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THE INFLUENCE OF THE KULTURKAMPF ON THE RECEPTION OF TRANSLATED DUTCH LITERATURE IN SLOVENIA AFTER WORLD WAR II

Abstract. The term *Kulturkampf* (cultural struggle) denotes the ideological and political conflict between liberal and Catholic forces within society. This study examines the impact of the Kulturkampf on the reception of Dutch-language literature in Slovenia from the end of World War II to 1990. By analyzing the historical development of Slovene translations of works written in Dutch, with particular attention to the writings of Gerrit Theodor Rotman, the egodocument of Dries van Coillie, and translated children's literature and juvenile fiction, this study emphasizes how religious and political contexts shaped the publication and interpretation of these texts. The role of Catholic and liberal publishers, both before and after World War II, is highlighted, as well as how the communist regime intervened in the literary field after 1945 – through censorship and ideological control of literary content – leading to far-reaching consequences for the transfer, production, circulation, and ultimately, the reception of translated literature. A corpus analysis of Dutch-language works translated into Slovenene reveals that the Communist Party's interventions were particularly focused on (the translations of) children's and youth literature, which is a reflection of their broader ideological goals in shaping cultural narratives.

Keywords: *Kulturkampf*; religion; communism; censorship; agitprop; translation; Dutch literature; Gerrit Theodoor Rotman; Dries van Coillie; children's literature; juvenile fiction

WPŁYW KULTURKAMPFU NA ODBIÓR TŁUMACZONEJ LITERATURY NIDERLANDZKIEJ W SŁOWENII PO II WOJNIE ŚWIATOWEJ

Abstrakt. Niemiecki termin „Kulturkampf" (walka o kulturę) odnosi się do ideologicznego i politycznego konfliktu pomiędzy siłami liberalnymi a katolickimi w społeczeństwie. Niniejsze badanie analizuje wpływ Kulturkampfu na recepcję literatury niderlandzkojęzycznej w Słowenii w okresie od końca II wojny światowej do 1990 roku. Poprzez analizę historycznego rozwoju słoweńskich przekładów dzieł niderlandzkojęzycznych, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem pism Gerrita

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Theodora Rotmana, egodokumentu Driesa van Coillie oraz tłumaczonej literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej, autor badania podkreśla, w jaki sposób konteksty religijne i polityczne kształtowały publikację i interpretację tych tekstów. Zwrócono uwagę na rolę katolickich i liberalnych wydawnictw zarówno przed, jak i po II wojnie światowej, jak również na interwencje reżimu komunistycznego w obszarze literatury po 1945 roku – poprzez cenzurę i ideologiczną kontrolę treści literackich – co doprowadziło do daleko idących konsekwencji dla transferu, produkcji, obiegu, a ostatecznie recepcji tłumaczonej literatury. Analiza korpusu dzieł niderlandzkojęzycznych przetłumaczonych na język słoweński ujawnia, że interwencje Partii Komunistycznej koncentrowały się szczególnie na (tłumaczeniach) literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej, co odzwierciedlało ich szersze cele ideologiczne w kształtowaniu narracji kulturowych.

Słowa kluczowe: Kulturkampf; religia; komunizm; cenzura; agitprop; przekład; literatura niderlandzka; Gerrit Theodoor Rotman; Dries van Coillie; literatura dziecięca; juvenile fiction

1. THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA AND NO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

The Socialist Republic of Slovenia (1944–1991) was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963–1992),[1] a multicultural and multilingual state governed by a communist regime. "In Yugoslavia, unlike most countries east of the Iron Curtain, the communists had already seized absolute power by 1945 and started radically changing the country's social system, modelled after its communist big brother, the Soviet Union" (Gabrič, 2008, pp. 64, 222).

However, in their attempts to imitate the Soviet model, they unfortunately overlooked the previously established levels of civilization and cultural development (Gabrič, 1998, p. 137). The process began with "the abolition of old newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, theaters, and associations, and the withdrawal of all 'inappropriate' publications from the public sphere" (Dović, 2008, pp. 12, 170). The authorities shut down all but one of the 26 existing publishing houses in Slovenia, seizing their assets or nationalizing them, leaving the Catholic Mohorjeva družba (St Hermagoras Society) as the only surviving publisher.

