Translation has always been a political matter

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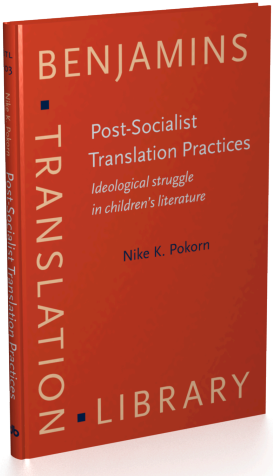

Pages 139–154 of
Post-Socialist Translation Practices: Ideological struggle in children's literature
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Translation has always been a political matter

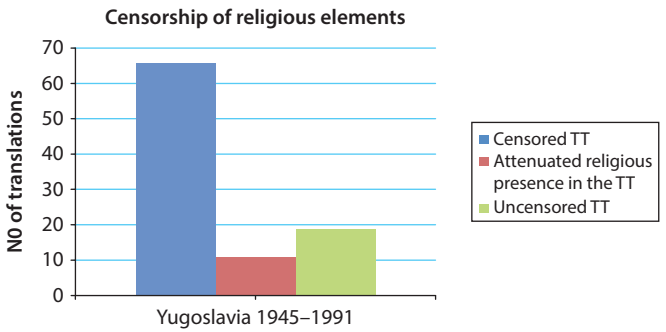
> To strive systematically to keep the young away from the influence of the Church. (Action plan, item 5, Meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia, 20 Nov 1950)

The results of the analysis

In our attempt to outline the characteristic features of Socialist translation practice, we started with an analysis of 14 works (*Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, *The Second Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain, *Michael Strogoff* by Jules Verne, *Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi, *Winnetou* by Karl May, *Pünktchen und Anton* by Erich Kästner, *Bambi* by Felix Salten and *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri) that were retranslated into Slovene in the period from 1945 to 1955. Five of these 14 works were not textually manipulated (*Pinocchio*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Pünktchen und Anton,The Second Jungle Book*, *Gulliver's Travels*): the reason for their retranslation was either the political or ideological unacceptability of the translator to Socialist society (i.e. in three cases) or stylistic (e.g. two pre-war versions were stylistically out of date). The nine remaining texts that were textually manipulated in this period were then compared to other translations from the later Socialist period in Slovenia (i.e. from 1955 to 1991), to post-Socialist Slovene translations (from 1992–2010), and to the translations of those works into Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian and Macedonian from 1945 to 1991, and from 1991 to 2010. In total, 217 different translations (reprints and separate editions of fairy tales are not included) into Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian were analysed in detail; 71 translations were created in the pre-Socialist period (i.e. before 1945), 96 under Socialism (1945–1991), and 50 were published in the post-Socialist period.

If we look at the 96 translations that were created during the Socialist period, we can see that only one original work (i.e. Karl May's *Winnetou*) included criticism of revolutionary activity and that all of the analyzed translations of that work in all the target languages (i.e. 11% of all Socialist translations in the corpus)

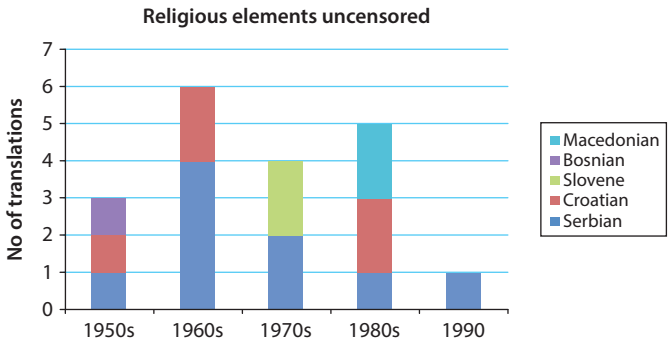
changed that passage, eliminating the anti-revolutionary sentiments. While such elements were hard to find in the corpus, this was not the case with religious elements, which were found in all the originals. The analysis showed that as far as a religious presence in the texts was concerned, 66 translations were ideologically censored, 11 attenuated the religious elements and 19 translations remained ideologically unchanged. That means that 80% of all translations in that period were ideologically tampered with. This level is high if we consider that when the original work contained elements of cruelty and vindictiveness (see the analysis of *Cinderella* above), in only 50% of translations was the ending changed and the elements of cruelty omitted.



However, more than half of the uncensored translations (i.e. 10 out of 19) were translations of Robert Louis Stevenson, Jules Verne and *Robinson Crusoe*, none of which, but in particular the work of Jules Verne and Daniel Defoe, targeted only a juvenile audience.

