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What Makes a Literary Translation Obsolete?

Contrastive analysis of culture-specific expressions in two translations of Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*

Summary

It rarely happens that a literary work is translated twice into Slovenian. The elements in a text that tie it most strongly to its temporal, social and cultural background are culture-specific concepts. They would be the first to sound archaic, even incomprehensible to the contemporary reader. Based on the contrastive analysis of the two Slovenian translations of Jerome K. Jerome's travelogue, *Three Men in a Boat*, the study tries to clarify what stimulated the second translation thirty-five years after the first one. The first translation by Avgust Petrišič was published in 1952, the second by Maja Kraigher thirty-five years later. In view of the fact that languages undergo constant changes, did the translations of culture-specific concepts in the first translation become too archaic, even incomprehensible? Or did the strategies and norms for dealing with culture-specific concepts at the time of the first translation become dated? The results may help to explain why some translations become obsolete and what motivates the appearance of new ones.

Key words: literary translation, culture-specific concepts, outdated translation, new translation of the same literary work.

Zakaj književni prevod postane zastarel?

Povzetek

Redko se zgodi, da bi bilo književno delo iz tujega jezika v slovenščino prevedeno dvakrat. Namen članka je dognati, zakaj nekateri književni prevodi zastarijo in kaj spodbudi nastanek novih. Analiza temelji na dveh slovenskih prevodih dela *Trije možje v čolnu* angleškega pisatelja Jeroma K. Jeroma. Prvi prevod, delo Avgusta Petrišiča, je bil objavljen leta 1952, drugič pa je knjigo petintrideset let pozneje prevedla Maja Kraigher. Humoristični potopis *Trije možje v čolnu* je izšel leta 1889 in opisuje angleško stvarnost ob koncu 19. stoletja; značaji so stereotipno angleški, pripoved pa se nanaša na pisateljevo sodobnost in oddaljeno angleško preteklost. Knjiga vsebuje obilo kulturnospecifičnih pojmov, ki ne izvirajo zgolj iz za slovenskega bralca tuje, tj. angleške kulture, temveč tudi iz obdobj, ki so oddaljena od časa tako drugega kot tudi prvega prevoda. Domnevati gre, da je prevajalske odločitve obeh prevajalcev določalo družbeno in kulturno okolje v času prevoda, na prevajanje pa so nedvomno vplivale tudi prevajalske norme in strategije, ki so bile takrat v veljavi. Primerjava prevodov kulturnospecifičnih elementov v obeh prevodih skuša razjasniti, kaj je privedlo do drugega prevoda le petintrideset let po nastanku prvega, in s tem pojasniti, zakaj nekateri prevodi postanejo zastareli.

Ključne besede: književni prevod, kulturnospecifični pojmi, zastareli prevod, novi prevod istega književnega dela.

What Makes a Literary Translation Obsolete?

1. Introduction

Why does a translation become outdated?

Outdatedness does not seem relevant when talking about the original. Great literary works are never considered outdated. We never claim that Shakespeare or Sophocles is outdated (Vidrih 1996, 73). When reading a 19th century novel in the original, the archaic expressions and syntax do not bother us, as we consider these linguistic features as congruent with the contents and the style of writing of the time the original was produced. Why does this not apply to translations? Why would we need a new translation if the original always remains the same and is read as such (Bratož 1995, 1)? Is the answer that provided by Meta Grosman, who claims that translators are foremost readers of the text, which is why their interpretation is temporally, culturally and socially determined? Does this mean that a translation is meant primarily for the contemporary reader and that it becomes obsolete for future generations? (Cited in Bratož 1995, 1). Why does it then happen so rarely that a literary work is translated twice into Slovenian?

The elements in a text that tie it most strongly to its temporal, social and cultural background are culture-specific concepts. They would be the first to sound archaic, even incomprehensible to a contemporary reader. Leaving aside translation field factors such as publisher's policy, editor preferences, critique etc.,¹ the study compares the culture-specific concepts from the two translations of Jerome K. Jerome's travelogue *Three Men in a Boat*. The contrastive analysis is an attempt to clarify what stimulated the second translation.

2. Culture, language and translation

The life of a society and the lexicon spoken by members of a society are closely connected (Wierzbicka 1997, 1). According to Teliya et al. (1998), "culture is assumed to be implemented, one way or another, on the content plane of linguistic expressions, reproduced in an act of denomination and transmitted from generation to generation through linguistic and cultural norms of usage. Thus, language can be looked upon as a crucial mechanism contributing to the formation of a collective cultural identity." In defining culture, Hofstede (as cited in Katan 1999, 39–42) uses the metaphor of onion skins: he talks of the superficial and deeper layers of culture. The superficial layer is visible and includes practices, symbols, heroes and rituals. The deeper layer is not visible and refers to values. Words with culture-specific meanings reflect a way of life; they are names for material culture, social rituals and institutions – and the way of thinking of a given society (Wierzbicka 1997, 2).

