradually rising in prominence. However, not only do speculative fiction and its sub-genres remain only vaguely defined in general despite numerous attempts by both writers and theoreticians, but their specific features are often even less explored from the perspective of translation studies. This article aims to enrich translation studies understanding of irrealia as signature features of speculative fiction texts. It builds on existing conceptions of both irrealia and realia in order to propose the concept of genre-specific irrealia. Hence, it discusses how irrealia relate to individual sub-genres of speculative fiction and how such distinctions can help the recipient or translator realise the specificity of these elements. The paper has a particular focus on science fiction, although it also discusses fantasy and supernatural horror specific irrealia. The article then illustrates the concept of genre-specific irrealia and discusses its implications for translation on examples drawn from the novel Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury and its Slovak translation by the translator Jozef Klinga.

Keywords: speculative fiction, science fiction, irrealia, genre-specific, translation, Fahrenheit 451

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Across all kinds of media, speculative fiction has been building in popularity, even arriving at the forefront of popular culture in recent years with the mass success of television series such as *Game of Thrones* (and the *Song of Ice and Fire* book saga on which it is based), many superhero comic-book films, etc. Popularity among recipients leads to an increase in production, and both inevitably lead to an increased volume of translation of texts of such type. Yet, a definition of speculative fiction and its sub-genres has proven elusive, leaving their many specificities, literary and translation alike, at best loosely defined, if at all. Anonymous (2021) explore irrealia as the connective tissue of all speculative fiction texts from the perspective of translation studies, and the implications and impact irrealia have on translation of such texts in general terms. This article builds on their understanding of irrealia and explores irrealia and their translation in the context of the three arguably chief sub-genres of speculative fiction: supernatural horror, fantasy and science fiction, with a particular focus on the latter. The article aims to propose a new classification of irrealia based on the genres they help define and that would be viable in terms of translation studies. It argues that a genre-based classification of irrealia may help the translator or even just the reader to better realize the specificities and function of irrealia in the individual genres including their intertextual potential. Besides the theoretical, the article also explores this conception in practical terms via a discussion of Ray Bradbury's classic science-fiction novel *Fahrenheit 451* (2013) and a targeted analysis of its Slovak translation *451 stupňov Fahrenheita* (2015) by the translator Jozef Klinga. Let us also note that while the practical discussion is focused on a novel, our understanding of 'literary text' or 'work' is not limited to merely books. Instead, due to transmediality becoming increasingly common, our understanding is rooted in the polysystem theory of a 'literary text' as a product – 'any performed (or performable) set of signs, i.e., including a given 'behaviour'' – of a literary system that internalizes all factors involved with literature as a socio-cultural activity (Even-Zohar, 1997, p. 43).

Science fiction as a genre, its characteristics, and irrealia

To consider *Fahrenheit 451*, the text which will be the focus of the practical portion of this article, a science-fiction story is easy – obvious even. However, despite this ease, upon further consideration such a categorization begs a misleadingly difficult question – what is science fiction? First of all, it is a part of a broader genre of imaginative fiction often referred to as speculative fiction. Speculative fiction is commonly understood as an umbrella genre that includes science fiction and two other chief sub-categories – fantasy and supernatural horror (cf. Herec, 2008, p. 40; Loponen, 2019, p. 1). Providing a true definition of any of these three genres is nigh on impossible as the boundaries between them are unclear, and all include their own sub-genres combining elements of two or even all three of them. Nevertheless, numerous attempts at defining these genres have been made. Perhaps the most accurate or representative of the elusiveness of any true definition is the summation – albeit directed at science fiction, it is very much applicable fantasy and, to a lesser extent, horror – by Damon Knight, who claims that science-fiction 'means what we point to when we say it' (1951, p. 1). However, we find such a summation unsatisfactory, since it does not in any way narrow down anything at all. A basic differentiation of the three can be inferred from the relevant entries in The Encyclopedia of Fantasy (Clute and Grant, 1999). Horror is defined by and named after the effect it is supposed to have on the recipient. Fantasy is described as a self-coherent narrative presenting a story which is either impossible in the real world, or in an otherworld, which is itself impossible, although the story presented may be possible within the confines of this otherworld. Science fiction is then defined in opposition to fantasy as presenting worlds and stories extrapolated from real scientific or historical premises. However, several standalone definitions of science fiction exist as well.

