Abstract. New era demands new approaches to help reading old books. Interpretation of onomastic units in literary texts is to be assured by encyclopedic knowledge. The level of such skills is modern readers’ minds decreases. We think many links lack now just because it was obvious, so not explicit, in the past or inside a culture. For instance, the warname of Athos in Dumas’ novel is the name of an orthodox holyplace in Greece. Dumas’ contemporaries caught the name’s meaning: Athos ancestors were crusaders, they passed by this holy mount going to Jerusalem. It’s a speaking name, revealing heroic acts and a long history of this noble family. The author’s conception is not perceived by contemporary Russians. In our language the name of the Holy mountain acquired the form coming from its indirect case [afon], in XIX century every Russian reader knew it, as Greek was a school matter. Now after a huge interrogation we constatated that nobody, even linguists, see any relation between the two names, knowing each of them separately quite well. The name lost its semantic transparency when translated.

We propose to reanimate lost links of the dialogue between the author and the reader, adding commentaries to classic books about onyms. We analyze Druon’s onyms. We analyze Druon’s onyms and their impact in the Russian translations.

Today we are experiencing a new stage in the world development. Alterations occur at every level of national cultures and mentalities, both in synchrony and diachrony, resulting in peoples’ acquiring new gains of international understanding and unity, yet losing some important traits in the customs of transferring their national knowledge to the coming generations.

The ongoing changes are too fast for the world to cope with both preserving old traditions and knowledge and absorbing and integrating the coming attainments. This situation results in people’s losing certain background knowledge including the information that used to be engaged in onyms.

As is known, onyms have particular sense loads in literary texts, they create a certain cultural basis in the texts, and great writers, undoubtedly aware of the fact, use onyms to weave a special “fabric” of their novels and stories, thus turning the texts into hypertexts – arising so many references with other facts (events, places, people) and inspiring so many emotions connected with them.
Studying the semantic load of such units we based on the fundamental works by E.S. Kubryakova [10], G.G. Slyshkin [16], C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni [8], [9], V.N. Teliya [17], V.L. Muraviev [11], and O.A. Burukina [3] devoted to thorough analysis of connotative aspects of onym’s semantics and connotative fields of words and revealing lexical lacunas.

The skill of revealing background knowledge lying behind onyms and particularly understanding the elements of their connotative fields is unfortunately being lost in the minds of many contemporary readers. For instance, the nom de guerre of Athos in the famous novel “Les Trois Mousquetaires” by Alexandre Dumas is the name of an orthodox holy place in Greece – a holy mountain. So Athos is a speaking name in the novel revealing the long history and heroic deeds of this noble family. Dumas’ contemporaries (both French and Russian) caught the name’s meaning: Athos ancestors were crusaders; they passed by this holy mountain going to Jerusalem. This name inspired appreciation, respect, awe. In the Russian language the name of the holy mountain acquired the form [afon] coming from its indirect case Athonis, as educated people spoke fluent Medieval Greek in 15th – 17th centuries (The first form being seldom used when discussed trips to “Athonis”). Yet in the 19th century every Russian reader knew it, as Greek was a school subject, and saw a whole world of connotations behind it. The name of the musketeer came to Russia in the 19th century when the Russian readers spoke French fluently and pronounced it in French, with -th- as [t]. However, in the medieval tradition -th- used to be pronounced as [f], which sounded closer to the Greek interdental [θ] to the Russian ear.

Owing to the changes, the author’s intention is no longer perceived by the Russian readers of today. Carrying out a large-scale poll we found out that today no Russians, including linguists, see any relation between the two names, knowing each of them very well, but separately. The name has lost its semantic transparency when translated into Russian, loosing the scope of its associations, emotions and feelings it is supposed to inspire to a Christian, particularly an Orthodox one.

The mentioned background knowledge used to be part of the common knowledge available for all members of a certain society (or at least of certain strata of societies). And the onyms under consideration used to be included in the background knowledge, too. As is known, knowledge cannot leave a person acquiring it indifferent. When absorbing a certain piece of knowledge a person processes it trying to find a proper place for it in his/her mind and soul and thus working out his/her own attitude to it. While receiving and processing the information a person associates it with some other pieces of information – connotations – some circumstances of
acquiring it, certain events, people, places. And all these circumstances, people and events are coloured in the person’s mind with certain emotions, feelings and senses.