The communist regime in Yugoslavia was characterized by political censorship, which officially did not exist. The regime was marked by a form of implicit censorship. In the realm of culture, it was primarily directed at

[1] The Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was established during World War II. In 1945, it was transformed into the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and from 1963 renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

national authors and artists. Its implicit nature reveals the perversity of totalitarian censorship, leaving behind very few or no documented traces (Gabrič, 2008, pp. 63–77, 221–236).

Since 1991, extensive archival and other research has been conducted on traces of censorship in Yugoslavia between 1945 and 1990 that have been documented. According to Janežič (5), this period can be divided into two phases.

1.1 1945–1952: Era of harsh repressions and direct political censorship

The Communist Party's seizure of power was followed immediately by an era of harsh repression and direct political censorship that did not differ significantly from the experiences of other Eastern European countries under communist regimes. Immediately after the liberation from the previous occupying power, an extensive purging of bookstores and libraries began. To illustrate the zeal of Slovene communists, it may be informative to compare the situation with that of the Czech Republic. There, unlike in Slovenia, the purging of libraries did not begin immediately after the war but only gained momentum in 1949 (Engelbrecht, 2021, pp. 237, 258). The final list of banned books, which Gabrič (2008, pp. 65, 223) refers to as the Slovene communist *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, included propaganda and political works by Fascist and Nazi ideologists, as well as those by opponents of the new communist regime and works expressing Catholic ideas.

The Agitprop—the department of agitation and propaganda of the Communist Party—supervised book production and all other cultural activities throughout the country. Although it did not have any formal authority, it was one of the most effective censorship agencies of its time (pp. 67, 225). It imposed strict censorship regulations and maintained complete control over the exchange of information with the West.

However, after the conflict between Tito and Stalin in 1948 and the break with the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia also became "the communist country that first abandoned the most flagrant patterns of political interference with artistic creativity" (pp. 68, 226), and in 1952 it symbolically abolished the Agitprop. According to Kocijančič Pokorn, however, the communists did not relinquish all pretensions to ideological control over the population; they merely transferred these controls to the newly established Socialist Alliance of the Working People, which was led by Communists (2022, p. 214). This organization oversaw all major media and played a key role in appointing editors for radio and television, newspapers, and magazines, as well as publishing houses.

1.2 1952–1980s: Era of preventive censorship

The second period was characterized by a deliberate system of preventive censorship that lasted until the end of the 1980s. According to Janežič (5), the most effective form of censorship was the all-encompassing self-censorship practiced by both writers and translators. It was almost taken for granted, and became such a deeply ingrained part of everyday social norms, that it remained a significant lever for maintaining communist power and ensuring long-term stability. Meanwhile, the Party operated behind the scenes, occupying all important positions in society, and seeing that the preventive censorship functioned seamlessly as "a well-oiled machine" (Kocijančič Pokorn, 2022, p. 222) felt no or little need for repressive censorship of national literature.

2. *KULTURKAMPF*

By the end of the 19th century, political groups in Slovenia became involved in what was termed *Kulturkampf*, a phenomenon that was based on the ideological and political opposition between liberals and "clericals" and which created a division between anti-Catholic liberal factions on the left and pro-Catholic parties on the right. This ideological conflict resulted in significant societal and political tensions. They did not abate in the years following World War II, when the Communist Party took control of all political power mechanisms, thereby establishing a totalitarian regime. On the contrary, the conflicts between the anti-church ruling party and the intolerant Catholic Church resulted in numerous disputes. The church and state were separated, which according to Gabrič (2018, p. 367) led to the Catholic Church beginning to lose the privileges it had enjoyed for centuries. In the early post-war years, the Communist Party also adopted a Soviet model in its approach to religion, identifying the Catholic Church as its principal opponent (p. 367). For instance, almost all Catholic press outlets were abolished, and the authorities nationalized all religious educational institutions, including nursery and primary schools, gymnasiums, teacher training colleges, and boarding schools. Additionally, the Faculty of Theology at the University of Ljubljana underwent radical changes (p. 368).

Slovenia's oldest publishing house, Družba sv. Mohorja (St Hermagoras Society), faced a considerable upheaval and pressure as well. Originally organized as an ecclesiastical fraternity, it was forced to abandon the religious

dependence at the request of the authorities and change its name to simply "Mohorjeva družba". Furthermore, the authorities imposed, as they did on all publishing houses across Slovenia, the so-called publishing council, thus making sure that representatives of the communist authorities held a majority.