First, let us take a look at Prucher's definition:

> …a genre (of literature, film, etc.) in which the setting differs from our own world (e.g. by the invention of new technology, through contact with aliens, by having a different history, etc.), and in which the difference is based on extrapolations made from one or more changes or suppositions; hence, such a genre in which the difference is explained (explicitly or implicitly) in scientific or rational, as opposed to supernatural, terms. (Prucher, 2007, p. 171)

It is in principle rather similar to the above-mentioned definition by opposition, merely explicating and expanding on examples of the various possible divergences between our and science-fiction worlds. Suvin (1979) considers what he calls a 'novum' as the defining feature of science fiction, provided that the novum is confirmed by cognitive logic. The novum is the feature of the presented world by which it is differentiated, set apart from the real world, and to Suvin, it is what allows science-fiction authors to comment in a round-about way on their context and real-world phenomena. Dick (1995) similarly believes that a science-fiction narrative must be set in a fictitious world with a society in some way derived from our real society, and this fictional society must differ from all known societies past and present in such a way that it allows for events which would not be otherwise possible, that it must include a new idea. Dick also adds that the presented society must be coherent and conceptual. He adds that a science-fiction narrative needs not be set in the future, nor does it need to focus on advanced technologies, which are often considered as hallmarks of the genre.

All four discussed definitions think of science fiction along similar lines with two seemingly defining features of the genre arising: science-fiction worlds must differ from the real world past or present and do so in a way that can be explained either logically or scientifically, rather than supernaturally, or in short, Suvin's novum confirmed by cognitive logic or science seems to encompass the other definitions' thoughts quite succinctly. While we believe that the novum works quite well as a science-fiction marker[1] from the literary perspective, it seems to be of little use in the context of translation, since as a general category it carries almost no useful information regarding the translation specifics of neither science-fiction texts, nor any other speculative fiction texts. Thus, we would like to propose using an alternative to it, which we believe to be more useful in the context of translation (studies) – the irrealis, or more often irrealia.

Loponen considers irrealia as elements of the very fictional cultures that they serve to define (cf. Loponen, 2009). This places them in opposition to realia, that is 'objects and concepts that exist as 'culture bound' – i.e., whose denotative or connotative significance is tied to their source culture' (ibid., p. 166-7). However, for our intentions, it must be pointed out that even Loponen sees irrealia not only as fictional counterparts to realia, but more broadly as the breaking points, the differences between the fictional and the real world, whatever they may be. Anonymous (2021) further expand on Loponen's understanding of irrealia, claiming they can also serve as the counterpart to all of Vilikovský's culture- or ontology-dependent specifics that comprise his *specifics* model of foreign phenomena present in a text (cf. Vilikovský, 1984, p. 130), in which realia are but one element. Anonymous also see irrealia as the elemental markers of speculativeness of expression, 'the general quality of diverging from the constitutive rules of the real world within the text's fictional world common for all' speculative fiction (Anonymous, 2021, p. 39). They argue that the presence of even a single explicit irrealis in a text indicates the presence of speculativeness in the text as a whole, that the text falls firmly within the boundaries of speculative fiction, and that any assumptions on how the fictional world functions made on the basis of real-world functioning can be challenged by the text at any time. In short, all other elements, including realia, gain the aspect of the irreal, becoming a mirror reflection of the real that can be warped and altered at any point. This works quite well with our proposal to replace Suvin's novum with the irrealis, but being common to all speculative fiction texts, it is without further specification much too broad a concept. Anonymous (2021) already propose not seeing irrealia as homogeneous, but rather distinguishing two types that present the translator with different translation issues – irrealia sensu stricto that are pure figments of imagination, i.e. with no real-world counterpart (in science-fiction terms, e.g. alien races), and irrealia (or pseudorealia) rooted in reality but altered, i.e. with an existing real-world counterpart (in terms of science fiction, e.g. real companies and organizations placed in a future setting). This distinction, however, can be made in all speculative fiction genres, thus necessitating another to be made, rooted perhaps in the three core genres of speculative fiction. In such a conception, genre irrealia could be defined based on the characteristics of the genre they define. Supernatural horror irrealia would then be, much like the genre itself, defined mainly by the response they (help) elicit within the recipient (be it horror, terror, unsettlement, etc.) while also being unnatural. Fantasy irrealia on the other hand would not be defined by their effect on the recipient, but their very nature, their impossibility, lack of external logic (which of course does not preclude internal logic and adherence to rules established within the fantasy world) and basis in reality and/or science. In relative – but not necessarily absolute – opposition to fantasy irrealia would be science-fiction irrealia, those derived from scientific knowledge, compliant with external, i.e. real-world logic and functioning, defined by their plausibility. A fourth type of irrealia may be needed for those that do not necessarily fall within the boundaries of the above categories – generic irrealia that are not meant to affect the recipient (horror), or to defy logic (fantasy), nor are they merely plausible (science-fiction), i.e. they are genre-independent. This could also include elements that would in non-speculative fiction be considered realia or other cultural specifics, e.g. real character names, suggesting their real/irreal duality. General irrealia may be the things and items that could currently exist, but simply do not, and that are simultaneously attributed to a fictional culture – their function being the enriching of the presented world (e.g. fictional meals, toys, statues, etc.). However, it would be an oversimplification to assume that the mere presence of one type or another of genre irrealia means the entire text is of the same genre. Instead, it is arguably the prominence of a given type of genre irrealia and the overall conception of the text together than determine the genre. Furthermore, it is necessary to mention that within the scope of the Nitra School of Translation a central role is played by the totality or completeness of literary and translation communication (cf. Popovič, 1983). This conception demands the participation of all communication relationships between the author, text, reality (context), tradition and reader. Hence, a translation cannot be divorced from the context of the original text and neither can be irrealia. Instead, the type under which an irrealis – much like the text and its genre themselves – falls must be judged in the context of the original text's creation, or much of science fiction could eventually become merely fiction, horror may cease to be scary, etc.