I will illustrate this proposition with the following example from my own experience. “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” by Douglas Adams contains a piece concerning the theory of chances and including the name of Hamlet: “… Two to the power of twenty thousand to one and falling. <…> Tiny furry little hands were squeezing themselves through the cracks, their fingers were ink-stained; tiny voices chattered insanely. Arthur looked up.

“Ford!” he said, “there’s an infinite number of monkeys outside who want to talk to us about this script for Hamlet they’ve worked out.”

According to the results of my poll carried out in Moscow, the knowledge of this very assumption from the theory of chances about monkeys’ ability to create “Hamlet” while typing letters randomly on a keyboard turned out to be not common, at least among the people participating in the poll – engineers, lecturers and researchers in linguistics and theory of translation. As for me, I received this piece of knowledge many years ago, when I studied at the University, and as I am not a mathematician, but a linguist, I didn’t recall this information – I seemed to have forgotten it. But when I came across it in this marvelous book, I didn’t only understand its meaning – a sudden sensation struck me. I remembered a professor saying it, my being puzzled, the image was three-dimensional, I saw the black fingers with long nails ticker tapping boldly. And then I puffed, appreciated the joke, and at the same time I got submerged in a wave of sensations: a pleasure of a spring day at the University, my group mates, young and hopeful, enjoying the brain’s gym, trees getting green and all that atmosphere and the whole ambience of expectations and pink illusions. So this piece of information turned out to be coloured with so many connotations, emotions and feelings in my mind – a whole connotative field.

Following Dr. Olga A. Burukina I define the connotative field of the word as a scope of emotions, associations, implications, associative and connotative notions, stereotypes, feelings and senses arising in the mind of an individual when perceiving a certain word, and connected with connotative links on the basis of a united common connotative nucleus having a certain connotative charge [Burukina, p. 287].

Studying the functions of onyms in literary texts and the problem of understanding their connotations we have analysed the novel by Maurice Druon “Les Grandes Familles”. So, on the 384 pages of the novel we found 495 onyms without the names of the characters, which we excluded from our research.
M. Druon deliberately uses the names of 41 famous figures of the French history – kings, ministers, generals, etc. The author’s erudition requires the reader’s knowledge of ancient history, too (Annibal, Lucrèce, Tertullien) and mythology (Orphée, Jupiter); French history: Renaissance, Directoire, Seconde Empire, République; rulers: Louis XIII, Louis XV, Ferdinand II, Guillaume II, Louis-Philippe, François-Joseph, Napoléon III, l’impératrice Eugénie, Marie-Thérèse; political figures: Richelieu, Louvois, Metternich, Talleyrand, duc de Chartres, duc d’Orléans.

A particular place belongs to writers: Honoré de Balzac, Bourget, Boylesve (René Tardiveau, dit René), le vicomte de Chateaubriand, François de Cure, Victor Hugo, Robert de Flers, Anatole France, Leconte de Lisle, Guy de Maupassant, Xavier de Montépin, Anna de Noailles, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Marcel Prévost, Henri de Régnier, Sully-Prudhomme, Voltaire (voltairien). The author inserts into the speeches of his characters the names of literary characters, without mentioning the names of the authors: Salambô (G. Flaubert), la duchesse de Maufrigneuse (H. Balzac), Colette Bauduche (M. Barrès), Odette de Crécy (M. Proust). M. Druon did not even have to mention the authors as their characters are supposed to produce scopes of connotations, arise attitudes, and emotions in the minds of M. Druon’s contemporaries and, hopefully, some readers of today. Nowadays only the “Ruy Blas” mentioned without its author’s name (Victor Hugo) can be caught by a French reader, but it would be difficult to find the one who knows the authors of “Crue de Paradis”, “Les Vaines tendresses”, “Petites Alliées”, “Lune Jaune”. There emerge more and more missing links.