Those words with culture-specific meanings in one language often lack equivalents in other languages and may therefore present obstacles for a translator. The translator of a text containing culture-specific concepts should first be able to identify them and then to adopt appropriate strategies to deal with them. The problem of non-equivalence of culture-specific concepts may be approached in various ways. Baker (1992, 21) lists a number of strategies used by professional

¹ Due to temporal remoteness and inaccessibility of the editors or translators of either translation.

translators to deal with different types of non-equivalence at the word level. The same strategies may also be applied to culture-specific concepts. Gonzales (2004, 88–9) adapts Hervey, Higgins and Haywood’s system of strategies used in the translation of culture-specific items. The list below is a combination of both these systems, adapted for the purpose of the present research:

1. Cultural borrowing – the source language expression is rendered without change in the target language.
2. Calque – the source language expression is introduced into the target language by translating it from the source language.
3. Transliteration – the cultural referent is changed according to the phonic conventions of the target language.
4. Cultural substitution – the source language expression is replaced by a reference that is more in accordance with the norms of the target culture; it may not have the same propositional meaning, but is likely to have the same impact on the target language reader.
5. Translation by a more general expression.
6. Paraphrase, using either related or unrelated words.
7. Note.
8. Translation by omission.

Standards that dictate translators’ decisions change and, according to Mette Hjort (as cited in Bassnett and Lefevere 1990), translations satisfy the appropriateness conditions, rules and norms dominant in the field of translation in a certain culture at a certain time. Norms that governed translation decisions at one time may become inappropriate or unacceptable at another time. Translations produced at different times are, therefore, made under different conditions and turn out differently, not because they are good or bad, but because they have been produced to satisfy different demands (ibid.).

3. Study Description

The aim of this study is to compare the two Slovenian translations of Jerome Klapka Jerome’s book, *Three Men in a Boat*, to see how the two translators tackled the problem of translating culture-specific elements of the original text. The attempt is to establish whether decisions in translating culture-specific items can render a translation obsolete, thus encouraging a new translation of the same work. The first translation by Avgust Petrišič came out in 1952. The second translation by Maja Kraigher was published in 1987. Both were translated from the original English version.

The English writer Jerome Klapka Jerome (1859–1927) is best known for his travelogue *Three Men in a Boat*, published in 1889. It is a work of fiction loosely based on fact, marked by the first person narrative perspective and a diary-like mode of writing. Jerome did make several trips up the river Thames with his two life-long friends, George Wingrave and Carl Hetschel, George and Harris (as they are named in the book). In his biography, Jerome himself commented on the book: “Its pages”, he says, “form the record of events that really happened. All that has been done is to colour them... George and Harris and Montmorency are not poetic ideals, but things of

flesh and blood...” (as cited in Connolly 1982, 52). In this manner Jerome created various comic situations which entwine with the history of the Thames region.

The first reviews were not particularly favourable. It was not the humour that attracted the attention but the “vulgarity” of the language, which was defined as “colloquial clerk’s English of the year 1889” (ibid., 75). The book was further criticized for merely imitating the American concept of what humour ought to be and for not being as funny as Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers*. The British public, however, liked the book, probably for the very reasons that the critics hated it: it was new, fresh, and vulgar in so far as it faithfully reflected the way people spoke. It was a very English book, its humour marked by the alternation of understatement and exaggeration, a strategy considered to be stereotypically English.

Three Men in a Boat is a humorous book about English reality at the end of the 19th century, set in the very English Thames region. Its characters are stereotypical Englishmen and the narrative refers to Jerome’s contemporary England and England’s remote past. It is therefore understandable that the text abounds in culture-specific concepts originating not only in a culture obviously different from Slovenian culture but also in a period of time distant from the time of both the first and the second translation. Jerome’s contemporary readers were probably familiar with the book’s cultural references. Taking into consideration the continuing popularity of the book, we may assume that contemporary English readers are still able to identify basic cultural references in the book, and yet some new editions (Jerome 1998) have been complemented with a glossary to inform English (and other English-reading) present-day readers about remote, 19th century, culture-specific references.

It is assumed that the socio-cultural atmosphere at the time of each translation may have influenced the translation decisions of the two translators. In view of the fact that languages undergo constant changes, the two translators may have used different strategies, and a different lexicon, for dealing with culture-specific concepts. To have a book of fiction translated twice is a rare occurrence in Slovenian literary history. The parallel analysis of both translations may clarify the reasons that led to the second translation “only” 35 years after the publication of the first and further help to explain why some translations become obsolete and what motivates the appearance of new ones. Could it be that the first translation became obsolete because the translator either did not understand the culture-specific concepts in the source culture, or did the norms for translating culture-specific concepts grow out of date?

Toury (1995, 86) claims that “Methodologically... a descriptive study would always proceed from the assumption that equivalence does exist between the assumed translation and its assumed source. What remains to be uncovered, is only the way this postulate was actually realized, e.g., in terms of the balance between what was kept invariant and what was transformed.” Toury further admits that the notion of equivalence – which is of little importance in itself – may help explain the textual-linguistic representation of the translational solutions within studied translation units.

For the purpose of the present analysis, the culture-specific English concepts contained in Jerome's book, *Three Men in a Boat*, were classified according to Nida's categories (1964), and compared to their equivalents in the two Slovenian translations. The categories taken into consideration were the following: concepts referring to the area of *ecology* which includes different aspects of nature – flora and fauna – and geographic concepts; the area of *material culture* is related to everyday life and everyday objects (household objects, food, clothes, housing and transport); the area of *social culture* (concepts referring to work, leisure, customs and rituals, historical concepts, arts and literature). The units of measurement, which abound in the text, were included in the area of social culture. Their use is basically a matter of mutual agreement within a particular society.

Taking into consideration Hofstede's Onion model of culture, the lexicalized culture-specific concepts express mainly the visible layer of culture, whereas the deeper, non-visible layer may be expressed through what is called linguistic culture (as cited in Katan 1999, 39–42).