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[1] Although it could easily be expanded to include fantasy or perhaps even horror by simply dropping the cognitive logic prerequisite and using the novum to denote any ideas and concepts that distinguish the presented fictional world from the real one.

Distinguishing four different types of irrealia based on their relation to various genres may seem pointless and superfluous, but we do believe that an irrealis of each type carries the potential to present the translator with different kinds of translation issues, thus requiring different approaches. Consider that if any lexical unit can be stylistically charged, marked with expressive qualities that need to be preserved in translation, then the same must apply to irrealia. Irrealia, however, especially irrealia sensu stricto, are not regular lexical units – one, they denote items and concepts that need not exist, and two, their very form may be unusual and original – the author's own invention. This asks of the translator to be nearly as creative as the original author, particularly in the latter case, in translating irrealia as equivalent to the original in such a way as to create something new in the target language and to preserve the stylistic particularities of the original. The translation of a fearsome monster in a horror text needs to be as fearsome as in the original, and the name of a new technology in a science-fiction text rooted in science – or at least intended to appear scientific – must carry the same qualities in translation, etc. Of course, all of this comes with the caveat that with irrealia it is not always the case that the lexemes of which the irrealis is composed are stylistically charged themselves – the expressive qualities, and indeed the quality of speculativeness, can instead be imbued by the context. Consider for instance a *fireman*, a stylistically neutral everyday word that is in the context of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* twisted and moulded into something utterly new and changed, gaining new irreal dimensions. Even then, the new meaning impacts the translation. The fireman can be translated into Slovak either as *hasič*, or *požiarnik.* The former is derived from the verb *hasiť* – to put out fires, meaning *hasič* is *one who puts out fires*. However, the firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* do not put out fires; instead, they start fires. This completely rules out the first option and forces the translator to reach for *požiarnik*, derived from *požiar*, meaning *a fire*.

With the above in mind, we argue that a genre-based categorisation of irrealia may help the recipient, especially one who engages with a text critically such as a translator, better realize that each type of irrealia is different, has its own specificities, and is employed for a different purpose. A fantasy irrealis intended to (help) create a fantastical, mystical, or magical tone and world is in its construction and intertextual connotation vastly different from one designed to convey the sense of plausible reality rooted in science in a science-fiction text. Hence, the categorisation can aid in a more precise interpretation of a text, in choosing an appropriate translation strategy, and perhaps even provide clues or help narrow down the intertextual potential – as outlined by Anonymous (2021) – seemingly common in irrealia.

Let us take the lexeme *warp* as an example. *Warp* can, of course, be used as a regular word in any text, but it can also appear in irreal contexts, e.g. as a method of travel in science-fiction or a warp spell that enables teleportation in fantasy (but it naturally is not limited to these two examples). Realising whether the irrealis is of the science-fiction or fantasy variety is likely to impact the appropriate translation approach; the translation of the former is likely to need to sound scientific, whereas the latter will likely benefit from seeming mystical and apart from science. Additionally, as the lexeme has been used in both contexts, determining the type of irrealis will point the translator to relevant texts to compare whether securing proper intertextual continuity is possible and needed. At first sight, it may seem that merely checking the overall genre of the text could lead to the same result as employing the concept of genre-specific irrealia. However, a text needs not to be homogeneous in its use if irrealia types and spells may appear in a science-fiction text and technologies may appear in fantasy texts, and that is not even accounting for the various science-fiction, fantasy, and supernatural horror sub-genres and hybrid genres. Hence, we argue that focusing on a level lower than a whole-text genre, i.e. on the irrealia themselves is beneficial to translation and beyond and that, perhaps ironically for a concept of genre-specific irrealia, it opens the possibility of better and more accurately linking irrealia across texts from different genres.