The communists also tried to establish a parallel church, independent of the Vatican,[2] and thus cause a rift among the Slovene clergy. But that did not work out and obviously put a strain on relations with the Vatican, which culminated in 1952 when diplomatic relations between Socialist Yugoslavia and the Vatican were broken off. "The initial anti-religious fervour of the Communist Party gradually abated" (Kocijančič Pokorn, 2022, p. 218), however, so in 1966 a protocol was signed between the Socialist Yugoslavia and the Vatican upon which Tito was received by the Pope in 1971, the first communist leader to be accorded this honour.

> In the first three decades after the war … the ideological focus of the Communist Party was mainly on religious re-education of their members and on the moulding of the coming generations. Controlling the minds of the young became a crucial battlefield, and the state started actively promoting atheism in schools. (Kocijančič Pokorn, 2022, p. 218)

2.1 Gerrit Theodor Rotman: From a liberal to a Catholic author

The first translations from Dutch in book form began to appear in the 1920s. Among the most frequently translated were Felix Timmermans, Stijn Streuvels and, most notably, Gerrit Theodor Rotman, who will be discussed below. By the end of the World War II, 38 translations of Dutch novels for children and adults had been published.

This paper sets out to investigate the question of whether the Kulturkampf had any impact on the reception of translated Dutch-language literature in Slovenia in the period following the end of the World War II and continuing until 1990. In order to answer this question, I will analyse the historical development of Slovene translations of Dutch-language works, with particular attention to the writings of Gerrit Theodor Rotman, the egodocument of Dries van Coillie, and translated children's literature and juvenile fiction.

In the post-war period, a total of 53 Dutch works were published in Slovene translation, comprising a collage of 42 literary (fiction, non-fiction, children's

[2] In 1949 they first founded the Cirilmetodijsko društvo katoliških duhovnikov LR Slovenije (The Cyril and Methodius society of Catholic priests of the People's Republic of Slovenia).

literature and juvenile fiction) and 11 spiritual works. Of all the Dutch authors whose works have been translated into Slovene, Theodor Rotman (1893–1944) is the most translated one, with many of his translations published before World War II, some even during it, and others afterwards. To date, 17 of his translations have been published, and with reprints included the total number is 33.

Rotman is considered one of the pioneers of Dutch comics. Initially, he drew in the Rotterdam liberal daily *Voorwaarts* (Forwards), but switched to the *Christelijke Nationale Dagbladen* (Christian National Dailies) in 1927, which later became *Het Kwartet*. Under the new name, the newspaper published another 40-something comics, many of which were subsequently published in book form. For *Het Kwartet*, Rotman drew about 40 comics. Many of them also appeared in book form. His comic books are primarily depictions of imaginative and witty experiences of animals and people.

After his death, Rotman's comics were reprinted many times in various Dutch newspapers. Outside the Netherlands, his work has appeared in Germany, Slovenia, France, Ireland, Iceland and Denmark. All his books and the comics published in the newspaper *Jutro* were translated into Slovene by one and the same person, the highly esteemed translator Vladimir Levstik (1886–1957).

If translation is always a reflection of the values and ideological and poetic positions of the target society (Lefevere, 2017), Rotman is the prime example of that. Due to the political and ideological orientation of Slovene publishers, he was initially considered a liberal author, only to suddenly be reclassified as a Catholic one. How did that happen? Tracing the publication of his works in Slovene reveals pivotal moments in the development of Slovenia's oldest publishing house Mohorjeva družba, the sole survivor of the communist regime.

The journey of Rotman's translation in Slovenia began in the late 1920s, when his first children's book, *Princeska Zvezdana* (Starry Princess) (1928), was published in Slovene by the publishing house Jutro (Morning), which also published a liberal daily newspaper of the same name. This newspaper had also continuously been publishing Rotman's "newspaper cartoons" every day since the late 1920s. They were called "newspaper cartoons" (*krantenprenten* in Dutch) at the time because the name "comic strip" had not yet been invented. Initially, Rotman's stories consisted of illustrations accompanied by brief texts. His newspaper cartoons – one, two or sometimes three printed per issue – could be barely seen among the newspaper columns and advertisements, but they nevertheless did attract readers' attention and soon Rotman's stories became very popular (Antič, 2006, pp. 102–103).