4. The Results

The analysis contains the most illustrative examples of concepts that are either unknown or not lexicalized in the target culture. The aim was to establish what strategies the two translators used in rendering these culture-specific concepts into the Slovenian language.

4.1 Ecology

Few lexical items in the field of ecology refer to concepts that do not exist in Slovenian culture. There is, though, an instance of superordination in both translations referring to a dog breed of British origin – a retriever. *There were a mastiff, and one of two collies, and a St Bernard, a few retrievers and...* (Jerome 1998, 106). In both translations the word is rendered into Slovenian by a more general expression, *louski pes* (1952, 130; 1987, 142). One can justifiably speculate that a contemporary translator would not hesitate to use the term *prinašalec*, since the golden retriever has in recent years become a highly popular dog breed in Slovenia.

4.2 Material culture

In the category of **household objects** a *hearth-rug* (a rug laid on the floor in front of the fireplace in English homes) in the sentence ... *and George stood on the hearth-rug, and gave us a clever and powerful piece of acting...* (1998, 8) is translated by the more general expression *preproga* in T1² (1952, 11) and a calque *preproga pred kaminom* in T2 (1987, 13). A *Gladstone* (a large travelling bag made of stiff leather) in *We got a big Gladstone for the clothes, ...* (1998, 30) is translated as *Imeli smo velik gladstonski kovček za obleke,..* in T1 (1952, 38) and *Imeli smo velik kovček za obleke* in T2 (1987, 41), the former being a case of calque with partial explication, the latter an example of translation by a more general expression. A *carpet-bag* (a travelling bag made of carpet, commonly from an oriental rug, popular in 19th-century England) in the sentence ..., *two other men disembarked from the starboard, and sat down among boat-hooks and sails and carpet-bags and bottles* (1998, 71) is translated as *potna vreča* in T1 (1952, 90) and *potovalka* in T2 (1987, 97), both instances of cultural substitution, the former being an old-fashioned piece of luggage, the latter a modern one.

² Throughout the article, T1 refers to the first, i.e. 1952 translation, and T2 to the second, i.e. 1987 translation.

Expressions denoting **food** like *Worcester* (Worcester sauce – a dark brown spicy liquid added to food to increase its flavour) in *If Harris's eyes filled with tears, you can bet it is because Harris has been eating raw onions, or has put too much Worcester over his chop* (1998, 15) is translated by a calque and partial cultural substitution *worcesterska gorčica* in T1 (1952, 19) and a calque *worcesterska omaka* in T2 (1987, 22). *Ginger-beer* (a British, normally non-alcoholic beverage with a strong taste of ginger) in *Then he [Harris] flew off about lemonade, and 'such-like Sunday-school slops,' as he determined them, ginger-beer, raspberry syrup, &c., &c.* (1998, 57) is replaced by a cultural substitution *oranžada* in T1: *Nato je spet zabavljal zoper limonado, in "podobno čvekanje iz nedeljske šole", kakor se je izrazil, oranžado, malinovec itd. itd* (1952, 72) and a calque *ingverjevo pivo* in T2: *Potem je začel udrihati čez limonado in "take brozge za nedeljsko šolo", kakor jih je imenoval, ingverjevo pivo, malinovec itd* (1987, 78).

A bottle of Bass in ... *when he came to a little shanty where they kept it, he kicked up a most fearful row because they charged him five francs for a bottle of Bass* (1998, 100) (Bass being the name of a former brewery and the brand name for several English beers originally brewed in Burton upon Trent at Bass Brewery) is translated by a superordinate as *steklenica piva* in T1 (1952, 123), whereas the T2 translator preserved the cultural connotation and translated it as a cultural borrowing *steklenica bassa* (1987, 133). Various other types of English beer, like *porter, ale and bitter* are all translated by the general expression *pivo* in T1, likewise in T2, with the exception of bitter, which is rendered into Slovenian by the paraphrase *grenko pivo*.

Another interesting example is the translation of *muffin* (a small round flat type of bread, usually sliced in two and eaten hot with butter) in *After hot muffins, it [our stomach] says, 'Be dull and soulless...'* (1998, 79) is translated by a slightly old-fashioned cultural substitution *Po vročih ponvičnikih pravi želodec:...* in T1 (1952, 101) and a more general expression *Po vročih kolačkih z maslom reče:...* in T2 (1987, 107), which also contains an explication of the way muffins are eaten in England, i.e. with butter. One might speculate here about how a contemporary translator would render muffins into Slovenian; it seems quite possible that he/she might decide on a cultural borrowing or even transliteration (*mafin*), since the sweeter, American-style muffins have become common in Slovenia and are referred to by their original name.

Culture-specific expressions in the category of **housing** denote different types of dwellings that either do not exist in Slovenian culture or have a different connotation in the Slovenian language. *A four-room cottage* in *It was a little four-roomed cottage where the boy lived, and his mother – good soul! – gave us hot bacon for supper, and we ate it all – ...* (1998, 99) implies a modest, even poor family home in the countryside. In T1 it is rendered into Slovenian as a superordination, *majhna štirisobna hiša* (1952, 122), and as a calque, *koča s štirimi prostori* in T2 (1987, 132). One cannot help but observe the difference between the English and the Slovenian conceptions of what small is in terms of a house or cottage. A four-room house would not be considered particularly small in the Slovenian culture of today, much less in the 19th century; furthermore, a *koča* (defined in *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* [SSKJ] – the standard Slovenian dictionary – as *majhna preprosta hiša* or *bajta*) would hardly contain four rooms, a problem the T2 translator tries to solve by changing *soba* (room) into *prostor*.