To sum up the proposed categories of genre-specific irrealia, we propose distinguishing four different categories:

- supernatural horror irrealia defined chiefly by their intended effect on the recipient (horror, fear, etc.), and to a lesser extent their unnatural origin and context;
- fantasy irrealia defined by their impossibility, lack of adherence to real-world logic and natural laws;
- science-fiction irrealia defined by their plausibility, adherence to real-world logic and functioning, by being derived from scientific knowledge;
- general irrealia that do not but could presently exist and that Diogenes do not fall under the above categories, i.e. they are not meant to affect the recipient (horror), or defy logic (fantasy), nor are they merely plausible (science-fiction).

Each of the three main sub-genres of speculative fiction can then be defined by the most prominent type of irrealia present in the text, and their ratios could perhaps even offer ways to characterize various hybrid sub-genres of speculative fiction.

Given all of the above, for translation purposes, science fiction could be defined as a text presenting a speculative world, i.e. one different from our own, in which irrealia are most prominently derived from and based on known functioning of the real world and scientific knowledge, and are thus at least theoretically plausible and conceivable. The main translational challenge therein lies on one hand in the translation of irrealia, the explicit and implicit differences between the real and the speculative, and on the other in the fact that until explicitly stated or shown in the text itself, any elements presumed to work in the same way as in the real world may not in fact function as they do in the real world.

Fahrenheit 451 and its translation

The primary subject of the remainder of the article is the novel *Fahrenheit 451* written by the American writer Ray Bradbury and a targeted analysis of its Slovak translation by the translator Jozef Klinga with a focus on the translation of irrealia present in the text. However, before we can truly turn attention to the translation and its analysis, we must first discuss the original text.

The novel *Fahrenheit 451* was originally published in the United States in October 1953 by the publishing house Ballatine Books. Upon publication, the novel was met with predominantly positive critical reception and continues to be considered one of Bradbury's finest works (cf. Reid, 2000, p. 53). The book's success is further proven by the fact it has received a number of awards, including the Hugo Award, and it has also been the subject of numerous adaptations – a television series, radio play, comic book, video game, and twice even film. Nowadays, the novel is often considered a classic of the science-fiction genre and, more specifically, the dystopian genre along with such works as George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

The novel presents the reader with a fictional future United States, where people have not only entirely stopped reading – instead watching large televisions and listening to radio – but even the ownership of books has been banned by the authorities; thus censorship, the importance of books, and the dangers of easy entertainment become the novel's central themes. As all houses in Bradbury's world are fireproof, it is the firemen who are in large part tasked with enforcing the ban on books by burning them and the houses where they are kept. The novel follows the story of Guy Montag, a fireman who gradually turns on his comrades and eventually escapes the city where he is being hunted as a criminal for reading books.

The *Fahrenheit 451* novel was for the first time translated into Slovak in 2015 by Jozef Klinga under the tile *451 stupňov Fahrenheita*. The translation was edited by Tatiana Búbelová and published by the Citadella publishing house. While there is a significant lag (62 years) between the original publication of the novel and the publication of the Slovak translation, with its themes of censorship, dangers of ever-present mass-media offering content with no substance, avoiding negative feelings and difficult subjects the novel remains ever relevant. It is also worth mentioning that the long gap between the two publication dates may have been exacerbated by another translation being present within the Slovak cultural space. Due to the close relationship and shared history between the Slovak and Czech nations, as well as the relative similarity between Slovak and Czech, Slovak readers have had access to the novel in a Czech translation published by the now closed Melantrich publishing house ever since 1957[2], albeit not in their native and national language.

