

Selected Problems in Translation of Culture-bound Elements in Marek Hłasko's *Beautiful Twentysomethings*

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Wybrane problemy tłumaczenia elementów kulturowych w przekładzie *Pięknych dwudziestolnich* Marka Hłaski

Streszczenie: Artykuł analizuje tłumaczenie wybranych elementów kulturowych w *Pięknych dwudziestolnich* Marka Hłaski w odwołaniu do teorii Olgierda Wojtasiewicza, Krzysztofa Hejwowskiego i Petera Newmarka. Składa się z czterech części, w których, kolejno, omówione zostały przekłady elementów kulturowych związanych z rzeczywistością komunizmu w Polsce, aluzji kulturowych i literackich oraz pochodzące od tłumacza poprawki wyrażen anglojęzycznych w utworze. Na końcu sformułowane zostały syntetyczne wnioski z analiz.

Słowa kluczowe: elementy kulturowe w przekładzie, aluzje literackie, Marek Hłasko, Ross Ufberg

Selected Problems in Translation of Culture-bound Elements in Marek Hłasko's *Beautiful Twentysomethings*

Abstract: The subject of the article is an analysis of the translation of selected culture-bound terms in *Beautiful Twentysomethings* by Marek Hłasko. The study is based on theoretical assumptions by Olgierd Wojtasiewicz, Krzysztof Hejwowski and Peter Newmark. The study is divided into four parts. The first one discusses translations of cultural elements relating to the Communist realm in Poland. The second focuses on the ways knowledge of the cultural allusions has been transmitted. The third one presents the analysis of the ways literary allusions were translated. The fourth one presents the translator's amendments of Marek Hłasko's English expressions. The conclusions complement the study.

Key words: culture-bound terms in translation, literary allusions, Marek Hłasko, Ross Ufberg

Introduction

One of the most obvious dimensions of translation perceived as transmission of otherness is articulating culture-bound terms in a target language.

Olgierd Wojtasiewicz called them ‘technical terms’, ‘erudition allusions’, symbols, linguistic allusions, modes of addressing people and referring to other persons, time span between the origins of the source text and the origins of the translation.¹ Presenting and categorizing these problems served him as a way of discussing limits of translatability. Although Wojtasiewicz’s position has been challenged – Krzysztof Hejwowski described it as ‘the myth of untranslatability’,² his enumeration of cultural elements that need to be translated with the application of special procedures remains valid. Both scholars identify two types of untranslatability. For them, linguistic untranslatability emerges when a lexical or syntactical equivalent for a source language item does not exist in a target language. Culture-bound terms are in turn matters of cultural untranslatability, when a target culture does not offer a relevant substitute for a source culture item. However, there are ways to compensate for these problems.

Peter Newmark uses a term ‘cultural categories’ in reference to culture-bound terms.³ He perceives them as very sensitive expressions that are intrinsically and uniquely related to national culture and tradition, and sketches his own areas where they may come from. However easy to detect within texts, they require special competence from translators in terms of both knowledge and professional skills.

For Hejwowski, the term ‘culture-bound item’ covers numerous phenomena characteristic to one culture that also pose certain questions and problems in translation, as they rarely have the same linguistic meanings in the source text and the target text.⁴ They are also subjects of interpretation especially on the ground of literature. Therefore, Hejwowski emphasizes their roles in literary texts as being “invitations to intellectual games, to journeys to other lands, other times, other worlds, other minds”.⁵

The aim of this article is to analyze and evaluate the ways selected culture-bound terms in *Piękni dwudziestoletni* by Marek Hłasko⁶ were translated into English by Ross Ufberg. The relevant questions also concern the best possible effects the translations may have on American readers.

Ross Ufberg’s choice of translating Hłasko’s book was a result of long fascination with this prose. The translation of *Piękni dwudziestoletni* was preceded by the publication of his versions of several short stories by this author. This allowed him to recognize the important features of Hłasko’s

¹ See O. Wojtasiewicz, *Wstęp do teorii tłumaczenia*, Warszawa 1975, p. 65–98.

² K. Hejwowski, *Translation: A Cognitive-Communicative Approach*, Olecko 2004, p. 128–132.

³ P. Newmark, *Translation and Culture*. In: *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1988, p. 112.

⁴ See K. Hejwowski, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes from Hłasko’s book come from the edition: M. Hłasko, *Piękni dwudziestoletni*, Warszawa 2014. They are referenced in the main body by indicating the number of the relevant pages in brackets.

unique style. However, the short stories do not pose translators as many difficulties as *Piękni dwudziestoletni*; it is a true catalogue of facts, names, and comments on authentic situations of Polish cultural life under Communism. Consequently, it requires a great competence and tidiness in transferring this data to English-speaking readers.

Ufberg adopted several approaches to address these needs. Firstly, he appended the body of the translated text with a foreword by an acclaimed Polish literary scholar living in the United States;⁷ it legitimizes his work and provides necessary cultural background to American readers unfamiliar with Polish history. Secondly, he offers a detailed glossary including a great deal of information about relevant figures, events and cultural data mentioned in the text. Thirdly, wherever it is possible or necessary, the translator explains cultural items so the narrative is enriched in his brief comments and appositions. In consequence, the act of reading the translation becomes a journey into Polish culture and history with numerous tracks provided by the translator who moves between facts, anecdotes and Hłasko's 'apt inventions' effortlessly.