Before 1945, no fewer than 17 comic books by Rotman had been published in Slovenia. The initial nine were issued by the consortium of the liberal daily *Jutro*. Moreover, in 1937, 1938, and 1939, three works previously published by the daily, were reissued by the Slovene publisher Sodalizio Sant Ermacora (St Hermagoras' Society) in Gorizia, Italy, with permission from the ecclesiastical authorities. As a result, Rotman was suddenly considered a Catholic author, even though, until 1938, his work had previously only been published by a liberal daily. One may wonder how the Slovene translations of Rotman's works in Italy were suddenly acceptable for a Catholic publishing house?

The answer to this question begins in the city of Klagenfurt, Austria, an important 19th-century centre of Slovene Carinthian culture. There, in 1851, the aforementioned Slovene publishing house (Družba Sv. Mohorja) was established. This publisher became so popular at the time that virtually every household in Slovenia had read its books, which thus played a significant role in the high literacy rate among Slovenes. According to Carole Rogel (p. 20, quoted in Kocijančič Pokorn, 2012a, p. 20), illiteracy in Slovenia in 1921 was only 8.8%, which is significantly low compared to 49.8% among Croats and 67.8% among Serbs.

After World War I, when Klagenfurt became part of Austria, the publishing house was relocated under severe pressure to the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia – first to Prevalje (1919) and later to Celje (1927) in Slovenia.

Just as the Slovenes in Carinthia lost their territory to Austria in 1920, 300,000 Slovenes in the west were taken over by Fascist Italy in the same year, which occupied one-third of the Slovene territory. In both regions with native Slovene populations that fell under Austrian and Italian control after 1918, there was severe pressure towards Germanization and Italianization, which involved a ban on the use of Slovene in public. Due to the rise of Fascism in Italy, among other restrictions, the export of Slovene books to Italian-controlled areas was soon banned. Consequently, in 1924, a new subsidiary of Mohorjeva družba was established in the city of Gorizia (in addition to the one in Celje, Slovenia), to provide services for the Slovenes under Fascist Italy. As already mentioned, between 1937 and 1939, three of Rotman's comic books were published in Slovene translation by Sodalizio S. Ermacora in Gorizia.

During World War II, four of Rotman's comic books, all reprints, were published by Knjigarna Tiskovne zadruge, a liberal publishing house established in 1916. In the post-war period, each of the three branches of the Mohorjeva/Hermagoras publishing group issued but a single translation of Rotman's

works. Due to its Christian orientation this publishing group faced serious impediments in Austria, Italy, and Slovenia. It was a source of contention for the communist authorities, who sought to abolish it by all means.

There are no known reviews of the Rotman's comic book translations that were published in Italy or Austria. I did, however, identify one review of his translations published in Slovenia in 1974 that appeared in the Catholic newspaper *Znamenja* (Omens). The review of *Koning Kikkerdik en zijn zoontje* (King Fatty Frog and his son) is negative, criticizing the book for its perceived lack of both Catholic elements and artistic merit.

The author of the review, Viktor Smolik (1976, pp. 88–94), argues that Rotman's inclusion of the single line in which the dwarves "rejoiced and praised God because they had arranged everything so beautifully" does little to elevate its quality. Smolik further criticizes the decision of the Mohorjeva publishing group to publish such a "trivial work," comparing it to the liberal newspaper *Jutro*, which once gained readers by featuring Rotman's comic stories between advertisements.

Such a negative evaluation may have been a collateral result of the ongoing Kulturkampf, as *Jutro* and Mohorjeva represented two ideologically polarized camps at the time. The fact that Rotman could be acceptably classified in both liberal and Catholic circles is hardly surprising, given the educational tone of his stories and the explicit aim to teach children universal values such as friendship, honesty, kindness, solidarity, and helpfulness.

It seems Rotman's Dutch (hi)story is repeating itself in Slovenia. While in the Netherlands, Rotman initially published his comics in the liberal newspaper *Voorwaarts*, and later moved to the Christian conglomerate *Het Kwartet* after a dispute over copyright, resulting in him being regarded as a Christian author subsequently. Similarly, in Slovenia, his comics were first published in a liberal newspaper and by a liberal publisher, but were later "snatched up" by the Catholic Mohorjeva/Hermagoras Group.

Rotman's enduring popularity in Slovenia, dating as far back as the late 1920s, is illustrated by the fact that immediately following the country's independence in 1991, his comic novels began to be reissued by newly established publishers.[3] This currently adds up to a total of 12 book reprints of translations by Vladimir Levstik in a new format, which were ultimately released as an e-book in 2014, thus even made available digitally.