The translation of (ir)realia in Fahrenheit 451

Let us begin our analysis with the translation of character names. Of course, one could argue names are a general translation issue and have nothing to do with irrealia whatsoever. However, we argue names are highly relevant even from the perspective of irrealia. Within the scope of Vilikovský's (1984, p. 130) specifics model of foreign phenomena, proper names fall under language specifics. As we stated previously, Anonymous (2021) posit that all culture- and ontology-dependent specifics as defined by Vilikovský (ibid.) can have irreal counterparts, and that the presence of even just one irrealis in a text imbues all other such specifics in the text with irreal dimensions. Thus, even seemingly ordinary names, sports, etc. are relevant to discussions of the translation of irrealia, as they at the very least exist on the boundary between the real and irreal, anchoring one to the other even if they themselves do not constitute full-fledged irrealia.

Characters, then, can be divided into different groups based on different criteria, be it main and side characters, static and dynamic, etc. However, within the context of realia and irrealia translation, most such criteria are not overly relevant. For our purposes, we are merely interested in whether a character has a speaking part and directly plays a role in the story, or whether the character is simply a name in the background without any dialogue or direct participation. Those familiar with standard Slovak translation practices will know that traditionally character names tend to retain their original form – the only exception are names and nicknames that carry a meaning in-and-of-themselves and thus are functional (cf. Ferenčík, 1982)[3] – and at most are adjusted for the morphological features of Slovak. More often than not, that means a base suffix may be added to the name in the nominative declension. This largely affects female characters, as female surnames often have the -ová suffix. As such, in the table listing all the named characters in the novel below we have separated male and female characters into separate columns.

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[2] It is notable that the then socialist Czechoslovak authorities that themselves censored books allowed the publication of a translation in which censorship and its condemnation play a central role, although the historical circumstances of the Czech translation nor the translation itself are not the subject of this paper.

Table 1

Comparison of original and translated character names

Male characters		**Female characters**	
Original name	**Translated name**	**Original name**	**Translated name**
Black	Black	Anne	Anna
Bob	Bob	Clarisse McClellan	Clarissa McClellanová
Captain Beatty	Kapitán Beatty	Helen	Helena
Dr. Simmons	Doktor Simmons	Maude	Maude
Fred Clement	Fred Clement	Mildred Montag (Millie)	Mildred Montagová (Millie)
Granger	Granger	Mrs. Blake	Pán Blake
Guy Montag	Guy Montag	Mrs. Bowles	Pani Bowlesová
Harris	Harris	Mrs. Phelps	Pani Phelpsová
Hubert Hoag	Hubert Huba	Ruth	Ruth
Professor Faber	Profesor Faber		
Professor West	Profesor West		
Reverend Padover	Farár Padover		
Stoneman	Stoneman		
Winston Noble	Bernard Blaho		

As we can see, the translated names follow the above rule. Among the male characters, two are noteworthy – *Hubert Hoag/Hubert Huba* and *Winston Noble/Bernard Blaho*. Both characters fall into our second category, i.e. they are only mentioned and do not directly appear in the story. They are also both mentioned in the same context – they are candidates for the presidency of the USA. It is easy to see why the translator chose to domesticate the names, as the surnames of both are meaningful. While *Noble* needs no explanation, *Hoag* is a bit trickier. The name can have multiple etymological origins, but we favour the origin as defined by Arthur (1857): 'Low in stature, small', because it fits with Bradbury's description of the character. The need to transform the names is further escalated by their function within the context in which they appear – they are used to illustrate that the people in Bradbury's world had been so dumbed down by not reading that they voted purely based on looks and the sound of names: '*Compare Winston Noble to Hubert Hoag for ten seconds and you can almost figure the results.*' (Bradbury, 2013). With all of this in mind, the transformation of *Hoag* to *Huba* and *Winston Noble* to *Bernard Blaho* is justified. *Huba* in Slovak, among other things, means 'big mouth', which carries fitting negative connotations and can be even more appropriate in a political context. However, the translation also introduces alliteration, making the name phonetically stand out. To counter this, Klinga chose to not only translate *Noble* as *Blaho* (meaning wealth, pleasure, etc.) to convey positive connotations, but also to transform *Winston* to *Bernard* to introduce another, subjectively more pleasant, alliteration. All that being said, the chosen translations are not without issue. As mentioned, all other names (more or less) retain their original English form, causing these two to somewhat negatively stand out.

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[3] It is worth noting that when it comes to texts intended for children, wholesale domestication is encountered much more commonly than in texts aimed at young adults and beyond.