1.1. Translation of Terms Related to the Communist Realm

As Beautiful Twentysomethings is a literary memoir of Hłasko's early career that flourished after the October, numerous references to the Communist realm in the book create an essential background to the narrative. Consequently, they are major challenges for translators, who not only need to look for verbal equivalents of words and phrases, but also must provide sufficient explanations, both meaningful and communicative. In most cases, Ufberg managed to strike a happy medium between excessive and lacking or irrelevant explanation of culture-bound terms related to the Communism in Poland.

Equally, the book is a liable-diary, where facts fuse together with fiction. Hłasko's anecdotes are conglomerates of facts (experienced and just heard or read) and pure fiction, a sudden clash of general and detailed, of seriousness and parody.⁸ The author plays with the categories of truth and fiction in literature, which is a leitmotif of his narrative. The interplay between fact and gossip characterized the atmosphere of the Communist Poland, where only the oral, informal circulation of news was to be

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations of Hłasko's book are taken from the edition: M. Hłasko, *Beautiful Twentysomethings*. Translated by R. Ufberg. Foreword by J. Anders, New York: NIU Press, 2013. They are referenced in the main body by indicating the number of the relevant pages in brackets.

⁸ See B. Rudnicki, *Marek Hłasko*, Warszawa 1983, p. 20.

trusted. Obviously, in this secret, oral chain of passed information, facts must have fused with myths. Hłasko, who emulated oral literature, made this mode of story-telling a political act and thereby he clearly defined his position in the system. Navigating in the realm where written coverage was suspicious whereas the oral message was exaggerated was his best literary patelier. To emphasize this paradox, the author uses a term ‘prawdziwe zmyślenie’ [apt invention], which only apparently may be seen as contradictory. It alludes to the Aristotelian concept of mimesis which in literature is a verbal imitation of the real world by re-creating instances of human action and events or portraying objects so they could resemble the real ones. As Hłasko rightly argues, the imitation of reality does not equal authenticity. On the other hand, the authentic experience of World War II or Stalinism went beyond comprehension behind the Iron Curtain, and is often perceived as surreal or unbelievable. The writer bitterly concludes that “only prominent communist apparatchiks defecting to the West were greeted with open arms, book contracts, and teaching positions” (Ufberg 2013: xv). The real defectors were “greeted by years of misery, humiliation, waiting on visa: years of emptiness and despair” (Ufberg 2013: 98). It is why Hłasko often resorts to anecdotes or hilarious stories serving as wrapping of bitter pills of historic true that cannot be swallowed by Western readers in other forms. Black cosmism and pure nonsense serve as an inevitable fictional package amortizing the audience’s cognitive and emotional shock.

Polish version	Translation
sklepy za żółtymi firankami	stores behind the yellow curtains
komisariat	the police station
milicja	the police
więzienie sowieckie	a Soviet camp
nakaz pracy	a work order in the boondocks
Październik	October
tajniacy	secret agents / secret snoops
PGR-y	government farms
Państwowy Dom Towarowy	government department store/ nationalized retail stores
handel uspołeczniony	a nationalized store
wyrobiliśmy około czterdziestu, czasami około czterdziestu pięciu procent normy	we’d met about 40, sometimes 45 percent of the norm
donos	denunciation/personal confession
blągając go jednocześnie, aby zabrał ze sobą na wszelki wypadek suchy prowiant	they told him not to expect a free lunch

Table 1.1. Terms Related to the Polish People’s Republic in *Beautiful Twentysomethings*

In the Polish People’s Republic, stores behind yellow curtains (‘sklepy za żółtymi firankami’) were confidential shops where only employees of the Ministry of Public Defense, senior officials of the Polish United Workers’

Party as well as members of the PUWP's political bureau could purchase foods, especially imported delis. These shops were situated in major Polish cities, but the greatest number of them were to be found in Warsaw. Formally, they were closed in 1956 after Gomułka's thaw. Hłasko mentions them as a topic of journalism in *Po Prostu*, where young authors were unmasking social inequalities in Poland in the era of Stalinism. Without such explanation, the phrase 'stores behind yellow curtains' remains meaningless, and does not allow an understanding of the role of young journalists during the October. *Nota bene*, owing to the introduction by Jarosław Anders, the translator does not need to explain the October (Październik), and can use it within the narrative as a comprehensible term.

In *Beautiful Twentysomethings*, there are more terms related to shops and stores as the issue of buying goods preoccupied the attention of everybody living in the Communist state. Therefore, of particular difficulty was finding equivalents for the Communist forms of trade, production and agriculture. All of them were in the hands of the government that set up and controlled quantities and the distribution of goods. Although the translator managed to find understandable phrases to articulate ideas which are alien to American readers brought up in the capitalist free market realm, some amendments of the terminology might be suggested. It may be due to the fact that the term 'state' is not defined similarly in the United States and in Europe. For instance, 'government farms' which stand for 'PGR-y' are clear, whereas the most popular European available translations are 'state-owned collective farms', 'state collective farms', 'state-owned farms', 'state-owned homesteads', 'state-run homesteads'. Also, whereas 'government department stores' used by Ufberg are correct, the most frequent European translations of such shops are 'state department stores'. The reason why the word 'government' is used might relate to the fact that the term 'state' refers to different political entities in Europe and in the United States; the term 'government' is perceived as federal, and so it clearly conveys the idea of centrality.