[3] Maya, Karantanija, Libro, and PeBook.

2.2 The Kulturkampf and the "Enthusiastic Suicide"

In Socialist Yugoslavia, censorship, even though it never officially existed (throughout the post-war period, only 11 works – all listed in the Official Gazette – were officially banned in Yugoslavia), had far-reaching effects.

One of the consequences of this "nonexistent censorship" was the so-called D-fund – an abbreviation for "directors' list." It refers to a list of books that were not officially banned but were nonetheless placed under supervision and purview of the Director of the National and University Library in Ljubljana. By the end of the 1980s, this list contained over 700 monographs and more than 140 periodic titles. Consequently, a significant discrepancy emerged between the number of officially and unofficially banned works. The University Library of Maribor (the second-largest city in Slovenia), in turn, was also required to compile a similar list of banned books, which ultimately included 223 titles (Gabrič, 2008, pp. 74, 233).

The D-fund, a highly confidential collection, primarily included works printed abroad. Many of those blacklisted works were produced by anti-communist political émigrés who voiced unreserved criticism of the political system in Yugoslavia, but a substantial number of literary works were also included. Since the Catholic Church in Slovenia (and Croatia) was considered as the primary ideological opponent of the new authorities, a natural consequence of the Kulturkampf was the inclusion of many religious and theological books in the list. Getting hold of these books in Slovenia was virtually impossible, since access to them was severely restricted. For every book imported from abroad, a special permit from the federal government in Belgrade was required (Gabrič, 2008, pp. 74, 233).

Lists of banned books from both libraries were made public in the early 1990s. These lists clearly indicate that the authorities did not distinguish between political and literary works, but aimed to include as many items as possible that had been printed abroad in Slovene.

A title that also made it to the list of the University and National Library in Ljubljana is also a Slovene translation of a Dutch book. Under the consecutive number 549 we find the egodocument *De enthousiaste zelfmoord. Ervaringen onder Mao Tse-Tung* (The enthusiastic suicide. Experiences under Mao Zedong), written in 1958 by the Flemish priest Dries van Coillie. Van Coillie, who had been a missionary in China since 1939 as well as a professor at a seminary in China, was imprisoned by communist authorities in 1950 along with other Western missionaries. During his 34 months of captivity, he was

subjected to interrogations, torture, and communist indoctrination. Following the Geneva Conference of 1954, he was finally released and expelled from China; upon his return home, he wrote the aforementioned book about his harrowing experiences. It was translated into German in 1960, and the Slovene translation, almost certainly based on the German one, was published two years later. Unfortunately, the name of the translator is not mentioned, which is understandable given the sensitive nature of the content and the political climate of the time.

The Slovene translation of Van Coillie's book was published by Mohorjeva družba in Klagenfurt. As it highlights the negative aspects of the activities of the communist party in China, it naturally ended up on the D-fund list, among books with a Christian or Catholic spiritual tradition, and therefore never reached Slovene readers. Moreover, the author himself, a Flemish Catholic missionary, was also controversial in the eyes of the communist authorities. Thus, *De enthousiaste zelfmoord* may serve as a typical Kulturkampf example of the Communist Party engaged in a direct struggle against Catholicism.

2.3 The consequences of the Kulturkampf in translations of children's literature and juvenile fiction

The prevailing regime sought to indoctrinate new generations primarily by promoting dialectical materialism in education and in translated publications for children and youth. One of the extensive studies conducted by Kocijančič Pokorn has revealed the ideological indoctrination of children through retranslations of children's classics, such as the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. A concise overview of her findings may reveal the scale and impact of the ideological censorship.

Through a textual analysis of nine original works and 96 translated versions (in Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, and Macedonian) published in Socialist Yugoslavia, Pokorn demonstrated that 80 percent of the translations underwent ideological censorship, with references to Christianity either removed or softened. These interventions, carried out by various publishers, translators, and across multiple languages, spanned several decades, yet were most prevalent between 1945 and 1955. It was striking, however, that despite the frequent use of ideological manipulation, intended to align the texts with the desired ideological goals, these alterations were never openly acknowledged. It was actually ensured that these interventions remained concealed from the public by

meticulously maintainted control over the publishing process (Kocijančič Pokorn, 2022, p. 219).