When it comes to female character names, there are two points worth mentioning. The first is a minor matter; *Mrs. Blake,* a character also mentioned only in passing as a neighbour who reported a woman for having books in her house, undergoes a gender swap and becomes *pán Blake* [Mr. Blake]. Luckily, this minor shift does not really impact anything. The other point is the ending -a implemented in the following names: *Anne/Anna, Clarisse/Clarissa* and *Helen/Helena*. Both *Anne/Anna* and *Helen/Helena* are fully domesticated, since the ending is the only difference between the Slovak and English versions of the name. *Clarisse/Clarissa*, however, is not fully domesticated – for that it would have to be transformed into *Klarisa*. While this does not have a significant impact either, it is a curious choice by the translator, which with the male names above results in a somewhat strange case of characters with a mix of English and Slovak names in a fictional version of the United States.

As for how character names fit within our proposed conception of genre irrealia, all of these names can be viewed as examples of general irrealia. Not only are they not bound to any specific genre, they are also not explicitly irreal. In genres outside of speculative fiction they would be merely fictional; only the two candidates for the presidency of the United States approach an irreal status not by their names, but their position in the presented world. Yet here all the names stand at the boundary between the merely fictional and the speculative, anchoring the speculative closer to the real, making it more relatable to the reader. This is in part why we find the elements of domestication troublesome – the domesticated names still function as connections between the real and irreal, but anchoring to the US is weakened. Admittedly, the domesticated names can be interpreted as anchoring the translation closer to its recipient, but that is a subjective matter and we believe that in order to achieve the domestication, the translator traded-in a more cohesive presentation of Bradbury's world.

There are more examples of such anchor points and general (ir)realia in the text, e.g. books, historical and literary personages, intertextual references, etc. Let us now take a brief look at just one more such example – a short dialogue mentioning various sports, which illustrates regardless of the (ir)real status of such specifics there is still freedom to be had in translation as with any other regular text element. First, however, one may ask here once again whether sports, similarly to names, are not merely realia. But as has been said, all cultural specifics in speculative fiction gain irreal dimensions, which for sports and other realia bears an additional implication. The irreal dimensions mean there is no guarantee that any sport, e.g. bowling, in a fictional world is the same sport with the same rules and aspects as the same sport in the real world. In other words, even sports and other realia in speculative fiction are imbued with semantic vagueness that can but does not have to be resolved in the relevant text. As long as the vagueness is not resolved, distinguishing sports as irrealia may seem superfluous as it seemingly does not impact translation approaches, but it would nevertheless be ill-advised to translate them too loosely; later resolution of the vagueness, if it shows the general irrealis is in some aspect altered from its real counterpart, may prove incompatible with a chosen loose translation. Imagine for instance cricket was in a translation of Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* series substituted for another sport before the narrative reveals the alien origin of the sport and its name.

Original	**Translation**
"You like bowling, don't you, Montag?"	„Hrávaš rád kolky, Montag, všakže?“
"Bowling, yes."	„Kolky, áno.“
"And golf?"	„A golf?“
"Golf is a fine game."	„Golf je skvelý šport.“
"Basketball?"	„Basketbal?“
"A fine game."	„Skvelý šport.“
"Billiards, pool? Football?"	„A čo biliard? Ragby?“
"Fine games, all of them."	Skvelé športy, všetky do jedného.“
(Bradbury, 2013)	(Bradbury, 2015)

The majority of the sports are translated one-to-one (*baseball/bezjzbal, basketball/basketbal, billiards/biliard,…*), but there are a couple of exceptions. *Bowling* is translated as *kolky* [skittles], which is a similar enough game. The word *bowling* is present in the Slovak language and would have sufficed in the translation, but the solution chosen by the translator does not detract from the text overall and it is in-line with the domestication trend observed with character names. *Football* has also been domesticated into *ragby* [rugby], which is fairly reasonable. Direct translation would be *americký futbal* [American football], a solution that would feel clunky in the snappy dialogue and with the adjective out of place for two Americans. Thus rugby is the closest alternative, albeit one that is not associated with the US and once again weakens the link to the country. It is also worth noting that *pool* has been left out of the translation entirely. We believe the omission to be permissible, because Slovak doesn't have fully developed terminology regarding the sport and *biliard* serves as the umbrella term for sports of that type. Although, of course, a simple substitution with any number of different sports, e.g. tennis, hockey, etc., would have also worked.

Of course, there is also a number of prominent decidedly science-fiction irrealia present in the novel. There are the technologies that help keep the population docile, such as the television walls referred to as *parlor walls, wall TV*, etc. As the name suggests, they are televisions that replace entire walls with screens, potentially – as the protagonist's wife desires – all four walls of a room. People can even purchase attachments for these walls that will fill in their name where appropriate in the watched programme in order to make the viewer feel as if they are participating in the programme. In translation, a television wall is called *telestena*, a portmanteau of *televízia* and *stena*, the Slovak words for *television* and *wall* respectively. This is a suitable solution that conveys the science-fiction nature of the irrealis in a concise form that does not disrupt the style of the original text.

