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**HOW TO SPICE UP A BREAKFAST CEREAL  
OR THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURALLY BOUND  
REFERENTIAL ITEMS  
IN “THE BLUEST EYE” BY TONI MORRISON  
AND “VINELAND” BY THOMAS PYNCHON**

**Theoretical background**

Undoubtedly, a literary work is a comprehensive phenomenon. It might be interpreted, analysed, read, perused and commented on from multifarious points of view, from different perspectives, theoretical or pragmatic standpoints and possibly according to various schools of literary interpretation. More traditional approaches perceive meaning as embedded in the literary text, intertwined with presupposed intentions of the author. More recent prefer to consider a text to be an infinite interplay of meanings, detached from any predetermined assumptions, an independent source of meaning generation.

Undeterred by those apparent discrepancies many ventured to fathom the poetics of a novel. One of the most insightful attempts, Barthes's “S/Z” distinguishes five codes which are applied in the reading of a text, each of the codes being “one of the voices of which a text is woven” (Barthes 1971:27-28). The codes allow “to identify elements which have similar effect and belong to the functional space a code designates” (Culler 197: 203). The five codes specified in “S/Z” are: proairetic (the reader's construction of plot), hermeneutic (enigma and solution, a logic of question and answer), semic (semantic features relating to the development of characters), symbolic (focus on symbolic reading) and referential (the cultural background the text refers to)” (Culler 1975:202-203). The referential code is referred to as “an anonymous, collective voice, whose origin is in human wisdom” (Barthes 1971:27-28) and its primary function is to denote a concrete though fictitious reality, to fulfill the function of “descriptive residue”, to substantiate the reader's belief that the presented world does form a part of a coherent reality, to create the mimetic effect (Culler 1975:192-193). The

uniformity of a literary vision plays an essential role in the reader's perception of a novel and, therefore, the comprehension of the relevance of every descriptive object rooted in a particular culture is essential for the comprehensive appreciation of a work of art by a reader not familiar with that particular culture. The fictional contract concluded between the reader and the narrative reality stipulates that the presented reality should retain its referential wholeness because only when the reader is acquainted with the referential code of the novel he is able to grasp the complex interplay of meanings within a text. A great deal of literature would lose all of its captivating charm when deprived of those precious little details that make the fictitious reality so true and so palpable. Translation is in these details.

In consideration of the above, it may safely be stated that special attention must be drawn to the translation of the elements of a text which fall into the category of cultural reference. The very act of translation presupposes the shift of the audience, the transfer of sense and the transubstantiation of the many levels on which a text operates including the level of cultural implication. The approach presented below, which aims to render culturally bound referential items, can be concisely defined as a sociolinguistics of translation, "describing the way translators can adapt texts to the needs of a different audience in the way we all adjust our language to suit the people we are talking to" (Fawcett 1971:2). The importance of such an approach was frequently indicated by many scholars. The theory of dynamic equivalence offered by Eugene Nida can be deemed a classic example: such equivalence can be defined in terms of "the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language". And although "the response can never be identical for the cultural and historical settings are too different, but there should be a high level of equivalence or the translation will have failed to accomplish its purpose" (Nida, Taber 1982:22-24). In his other work "Linguistics and Ethnology in Translation Problems", Nida compiles a list of items which indicates the areas a translator should take into consideration while examining both his own and the target culture and thus allowing him to become not only bilingual as he may already be, but also bicultural (Nida 1945:194-208). The list includes areas of items the translation of which will be later analysed in this article (e.g. flora and fauna – the plant *wintergreen* in "The Bluest Eye", household objects – the breakfast cereal *Froot Loops* in "Vineland").