This distinction in translation strategy shows that the same text conforms to a different set of translation norms when intended for an adult or a juvenile public. The texts in our corpus that were not intended for a young audience, but fell into the category of "mass fiction for larger audiences" were not ideologically changed in translation. On the other hand, the translators of children's literature acquired a habitus tuned to the specific demands of juvenile fiction and in the vast majority of cases changed the target text according to the ideological imperatives of the Socialist society. Translation thus becomes the locus of the definition of genre – it is through the translation strategy used in the target text that one can define whether the text is intended for children or adults. While the translations in our corpus intended for an adult readership were never subjected to textual manipulation, the "protect and control" imperative seemed to have dictated textual changes in particular in the target texts intended for children, with the intensity of the intervention increasing in line with the youth of the intended reader – the younger the target readership, the more invasive the textual intervention. It seems that

since literature for children, including translations, in many societies is supposed to encourage the development of children into "model citizens", then textual manipulation and ideological intervention in translations are not only acceptable, but also highly desirable.



The uncensored translations appeared in different periods (3 in the 1950s, 6 in the 1960s, 4 in the 1970s, 5 in the 1980s and 1 in 1990), and in all the observed languages (9 in Serbian, 5 in Croatian, 2 in Slovene, 2 in Macedonian and 1 in Bosnian). The questions that arise are not only why this level of censorship of religious references is so high, but also why it is not even higher? How is it possible that the strategy of eliminating religion from texts was so prevalent? And, how is it possible that, nevertheless, some translations went against the grain and did not censor the religious elements? In order to find answers to these questions let us look more closely at the way censorship functioned in Socialist Slovenia.

Censorial mechanisms

> The ideological struggle against religious prejudice shall be long and harsh… (Ivan Maček, Meeting of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Slovenia, 7 June 1946)

The official position of the ruling party and the Yugoslav government was, like in almost all Socialist states, that the government did not censor any publications (Čepič 2005:1066; Gabrič 2005:903). The Yugoslav Socialist system wanted to present itself to its capitalist and Socialist neighbours, and also to its own citizens, as a manifestation of the most progressive political system, enabling the liberation of the workers and encouraging the development of accomplished Socialist individuals. Yugoslavia wanted to maintain the image of the most liberal Socialist country and so all forms of state oppression and surveillance, including

censorship, were carefully concealed (cf. Gabrič 1995: 21–23). This was not surprising: even in East Germany, i.e. in one of the strictest Socialist systems that was renowned for its oppressiveness and its efficient system of surveillance, Walter Ulbricht, head of the German Democratic Republic in 1968 denied the existence of state censorship in the GDR (Jäger 1993: 18 in Thomson-Wohlgemuth 2009: 62). Any research whose aim is to present a possible framework for the subsequent systematic research of Socialist translations and translation strategies in Socialist states is therefore doomed to deal with attempts to reveal something that wanted to remain hidden and whose intrinsic nature demanded that it should remain concealed.

In order to be able to deny the very existence of censorial pressure, preventive or prior censorship (cf. Merkle 2002), i.e. the official state censorship that prevented the appearance of a particular text, seemed to be widely practiced in Socialist states. The GDR, for example, had a blacklist indicating 35,000 titles of books and magazines that were not allowed to be published (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 2009: 94). In other Socialist countries, e.g. in Yugoslavia, such an extensive and explicit document did not exist,[10] but this does not mean that everyone could publish whatever they wanted. On the contrary, in particular in the first 15 years after World War 2, Yugoslavia employed very effective preventive censorship, so that "problematic" works were not even suggested for translation (Čepič 2005: 1066). Although after 1963, when a new publishing law was passed and the government started to use post-censorship and prohibited some works that had already been printed (Čepič 2005: 1066), only rarely were already translated works denied publication. In the analyzed corpus for this research, for example, there is no historical evidence indicating that any translated work for children or young adults in Slovenia was ever denied publication. Similarly, in the GDR print permit files Thomson-Wohlgemuth (2009: 156–165) found only one translation that was not allowed to be published in the corpus of English-language texts for children translated into German between 1961 and 1989. Furthermore, in Yugoslavia, despite considerable differences regarding the historical period we are focusing on (for example, the 1950s were much more oppressive than 1980s), the translations for adult readers that appeared were, by and large, not censored. Publications that were highly regarded by society, and that might have attracted public attention and also may have been critically studied by literary critics and other readers, were not altered; the official state censorship in the form of punitive, repressive or

10. Hitler's works were, for example, prohibited, and the distribution of works written by Yugoslav political immigration published in Argentina and elsewhere abroad was not allowed (Ribičič 1981), but up to now there has been no evidence of the existence of a list of prohibited titles.

post-censorship was largely not employed – the problematic works in the eyes of the Socialist ideology were simply not recommended for translation.