A *house-boat* (a barge that is designed and equipped to be used as a dwelling, often kept in one place on a river or canal) in ‘*Let me see, sir; was yours a steam-launch or a house-boat?*’ (1998, 109) is translated as the slightly ambiguous paraphrase *ladja s hišo*: “*Kako, gospod, ali je vaša parna ladjica ladja s hišo?*” in T1 (1952, 135) and possibly insufficient paraphrase *barka s kabino* in T2: “*Čakajte no, gospod; ste imeli parnik ali barko s kabino?*” (1987, 147).

It is easy to understand that a book about a boat trip down the Thames contains many expressions connected with **transportation**, more precisely, boating. Many of its concepts are known in Slovenian culture; they are even lexicalized, but since the practices have long been abandoned, the general readership may not be familiar with them and would require an explanatory note to understand them. One such interesting cultural peculiarity is *punting* (travelling on a river in a punt, i.e. a long narrow boat with a flat bottom and a square area at each end, which is moved by a person standing on one of the square areas and pushing a long pole against the bottom of the river). A *punt* is translated by means of superordination as *čoln* in both T1 and T2; the very action of *punting*: *George said he had often longed to take to punting for a change* (1998, 131), however, is paraphrased as *riniti čoln z drogom* in T1: *George je rekel, da si je čestokrat želel, da bi za spremembo rinil čoln z drogom* (1952, 160) and as *poganjati čoln s palico* in T2: *George je rekel, da si je dostikrat zaželel za spremembo voziti se s čolnom, ki ga poganjaš s palico* (1987, 176). Slovenian culture is familiar with this sort of river transportation; the method called *droženje*, or rather its verbal form *drožiti*, is explained in the SSKJ: *z drogom poganjati splav ali čoln*.

Another specific method of transportation on the river or canal is a barge pulled by a barge-horse following a tow-path along the river bank. This kind of transportation was also used in Slovenia in the past; on the Sava River, for example, horses, but mainly oxen, were used to pull boats against the current. One of the expressions to do with boat-towing is a *tow-path* (a path along a canal or river used by animals towing boats). Jurij Vega (Umek 1986, 233–68; Južnič 2003) uses the expression *vlečna pot* when writing about Gruber’s introduction of cargo transport on the Sava River. A *tow path* in *Three Men in a Boat* occurs in the following passage:

The quaint back streets of Kingston, where they come to the water’s edge, looked quite picturesque in the flashing sunlight, the glinting river with its drifting barges, the wooded towpath, the trim-kept villas on the other side, Harris, in a red and orange blazer, grunting away at the sculls... (1998, 41)

The wooded tow-path is translated by a paraphrase *senčna obrežna steza, po kateri so čolnarji z vrvmi vlačili čolne* in T1 (1952, 53) and *lesen hodnik za vleko čolnov*, an obvious mistranslation, in T2 (1987, 57). In another place tow-path is translated as a calque *steza za vlečenje* in T1 (1952, 87), and a superordinate *obrežna steza* in T2 (1987, 94), which is somehow semantically insufficient.

4.3 Social culture

Concepts referring to social culture are largely conditioned by the division of social classes and the professional hierarchy in England at the end of the 19th century. The social situation

at the times of the two translations undoubtedly influenced the translation decisions of the two translators. Translation of three police force ranks, a *policeman*, a *constable* and a *detective* are clearly marked by these circumstances. A *policeman* (a general expression for a male police officer) (1998, 85, 86) is translated by both a rather archaic, even though perhaps the most appropriate substitution *stražnik* (1952, 85) and semantically problematic *stražar* (1952, 86) in T1 and by a cultural substitution *miličnik* (a term used for a member of the Slovenian police force during the Socialist regime) in T2 (1987, 115, 116). A *constable* (a British police officer of the lowest rank) (1998, 86) is replaced by *redar* in T1 (1952, 106) and translated as a cultural substitution *stražnik* in T2 (1987, 116).

An *errand boy* (a boy who earns money by running errands) is in both T1 and T2 translated by a more general word and a cultural substitution: *vajenec* in T1 and *potepuh* in T2, the latter a deviation from the original lexical meaning.

Biggs's boy was the first to come round. Biggs is our greengrocer, and his chief talent lies in securing the services of the most abandoned and unprincipled errand-boys that civilisation has yet produced. (1998, 39)

T1

Prvi je prišel Biggsov vajenec. Biggs je naš zelenjavar, ki kaže največji dar za to, da si za svoje delo zagotovi najbolj zanikrne in brezznačajne vajence, kar jih je kdaj ustvarila civilizacija. (1952, 49)

T2

Prvi se je prikazal Biggsov vajenec. Biggs je naš zelenjadar in njenov največji talent je, da si najde za pomočnike najbolj zanikrne in lopovske potepuhe, kar jih je doslej dala civilizacija. (1987, 53)

A *police-court* (a synonym for a magistrate's court, a court that has jurisdiction over various minor offences) is translated by a calque *policijsko sodišče* in T1 and replaced by a cultural substitution *policijska postaja* in T2:

... and then these two detectives would rush and handcuff him, and march him off to the police-court. (1998, 87)

T1

... nakar bi onadva detektiva pridvela v hišo, ga vklenila in odvedla na policijsko sodišče. (1952, 108)

T2:

... in da bosta tista dva miličnika planila noter in ga uklenila in odgnala na policijsko postajo. (1987, 117)