As a consequence, the translator's task in relation to culturally bound items will be an attempt to retain the descriptive wholeness of the cultural objects from the original text at the same time endeavouring to translate them in a manner assuring the similarity of response of the receptors of the original and target text. The reconciliation of these two principles has led to never-ending and inconclusive

dispute as to what constitutes the better mode of translation: a drive towards “ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values” (Venuti 1995:20) (involving the so-called translator’s invisibility (Venuti 1995:1-42)) called domestication or a tendency which “entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language” (Venuti 1997:242) called foreignization. The present article will not end this ongoing debate offering contradictory judgments based on different criteria. Levefere patriotically states in defence of the domesticating method: “The artistically perfect translations in a national literature are the means by which the linguistic genius of a nation defends itself against what is foreign by cunningly stealing from it as much as possible” (Levefere 1977:97) while many others claim otherwise i.e. Venuti opposes on similar grounds: It is “highly desirable [...] to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation” (Venuti 1995:20), Nida cognitively observes: “[people have] capacity for adjustment to the behavioural patterns of others. [...] It would seem that we possess a kind of grid which we can employ to reinterpret experience in terms of some other conceptual framework” (Nida 1964:55) and e.g. Hejwowski computationally confirms: “if calculations of costs, losses and gains result in a decision to translate the text I would like to argue that culture-bound items [...] should be preserved whenever possible” (Hejwowski 2004:131). Suffice is to say that a wide range of translation techniques or procedures have been developed to overcome this apparent conundrum.

Most notably, researchers such as Vinay and Darbelnet, Newark, Hejwowski, Klaudy, Nida, Hervey, Higgins and Haywood provide in-depth analyses of translation procedures. Their taxonomies will be reworked and complemented for the purpose of the analysis of selected items from the books by Toni Morrison and Thomas Pynchon. The main criteria for choosing a particular technique for the translation of a cultural item will be the translator’s choice concerning the transfer of the implicit knowledge of the receptors of the original text into the confines of comprehensibility of the receptors of the target text. Consequently, the assumptions of the translator will be directly reflected in the chosen technique. In other words, what the translator thinks the audience knows determines how he translates the text.

Another aspect of trans-cultural transmission has to be taken into account when suggesting a framework for translation of culturally bound items is loss as understood by Newmark:

*“[Translation] involves some kind of loss of meaning due to a number of factors. It provokes a continuous tension, a dialectic, an argument based on the claims of each language. The basic loss is a continuum between overtranslation (increased detail) and undertranslation (increased generalization)”* (Newmark 1982:7).

As it was mentioned before, a successful translation should precisely transfer the referential code of a novel and, as a result, should employ the translator's assumptions about the source and target receptors. Naturally, the translated text often drifts towards increased detail for fear of widening the yawning gap in the reception of the cultural message. This marked tendency was reflected in the search for translation universals resulting in the explicitation hypothesis i.e. the belief that specific characteristics of translated text are distinct from the non-translated language. This would be the same whatever language pair is involved and might include greater cohesion and explicitation (Hatim, Munday 2004:7). Again, the thin borderline between clearer expression and superfluous digression gives rise to controversy (to say nothing of the overlapping of related terms such as explicitation, addition, complementation, amplification, expansion) but for the purpose of this article, explicitation, being far from accusations of verbosity or redundancy, will mean nothing more than the necessary clarification of implicit cultural message of the original text in the surface structures of the target language and will not by any means be considered erroneous.

Furthermore, it is also the specificity of literary work that should be investigated. A literary work, unlike purely utilitarian texts, possesses a delicate structure, exquisitely balanced elements which contribute to the overall magnificence. Every word like a facet which constitutes a unique aspect of the diamond the whole novel surely is. Therefore, as Landers suggests any interpolations have to be done carefully and with consideration for the rhythmic flow of the language and made as imperceptible as it can be (Landers 2001:94). All translation techniques tampering with literature have to make an allowance for the quantitative aspect since, ultimately, it is better to leave a subtle exotic mysterious butterfly alone than turn it into a perfectly explicable linguistic juggernaut. Moreover, Hejwowski observes that implicatures kill the humorous aspect of a text, give the audience the impression of being patronized, spoil the reconstruction part of the reading process and turn a literary work into an encyclopedia obliterating its aesthetic function (Hejwowski 2004:137).

### **Translation procedures**

Now, with loss accepted as a necessary but admittedly a creative drive behind translation processes, with quantitative and stylistic constraints in view, with translator's bicultural competence at the helm and with the ultimate goal of bridging the cultural gap in literary works by focusing on the referential level of narration, we can suggest proper translation techniques.