Nevertheless, as we have seen in our analysis of the translated works, the Communist Party very successfully transmitted its own ideological premises into translated texts. In order to see how and when different bodies led by the Slovene Communist Party exercised direct or indirect censorial pressure on translators and translations, I looked at the minutes of the meetings of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (1945–1954), then at the archival material of the following committees at the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Slovenia:

a. Committee for printing at the presidency of the SAWPS
b. Committee for ideological education
c. Committee for publishing and printing
d. Committee for political and ideological education
e. Committee for culture and education
f. Committee for political-ideological and cultural-educational issues
g. Ideological committee

And at the archival material of the following committees of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia (CC LCS):

a. Committee for socio-political relations and ideological-political issues
b. Committee for ideological issues in culture
c. Committee for socio-political and ideological issues in science, education and the ideological-political training of Communists
d. Committee for political propaganda and information activity
e. Committee for ideological-political issues in education, training, culture and science
f. Committee for agitation and propaganda
g. Committee for public information and propaganda
h. Committee for public information and communication

The minutes of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia (CC CPS) from 1945 to 1954 clearly show that in the first post-war decade the inner circle of the Party not only controlled the national budget and supervised all the government ministers, but that its members were also constantly concerned about the lingering religious presence in society, which they regarded as a threat to the new order (e.g. meetings 24 Sept 1947, 30 June 1950, 3 Nov 1950, 20 Nov 1950, Jan 1951, 8 Jan 1954). The between five and nine members of the Politburo, this innermost circle of the Party, were particularly unhappy to see that a high percentage of children still attended religious education (Meeting 5 March

1949, 20 Dec 1951), so much so that in the school year 1951/1952 religious education was removed from state schools, and particular attention was paid to publishing activity. This was reflected in the fact that from its inception the agitprop department always included among its members a representative of Mladinska knjiga (e.g. meetings on 25 August 1947, 12 October 1951); moreover, the general manager of Mladinska knjiga, Zorka Peršič, is either listed as a member of agitprop or some other CC CPS committee, e.g. of the subcommittee for culture, art and people's education (meeting 13 Feb 1952). In addition, ideological pressure from the Communist Party on publishing activity is also clearly expressed in one of the items in the action plan of the meeting of the Politburo of the CC CPS on 20 December 1951 which states: "They [publishing houses] have to be given a general manager that shall not let anything into print without our knowledge."

After the dissolution of the agitprop department, the ideological control did not weaken – it was simply shifted from the Central Committee to the newly established committees at the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Slovenia, in particular to the print committee. The archival material thus shows that in the 1950s and 1960s the SAWPS print committee focussed mainly on daily publications and radio broadcasting (AS 537, a.u. 168), "analysed publishing programmes of publishing houses", and proposed members of the publishing councils of the daily newspapers and the publishing houses, thus directly influencing their publishing programme (AS 537, a.u. 139). Upon its establishment in 1954, the print committee stressed that, although they should closely monitor everything that was in print, "this collection of data should not have censorial tendencies" and only in "exceptional cases shall the SAWPS give the printing house its opinion" on a particular publishing order (print committee, 26 March 1954, AS 537, a.u. 168) – which means that they attempted to hide their monitoring activity as thoroughly as possible.

The minutes of these first meetings of the committee also show that at first the 15 members of the publishing council at Mladinska knjiga were nominated by the Central Committee of the Youth Organisation of Slovenia (AS 537, a.u. 176), and were merely approved by the SAWPS print committee (meeting 3 September 1955, AS 537, a.u. 176). However, over time the pressure increased: in 1956, following a directive from Belgrade, a new office for information was set up, one of the aims of which was to monitor publishing activity. The establishment of this office was the result of the fact that in Croatia and Serbia there had appeared some "uncontrolled publishing activity". The Slovene print committee, however, stressed that the "office for information should not represent a kind of censorial office", especially as in Slovenia "there are generally no problems, in particular because we have put extremely good publishing councils in place" (31 March 1956, AS 537, a.u. 180). Despite this "unproblematic" state, in 1959 some changes were