Among the expressions referring to culture-specific English **institutions**, a *vestry meeting* stands out, meaning either a business meeting of an English parish or a meeting of an elective body in an Episcopal parish composed of the rector and a group of elected parishioners administering

the temporal affairs of the parish:

The whole lobby was a perfect pandemonium, and the din was terrific. A crowd assembled outside in the Haymarket, and asked if it was a vestry meeting; or if not, who was being murdered, and why? (1998, 107)

T1

Vsa veža je bila v popolni peklenški zmedi in trušč je bil grozovit. Zunaj se je zbrala množica ljudi in povpraševala, ali ima občinski zbor sejo ali, če ne, koga so morili in zakaj? (1952, 131)

T2

Direndaj v veži je bil neznanski in trušč strahoten. Zunaj na Haymarketu se je zbrala množica in spraševala, ali imajo cerkveni gospodje kak sestanek; če pa ne, koga so potem umorili in zakaj? (1987, 142)

In T1 a *vestry meeting* is translated as the cultural substitution *občinski zbor* and is devoid of its religious connotation. In T2 the translator paraphrased it as *sestanek cerkvenih gospodov*. It has to be observed, though, that the functional aim of both translations has been achieved, since both references contain humorous connotation.

A case of translation omission is noted in T1, where the translator chose not to translate the name of the British commission for control and protection of an area of land, a river etc., a *Conservancy* (1998, 146). In the original, the author in a footnote ridicules the policy of the commission of appointing as lock-keepers “excitable, nervous old men, quite unfitted for their post”. In T2, the *Conservancy* is translated by a cultural substitution *Urad za zaščito rek* (1987, 196).

Among the expressions denoting **leisure** activities, two interesting cases may be mentioned. A *beanfeast* (an annual party given by an employer for the employees).

Another good way we discovered of irritating the aristocratic type of steam launch, was to mistake them for a beanfeast, and ask them if they were Messrs Cubit lot or the Bermondsey Good Templars, and could they lend us a saucepan. (1998, 111) In T1 *beanfeast* is rendered into Slovenian by means of a paraphrase that avoids the translation of the culture-specific concept:

Potem smo odkrili še neki drug način, da smo jezili parne ladjice takele gosposke vrste. Imeli smo jih za izletnike ter jih pomotoma vpraševali, ali spadajo k Tvrcki Cubit ali pa so bermondseyski templarji in ali bi nam mogli posoditi kako kozico. (1952, 136)

In T2 the translator rendered the expression with the cultural substitution *veselica*:

Drugi dober način draženja aristokratskih ladjic na paro, ki smo ga odkrili, je bil ta, da smo jih zamenjali za veselico na reki in jih vprašali, ali so mogoče družčina gospodov Cubitov ali dobri templarji iz Bermondseya in ali bi nam lahko posodili kako kozico. (1987, 148)

Neither of the translations preserved the original connection of the concept with the context. The humorous effect in this passage derives from the writer's disdain for "aristocratic" steam boats, which had obviously become popular among people who at the time could afford them and threatened to oust the "idyllic" row boats or tow boats. In the writer's mind, such people could by no means be employees in a firm or members of a fraternal organization and would consider such thoughts offensive.

A ball game similar to baseball, *rounders and touch* (1998, 134), has been translated by a more general expressions *igra z žogo* in T1 (1952, 163) and *igre z žogo* in T2 (1987, 179). Similarly, the card game resembling whist, *penny nap* (1998, 155), is rendered into Slovenian in T1 by the paraphrase *Po večerji smo kartali po peniju za piko* (1952, 189) and in T2 by a superordinate *Po večerji smo kartali* (1987, 207).

English possesses a number of expressions for a public house, where people can socialize and drink alcohol. The differences in meaning between the English expressions are blurred and many are interchangeable, hence the arbitrary choices in both translations. A *public house* and its shorter version *pub* (1998, 42, 57) are translated by the cultural substitution *krčma*, in both T1 (1952, 53, 72) and T2 (1987, 58) and on one occasion by *gostilna* in T2 (1987, 77); an *inn* (1998, 5, 80) is translated as *gostilna* in T1 (1952, 18, 102) and *gostišče* and *krčma* in T2 (1987, 20, 109). An *ale-house* (1998, 90) and a *beer-shop* (1998, 98) are *pivnica* in both translations (1952, 112, 120; 1987, 122, 131).

For any translator some of the most problematic transpositions between English and Slovenian are the names for daily meals. Apart from breakfast, none of the English meals – at least in the traditional past – corresponded to the Slovenian ones. This is also applicable to the two translations of *Three Men in a Boat*. *Lunch* (1998, 10) is translated by substitutes in both translations, the obsolete expression *predjužnik* in T1 (1952, 13) and as *kosilo* in T2 (1987, 16). *Dinner* (at six) (1998, 10) is translated by the more general expression *obed* in T1 (1952, 13) and by the substitution *večerja* (ob šestih) in T2 (1987, 16). *Supper* (1998, 8) is *večerja* in both translations (1952, 11; 1987, 13). *Tea* (1998, 101, 112) as a meal is translated as *čaj* in both translations, mostly expanded into phrases *piti čaj*, *skuhati čaj* etc. (1952, 125, 137; 1987, 135, 150).