- Exoticisms (Hervey, Higgins and Haywood 1995:20) - transfer without any changes in the form of translated source language word or expression; the level of adaptation is zero or very low, which stresses its foreign character,
- Borrowing (Vinay, Darbelnet 1958:47) – when the level of adaptation is also very low but the translated expression functions in the target language in its own right and its exotic character diminished or vanished,
- Calque (Hervey, Higgins and Haywood 1995:20) – literal translation of an expression from the source language
- Recognized equivalent (Newmark 1988:82-91) – when the translator uses a universally recognized equivalent for a given expression,
- Hypernyms (Hejwowski 2004: 141-142) – the result of undertranslation resulting in the choice of a superordinate word in case of items of low importance,
- Pragmatical explicitation (Klaudy 1998:82-83) – explicitation arising out of the need to bridge cultural differences,
- Cultural equivalent (Newmark 1988:82-91) – replacing a culture-specific item or expression with a target language equivalent,
- Cultural transplantation (Hervey, Higgins and Haywood 1995:20) – when the source language is completely adapted to the target language,

Ernst-August Gutt suggests that there can be two main approaches to translation: the paraphrase method and the citation method. The first seems to follow the premises of domestication the other – foreignization. The paraphrase method can compensate for explicable cultural differences and in this way achieve the effect of greater comprehensibility – in other words the bigger the degree of domestication the smaller the authenticity of the text. However, when there is a multitude of cultural differences, just slight naturalization becomes inefficient and the need arises for full-fledged cultural transplantation. The citation method does not domesticate the text in order to diminish cultural differences so it retains a high level of authenticity, but the audience are required to possess a proper level of cultural knowledge (Gutt 2004:25-31). In consideration of the above it may be concluded that without resorting to the extremity of cultural transplantation, a translator can only achieve his ultimate yet elusive goal i.e. reconciliation of aesthetic integrity and cultural transparency, he should focus on the subtle rendition of the fleetingly germane cultural differences that mean so much in the overall reception of a novel. In other words to lift the veil of culture just enough to let in the light of understanding and not to blind the reader with dazzling obviousness. Or to fish out the implicit and imperceptibly blend it with the tasty dish of literature. After the apt assessment of his audience's cultural competence (in this case an average Polish reader) a translator should bring forth only the necessary elements to strike a subtle balance between spoiling/patronizing the lazy reader with ready-made explicitations (which could also mean spoiling the pleasure of reading) and leaving the reader at the mercy of

his oft vestigial cultural knowledge (which could lead to utter frustration at the impenetrability of a book).

The following assumptions seem to come in handy when translating cultural references in the descriptive level of a novel:

- a culturally bound item is widely recognized by source and target culture reader because of its international status, commercial success etc. and has been internalized by the target culture – such an item in translation remains the same (e.g. hot dog – hot dog) and is translated with its recognized equivalent, borrowing or calque.
- a culturally bound item is unique, not recognized by the target audience and of considerable referential importance for the novel – exoticism with optional explicitation (e.g. mince pie – *mince pie* świąteczne ciasto z nadzieniem)
- a culturally bound item, not recognized by the target audience and of relative importance for the novel - translation along with various forms of explicitation (wintergreen – starzęsła o przenikliwej woni),
- a culturally bound item is not recognized by the target audience and is of low importance and relevance for the referential code – such an item should be rendered using hypervyms (e.g. A-levels – egzaminy).

In case of proper names in the function of referents in the descriptive level of a novel the following assumptions seem to be useful:

- a culturally bound proper name is widely recognized by the source and target culture reader – such an item in translation remains the same (e.g. FBI - FBI) or is translated with its recognized equivalent, borrowing or a calque,
- a culturally bound proper name is unique, not recognized by the target audience and of considerable or relative referential importance for the novel – a) exoticism with optional explicitation (e.g. 7/11 – sklep calodobowy 7/11) in order to emphasize the mimetic effect or b) (whenever it seems justifiable to sacrifice the mimetic effect for the sake of generally perceived humorous effect, tone or style of a book; in case of (also but not only) fictitious names included into the novel because of the name's associations) calque/cultural equivalent/cultural transplantation – whichever is more successful - with optional explicitation (Raggedy Ann – Anka Szmacyanka). In this case a translator who ventures to find a cultural equivalent might be required to create a non-existent but still credible cultural equivalent just to legitimize the novel's reality – in other words he might answer the question what this proper name would look like if it was an inherent part of the target culture of translation with all its linguistic and extra-linguistic properties.
- a culturally bound proper name is not recognized by the target audience and is of low importance and relevance for the referential code – such an item should be rendered using hypervyms (e.g. 7/11 – sklep).