introduced: the members of the publishing council at Mladinska knjiga were no longer nominated solely by the Youth Organisation, but also by the SAWPS. The SAWPS print committee also ran a thorough check on the editors, management and council members at major publishers, paying particular attention to whether they were members of the Partisan movement during the Second World War and whether they were party members – and the report presented at the print committee showed that in 1959 two-thirds of all Mladinska knjiga publishing council members were also members of the Communist Party (meeting of the print committee, 24 September 1959, AS 537, a.u. 212). Moreover, some members of the print committee were also members of the publishing councils at Mladinska knjiga (e.g. Dr. Marijan Dermastja AS 537, a.u. 180), and the general director Zorka Peršič attended the joint meetings of the print committee and the ideological committee (e.g. 11 April 1956, AS 537, a.u. 180).

This close interconnectedness was not haphazard: on the contrary, in 1959 the main focus of the print committee was on "political, school and juvenile literature" (AS 539, 218), and the system served well the intentions of the ruling party. In 1961 Zorka Peršič, the general manager of Mladinska knjiga gave a report at the SAWPS committee for publishing activity and print, where she served as one of the members, on how the books were selected for print (24 November 1961, AS 537, a.u. 315): the programmes were drawn up by the editor's office and then approved by the publishing council at the publishing house; in addition, they were also submitted to the relevant SAWPS committee for discussion. This procedure clearly shows how external pressure was created in order to avoid direct censorial intervention.

It has to be noted, however, that in the 1960s the SAWPS committee for publishing activity and print lamented the fact that it was closely monitoring only five major publishing houses in Slovenia and was not looking closely at all of them (there were approximately 10 of them at the time) (1962, AS 537, a.u. 287) – which could explain the fact that some of the translations published by the publishing houses that functioned away from the centre, such as Pomurska založba, were not subject to such ideological control (cf. Gabrič 1995: 76) and did include some religious elements in target texts.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Yugoslavia witnessed the emergence of a liberal movement, which reached its peak in Slovenia in 1971 with the government of Stane Kavčič, one of whose goals was the introduction of cultural pluralism (Repe and Prinčič 2009: 80). However, the late 1970s saw a counter-reaction in all the republics, and Party hardliners once again took over the decisive positions in the country (Gabrič 2005: 1127).

The political liberalisation of the early 1970s is reflected in the archival material: the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia in 1970 stated: "Our society is democratic and open" (AS 144, a.u. 352–354), and in 1971

the print committee rejected the possibility of becoming a censorial body, publishing this statement in the daily press (AS 537, a.u. 507). Moreover, it seems that the SAWPS committees were increasingly losing power and influence: when discussing the publishing councils, the SAWPS asked the major publishers to submit their opinion on the role of the publishing council within the organisation of the publishing house, and Mladinska knjiga, for example, did not even bother to reply (AS 537, 507). This liberalisation affected schools: in 1972 the CC LCS committee for socio-political and ideological issues in science, education and the ideological-political training of Communists defined as one of the learning objectives in primary schools the "development of critical and creative minds" (2 June 1972, AS 176, a.u. 411), and no longer focused only on dialectical-materialistic indoctrination.

After the collapse of the political liberalisation movement in Slovenia, the reaction can also be seen in the work of the committees (in particular that of the CC LCS for political propaganda and information), which now focussed mainly on newspapers (AS 198, a.u. 453–458; AS 199, a.u. 459–461). However, the managers and editors of the publishing houses remained members of different committees: for example, the general editor of the publishing house Mladinska knjiga from 1947 to 1972, Ivan Potrč, was in 1960s a member of the SAWPS committee for publishing activity and print (AS 537, a.u. 139) and in the 1970s he could still be found among the members of the committee of the Presidency of the CC LCS for ideological-political issues in education, training, culture and science (1974, AS 366, a.u. 2526–2541; 1976, AS 368, a.u. 2565–2577; 1977, AS 370, a.u. 2596–2602).

The 1980s began with the death of Tito, followed by economic and political crisis: in Slovenia for the first time certain taboo topics were discussed, among them Communist concentration camps, the victims of the Informbureau, show trials, the post-war executions of the members of the Home Guard and so on. New journals voicing opposition to the Communist ideology were established, such as *Nova revija* (1980), and the young increasingly challenged the official ideology through punk rock and politically critical publications such as the *Mladina,* the journal of the Youth Association (Gabrič 2005: 1155–1160). Another sign of new times was the fact that in 1986 the Slovene Catholic archbishop Šuštar gave the Christmas Eve address on public television for the first time since the Second World War (Gabrič 2005: 1165). While the League of Communist became more and more liberal, membership of the Party constantly declined (Gabrič 2005: 1178).