Concerning translation of **references to English historical events and figures**, huge differences can be observed between the two translations. While the T2 translator used the conventions in use nowadays for transliteration of names and titles, the T1 translation is based either on obsolete conventions or on what seem to be arbitrary solutions in transliteration (*Ana clevska*, *vojvodinja yorška*, *grof esseški*, *princ oranjski*, *surovi Odo* and *St. Dunstan*). The same names and titles in T2 are transliterated in accordance with contemporary Slovenian orthographic conventions (*Ana Klevska*, *vojvodinja Yorška*, *grof Esšeški*, *princ Oranški*, *surovi Odo* and *sveti Dunstan*). Nevertheless, in some cases T1 provides better solutions: *King James* (1998, 136) is domesticated as *kralj Jakob* in T1 (1952, 166), but remains *kralj James* in T2 (1987, 181). According to *Slovenski pravopis* (29), names of rulers are domesticated. Similarly, *Edward the Confessor* (1998, 95) is *Edvard Spoznavalec* in T1 (1952, 118) and *Edvard Spovednik* in T2 (1987, 128). The majority of Slovenian sources refer to the king as *Edvard Spoznavalec*. The T1

translator also provides a thoughtful solution to translation of the affectionate denomination for Elizabeth I., *the good Queen Bess* (1998, 42). Since the queen is known to Slovenian readers as *kraljica Elizabeta*, it may be argued that the T1 translation *dobra kraljica Liza* (1952, 53) is a solution providing better understanding than *dobra kraljica Bess*, used in T2 (1987, 58), even though *Good Queen Bess* is a common denomination for the famous English monarch.

Furthermore, neither translation tried to explicate the notion of *the Great Charter* (1998, 93). T1 translator rendered it into Slovenian as a superordinate *listina* (1952, 116), the T2 translator as a calque *velika listina* (1987, 125), both leaving the non-informed reader in the dark as to the historical importance of its meaning.

What seems odd about the translation of references to English historical events and figures is the large number of omissions in T1. This may be due to the insufficiency of proper reference sources at the time the first translation was produced. The translator was particularly likely to leave out references to less known figures that were probably well-known to the English public of the 1890s. Here are some examples:

The village of Hurley, five minutes' walk from the lock, is as old a little spot as there is on the river, dating, as it does, to quote the quaint phraseology of those dim days, 'from the times of King Sebert and King Offa.' (1998, 104)

T1

Vas Hurley, pet minut od zatvornice, je ena izmed najstarejših na reki. (1952, 129)

T2

Hurley pet minut hoda od zapornice je najstarejša vasica ob reki, kar jih je, saj izhaja, če naj uporabim starinsko govorico tistih mračnih dni, "iz časa kralja Seberta in kralja Offa". (1987, 140)

The famous Memenham monks, or "Hell Fire Club", as they were commonly called, and of whom the notorious Wilkes was a member, were a fraternity whose motto was, 'Do as you please,' and that invitation still stands over the ruined doorway of the abbey. (1998, 105)

T1

Prosluli medmenhamski menihi ali "bratovščina pleklenskega ognja", kakor so jih splošno nazivali, so bili bratovščina, katerih geslo je bilo "Delaj, kakor ti je všeč", in to vabilo še danes stoji nad podrtim opatijskim vhodom. (1952, 129)

T2:

Slavni medmanhamski menihi ali "Bratovščina peklenskega ognja", kakor so jih večinoma imenovali in katerim je pripadal tudi zloglasni Wilkes, so imeli za geslo stavek "delaj, kar ti je všeč", in to povabilo je še danes zapisano nad porušenm vhodom v opatijo. (1987, 141)

This following passage, containing reference to two Victorian professors of painting at the Royal Academy, and a religious reference to the motif of St. George and the dragon is left out altogether in T1. In T2, however, it is translated, even though St. George is for some reason not domesticated as *sv. Jurij*:

The 'George and Dragon' at Wargrave boasts a sign, painted on the one side by Leslie, R.A., and on the other by Hodgson of that ilk. Leslie has depicted the fight; Hodgson has imagined the scene, 'After the Fight' – George, the work done, enjoying his pint of beer.

Day, the author of Sandford and Merton, lived and – more credit to the place still – was killed at Wargrave. (1998, 115)

T2

“George in zmaj” v Wargraveu se šopiri z izveskom, ki ga je po eni strani poslikal Leslie s Kraljevske akademije in po drugi Hodgson z iste ustanove. Leslie je upodobil boj; Hodgson pa si je zamislil prizor “Po boju” – ko si George po opravljenem delu privošči vrček piva.

V Wargraveu je živel in – kar je za mesto še večja čast – umrl Day, avtor Sanforda in Mertona. (1987, 154)

Jerome made a number of **references to literary works**, either contemporary or older. Thomas Gray's “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” was written in 1750 and it was from this poem Thomas Hardy took the title for his novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*, which was published in 1874. It can therefore be assumed that Jerome referred either to the poem or the novel when he writes:

I agreed with George, and suggested that we should seek out some retired and old-world spot, far from the madding crowd, and dream away a sunny week among its drowsy lanes... (1998, 9)

T2 translator, obviously aware of the reference, makes use of the 1979 Slovenian translation of the novel's title:

Pritegnil sem Georgeu in predlagal, naj bi poiskali kak odmaknjen, staroveški kotiček daleč od ponorelega sveta in med njegovimi dremotnimi kolovozi odsanjali sončen teden... (1987, 14)

It is not evident whether the T1 translator recognized the reference to Hardy's novel. He translated the reference as follows:

Pritrdil sem Georgeu in predlagal, sa bi si poiskali kak odmaknjen, starosveten kraj, daleč stran od množic, ki človeka naredo blaznega, ter bi presanjali kak sončen teden med dremavimi stezami... (1952, 12)