Another challenge in translation of terms connected with trade is the differentiation between 'handel uspołeczniony' and 'handel detaliczny'. The first one was used as opposed to private, commercial initiatives hammered by the Communist state. However, it also covered this sector represented mostly by artisans. Obviously, retail trade in Poland was a part of the planned state-owned trade, yet these terms are not synonyms; the first one is subordinate of the latter. Consequently, using terms 'retail trade' and interchangeably is not completely precise. Evidently, knowledge of such nuances is not necessary to understand the overall atmosphere of the Communist economy. Using precise nomenclature as well as explaining differences between the terms would allow going into details by readers interested in world economic history.

Translating terms related to uniform state services in the Polish People's Republic requires special mention as well. The term 'militia'

or ‘Citizen’s Militia’ are in use to make a clear difference between these services in the years 1944–1990 and after the collapse of Communism. Rather than use these terms and gloss them, Ufberg consistently applies terms ‘the police’ for ‘milicja’ and ‘the police station’ for ‘komisariat’, which blurs the historic and political changes in the organization. Implementing such historic nomenclature would be also in line with other terms like ‘secret agents’ or ‘secret snoops’, which illustrate the ways ‘Citizen’s Militia’ adopted to invigilate society. *Nota bene*, it would be advantageous to unify all terminology referring to secret militia operatives. Making use of several English terms relating to the same activity may confuse readers by suggesting there were more than one kind of gumshoes in the Communist Poland.

Of a similar nature is the issue of the term ‘donos’ translated either as ‘personal confession’ or ‘denunciation’. According to *Słownik Języka Polskiego*: ‘donos’ is ‘a confidential accusation of committing a crime, offense against the law or policies, submitted to the authorities; a denunciation’.⁹ The meaning of this word is clearly pejorative. Even in English the phrase ‘a personal confession’ is not a synonym of ‘denunciation’; the more it is not in Polish, where the word has political connotations. Again, the usage of the word ‘denunciation’ might be unified within the whole translation.

In the area of political terms one comes across a phrase ‘a Soviet camp’ used as a translation of ‘więzienie sowieckie’. In the USSR, both labor camps and prisons were instruments of political repressions. Hłasko also alludes to both, which is confirmed in the glossary noting Kolyma and Lubyanka. Unfortunately, when Hłasko tells the story of Władysław Broniewski, the prisoner of Lubyanka, the translator uses the term ‘a Soviet camp’, which is both a lexical and a factual error.

In the case of ‘nakaz pracy’ translated as ‘a work order in the boondocks’, Ufberg assesses leaving the translation without any explanation as insufficient. Therefore, he included this phrase in his glossary and explicated (Ufberg 2013: 201): “compulsory job assignment. Recent graduates of universities and graduate schools would be assigned to a specific job, often in rural areas. Many young people wasted away in towns and villages where their expertise was neither wanted or appreciated, nor particularly useful”. The work order policy aimed at enhancing economic development as well as reducing unemployment and discontinuing classed society. However, the gloss is still informative and sufficient to understand the contextual meaning of the phrase.

By the same token, the term ‘norm’ might have been glossed. In the realm of the Polish People’s Republic, this word gained a particular negative fame due to the fact it was used by the Communist propaganda to attribute pathos

⁹ *Słownik języka polskiego*. Academic editor: Mieczysław Szymczak, Warszawa 2002, v. 1, p. 399.

to hard and cheap physical labor. Workers were encouraged to compete in fulfilling or exceed so-called norms, which in most cases were unrealistic. When the narrator sarcastically states: 'we'd met about 40, sometimes 45 percent of the norm' (Ufberg 2013: 7), on one hand he indirectly ridicules the idea of norms, on the other demonstrates authentic circumstances of economy in which achieving certain goals was impossible. A short gloss with a historic explanation of the term would allow not to be treated it as neutral or meaningless.

Among numerous culture-bound terms related to the Communist realm in Poland that were translated successfully in *Beautiful Twentysomethings* some require a slight correction. Hłasko tells the story Bolesław Bierut's diplomatic visit to Moscow:

Nie słuchano jednak wystarczająco uważnie jego słów: kiedy jechał do Moskwy, tłumy zebrane na dworcach ryczały radośnie na jego widok, błagając go jednocześnie, aby zabrał ze sobą na wszelki wypadek suchy prowiant, i dając mu dobrą radę, która w owym czasie stała się hasłem narodowym: „Wiesiek, trzymaj się” (Hłasko 2014: 110-111).