Naturally, it is not feasible for people to be engaged and entertained by their TV walls at all times, which is where the little in-ear radios often called *thimble radio, Seashells*, or even *thimble-wasps*, as they are often compared to bees and wasps nesting in ears, come in. Characters can listen to these whenever they are not watching, including while they sleep, and be 'flooded' with a constant ocean of music and talk alike. The choice of what to call them in translation is as varied as in the original: *Seashells* become *Lastúry* (a direct translation) and *thimble wasps* turn into *náprstkové osy* (also a fairly direct translation). On the other hand, there is a case when the translation stylistically drifts away from the original and sounds overly professional.

> Original: …*apprenticeship at Seashell ear-thimbles.* (Bradbury, 2013)
>
> Translation*: …učňovstva počúvania rádia v slúchadlách modelu Lastúra.* [apprenticeship at listening to radio in the Seashell model of headphones] (Bradbury, 2015)

Both these irrealia further illustrate why it is necessary to judge what is and is not science fiction based on the context of the original publication. To our knowledge there are no televisions that literally replace entire walls, nor are there wireless in-ear headphones that function as a radio independently, i.e. without being connected to another device such as a mobile phone. They are, however, absolutely conceivable with our current level of technology, and, depending on how literal your interpretation of such devices is, they may soon become a reality, whereas at the time of the novel's original publication, such things would be highly far-fetched, which in-and-of-itself is another factor and a potential challenge to be considered when translating science-fiction long after it was originally written. Once contemporary technology approaches the level of technology presented in the source text, how does one convey the speculativeness of expression that was apparent in the original irrealis and text as a whole? And should they? The answer is perhaps offered in the tenets of the so-called "Slovak translation school"

(Ferenčík, 1982, pp. 50-70), albeit indirectly. One of the sub-tenets of the school dictates that archaicity of an older text should only be transferred in a translation if it constitutes a concious choice on the author's side, i.e. if it serves a function; not when it is merely a consequence of the original text's time/context. In the latter case, the translation should use appropriate modern language. From this we can extrapolate that the emphasis in translation should be placed on the effect the original text would have had on a reader when originally written. Irrealia age just as any other linguistic element, and science-fiction irrealia describing technologies can seemingly undergo the same process of ageing as real technologies, e.g.: futuristic → common → archaic[4]. Within the confines of both the Nitra School of translation and the Slovak translation school, the translator should not alter the conveyed meanings, thus there is little to be done to alleviate the ageing of described science-fiction irrealia. Nevertheless, a degree of speculativeness of expression can still be maintained by the translator intentionally choosing lexemes for the irrelia themselves and their descriptions that will differentiate them from existing technologies and avoid the mundane. In terms of the examples from *Fahrenheit 451* discussed above, the translator could have chosen the mundane solutions *televízne steny* [television walls] and *rádiové slúchadlá* [radio headphones] or similar, but, as shown, the translator correctly avoided such solutions. While *Fahrenheit 451* largely extrapolates its technologies from those already known at the time of writing and thus avoids further issues in translation, the avoidance of mundane solutions can become even more important when dealing with works that perhaps create entirely new lexical units to describe their technologies, and such technologies are later developed in the real life but are called differently. It may then be tempting for a translator to lean on the real technology and simply use its name in the translation, but that would be a mistake as it would deprive the irrealis of its speculative aspect. On the other hand, a delayed translation can also offer an advantage – if an irrealis and its name are based on an already existing but a niche technology available in the source country, but it has not yet been established in the target language, the delay may give the technology an opportunity to establish itself in the target language and thus save the translator the need to create a new lexeme.

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[4] Think for instance how the eighties science-fiction often envisioned future computers with often small screens and large chunky keyboards that from our modern perspective appear decidedly low-tech.