This liberalisation was mirrored by heightened nationalism in all the Yugoslav republics: Serbia, for example, increasingly attempted to spread its influence to the other republics; in Croatia and Slovenia separatist tendencies

were strengthening; and ethnic Albanians openly demanded the separation of Kosovo from Serbia (Gabrič 2005: 1172). In 1988 *Mladina* published some secret documents showing that the Yugoslav army had planned a sort of military coup. Four people who were involved in the publication of this document were imprisoned, which triggered massive public demonstrations. Other events soon followed: in 1989 the first Slovene political parties emerged, in 1990 the League of Communist of Slovenia changed its name into the SDP (Social Democratic Party), the first democratic elections were held and in the same year the Slovene population voted for separation from Yugoslavia. In 1991 Slovenia declared itself an independent republic and in 1992 it became an internationally recognised state (Gabrič 2005: 1197).

The political crisis is also reflected in the archive material from the 1980s. On the one hand, the pressure on newspapers and journals was increasing. For example, CC LCS committees for agitation and propaganda censored some numbers of the journal of the student organisation (1982, AS 1589, a.u. 664; AS 1589, a.u. 699; AS 1589, a.u. 744; AS 1589, a.u. 747; AS 1589, a.u. 899; AS 1589, a.u. 942), and from 1982 onwards problems with Kosovo come to the forefront (AS 1589, a.u. 697; 1985, AS 1589, a.u. 791; 1986 AS 1589, a.u. 832; AS 1589, a.u. 863). On the other hand, the attitude towards religion and the Roman Catholic Church changed: in 1983, the committee of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia for information and propaganda discussed the activities of the Roman Catholic Church, calling for a greater tolerance of religious sentiment. Moreover, it condemned the elimination of religious expression from literature and film: "Such a practice is morally and legally unacceptable and challenges the integrity of copyright. Translations have to be authentic and professionally well-done or in accordance with the norms of translatorial activity in all fields, i.e. in translations for TV, in film and television subtitling, in books or any other printed matter" (AS 1589, a.u. 697). Thus in 1983, the Party condemned any form of ideological intervention in translation. In 1989 the committee for information and communication discussed political pluralism and the change from a party state to a legal state (AS 1589, a.u. 977). After that point there were no more committees with an ideological focus and a new committee for the restoration of injustice was established.

The archival material and the historical sources therefore suggest that censorial mechanisms were most pertinently at work within publishing houses. In order to understand the experience of the editors of the Socialist period, interviews were carried out with the remaining "eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction" (Grele 1996: 63; Perks and Thomson 2004: ix), i.e. with the editors of children's literature at the major Slovene publishing house for juvenile fiction.

The interviews

Of the various sections at Mladinska knjiga the most important was that for children's literature and juvenile fiction, which since its foundation in 1947 has been led by four editors: Kristina Brenk, who held the office from 1948 to 1973, Niko Grafenauer (1973–1995), Vasja Cerar (1995–2006) and Andrej Ilc (2006–). Mladinska knjiga also published various influential series for children and a juvenile readership that were edited by Ivan Minatti from 1947 to 1984.

Let us start with the present: in an interview held on 12 May 2009, the current editor for children's literature and juvenile fiction, Andrej Ilc, expressed his awareness of the Socialist censorship applied to translations of children's literature and described his attempts to systematically re-translate and replace the ideologically manipulated Socialist translations. He complained, however, that the new, revised translations of the fairy tales, published in the series Illustrated classics, do not sell well, so that their impact on the contemporary Slovene reading public is limited. An interview with Vasja Cerar, an excellent translator and the president of the Association of the Literary Translators of Slovenia, unfortunately could not be carried out due to his sudden death in 2006. I was able, however, to interview both editors (and translators) from Socialist times: Kristina Brenk and Niko Grafenauer, as well as the editor of the series for young readers, Ivan Minatti.