He alludes sarcastically to the mysterious death of Bierut during the 20th Party Congress in Moscow. At this Congress Nikita Khrushchev delivered the "Secret Speech" denouncing Joseph Stalin's purges. Shortly after, Polish political prisoners were liberated, and Bierut might have turned out insufficiently progressive in the announced era of less repressive Communism. Having this historic knowledge and perspective, the narrator anticipates the troubles the politician would come across in Moscow. The advice of taking a packed lunch with oneself refers to the conditions of Soviet political prisons to mention only Lubyanka or labor camps where prisoners starved to death. The sarcastic farewell at railway stations is meant to be ultimate, but the translator did not elevate the historic context of this bitter anecdote. His version: 'they told him not to expect a free lunch' does not communicate the factual layer of the story and changes the meaning of the event.

These comments should not detract from the overall high assessment of the translation of the terms relating to the Communist realm in Poland, which deserve almost unqualified praise.

1.2. Translation of Selected Cultural Allusions

As cultural allusions usually challenge translators, a number of them that have been translated in *Beautiful Twentysomethings* impress with their brilliance. None of the errors, in turn, seem detrimental to the novel's quality. I would like to single out some examples of both for special mention.

Polish version	Translation
lewy	leftist
na ciuchach	in your wardrobe
światlica	common room
rozczłowaliśmy się	we shook hands
chłopi	yokels/ farmers/ peasants
jak zdejmą ci medalik z szyi	when they tear the medallion from your neck
przyklęknij i ucałuj	kneel down on the floor and kiss their feet
Strzelec	the Polish paramilitary organization, <i>Strzelec</i>
Słuchaj, stary!	Listen, old man!

Table 1.2. Selected Cultural Allusions in *Beautiful Twentysomethings*

In the majority of instances, the culture-bound terms in *Beautiful Twentysomethings* are translated accurately, demonstrating the translator's broad research into Polish history. His text is ostensibly strong on European and Polish details. Only rarely may one encounter inappropriate comprehension of nuances of spoken idiomatic Polish. Sometimes it leads to misinterpretation of the source text like in the case of the word 'lewy' used by the narrator in the sense of 'unclean', 'suspicious'. The protagonist characterized himself this way to warn his colleagues. He was recruited by the secret political police to denounce his co-workers. He did not want to have any information about any irregularities in their company, and he did not want to reveal any negative facts in his potential denunciations, so he asked his manager to move him to another department where such irregularities could not occur. In his request he used an idiomatic word 'lewy' to suggest his collaborators should have not talked to him openly, so he could not witness any problems. Ufberg translated the word as 'leftist', which might suggest the protagonist had agreed to be the secret agent of the political police. This mistranslation changes the meaning of the scene and misinforms the readers.

Also, the phrase 'na ciuchach' translated as 'in your wardrobe' demonstrates insufficient access to cultural customs in Warsaw in the 1960s. As most of fashionable clothes were inaccessible in regular stores, habitants of the capital would buy them in the city market, where private producers or importers used to sell second-hand Western outfits or their imitations; Hłasko describes this innocent play with authorities in the chapter *Goofy, the dog*. The phrase 'na ciuchach' refers to the capital markets where the informal trade was an alternative to dull Communist design of clothes. The clothes market was the place where the bikini boys (the Polish equivalent of American beatniks) would purchase fashionable colorful clothes. This term might be translated as 'at outfit market' and explained either in the glossary or within the text.

A slight problem with imitating spoken vernacular Polish occurred in translation of a dialogue phrase 'Słuchaj, stary' which should have been

expressed as 'Listen, buddy' rather than 'Listen, old man'. The Polish expression does not refer to age but to the closeness in relationships therefore the latter version seems more accurate.

Some misgivings about translation of the phrase "jak zdejmą ci medalik z szyi, przykleknij i ucałuj" (a piece of humorous advice given to a man arrested in Italy) also emerge. In Catholic Italy the tradition of wearing crosses or holy medals with the image of Blessed Mary was very common. Manifesting attachment to this tradition was advised to prisoners so they could gain favor of the Italian police. The translation crosses over with the intention of the source text. It suggests to the arrested man a different behavior: "when they tear the medallion from your neck, kneel down on the floor and kiss their feet", which is not in line with the author's original words.

Another issue stemming from different cultural traditions is combined with greetings in Poland and America. In Poland, relatives and close friends kiss on the cheeks when they meet or say goodbye, which might not be common in the United States. Under Communism, this cordial way of greetings reserved for true relationships was moved onto the political stage. Communist leaders would kiss on the cheeks and mouth when they greeted one another at the Party congresses. This behavior was subject to criticism in the society that perceived these gestures as untrue and performed only for show. When recounting his difficulties with prolonging his passport as well as all experiences with the regime representatives in Western Europe, Hłasko sarcastically alludes to the way the Communist leaders acted. By saying that he kissed the agent of the political police goodbye, he simply recaps their meeting and suggests how unauthentic it was. Although the English version 'we shook hands' also emphasizes that persons with opposite political worldviews acted as if they fully agreed, it does not convey the cultural message the source text did.