There are numerous other irrealia that are a fact of life in *Fahrenheit 451*, e.g. *jet cars* or *air-propelled trains*, all houses being fireproof, the fireman starting fires instead of putting them out as discussed in a previous chapter, the very idea of all books being banned, etc., but there is just one more irrealis we need to discuss in more detail – the *mechanical hound*. The *mechanical hound* is almost exactly what it sounds like – a robot with a function that mimics that of an actual dog. Its form may also be inspired by dogs, but with its eight spidery legs it certainly becomes its own thing. It is used by the firemen to search for and outright hunt fugitives with its impeccable 'sense' of smell, and it is capable of delivering lethal doses of morphine and procaine via a four-inch hollow needle. It is likely due to the hunting connotations of both the hound's description and of the word *hound* itself, as well as to be linguistically economical that the translator chose to specify it more closely in translation. The translator turns to *mechanický stavač* [mechanical setter], a specific group of hunting dog breeds, rather than using *mechanický lovecký pes* [mechanical hunting dog], which would be the solution most faithful to the original, or weakening the translation's descriptive power and use just *mechanický pes* [mechanical dog]. What is most interesting about this irrealis is that in isolation it is distinctly a science-fiction irrealis. Account, however, for the context(s) in which it is mentioned, how it is described, and it gains an undercurrent of horror, exemplifying one of the ways in which an irrealis can find itself on the boundary between two genres and carrying features of both:

> *The Mechanical Hound slept but did not sleep, lived but did not live in its gently humming, gently vibrating, softly illuminated kennel back in a dark corner of the firehouse. The dim light of one in the morning, the moonlight from the open sky framed through the great window, touched here and there on the brass and the copper and the steel of the faintly trembling beast. Light flickered on bits of ruby glass and on sensitive capillary hairs in the nylonbrushed nostrils of the creature that quivered gently, gently, its eight legs spidered under it on rubber-padded paws.* (Bradbury, 2013)

Conclusion

Nowadays, science fiction is a common literary genre often associated with fantasy and certain kinds of horror, with all three genres falling under the speculative fiction umbrella. In their 2021 article *On Translating Irrealia in Speculative Fiction*, Anonymous argue that irrealia – culture- and ontology-dependent specifics as well as all departures from reality in fictional, or rather speculative, worlds – are the essential markers of speculativeness of expression in a text. They posit even a single irrealis means that the rest of the presented world is implicitly irreal, different from the real world, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the text. This positions irrealia as the defining feature for all speculative fiction and its sub-genres. In this article, we discuss several definitions of science fiction while also touching on fantasy and supernatural horror, and we particularly focus on a definition of science fiction using Suvin's (1979) concept of novum. We believe the novum is a fine concept for a literary understanding of science fiction (and with a bit of generalization other speculative fiction sub-genres as well), but that it is somewhat limited in terms of its viability within translation studies. We thus propose replacing it with the irrealis. However, such replacement requires the general concept of the irrealis to be narrowed down and specified further, which leads us to the introduction of genre irrealia – supernatural horror irrealia that are intended to affect the recipient with feelings of horror, fear, etc., fantasy irrealia that defy scientific knowledge, real-world logic and functioning, and science-fiction specific irrealia that are in turn derived from scientific knowledge and do not break known real-world logic and functioning, as well as general irrealia that do not exhibit genre-specific qualities despite their irreal nature.

This article argues that each main speculative fiction sub-genre is defined not by the mere presence of a particular type of genre irrealia, as multiple types can appear within a single text or even a single irrealis can exhibit features of multiple types, but by the prevalence, or perhaps the prominence of a given type of genre irrealia. This accounts not only for the main three sub-genres, but also their own sub-categories and hybrid genres, and it also allows further specification of genre irrealia to accompany the specification of the genres themselves.

This article also argues that the concept of genre-specific irrealia can aid readers in interpretation and, more importantly, the translator in choosing appropriate translation approaches. Since each speculative fiction text can contain irrealia of different types and any given irrealis needs not be in agreement with the overall text genre, being able to categorize each irrealis allows the translator to fully realize its particular specificities and function while opening the possibility of intertextually linking irrealia if each type across texts from different genres.

Using the novel *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury and its Slovak translation, the article illustrates the various concepts of genre irrealia and how they can be approached in translation. We show that even something as mundane as regular English character names can fall under general irrealia, serve as anchors between the real and the speculative, and how such anchorage can be arguably weakened or altered via domestication. Some of the specific science-fiction irrealia, on the other hand, show the importance of classifying them and the text as a whole from within their original context, since tamer or more realistic science fiction can over time begin to lose its speculative nature and begin approaching reality, becoming mere fiction if viewed through a contemporary lens. While the novel does not provide us with a clear-cut example of genre irrealia other than science-fiction, it does include at least one science-fiction irrealis with horror undertones when taken together with its context – the *mechanical hound* – which illustrates the potential hybridity of genre irrealia.

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