Niko Grafenauer (1940–), the head of the section from 1973 to 1995, is not only one of the most prominent Slovene poets and translators for children and adults, but also a dissident who encouraged political opposition to the Socialist government, particularly in the 1980s. In interviews on 25 March and 12 May 2010 he confirmed the widespread claim (e.g. see Žnideršič 1995) that there was no censor employed and no censorial body at Mladinska knjiga or at any other level of the Socialist society of the time. He emphasised, however, that the non-existence of a censor encouraged self-censorship. But despite that general pressure, he felt no "direct ideological censorship or censorship by the regime that would affect my editorial work." The selection of different translators was entirely in the hands of the section editor, who chose them on the basis of merit and their previous work. New translators were chosen cautiously, and were sometimes asked to do sample translations before hiring. The final selection of the books to be published (including translations) was made by editors of different sections. These lists, however, had to be approved by the editorial board (the so-called publishing council) that was presided over by a "trusted Party member". He recalled only one instance, following the publication of the book *Fairy Tales from Corsica* (Ortoli 1976), which contained numerous biblical allusions, when the general manager of the publishing house had to defend this translation at one of the sub-committees of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia – however, there

were no serious consequences: the book was not withdrawn and no sanctions were imposed.

Ivan Minatti (1924–2012), an academician and one of the most important Slovene poets, who helped break the monolithic support for soc-realism after the war, was for 37 years the editor of the three most influential book series for young readers (i.e. Sinji galeb, Biseri, Zlata knjiga), which included numerous translations. In an interview on 15 April 2010 he too confirmed that there was no censor's office at the publishing house. The selection of books to be translated was made by the editors, but those selections had to be approved by the general editor and the general manager. As the editor he selected his translators but generally did not check their work, especially if he was working with well-established translators. In another interview, Mr Minatti recalled one instance of ideological pressure: his initiative to translate *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was halted for four years (it was finally published in 1964), because it was considered by the general editor Ivan Potrč to be too idealistic, too spiritual and unsuitable for Socialist times (Mahnič et al. 2005: 24). However, a transcribed round table discussion from 1983 on translating juvenile fiction reveals that Minatti did sometimes directly influence the way translators did their work. He said: "As an editor of Karl May I have to use adaptations. May has in his books a lot of Pan-Germanism, sentimental Catholicism. However, the essence of his stories lies in action. When we started with these translations, we – as a publishing house – gave the translator a hint, an indication as to what he should tone down or simply leave out. I am convinced that with these steps we have not harmed the quality of May's work." (Minatti 1984: 69–70).

The first and most important editor for our study was Kristina Brenk (1911–2009), a teacher by profession, who did not belong to the inner circle of the new elite: although an active member of the Slovene resistance movement during the war, she never joined the Communist Party. After the war, she helped set up the new publishing house and in 1948 was made the editor of the section for children's literature and juvenile fiction, a post she kept until her retirement in 1973 (Jamar Legat 1973; Zupan 1996; Hostnik 2007). She edited, wrote and translated books for children, including *Bambi*, which is analysed in this book. In an interview on 8 November 2006 Kristina Brenk, at that time aged 98, also confirmed that there was no censor employed at the publishing house and that there was no censor's office at the state level either. The general manager of the publishing house, however, had to approve every new publication, but it was possible (although risky) to avoid even that. She, as the editor, did not change or purify translations: in fact, she claimed that she had trusted the translators she commissioned. She did not remember any political intervention in her work, the only exception being when Mladinska knjiga published *Biblical Stories* (Olbracht 1969)

and the general manager of the publishing house called her to his office. She said that she had been able to explain that *Biblical Stories* belong to the world's cultural heritage and thus merited being presented to children. She knew, however, that certain works and certain passages might cause problems for her and for translators. When asked directly why she had changed some religious references in her translation of *Pippi Longstocking* (where she replaced Christmas with New Year's Eve) and *Bambi*, she replied that she did not remember changing anything. This non-awareness should not be attributed only to her advanced age.

The interviews thus confirmed the assumption that there was no censor employed at the publishing house, nor was there a censor's office at the state level such as the one Gaby Thomson-Wohlgemuth (2006a, 2006b) describes in East Germany. However, the fact that in the period between 1945 and 1955 nine out of 14 (i.e. 64%) Slovene re-translations of children's literature omitted or replaced religious elements, in particular those belonging to the Christian tradition, suggests that this conformity was the result of self-censorship by the translators who, consciously or subconsciously, internalised the Communist attitude towards religion.

Self-Censorship

Self-censorship by translators is a form of preventive or prior censorship which shifts the ideological pressure to the inner life of the individual who consequently internalizes the censorship and conforms to ideological dictates (cf. Gambier 2002; Wolf 2002). As we have seen with regard to translators of children's literature in Yugoslavia, this censorship prohibited, reduced to silence, and limited the manifestation of the ideas which the Socialist ideology regarded as the greatest threat. The causes of the conformity of translators were manifold: if we look at the translators whose works were analysed in this research, we can see that their habituses on one hand reflected the social conditions within which the translators acquired a particular set of dispositions, inclining them to act and react in similar ways, but that they were, on the other hand, also elaborate results of the translators' personalized social and cultural history (cf. Simeoni 1998). It seems that there were three broad reasons why Slovene translators of children's literature in Communist times accommodated to the established order:

a. because they wanted to avoid negative consequences or sanctions,
b. because they internalised the censorship and conformed to ideological dictates,
c. because they upheld the Communist attitude towards religion.