What might have been challenging for American translators is presenting class division in postwar Poland, where the people consisted of farmers and workers apparently ruled the society. The cultural landscape of the Polish countryside has many individual features, which are quite important in the perception of the whole culture due to the fact that the majority of society in Poland was of rural background. The translator dealt well with the nuances of the Polish village's portrait sketched in Hłasko's story. He successfully used proper synonyms: farmers, peasants and yokels to refer to 'chłopi'. The differentiation of these terms alludes to the fact that in Poland farming was not only a way of making a living but a lifestyle, and inhabiting rural areas defined social status rather than an individual choice. The usage of such a wide range of terms in translation provides readers with broader knowledge of the specificity of the Polish rural culture.

Another impressive example of successful lexical choice is applying the word 'common room' for 'świątlica'. According to the Collins Dictionary of

American English a common room is ‘a room at a college used by the faculty members or students for socializing, relaxation etc.’,¹⁰ so on one hand the definition appeals to group activities, on the other it does not point to culture of farmers. Moreover, the dictionary identifies this term as British English. Even though the application of this term seems to be right in place for at least two reasons: firstly, it is understandable for American readers, secondly, it expresses the original idea very well.

This example shows a more general attitude adopted by Ufberg, which comes down to looking for the closest possible equivalents, avoiding extensive explanation or footnoting, when the information may be well articulated within the text. It does not mean, however, that he avoids explaining or adding necessary data. A good instance of such practice is explaining ‘Strzelec’ as ‘the Polish paramilitary organization’ even though the organization was separately glossed.

1.3. Translation of Selected Literary Allusions

The American translation of literary allusions in *Beautiful Twentysomethings* deserves, on the whole, the highest praise; however, several examples of special importance shall be singled out.

Polish version	Translation
reportaż Wyglądał jak Jasiński: młodzian piękny i ponury to miałby o czym dumać na paryskim bruku napisał wiersz, że kłania się rewolucji radzieckiej po polsku, czapką do ziemi stajemy się purpurowi jak maki pod Monte Cassino	assignment / story he looked like Jasiński: a young lad, handsome and gloomy what to think about on the Paris streets he wrote a poem in Polish that genuflected before the Soviet revolution, hat in hand you turn as crimson as the poppies at Monte Cassino

Table 1.3. Selected Literary Allusions in *Beautiful Twentysomethings*

The general rule of Ufberg’s translation is not to annotate the text at the bottom of pages and not to provide additional information explaining literary allusions. In result, some of them cannot be identified as quotations, intertextual allusions or allusions, which well emulates Hłasko’s style. The glossary at the end of the book allowed him to avoid footnoting numerous allusions occurring in the narrative. A fine example of such strategy is translating a phrase ‘stajemy się purpurowi jak maki pod Monte Cassino’

¹⁰ Collins Dictionary of American English, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/american-english>. The date of access: 3rd of April, 2017.

with a quotation from the famous Polish soldier song as 'you turn as crimson as the poppies at Monte Cassino'. In glossary, one may read:

"Monte Cassino, site of a battle in southern Italy between Axis powers and Allied forces in 1944. The Allied forces eventually broke through the German lines, but at an extremely high cost. »Czerwone maki na Monte Cassino« [»The Red Poppies of Monte Cassino«] is one of the best-known Polish military songs of World War II, composed on the eve of battle" (Ufberg 2013: 197)

which enabled the omission of further explanations within the translated text. This method gives the opportunity to read the story without distraction by frequent footnotes, as well as dwell the cultural past of Poland.

In his book, Hłasko refers to numerous literary conventions and genres such as novel, novelette, drama, epos etc. The nomenclature he uses is relevant either to the Polish or to the continental European tradition. In most cases they do not pose problems in translation. One exception is reportage (reportaż) that was called 'assignment' in *Beautiful Twentysomethings*. Such a term was introduced due to the fact that producing reportages was an obligatory task assigned to the Polish writers after 1949, when the doctrine of Socialist realism had been imposed on literature. Both young and acclaimed writers were forced to visit plants or construction sites to collect data for their literary works affirming the deeds and achievements of the Socialist state. Hłasko recounts his adventures in travelling around Poland and covering various topics in his reportages. The author collected his information on behalf of *Po Prostu*, so on one hand it was his job, on the other it was his own choice (Ufberg translated properly the statement about the journal: "The magazine had an excellent cadre of local reporters"). His journalism did not praise the system; to the contrary, the narrative gives evidence of the writer's subversive attitude to this task. Consequently, using the term 'assignment' is only partially legitimate. The equivalent of the Polish term 'reportaż' is 'reportage',¹¹ and such a word would better depict the activities of Hłasko in *Po Prostu*. Maybe the term might have been the subject of a separate gloss as well.