Additionally, there is reference to the legend about the seven Christian youths of Ephesus who allegedly hid in a cave during persecution by the emperor Decius and slept there for several hundred years: *We shouted back loud enough to wake the Seven Sleepers – I never could understand myself why it should take more noise to wake seven sleepers than one – and, after what seemed an hour... (1998, 123)* is replaced by a cultural substitution in T1:

Zakričala sva nazaj dovolj glasno, da bi prebudila polha in... (1952, 149). The translator altogether omitted the author's personal comment. The legend of the seven sleepers has given origin to the word *sysover* (literally seven-sleeper) in Scandinavian, as in “one of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus”. It has come to refer to someone who “sleeps hard and long”. In both Scandinavian languages and German the word secondarily refers to a hibernating rodent, the

edible dormouse. The T2 translator translated the reference by a calque: *Zavpila sva nazaj tako naglas, da bi zbudila tudi sedem zaspancev – jaz pravzaprav nisem nikoli razumel, zakaj bi bilo za sedem zaspancev potrebnega več hrupa kakor za enega – in...* (1987, 164). Even though the religious connotation may be lost to those who are not familiar with the legend, the effect of the translation seems adequate.

In the following passage Jerome makes a reference to the traditional children's tale "Babes in the Wood", about two orphans abandoned by their uncle who made a promise to their dying parents to look after them. The two children are taken to the woods where they die. The story was first published in Norwich in 1595 as a ballad by Thomas Millington:

We despairingly tried what seemed in the darkness to be the fourth island, but met with no better success. The rain was coming down fast now, and evidently meant to last. We were wet to the skin, and cold and miserable. We began to wonder whether there were only four islands or more, or whether we were near the islands at all, or whether we were anywhere within a mile of where we ought to be, or in the wrong part of the river altogether; everything looked so strange and different in the darkness. We began to understand the sufferings of the Babes in the Wood. (1998, 122)

The T1 translator translated the reference as a calque, capitalizing the expression and placing it in quotation marks, indicating that it is the title of a literary work. However, by using the noun in the plural – and not in the dual – he wrongly implies that there are more than two children in question:

Začela sva razumevati trpljenje, ki so ga morali prestajati »Otroci v gozdu«. (1952, 149)

The T2 translator put the expression in italics. The noun is in the genitive, which may express either plural or dual:

*Začenjala sva razumeti trpljenje *Otrok v gozdu*.* (1987, 164)

The book also contains a reference to Shakespeare's Hamlet:

'Angels and ministers of grace defend us!' exclaimed George. (1998, 85)

Neither translator made use of the 1933 translation by Oton Župančič (Two more translations of Hamlet have appeared since, the 1989 one by Janko Moder and the 1995 one by Milan Jesih). No imperative binds a translator to use the existing translation; however, it is unclear whether either the T1 or the T2 translator recognized the line as one taken from the famous tragedy.

Jerome also makes several references to Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas, especially *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Mikado*. The line *He's got'em on,* from the passage *I still went on pulling, however, and still no lock came in sight, and the river grew more and more gloomy and mysterious under the gathering shadows of night, and things seemed to be getting weird and uncanny. I thought*

of hobgoblins and banshees, and will-o'-the-wisps, and those wicked girls who sit up all night on rocks and lure people into whirlpools and things; and I wished I had been a better man, and knew more hymns; and in the middle of these reflections I heard the blessed strains of 'He's got 'em on,' played, badly, on a concertina, and knew that we were saved (1998, 75) is from *The Mikado* in which Gilbert satirized British politics and institutions. In the song "As some day it may happen", sung by the character Ko-Ko in Act I, the character goes through "a little list" of society offenders who, if executed, "would not be missed". Both T1 and T2 translators make no reference to the origin of the line, but translate it by means of cultural substitution:

T1: "*Mi se pa peljemo.*" (1952, 95)

T2: "*Kaj nam pa morejo.*" (1987, 101)

The song "Two Lovely Black Eyes" was written by the British hall singer and comedian Charles Coborn in 1886 as a parody of another song. The black eyes refer to bruises the first person narrator has received for expressing freely his political preference, first for the Tories, then for the Liberals.

The refrain of the song occurs in the book:

*Two lovely black eyes!
Oh! what a surprise!
Only for telling a man he was wrong,
Two-! (1998, 156)*

The T1 translator chose a literal translation. Presumably he was not aware of the original meaning of the song. The title is translated »*Dve ljubki črni očesi*« and the refrain in translation goes like this:

*»Dve ljubki črni očesi
me presenetita močno,
samo ker možu sem dejal,
da nikakor ni imel prav!
Dve...« (1952, 190)*

The T2 translator did not take into consideration the meaning of the original. She translated the title as *Dvoje črnih oči*. Both the song title and the refrain imply a love song, not a political satire:

*O, dvoje lepih črnih oči,
lepih tako, da sapo ti vzame,
ki fantu povejo,
da vse je le zmota, o... (1987, 209)*

The approach to translating **measurement units** is practically identical in both translations. In most cases, English measurement units are translated into Slovenian as follows: pound

– *funt*, foot – *čevelj*, inch – *palec*. *Yard* is rendered into Slovenian by a cultural substitution, the metrical unit *meter*, and *mile* by a calque *milja*.