Avoidance of sanctions

From our corpus of analysed texts we might assume that Ludvik Mrzel, the Slovene translator of *Winnetou*, falls into this category. The editor of the series in which Mrzel's *Winnetou* appeared in 1962, 1967 and 1968, Ivan Minatti, on the one hand a "rebel" in the field of creative writing, opposing the predominant soc-realism, but on the other hand close to the most influential circles in society thanks, among other things, to his membership of the committee for socio-political relations and ideological-political issues at the CC LCS in 1966 (see AS 1589, a.u. 193), admitted that he gave instructions to the translator on how to translate Karl Mays's work, in particular that he should omit all instances of "Pan-Germanism" and "sentimental Catholicism" (Minatti 1984). And the translator Mrzel, after surviving Dachau, Stalinist show trials and seven years in a Socialist concentration camp on one of the Dalmatian islands, most probably did not want to put himself in danger again by risking provoking the ruling clique with his translation of *Winnetou*. He therefore omitted or replaced all the religious passages of the original text in his adaptation. Similar reasons, i.e. the fear of sanctions, for the self-censorship by Henrique Leitão, the first Portuguese translator of *Robinson Crusoe*, have been identified by Goreti Monteiro (2006: 63–72) in a completely different period and culture, although in his case self-censorship was guided by his fear of offending the Catholic Inquisition. Mrzel thus most probably accommodated to the expectations of the editors and the ruling ideology primarily in order to avoid sanctions. However, the fact that the translator used a pseudonym and that the publishing house described Mrzel's *Winnetou* as a "translation and adaptation" reveals that they all felt that this kind of ideologically changed translation deviated from what the audience expected a translation to be like and consequently also indicated that deviation in the description of the translator's work.

Internalisation of ideological dictates

The most interesting cases, however, are those where it is hard to define whether the translators submitted themselves to self-censorship or were consciously misleading the target readership. For example, the interview with Kristina Brenk shed no light on whether the ideological interventions she made in her translations were because she felt she had no other choice or they were the result of her personal ideology. Indeed, the biographical data show that Brenk had an ambivalent attitude towards Christianity: on the one the hand, she had detested the oppressive atmosphere in the convent she experienced as a young girl, but on the other she managed to promote the publication of *Biblical Stories* (1969) for children

at a time that was openly opposed to religious education and when the Faculty of Theology, for example, was excluded from the only university in the republic (from 1952 to 1992). The interview also showed that she did not regard her traslatorial habitus as a limitation or imposed rule – on the contrary, it became a second nature. For example, when she was directly asked why she omitted any reference to God in *Bambi*, she replied: "Did I?" And her reply did not seem an avoidance manoeuvre. Nor could it be attributed to her advanced age, since she remembered so many other details clearly. It seems more likely that the fact that she did not even remember this ideological shift in her translation is the result of her internalisation of the translation strategy that was dominant at the time. Perhaps the decision to eliminate religious elements in her translation of *Bambi* might be attributed to her (sub)conscious decision to choose the lesser evil: she had to decide whether to employ self-censorship and avoid overtly religious elements in the text or to risk not having the translation appear at all. From her interview it seems that her decision to change the ideological framework of the original text was internalised, and that she adopted the "servitude volontaire" so typical of translators of all ages. By admitting that Brenk's translation strategy was norm-governed, following the new norms set up in the Slovene Socialist society in the 1950s, I do not want, however, to dismiss the ethical dimension of this issue. I am convinced that the fact that the intended readers were not informed about the ideological shifts in Socialist translations justifies the use of the terms "self-censorship" and "manipulation" in these cases, since the translators consciously helped the dominant ideology in its attempts to impose its worldview as the only current, eternal and valid interpretation of reality.