Another type of literary allusion is evoking authentic persons such as poets, playwrights, philosophers or prose writers, e.g. Miron Białoszewski, Cicero, Czesław Miłosz or literary characters e.g. Szczuka, Kitajczonok Li, Agnieszka, pan Kaczyński. Most of the authentic persons are glossed, so the allusions become understandable like in the case of the phrase 'Wyglądał jak Jasiński: młodzian piękny i ponury' translated as 'he looked like Jasiński: a young lad, handsome and gloomy'. The gloss explains that Jasiński was a 'Polish-Lithuanian general and poet who fell in the Kościuszko Uprising of 1799 against Imperialist Russian and Royal Prussian forces' (Ufberg 2013: 193). The gloss, however, does not explain the way Jasiński was presented as handsome and gloomy (*nota bene* the translation emulates well the sentence order of the source text). Depicting him this way, Hłasko quotes the lines

¹¹ See *Słownik terminów literackich*. Edited by J. Sławiński et al., Warszawa 1998, p. 655.

from *Book I* in *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz. In *Book I* Tadeusz looks at four portrait of the Polish patriots: Kościuszko, Tadeusz Rejtan, Jakub Jasiński and Samuel Korsak, which hang in the living room of his paternal uncle's house. The protagonist sees a copy of Jasiński's famous portrait by unknown painter, which is indicated by the words: *Dalej Jasiński, młodzian piękny i posepny*¹². Although the translator recognized the historic figure accurately, he did not read the intertextual layer of Hłasko's narrative, so his readers may not understand why Jasiński was 'handsome and gloomy' and why Lasota was compared with this figure. On the other hand one may ask how many Polish readers of the source text may know the meaning and the origins of this allusion. Without this knowledge they still may interpret the description of Lasota properly.

Another evocation of *Pan Tadeusz* that was not identified in the translation was a famous line 'dumać na paryskim bruku' which was frequently repeated by numerous émigré poets both in France and other countries. Although the phrase was translated properly as 'what to think about on the Paris streets', readers of the translation remain unaware of the origins of the words and the reasons why Hłasko evoked them. In fact, the narrator used this verse when telling his Parisian adventures at the very first stage of his emigration, so the quotation was introduced truly intentionally and in right place.

The successive example of difficulties with recognizing the meaning of a literary phrase is the translation of the sentence "napisał wiersz, że kłania się rewolucji radzieckiej po polsku, czapką do ziemi" which is a quotation of the lines from the poem by Broniewski *Pokłon rewolucji październikowej: Kłaniam się rosyjskiej rewolucji / Czapkę do ziemi: / Po polsku*¹³. The translation: "he wrote a poem in Polish that genuflected before the Soviet revolution, hat in hand" changes the sense of these lines due to the fact that the word order was moved. The phrase 'in Polish' was erroneously moved from the end of the sentence to its beginning, so the sense of the phrase was missed. Firstly, readers may imagine that Broniewski used to write poems in a language other than Polish, which is untrue. Secondly, they are deprived of the cultural knowledge of how Polish gentry greeted one another. By saying "I bow before the Soviet revolution/ Hat in hand/ like Poles do" the poet alludes both to his noble family background and his political worldview. Another place where the tradition of doffing hats appeared is the chapter *Goofy the dog*. It recalls reminded the behavior of students walking by the American embassy in Warsaw. This passage, translated accurately, might have influenced the a way of translation of Broniewski's lines.

¹² A. Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*. In: *Dzieła poetyckie*. Edited by K. Górski, „Czytelnik”, Warszawa 1983, p. 379.

¹³ W. Broniewski, *Pokłon rewolucji październikowej*. In: *Poezje zebrane*. A Critical Edition. Edited by [introduction] F. Lichodziejewska, Warszawa, v. 3, p. 37.

None of those errors affect the fluency of the text or would necessary lead the average reader to spot an unintended incoherence.

1.4. Translator's Amendments of Hłasko's English Expressions

Hłasko was fascinated with the United States and American culture. He left for the United States in 1966 at Roman Polański's invitation. His acquaintance with Polański and Krzysztof Komeda gave him access to Hollywood, where he tried to work as a screenwriter, without much success. Paradoxically, among other Polish writers in the United States, only Hłasko was the closest to the Hollywood model of an alienated American character, and he did not manage to harness the surroundings which inspired his self-creation¹⁴. He was offered a job of a TV series writer by CBS, but he failed to follow up on this offer. He needed to support himself by doing manual jobs. He had to work illegally as a driving instructor, in a comic book sorting department, in a sawmill and in an aluminum plant. He took flying lessons and worked on the American novel about a pilot. It was issued posthumously in 1985 as *Rice Burners* [*Palcie ryż każdego dnia*].

He published *Letters from America* in *Kultura*, in which he portrayed poor, forlorn outsiders living on the margins of American society. This could not, however, help him to manage his literary career without hard menial jobs. Paradoxically, it was his unsuccessful life in Hollywood that gave him the psychological background to portray a great number of Californian outsiders and castaways who could make their living by fulfilling the lowest needs of American audience. His interest in this dark and complex American realm made him more akin numerous American authors that shed light on moral and political corruption in society. Hłasko lived too briefly in the United States to depict their society in a comprehensive way, but his engagement with American popular culture and the discrepancy between the medial and actual image of the country allow him to be treated as a spiritual ally of many American writers and a precursor of multiethnic American literature written from immigrant positions.¹⁵

Hłasko's biography may partly explain why he used to introduce foreign expressions to his prose so frequently. His work is full of quotations and misquotations, as the writer playfully cites pulp fiction alongside high-brow literature. The quotes come mostly from the Russian, English

¹⁴ See H. Stephan, *Introduction: The Last Exiles*. In: H. Stephan, H. (ed.) *Living in Translation. Polish Writers in America*. Amsterdam – New York, 2003, p. 7.