Quantitatively, the largest semantic group of onyms used in the novel is connected with the topic of war, with all the names bearing great pragmatic load in the context of the novel. These are not only the names of generals and marshals of France: Foch, Galliéni, Gallifet, Lyautey, Chamboran, Esterhazy, Joffre, Mac-Mahon, maréchal de Tavannes, but orders including military ones listed by M. Druon very precisely as there is a milestone behind each of them: (Chevalier de) l’ordre Souverain de Malte, (Companion) of Michael and George, (Chevalier de) l’Ordre de Léopold, (Chevalier de) l’Ordre de Sainte-Anne de Russie, (Commandeur de) l’Etoile Noire du Bénin, (Commandeur) du Nichan-Iftikar. What heroic deeds the orders were given for, one can learn from reference books, yet it is impossible for a foreigner to understand what stands behind the dragons de Lorraine and hussards de Chamboran et d’Esterhazy. M. Druon might not foresee that Russians would read his novel in translation, so he could not expect that the mentioned Russian order – l’Ordre de Sainte-Anne de Russie – would have such a large and special connotative field for Russian readers as the
connotative field of this onym has many extra associations arising in the minds of Russian readers (remember the story “Anna on the neck” by A.P. Chekhov) and the fact that this order used to be the first one an officer received for his bravery and courage and was supposed to be won on swords, sabers and dirks.

In our opinion, the most difficult interpretation of onyms in the novel is the interpretation of proper names connected with the theme of war: the author mentions different military campaigns and battles since the crusaders’ times and up to World War I. For instance, the resignation of General La Monnerie starts with a sentence indicating a certain location – “Tarbes Valley” (la campagne tarbaise). How can readers interpret the fact that at the end of his brilliant career replete with victories the General served in Tarbes, in the Pyrenees? The French can understand the hint correctly as special military units – nowadays paratroopers – best prepared for military actions. That’s why the general who did not make the final step in his career owing to his political reactionary convictions (the case of Dreyfus, in which he took the antidreyfussards’ part) and was not invited to the General Staff, was appointed the head of the best French military troops – due to his services and honours well-known to the Army top staff.

Yet, the Russian reader, as a rule, may not know the military policies or allusions widely known in France. Our poll has revealed the fact that none of our University students reading the novel at the moment of the poll paid attention to the catastrophe of a military plane, which happened in the second half of 2000 when some French paratroopers died in a crash in a practice flight. A French reader understands quite well why French paratroopers happened to be in the Pyrenees, he also know Tarbes as the famous marshal Foch’s native town, while a Russian reader, even if he knows where Tarbes is situated, is unlikely to see any connection between the events described in the novel and the news item covering the death of French paratroopers in the Pyrenees.

The names of composers: Chopin, Schumann, Liszt; historians: Jérôme Barère, Thureau-Dangin; painters: Carolus Duran, Manet, Degas, Jean-Jacques Henner, Daumier, Jean-Louis Forain, sculptors: Rodin; scientists: Maine de Biran, Pascal, Fourier; doctors: Hippocrate, Laënnec (used in the novel in direct allusion with the name of Doctor Larfois – one of the main characters) – draw a large-scale picture of the cultural life of Europe in the first half of the 20th century and the author is sure that the addressee cannot only identify the mentioned art works but share his own appraisals and appreciations.

Maurice Druon expresses thoughts and values prevailing in the milieu of intellectuals, which the reader belonging to the same subculture, is sup-
posed to share a priori. At the same time the author delicately shows what has not been assimilated by the culture, society at the described moment (the early twenties) and was perceived as something new, interesting, proper to use in small talk but demanding an explanation:

“Vous vous rappelez ce que dit Bergson du temps véritable et du temps des horloges?” (Druon, p.125).

The positions of intuitivism as the philosophical doctrine of Henri Bergson (le temps et la durée) at the moment when the book was written were known quite well, so the author uses onyms deliberately in order to involve them in creating the images of the characters belonging to the “grandes familles”. The main characters are surrounded with famous real people, go to rest at famous resorts (Deauville, Bagnoles-de-l’Orne); drive luxurious cars (Dellauney-Belleville, Hispano-Suiza), use objects of luxury (objets de Chine, tabac d’Oriente). All this addresses the feelings of the readers creating a sensation of the happy few lifestyle and the readers’ sharing it.