Conscious support for Communist ideology

And finally, some translators openly supported the Communist attitude towards religion, and consciously eliminated the religious presence from the text: they believed that any kind of religious attitude towards life was an anachronism and could prevent the child from developing a well-rounded Socialist personality (just as today, adaptations for children often avoid cruel elements, believing that excessive cruelty might cause anxiety in children). Some of them revealed their attitude towards religion in their prefaces, such as, for example, Fran Albreht in his translation of the fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, where he attacks the "unhealthy additions" to the fairy tales that, according to him, express "intrusive, mawkish sanctimoniousness" (Albreht 1954b: 8), or Rudolf Kresal in his translation of the fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen, where he regrets the fact that Andersen "succumbed from time to time to religious mysticism" (Kresal 1950b: 22). However,

the textual changes they carried out were never revealed to the intended audience, which allows us in these cases to talk about manipulation.

Thus, regardless of whether Socialist translators ideologically changed their target text because they were afraid of sanctions and practiced self-censorship, or because they believed that religion was bad for children and manipulated the target audience, the results show that the translator's habitus led the translators of children's literature in the Socialist Yugoslavia to constantly act in a similar way. Despite the absence of official state censorship, the Yugoslav Socialist society of the time ensured sufficient indirect pressure to achieve social conformity in the field of the translation of children's literature.

When talking about censorship and ideological interventions we are inevitably led to rethink the notions of "meaning", "manipulation" and "error", and introduce the notion of ethics into the translation process. The uniformity of displacements and changes that the analyzed corpus of translated works of children's literature in the Socialist period exhibit cannot be dismissed by simply appealing to the freedom and plurality of possible interpretations of the text whose meaning is elusive, and where its signifieds playfully escape the grasp of signifiers. The uniformity and conformity of the translational changes of the target texts analyzed in this study throughout a considerable period of time, detectable in translations by various translators published by different publishing houses and in different linguistic communities without the presence of an official censor's office, indicate that intentional, motivated and well organized pressure in the form of textual manipulation was taking place. The very existence of detectable and systematic intentional choices, motivated by a set of well-articulated principles and beliefs (in contrast to errors, i.e. to unmotivated and inexplicable shifts, see Malmkjaer 2004) used in this small study of Socialist translation practice thus show that readers may consciously be misled (or at least an attempt may occur) and that therefore there must be some irreducible meaning of the text that does not entirely stem from the extratextual environment and does not solely reside outside the text in the social institutions and cultural monuments, in other contexts and centres of power.

Let us, therefore, attempt to think paradoxically – there seems to be a double bind involved here. On one hand, it is argued here that plurality of meanings and complexity are intrinsic to every interpretation of textual meaning, so that our desire for dominance and univocity inevitably fails in the last instance and capitulates to the plurality, elusiveness, equivocity and fuzziness of language (cf. Derrida 1989). This is even more evident in the process of interlinguistic and intercultural transfer where the translator "must renounce the dream of a return to some adamantine logos of pure correspondences" (Ricoeur 2006: 7; see also Ricoeur 2004). But if we radically accept this premise, can we still talk about manipulation? If

textual meaning is elusive and plural, a result of the translator's interpretation, how can we argue that the translator usurped the power and deliberately changed the meaning with an intention to deceive the target reader? Is it possible to distort something that is essentially polysemous, differential and deferred (cf. Venuti 1995: 18)? In fact, if we radically think the elusiveness of textual meaning, this would lead us to a denial of the possibility of any transferral of meaning. And yet, we know that we live in a world where meaning, or at least the trace of it, is transferrable. Similarly to postmodern conceptualisations, which view translation as possible and impossible at the same time, as a necessity that the multilingual world imposes upon us, but at the same time as an impossible task in its entirety, an eternal debt that we can never pay off (Derrida 1985), the meaning of the text should also be understood in the same paradoxical framework. There is the absence of demonstrable *identity* of meaning of the text, but nevertheless some trace of meaning is transferred through translation. Translation is *practicable*, creating a paradoxical equivalence without total adequacy, which means that meaning of the text has to exist in order not to be transferred in its totality. Indeed, not only is translation practicable, and "not only can we say the same thing *in another way*, but we can say something *other* than what is the case" (Ricoeur 2006: 28).

The abuse of the power manifested in manipulations of translations shows that we should not lightly dismiss these uniform ideological transformations as reflections of individual (and therefore admissible) interpretations of the original text. Contrary to the claims of Foucauldian theories that meaning is formatted solely outside the text in other contexts and centres of power, the possibility of a conscious and organised breach of trust and betrayal of the reader reveals that there nevertheless exists a trace of the truth, of the meaning of the text which is intrinsic to the text and which can be distorted or conveyed loyally in always different and personal ways to the target reader. And because this deliberate distortion is possible and also practicable, translation becomes an ethical problem.