## “The Bluest Eye” by Toni Morrison

“The Bluest Eye” is a novel by an American author Toni Morrison. The story depicts about a year from the life of a young black girl named Pecola. It is set in America’s Midwest in Lorain, Ohio, in the years following the Great Depression. “The Bluest Eye” is narrated from the perspective of Claudia MacTeer as a child and an adult, as well as from a third-person, omniscient viewpoint. It is crucial that the perspective of a child, still discovering all the new miscellaneous phenomena of the world around, is meticulously rendered by a translator who has to make sure that the reader closely follows the child’s foraging perception and not to impoverish the reception of the book.

Morrison uses the modernist techniques of stream-of-consciousness and multiple perspectives with the dominant mode being that of realism. She strives to create a distinctively black literature. Her prose is permeated with black musical traditions such as the blues, spirituals, gospel and jazz. In this way, she strives to create what she calls a “race-specific yet race-free prose” (Morrison 2004:171). That is why a translator has to retain the realistic elements appearing in the novel, which contribute to the rendition of the specificity of the black culture.

### Item 1

*Our illness is treated with contempt, **foul Black Draught**, and castor oil that blunts our minds* (Morrison 2004:6).

Item **foul Black Draught** can be translated with explicitation (although we could attempt to find an equivalent of this popular medicine such as *Czarny Łyk* or *Czerni Łyk*, but in case of “The Bluest Eye” our priority is the realistic presentation of the black culture): *wstrętny Black Draught na przeczyszczenie*.

### Item 2

*Her hands are large and rough and when she rubs **the Vicks salve** on my chest, I am rigid with pain* (Morrison 2004:6).

Item **the Vicks salve** was already clarified by the author herself so there is no need for more explicitation: *balsam Vicks*.

### Item 3

*Their conversation is like a gently wicked dance: **sound meets sound, curtsies, shimmies, and retires*** (Morrison 2004:10-11).

Item **sound meets sound, curtsies, shimmies, and retires** has to be carefully scrutinized. Although it has the form of a verb it refers to a distinct element of Afro-American culture i.e. a jazz dance called *shimmy* which consists in shaking the upper parts of the human body. So any rendition omitting this element such as: *dźwięk napotyka dźwięk, dyga, ponętnie drży i się oddala* will impoverish Morrison's message. A more complete version would include the *shimmy* element: *dźwięk napotyka dźwięk, dyga, ponętnie drży jakby tańczył shimmy i się oddala*.

#### Item 4

*He smelled wonderful. Like trees and lemon vanishing cream, and Nu Nile Hair Oil and flecks of SenSen* (Morrison 2004:10).

Item **Nu Nile Hair Oil** can be sufficiently made explicit by: *pomade do włosów Nu Nile*.

#### Item 5

*They laugh. Frieda and I are washing Mason jars* (Morrison 2004:9).

Item **Mason jars** as a generic name does not play an important descriptive role so it can easily be translated with a hypernym: *słoje* or with slight explicitation: *słoje na przetwory*.

#### Item 6

*Love, thick and dark as Alaga syrup, eased up into that cracked window. I could smell it - taste it - sweet, musty, with an edge of wintergreen in its base - everywhere in that house* (Morrison 2004:7).