Stylistic differences between the two translations, in comparison with the original, can be seen in the example below. The two translations of the passage contain several of the established advantages and deficiencies of both translations. T1: the absence of dual and the superfluous translation of *a chop* as *telečji zrezek*, and T2: mistranslation of *the Gladstone* (a suitcase) and inappropriate choice of the word *lokal* for a theatre.

Stylistically, the T1 translation sounds somewhat archaic but also more credible as a text depicting the reality of the late 19th century. On the other hand, the T2 translation is more communicative, using language familiar to a contemporary reader.

The passage portrays the moment in the story – at the end of the last chapter – when the three friends decide to cut short their journey because of bad weather and return to London by train:

'If we hadn't made up our minds to contract our certain deaths in this bally old coffin,' observed George, casting a glance of intense malevolence over the boat, 'it might be worth while to mention that there's a train leaves Pangbourne, I know, soon after five, which would just land us in town in comfortable time to get a chop, and then to go on to the place [the former West End theatre and music hall Alhambra] you mentioned afterwards.'

Nobody spoke. We looked at one another, and each one seemed to see his own mean and guilty thoughts reflected in the faces of the others. In silence we dragged out and overhauled the Gladstone. We looked up the river and down the river; not a soul was in sight! (1998, 158)

T1

»Ako bi se ne bili odločili, da se s pogodbo zapišemo gotovi smrti v tej vražji krsti,« je pripomnil George, ko je ošvrknil čoln z zlohotnim pogledom, »bi nemara bilo vredno omeniti, da odhaja iz Pangbournu kmalu po petih vlak, ki bi nas pripeljal v mesto še ravno o pravem času, da bi dobili telečje zrezke, nakar pa bi šli v tisti kraj, ki si ga omenil.«

Nihče ni izpregovoril. Gledali smo drug drugega in zdelo se je, ko da vsakdo vidi lastne nizkotne in pregrešne misli, kako se zrcalijo z obrazov drugih. Molče smo pograbili veliki gladstonski kovček. Pogledali smo gor in dol po reki; žive duše ni bilo videti! (1952, 191–2)

T2

»Če ne bi sklenili, da si nakoplujemo gotovo smrt v tej prekleti krsti,« je pripomnil George in s skrajno neprijaznim pogledom poblisnil po čolnu, »bi bilo mogoče vredno omeniti, da odpelje vlak iz Pangbournu malo po peti – to vem; v mestu bi nas odložil ravno pravi čas, da bi dobili kak zrezek, potem pa bi šli v lokal, ki si ga omenil.«

Nihče ni nič več rekel. Gledali smo se in najbrž je vsak videl svoje podle in pregrešne misli zapisane na obrazih drugih dveh. Molče smo veslali naprej in prišli mimo Gladstonea. Ozirali smo se gor in dol po reki; niti žive duše ni bilo nikjer! (1987, 210–11)

5. Conclusion

The comparison of the two translations of J.K. Jerome's travelogue, *Three Men in a Boat*, shows that in the categories of ecology, material culture and social culture – with the exception of references to historical facts and arts and literature – the number of calques, superordinates, cultural substitutions and paraphrases used by the two translators in translating culture-specific concepts is almost identical, with superordinates and cultural substitutions by far exceeding the other two. The only observed case of cultural borrowing comes from the 1987 translation. The strategies and norms for dealing with culture-specific concepts therefore did not change much from the time of the first translation to the time of the second. Within these categories there are three omissions in the 1952 translation and one in the 1987 translation – the only omission in the whole 1987 translation. The 1987 translation contains some mistranslations of concepts such as *errand-boy*, *tow-path*, and *house-boat*.

The most obvious difference between the two translations seems to be in the lexis chosen to replace the culture-specific concepts. The translation solutions are conditioned by the reality at the time of the translation. The 1987 translation solutions seem closer to present day language, whereas the 1952 translation solutions often sound exotic and archaic.

The comparison of culture-specific references to history shows a significant number of omissions from the 1952 translation, particularly those referring to less known historical events and characters in Jerome's England. This may to some degree be attributed to the limited and scarce sources available to the 1952 translator.

In the category of arts and literature, in both translations imprecision can be observed in some cases in which literary works are quoted. Both translators tend to choose cultural substitution in preference to cultural picturesqueness.

It cannot be denied that the 1987 translation is more communicative and up-to-date; nevertheless the 1952 translation, despite its obvious deficiencies, possesses something the 1987 translation does not. The 1952 lexis – and syntax for that matter – even though sounding archaic and exotic, adds to the illusion of authenticity of a text portraying a late 19th-century reality. One can understand that the “new” translation in 1987 was probably stimulated by the considerable number of unnecessary omissions of culture-specific concepts in the 1952 translation. Is it possible that the obsolescence of the language also contributed to the decision? If language, as Edward Sapir claims, is “a guide to social reality” (as cited in Bassnett 1980, 9), should not archaic language be considered valuable, especially in a literary text portraying a culturally colourful remote past? Furthermore, should the 1987 translation be considered obsolete with equal justification, given translation solutions such as *miličnik* (for a constable), an expression that, to a present day reader, bears a connotation completely different – and possibly unpleasantly loaded – from the obsolete *stražnik*?

Therefore, in an attempt to answer the question of when a translation becomes obsolete, one cannot help but observe that “updating” a literary text culturally marked by time and space is a delicate matter and not always the best option. Solving culture-specific translation problems

primarily by cultural substitution would soon render translations obsolete, regardless of how communicative they were at the time of creation. The case of the 1952 translation shows how obsolete translation solutions eventually gain a new function, making the seemingly outmoded translation interesting and attractive.

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