The geographic names used in the novel impress with the scale of the coverage – they practically cover the whole globe from le pôle Nord to l’Amérique (Nouveau Monde) and l’Orient. Countries: l’Allemagne, l’Argentina, la Chine, l’Écosse, l’Italie, le Madagascar, Malte, le Mexique, la Palestine, le Panama, la Roumanie, le Sénégal, la Suède, la Suisse; foreign cities: Biskrah, Bombay, Bruxelles, Cologne, Florence, Magenta, Naples, New-York, Petersbourg, Rome, Sadowa, Solférino, Tanaria, Venise, Vienne; regions of France: Artois, Hautes-Pyrénées, Lorraine, Normandie, Pyrénées, Var; French cities and towns: Bagnoles-de-l’Orne, Béziers, Bordeaux, Calais, Cher, Deauville, Dijon, Douais, Grasse, Lieufort, Lisieux, Paris, Saumur, Tarbes, Vierzon; castles: Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Schoenbrunn, Malmaison, Mauglaive – all these onyms arouse many associations in the minds of French readers of today, but they used to arouse much more connotations in the minds of M. Druon’s contemporaries, be they French, English or Russian.

Proper names often function in the text as epithets characterising objects along with adjectives derived from proper names:

“... mélanges de meubles en copie Louis XIII et de bibelots berbères ou soudanais...” (Druon, p.154) ‘Le baron Noel, le gigantesque…, se tenait les reins appuyés à la lourde table à écrire Louis XV...” (Druon, p. 181)

The author presumes that his reader can appreciate his satirical play on words when he says that Sully-Prudhomme is a “Lucrèce bourgeois au prénom de mamelle” (Druon, p. 44). Can we understand this abstract? It is firstly connected with the fact that Sully-Prudhomme is a translator of Titus Lucretius Carus (Lucrèce in French) and secondly with the notorious
Lucrecia Borgia (*Lucrece* in French again, here we have a play on homonyms); we find the full name of Sully-Prudhomme – René François Armand – and fail to find any connection with the second hint (prénom de mamelle). And none of our French respondents – our colleagues and friends – managed to explain this allusion to us. It means that this connotation is not grasped by contemporary educated French readers either. Le petit Larousse editors follow the quick evolution of knowledge items: just imagine: the 1974 edition [12] still includes entries on Flers, Jean-Jacques Henner, Jérôme Barère, Thureau-Dangin, Carolus Duran, Jean-Louis Forain, but the entries were not included in the 2004 edition [13] depriving the contemporary French reader (not to say about foreigners) of the opportunity to understand the connotations of the novel.

To create an effect of reality M. Druon uses 58 names of streets, avenues, squares, parks, blocks of buildings, suburbs, as well as certain establishments, hotels, museums of Paris of that epoch (some of which changed their names later): la Société des Nations, le Sénat, le Parlement, l’Académie de Médecine, l’Académie française, le lycée Louis-le-Grand, le Conservatoire, l’École de Guerre, l’école de Saint-Cyr, la bibliothèque Nationale, la bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, le Comité d’honneur des Anciens Lauréats du concours général, l’Instruction publique, l’Éducation Nationale et des Beaux-Arts. And M. Druon shows his belonging to the environment where his characters act: the Academy of France is called in a short form – Institut or metonymically – la Coupole; and the reader has to understand himself what establishment is mentioned, when he comes across la Commission de la Chambre, le Conseil, la Faculté, l’Université (salon de l’Horloge). The onym Saint-Cyr is used with this very connotation in the Chapter depicting the resignation of General de La Monnerie. In the “France” dictionary [5] we can find the entry “Écoles spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr”, but to manage in doing it we have to know the official name of the military school not used in the novel. The military school was founded by Napoleon in the place of Saint-Cyr not far from Versailles to educate and prepare Army offices. Yet, the main “but” lies in this – the entry doesn’t say a word about the cadets – while only offspring of the best aristocratic families were supposed to enter the school as it prepares the flower of the army, future generals – and this is the core of this onym beyond the reach of foreign readers. The connotation of the end of a whole world is inserted by the name of the successor – Crochard (-ard being a pejorative suffix). A bright cavalryman has been succeeded by an infantry general, a new democratic epoch has come.

The interpretation of pragmatic senses of the newspapers and magazines mentioned in the novel: “L’écho du Matin”, “Le Figaro”, “Le Petit
Parisien”, “Le Journal”, “Excelsior”, “Le Temps”, “Les Débats”, “Illustration”, requires the reader’s understanding their political and social orientations, their reputations and the associations arising from this information. But M. Druon also uses the invented name “Le cri de Paris” reminding his readers of the periodical “Le Cri du peuple” established in 1871, and this secret sense and its allusion remains concealed from foreign readers.