Item **Alaga syrup** can be made more explicit by adding: *słodki syrop Alaga* to extend the love metaphor and to make the Polish reader at least slightly aware of the properties of the syrup often used as a sweet topping for pancakes, biscuits etc. Item **with an edge of wintergreen in its base** deserves special treatment. The plant wintergreen (or to be more specific American wintergreen, teaberry or checkerberry) is a unique species for the northeastern America so the Polish reader cannot be aware of any of its properties. The task of the translator here is more complicated since he has to choose from the variety of the properties of this plant in order to pick the most important for its explicitation in this context. In other words he has to select the paramount explicative trait which embodies the implicit information about this item. The research into the properties of American wintergreen reveals:

- oil of wintergreen is widely used as a medicine and has a distinctively medicinal smell, a sweet woody odour; it includes methyl salicylate which is a liquid with a strong, strident and long-lasting scent,
- wintergreen fruits are edible, with a minty flavour; the leaves make a fine herbal tea,
- Teaberry is also used for flavoring ice cream and root beer. It also inspired the name of Clark's Teaberry chewing gum.

After the analysis of the context from the novel the paramount explicative trait of wintergreen seems to be its intensity which Claudia MacTeer could smell and taste everywhere in the house. Hence the translation: *z wyrazistą/przenikliwą starzejącą nutą w swej konsystencji*. In case of lack of certainty of the proper explicative trait in the relevance scale of all the properties of a given item it is recommended to use an expression of maximal vagueness i.e. choose a more vague term to avoid misinterpretation when the context does not allow to make the meaning of an expression precise enough.

### Item 7

*Picture books were full of little girls sleeping with their dolls. **Raggedy Ann dolls** usually, but they were out of the question* (Morrison 2004:14).

Item **Raggedy Ann dolls** can be successfully rendered with a calque – the outcome sounds like a real Polish name for a doll: *lalki Anki Szmacianki* or *Szmaciane Anie*.

## “Vineland” by Thomas Pynchon

Vineland is a novel by an American writer Thomas Pynchon, a postmodern fiction set in California, United States in 1984, the year of Reagan's re-election. It is a story of rock music, drug use, cultural turmoil, social unrest and repression. Pynchon's fiction deconstructs cultural myths and its trademark is the creation of his fictional reality: swarming with colourful characters such as ex-hippie Zoyd Wheeler, brimming with wonderful puns, ingenious names, broad slapstick, extended metaphors, artfully complicated plots, spellbinding with an amusing array of elements from popular culture but also scientific, literary and historical discourses. A true postmodern landscape of the novel with a multitude of cultural elements where the fictional is inextricably woven into the real with no indication when one ends and the other begins offers the translator a chance to take his

cue from the general tone of the book and engage in much freer translation. The narrator is advised or even has to playfully render this chaotic world which eschews the possibility of meaning, to spice it up, to find coherence in the postmodern semiotic iridescence which is a no mean feat indeed.

### Item 1

*On the table in the kitchen, next to the Count Chocula Box, which turned out to be empty he found a note from Prairie (Pynchon 1991:2).*

Item **The Count Chocula Box** can be rendered using a calque: *plutki Hrabiego Czokuli* lub *plutki Hrabiego Czekoladuli*. Cultural equivalent found in Polish reality would be: *Mlekolaki* retaining the scary creature reference.

### Item 2

*“Froot Loops again I guess” he muttered at the note. With enough Nestle Quik on top they weren’t all that bad [...] (Pynchon 1991:2).*

Item **Nestle Quik** is so recognized that can easily be left unchanged. Item **Froot Loops** could be left unchanged since it is a popular brand of breakfast cereal although not yet in Poland. There are, however, some instances in which the translator could sacrifice the referential faithfulness and simply spice the translation up for the greater good of the excellence of the final effect. The retention of the name plays a minor role in building the stylistic effect of Pynchon’s work contrary to possible ingenious renditions that could spice the Froot Loops up. The exotic-sounding name tells almost nothing to the Polish receptors while a successful, comprehensive rendition could uncover many flavours. What would be the cultural equivalent of Froot Loops if the name originated in the Polish reality? Research in the cereal brands on the Polish market reveals: *Owocowe Kóleczka*, *Hopki*, *Magusie* and *Mlekolaki*. The translator, however, could think of precise rendition of this item on its many levels creating a precise cultural equivalent of it just for the sake of the novel. An example of such practice could be the rendition of **Froot Loops** to: *Owocowe KręCiolki* which retains the complexity of the original:

- on the level of meaning (fruit – owocowe, loops – kręciolki, fruit loop [the slang meaning of which is “dork”, “moron” or “eccentric”] – ciolek),
- on the pragmatic level (the translation sounds and looks like a true brand name of breakfast cereal),
- on the level of linguistic play with the written form of the words (in the English version – Froot instead of Fruit, in the Polish version – the capitalization of C in the middle of the word KręCiolki).