¹⁵ See B. Holmgren, *America, America. Scouts of the Routes of Translation*. In: H. Stephan, H. (ed.) *Living in Translation. Polish Writers in America*. Amsterdam-New York, 2003, p. 31–32.

and German language. The reasons why the author used so many international phrases may be associated with the fact that in the Communist era learning Western languages was impeded, and the Russian language was obligatory in the Polish educational system. They depict the writer's desire to cross the circle of the Polish culture isolated from foreign influences by the Iron Curtain. In this sense, the usage of foreign vocabulary indicates the desire for freedom and freshness. It makes the narrative diverse and attractive to readers craving freedom of speech. Moreover, it illustrates Hłasko's strategy of creating his own legend of a cosmopolitan author reaching for the European cultural heritage naturally and without effort. One should not forget that the book was written in the West, in a sophisticated milieu of intellectuals and artists, which might have influenced its linguistic layer as well.

Breaking the rule of decorum, by combining a high style of syntax and vocabulary with unexpected quotation from foreign slang, was also a genuinely "Hłasko" way to play with literary traditions and the expectations of his audience, and the foreign expressions within his narrative depict well his intentions. However, some of them required amendments by the translator so they fitted better the syntax or the American contemporary dictionary. As a result, paradoxically, in the American translation of Hłasko's English expressions remain invisible, and only the Russian and German phrases may be the subject of reflection and the way of presenting the author as cosmopolitan.

Polish version	Translation
<i>commies</i> Kennedy czy Johnson musi się wyklócać z Kongresem o każdy grosz, który idzie na <i>space-action</i> Micky, tam przecież siedzi twoje dziecko Close up to teacher Kiedy w Londynie chodziłem na <i>body-building</i> postanowiłem pracować na <i>over-time</i> znaleźli się jednak <i>out of job</i> po angielsku <i>loser</i> , czyli przegrywacz można było pić na zasadzie <i>over-time</i>	<i>the commies</i> Kennedy or Johnson has to debate with Congress over every penny that goes into space exploration Mickey, your kid is sitting right there Zoom in on teacher When I used to go to the gym in London I resolved to work overtime found themselves with nothing to do What's politely called in English a "loser" you could drink till all hours

Table 1.4. Selected Amendments of the English Expressions in *Beautiful Twentysomethings*

Both the grammar and usage or the stylistic norm can explain the reasons why the amendments were introduced. In the first example of 'the commies' a definite article is added as it usually precedes nouns referring to a whole group or class. By adding the definite article the author is able to generalize about all possible members of this group and is in line with linguistic expectations of American readers.

The second phrase 'space-action' does not exist in American English as a collocation, so the translator had to replace it with a proper one. Ross Ufberg explains that:

'space exploration' was and still is the standard English term used to refer to the adventures in space of the 1950s and 60s. I believe this is simply a case of Hlasko not knowing English well enough; I've never heard or seen the term 'space-action' and especially not in the context of a president requesting funding. The other option would have been 'the space race', which would have been suitable, as well¹⁶.

The proper diminutive of the name Michael is 'Mickey' not 'Micky' as the author suggested, so it was changed in the translation. Ross Ufberg corrects:

Afraid I don't have a good answer here. Mickey is the more standard spelling, but Micky (as I see now) is also used sometimes. Looks like I was quick to 'correct' but it may not have been a correction. I just thought Hlasko misspelled a common name. The trouble is, I don't think that's actually a sentence from any book Hlasko ever read. He did that sort of thing quite often – indicate he was quoting an old tough-guy American story or movie, but in fact he was just making it up.

Also, the phrase 'close-up' is corrected in translation. Collins Dictionary of American English provides some explanations of this phrasal verb: 1. 'to draw nearer together', 2. 'to shut or stop entirely', 3. 'to heat, as a wound does'. This verb does not have connotations with filmmaking or using a camera, so the phrase 'zoom in' fits better the author's intentions. The translator adds:

Not sure I've got a brilliant explanation here, either. Close up is actually a phrase in use and would have been ok to keep, though it should have been close up *on* teacher, not *to* teacher. Zoom in is a bit more directional, indicating a camera in motion, which is why I chose the latter, though perhaps should have kept closer fidelity to the original.

The case with 'body-building' is more complex. It refers both to Marek Hlasko's biography, the sport nomenclature in the United States and English rules of spelling. According to Collins Dictionary of American English bodybuilding (written as one word without a hyphen) is "the practice of lifting weights and performing certain specific calisthenics, as sit-ups and push-ups"¹⁷. Nowhere in the author's biographical documents there is an evidence of such sport activities. As the translator rightly assumed, Hlasko might have meant 'gym' when he used a sophisticated term 'body-building', and such change was made in the translation. Ufberg supports this explanation:

I believe this is another case of Hlasko's English not offering him an entire closet-full of clothes, so to speak. Body-building is a very specific type of weight lifting. Body-building is for men like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

¹⁶ All explanations by Ross Ufberg come from our electronic correspondence shared during preparation of this study.

¹⁷ Collins Dictionary of American English: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/american-english>. The date of access: 3rd of April 2017.