What shall translators/interpreters do to make a correct translation in case of finding out changes in connotative fields and connotations of words leading to proper perception of the translated text by its readers? Though the language of translation does contain direct equivalents to original words, these equivalents have differing or even opposing connotations (i.e. underlying senses). Formerly widely known and widely used words and set phrases are subject to resemantisation or archaisation, as well as reconnotation. The parallel process is the introduction of new ones into active use. Dr. Olga A. Burukina offered to use certain ‘connotative’ transformations including connotative substitution, connotative addition, connotative omission and slide differing from their lexical counterparts due to their origin [Burukina, p. 55].

We offer to prepare special comments that would not include historical and cultural information only, but pragmatic information as well, which is absolutely necessary in many cases.

Let’s dwell upon the special commentaries mentioned above in more detail. We propose to restore the lost links of the dialogue between the author and the reader, adding commentaries about onyms to classics. So we have analysed Druon’s onyms and their impact in the Russian translations and prepared special commentaries, in which we tried to enlarge usual geographic and historic data adding some information implied in the onyms used in this novel. The commentaries we made for the novel are used at the lessons on home reading on the third year of the French Department of the Part-time Faculty of Moscow State Linguistic University and cover the following three cases:

1) In case a name is used in the text in its direct meaning, we offer to give historical and cultural information, choosing items in connection with the text, for instance:

p. 24 Guillaume II – emperor of Germany (1888-1918). He pursued imperialistic conquer policy, which resulted in tense relations between Germany on one side and France and the UK on the other. He declared war against France on 03.08.1914.

German names in French text present a certain difficulty for Russian students: they are written in French, while in Russian they are transliterated from German;
2) In case when onyms function is to describe and characterise a certain phenomenon, event or an allusion, we offer to give its pragmatic characteristics:

p. 212  *l'affolement du Panama* – the largest financial scandal in the Third Republic connected with the construction of the notorious interocean canal in Panama (1879-1881). The scandal generated serious political and ideological repercussions.

thus revealing the emotions of people who suffered from this fraud.

3) In case of omitted names: «*La République avait élu pour premier président d’après la victoire l’un des hommes les plus élégants de France qui, en peu de semaines, sombrait dans la folie...*» (Druon, p. 27) we restored the omitted name – for instance Paul Deschanel, elected President of the Republic on 18 February who resigned on 16 September 1920.

Thus, only in case of a particular, specially intended text processing we can create an opportunity to interpret correctly and completely the functions of each onym used in the novel by M. Druon and bearing important cultural information. Yet, the writer’s addressing bearers of the French culture only prevents readers of many others national and cultural backgrounds from obtaining complete information, and primarily its implications and connotations included into the connotative fields of the onyms.

Summarizing this article I would like to offer the following conclusions.

1. The crucial transformations in the state structures, political, social and economic systems, tendencies dominating in ideology have entailed considerable changes in languages and mentality including the background knowledge, and the changes prevent new generations from understanding the implied meanings and connotations included in connotative fields of many onyms – whatever language they speak Russian, English, French or any other.

2. The changes in the ideologies and mentalities of most nations have affected the vocabularies of most languages: formerly widely known and widely used words and set phrases are subject to resemantisation or archaisation, as well as reconnotation, with the process of introducing new ones into active use going in parallel.

3. These changes may create serious problems for translators/interpreters in their daily work and for readers in their correct interpretation and understanding of literary works: direct equivalents to many original words have acquired differing/opposing connotations (i.e. underlying senses).
4. The onym loses its semantic transparency when translated, it loses
the scope of its associations and the emotions and feelings it was
supposed to inspire, so translators/interpreters should use special
transformations that can help them.
5. We offer to use certain ‘connotative’ transformations including con-
notative substitution, connotative addition, connotative omission
and slide differing from their lexical counterparts due to their origin.
The use of such connotative tools leads to proper perception of the
translated text by its readers.
6. Nowadays a worthy book in a foreign language demands special
commentaries revealing the implied senses and connotations to be
prepared before reading and discussing.
7. Thus, the onyms do not start associating with facts only, but accu-
mulate a scope of associations, emotions, feelings and senses behind
them, and do not only become logically connected with some cir-
cumstances or facts, but start arising the mentioned scope of emo-
tions and connotations in the mind of the person processing the
knowledge including them.

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