The Polish reader receives so much more instead of a cryptic English-sounding name. Nevertheless, it must be said that such “spicing up”, to use the term from the title of this article, has to be performed with utmost meticulousness because even a hint of foul spice can render the whole dish uneatable or indigestible.

### Item 3

[...] he proceeded to the men's room of the **Breez-Thru gas station**, where he shifted into the dress [...] (Pynchon 1991:3).

Item **the Breez-Thru gas station** could be defined as a mimetic explicative enigma. In texts like “Vineland” the borderline between factual items and the ones invented by the author is a very thin indeed. In reality there is a car wash called Breeze-Thru. It is impossible to determine which name has come into the existence first: was it Pynchon's idea and somebody copied his idea into real life or did Pynchon copy real life incorporating it into his fiction or perhaps these two names have nothing in common and were chosen just because of the very colourfulness of the phrasal verb “breeze through” evoking the image of a breeze and expressing swiftness of actions. A true enigma but its solution is irrelevant for the translation of the playful text of “Vineland”. It is the humorous effect and not the mimetic links that determine the translation procedure of this item: *stacja Bryza*, *stacja Śmig-w-Mig* or *stacja Auto-Glanc*, *stacja Hadwao*, *stacja Niagara*, *stacja Auto-Blysk* would be possible renditions.

### Item 4

He got a quart of oil [...] and poured this into a tank of an elegant little important-looking chain saw about **the size of a Mini-Mac** [...] (Pynchon 1991:3).

Item **the size of a Mini-Mac** can be translated by means of explicitation: *wielkości karabinka Mini-Mac*. Here explicitation is a must because the Polish reader could easily mistake the name Mini-Mac denoting a gun for Mini-Mac denoting a computer whose name is much more popularized in Poland.

### Item 5

[...] Owing to a convoy of **Winnebagos** on some leisurely tour of the redwoods, in among whom, on the two line stretches, he was obliged to gear down and put up with a lot of attention (Pynchon 1991:3).

Item **Winnebagos** can be translated by means of a hypernym since in this context it just stands for a generic name for recreational vehicles: *samochody kempingowe* or *kampery*.

## Item 6

"Gimme a break," he yelled over the engine noise, "it's, uh, **a Calvin Klein original!**" (Pynchon 1991:3).

Item **a Calvin Klein original** has to be translated without any changes since it is a well-recognized brand name: *oryginalny Calvin Klein*.

## Item 7

*Dangerous men with coarsened attitudes, especially towards death, were perched around lightly on designer barstools, sipping **kiwi mimosas*** (Pynchon 1991:4).

Item **kiwi mimosas** can be translated using explicitation: *damski drink kiwi mimosa*. The contrast between the expected type of drink for dangerous men and the actual ones, effeminate low alcohol drinks, has to be stressed. Mimosa cocktail is a popular drink in the US and is commonly used as hair of the dog or at wedding receptions.

## Item 8

*He wore sunglasses with stylish frames, **a Turnbull&Asser shirt** in some pastel plaid, three-figure-price-tag **jeans by Mme. Gris**, and **après-logging shoes** of a subdued, but incontestably blue suede* (Pynchon 1991:4).

Items **a Turnbull&Asser shirt** and **jeans by Mme. Gris** could be additionally (but not necessarily) explicated as: *markowa koszula Turnbull&Asser* or *eleganckie/ekskluzywne dzinsy Madame Gris* since those upscale brands might not be recognizable for the Polish reader. Item **après-logging shoes** requires careful attention of the translator. It is an ironic paraphrase of the expression *après-skiing* (literally *after skiing*) which means going out and socializing after skiing and which is increasingly used in a derogatory sense of being only interested in the skiing image rather than actual physical activity. Pynchon uses this term to describe homosexual men at a bar showing off their trendy outfits and exuding the sex appeal of a lumberjack. Here we have to find a cultural equivalent capturing this concept. Attempts could include: *buty a la szpan na drwala* or to retain the exotic French element in the original: *lanserskie buty w stylu drwal couture* (hinting at *haute couture*).