The noun ‘overtime’ was used twice by Hłasko. In the first case, the translator only corrects the hyphen wrongly used in the source text, as the way it was introduced into the Polish sentence was appropriate. Ufberg clears up: “I’ve never seen ‘overtime’ written with a hyphen”. In the second one, the noun was replaced with the phrase ‘till all hours’ meaning ‘until very late’, which was the author’s right intention. The translator writes:

Similar to ‘out of job’, Hłasko attempts a transference of a phrase from the literal realm to the metaphorical where the language just doesn’t allow it. ‘To drink overtime’ is an expression I’ve never heard used. I can imagine a scenario where it would be possible - probably in the South, at a bar where somebody is sitting drinking all hours of the day, instead of going to work. I can imagine a man saying ‘I sit at this bar so much’ I might as well work here. But again, it’s a very specific context.

Analogically, the phrase ‘out of job’, which is British English (according to Collins Dictionary of American English the relevant phrase is ‘out of work’), was replaced with the description of the characters’ real situation. They did not have any occupation rather than lost their jobs. The translator accurately read Hłasko’s story and described the characters as ones who ‘found themselves with nothing to do’. Additionally, Ross Ufberg explains:

First of all, the expression is ‘out of a job’, and anyway Hłasko misuses it. He’s trying to casually transfer the literal meaning of this colloquialism to a metaphorical meaning but the phrase just isn’t ever used that way in English, especially about cops. If they’re twiddling their thumbs, or sitting on their asses (which is a rude expression but could have fit the context here) they’re still not ‘out of a job.’ That could only mean they’re unemployed.

The last selected example (a loser) is of a different nature. It is Hłasko who explains the meaning of this noun to the Polish audience. One can argue about the value of this explanation. It is clear, however, that in the American version this gloss must be omitted. Consequently, American readers are not aware of Hłasko’s pedagogical drive to teach English to the Polish readers. Analogically, they do not have access to the multilayered narrative incrustated with foreign phrases. Whereas it is to some extent preserved in other languages, in English this fact becomes invisible and can be interpreted as an inevitable loss in translation.

Conclusions

Not only is a translation neither neutral nor free from cultural dependence; it is a revelation of numerous hidden cultural implications. Seen this way, translation becomes a means of the cultural transmission of otherness. This process develops on numerous levels simultaneously. Krzysztof Hejwowski points out (2004: 144) the special role of translators in a dialogue of cultures: “If translators are to be intermediaries between different nations, if translation is to build bridges between different cultures, then it

should be every translator's ambition to convey as much as possible from the original culture to target language recipients".

The aim of this paper was to analyze and evaluate the ways Polish culture-bound terms were translated into English in *Piękni dwudziestoletni* by Marek Hłasko. The questions regarding these problems concerned the techniques applied by the translator in achieving the best possible results as well as the possible effects they may have in American readers.

It is without any doubts that Ross Ufberg conducted extensive research into Polish history and culture with special insight into the 1950s to be able to address possible translation tasks that emerged during his work on *Beautiful Twentysomethings*. Moreover, his deep awareness of the cultural and political complexity of the book resulted in some significant decisions that make him a literary translator *par excellence*. Firstly, he appended the body the translated text with a foreword by an acclaimed Polish literary scholar living in the United States; it legitimizes his work and provides necessary cultural background to American readers unfamiliar with Polish history. Secondly, he offers a detailed glossary including a great deal of information about relevant figures, events and cultural data mentioned in the text. Thirdly, wherever it is possible or necessary, the translator explains cultural items so the narrative is enriched in his brief comments and appositions. Many of them, like cultural and literary allusions, were the subject of consideration in this paper. All of them prove that the translated story does not function in a cultural vacuum; on the contrary, the act of reading becomes a journey into Polish culture and history with numerous tracks provided by the translator who himself moves effortlessly between facts, anecdotes and Marek Hłasko's 'apt inventions'. This tendency to enrich and expand rather than reduce or omit is visible in reference to all culture-bound terms. Unarguably, the ways they were translated or transcribed demonstrates the translator's detailed knowledge and care in transferring historical data from the source text to the target. In turn, the section of this paper about the translator's amendments of Marek Hłasko's English expressions illustrates they might have been Ross Ufberg's hardest decisions. On the one hand, they were inevitable if the translation was addressed to English native-speakers who might have detected all errors in the language usage. On the other hand, the English expressions applied in Marek Hłasko's narrative get lost in translation into this language, which is the paradoxical cost of this undertaking. The aforementioned practices can be localized on a scale where domestication and exoticization are opposite poles. Another scale relates to Lawrence Venuti's concept of translator's visibility. Paradoxically, the amendments of Hłasko's English make the translator visible only to the Polish audience, whereas he remains invisible to American readers to whom the source text is inaccessible.

The overall result of the translator's endeavors to bring Marek Hłasko's world closer to American readers may fulfill the expectations of a demand-

ing audience, including the Polish one. It does not, however, lose sight of those readers whose journey into the Polish culture and literature has only just started. Marek Hłasko's prose in Ross Ufberg's translation may be equally well an excellent invitation to the Polish 20th Century literature as well as a great example of its best features mirrored brightly in American words.

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