## Item 9

*Zoyd got up, put a white suit he'd borrowed from Scott Oof on over his Hawaiian shirt, rolled up the cuffs of the pants, which were a little long, left open the jacket, too tight and also too long, giving it a **zoot-suit effect** [...] and hit the street [...]* (Pynchon 1991:53).

Item a **zoot-suit effect** could look awkward if left in its original form just with explicitation. Since in this context we are mostly interested not in the cultural associations of zoot-suiters as a sub-culture or a social group but rather in the cut of the piece of clothes it would be possible to leave out the term *zoot* and apply cultural transplantation. The Polish equivalent of zoot-suiters was a sub-culture called *bikiniarze* wearing similar clothes and professing similar (not only fashion) values. So after dispensing with the awkward: *wyglądał jakby ubrał szpanerski zoot suit* we can suggest more or less adapted versions: *wyglądał jak bikiniarz w szpanerskim garniaku*, *wyglądał jak ubrany w workowaty gajer bikiniarza*, *wyglądał jak szpaner w gajerku "na kilowatach"* (this is how *bikiniarze* called the Polish version of a zoot suit; the name is derived from the bagginess of the suit which looked as if, and often was, filled with cotton wool, hence "na kilowatach"). However, such explicitation might seem exaggerated and many might claim that such rendition applies outdated terminology of dead and buried social phenomena (*bikiniarze*, "na kilowatach") understood only by the older generation. So ultimately, bearing in mind that the focus is just on the fashion, we could get over the loss and translate: *wyglądał jak szpaner w przydużym/obwisłym/workowatym garniaku*.

## Conclusion

The constant challenge to the translator, the opportunity for bridging cultural precipices, the rapture of linguistic precision – the translation of a literary work, that is – could bring a whole smorgasbord of difficulties. Different types of novels offer different restrictions and avenues of translation: those in more realistic conventions allow less room for maneuver, move in the direction of foreignization, while other in more permissive conventions like the postmodern one allow less constrained transfer and more freedom for the sake of retaining the coherence of the interplay of meanings in the text even though the aim of their translation still remains to preserve the uniqueness of cultures and the starting point for any translation ventures is the domain of foreignization with only tentative, timid and tenuous forages into the realm of domestication.

When preparing the translator's brew in the kitchen of cultural transubstantiation, the master of the ceremony, the translator, should display utmost delicacy whichever recipe he chooses. No matter whether it is more exotic or includes more domestic ingredients, he should scrutinize the tastes of the consumers of his work, and by means of his translator's lore select the best way to spice it up, to bring out the hidden, implicit flavours so that they could be later savoured by literary gourmets. Too much spice will kill the inherent taste, none will leave the dish bland.

## Summary

This article will attempt to suggest translation procedures necessary to translate culturally bound items in the referential level of a literary work illustrated with examples from two novels: "The Bluest Eye" by Toni Morrison and "Vineland" by Thomas Pynchon. First, the article will include a general description of the referential level in literary works offering possible avenues of

its rendition, then present a discussion of theoretical approaches to this issue and finally suggest a translation methodology and techniques together with practical examples of the theory at work.

**Key words:** translation procedures and techniques, culturally bound items, cultural references, explicitation.

## Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł stanowi próbę znalezienia procedur przekładowych niezbędnych do przetłumaczenia elementów specyficznych dla danej kultury na poziomie referencyjnym dzieła literackiego na przykładzie dwóch powieści: "The Bluest Eye" Toni Morrison oraz "Vineland" Thomasa Pynchona. Na wstępie artykuł zawiera ogólny opis poziomu referencyjnego dzieła literackiego przedstawiając możliwości jego przekładu, następnie prezentuje różne teoretyczne podejścia do tej kwestii, by ostatecznie zasugerować metodologię takiego przekładu oraz stosowne techniki, które zostały użyte w przykładach realizujących założenia teoretyczne w praktyce.

**Słowa kluczowe:** techniki i procedury tłumaczeniowe, elementy specyficzne kulturowo, odniesienia kulturowe, eksplikacja.

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