As previously mentioned, self-censorship was common practice that also affected translators who were acutely aware of the potential repercussions and dangers that both a controversial book and its translator could face in the prevailing political climate. As a result, translations of certain works were also systematically purged of "harmful" ideological influences and aligned with the ideological framework of communism. This process was applied almost exclusively to children's literature and juvenile fiction.

A typical example of this can be seen in the first Slovene translation of *Pippi Longstocking* from 1955, where Christmas Eve in the original was replaced by New Year's Eve in the Slovene version, Christmas presents became New Year's gifts in a similar fashion, Christmas tree was substituted with a New Year's tree, and Christmas holiday was changed to winter holiday. Similar secularizations or de-Christianisations (Smolik, 1998, pp. 29–42) occurred in the Slovene translations of texts such as Sienkiewicz's *In Desert and Wilderness* (1911), many popular children's books by Felix Salten, including *Bambi*, and the adventure novels of Karl May (Gabrič, 2008, pp. 75, 234). A telling statement from Ivan Minatti, a former editor at the publishing house Mladinska knjiga, illustrates this rather vividly:

> As the editor of Karl May, I had to resort to adaptation. May's books contain a lot of Pan-Germanism and sentimental Catholicism. However, the essence of his stories is action. When we started working on these translations, we, as a publishing house, gave the translator a hint or direction about what to tone down or simply omit. I am certain that in doing so, we did no harm to May, and this did not come at the expense of the quality of his work. (Minatti, 1984, pp. 69–70)

Thus, in the post-war period, Karl May's works were entirely purged of any references to Christian(ity). Since interference in translations is not limited to the post-war period but occurs in all eras, it is worth noting that the pre-war translation of Karl May from 1931 also resorted to such "purges", for example in omitting all passages in which Winnetou is critical of Christian missionaries and emphasizing those where he converts to Christianity.

I wondered whether similar interventions occurred in the translations into Slovene of Dutch-language children's literature and juvenile fiction. Unfortunately, the corpus of such literature is exceedingly small, and aside from Rotman's comic books (published by the Catholic Mohorjeva/Hermagoras publishing house, where such ideological interventions at that time were unlikely),

only six children's books or juvenile fiction were translated into Slovene between 1945 and 1990: *Lawines Razen* (*Avalanche!*) (1967) and *Ik ben Fedde* (*I Am Fedde*) (1979) by Ann Rutgers van der Loeff, *Verhalen van de spinnende kater* (*Tales of the Purring Tomcat*) (1969) by Harriët Laurey, *Sterrekinderen* (*Star Children*) (1970) by Clara Asscher-Pinkhof, *Padu is gek* (*Padu Is Nuts*) (1973) by Miep Diekmann, and *De Scheepsjongens van Bontekoe* (*Java Ho!*) (1975) by Johan Fabricius.

For the purpose of the present study, I carried out a focused investigation, analyzing all six works for references to Christianity or expressions containing religious elements. In all of them, a total of 56 such elements were identified. Of these elements, the vast majority (51 instances) were found in the novel *De Scheepsjongens van Bontekoe* (*Java Ho!*) (1975) by Johan Fabricius: *God* (3), *Goddank!* [Thank God!] (5), *Heer* [Lord] (3), *Christenmens* [Christian man] (1), *bidden* [to pray] in all verb forms (5), *de priester* [the priest] (1), *het gebed* [the prayer] (3), *Kerstmis* [Christmas] (2), *hemel* [heaven] four times and *Hemeltje!* [Goodness gracious!] four times. In other works listed in the previous paragraph, the remaining five elements were identified: *bij de gratie Gods* [by the grace of God] (2),[4] *O God!,*[5] *Goddank!* [Thank God!],[6] and *communiefeest* [Communion celebration].[7] All of these expressions were omitted in the Slovene translation, except for *bij de gratie Gods*, which was translated once but omitted the second time.

There is a notable difference in the number of references to Christianity or expressions containing religious elements between *De Scheepsjongens van Bontekoe* and all other youth novels. However, this does not imply that *De Scheepsjongens van Bontekoe* is a novel with a Christian theme. The translator, Janko Moder, did not omit or alter any of these expressions in the Slovene translation but instead found suitable equivalents in Slovene. When determining the reasons for possible changes in translations, it is sometimes helpful to consider not only the editorial policies prevalent in the post-war period but also the the career trajectory of the translator. Janko Moder was a highly esteemed translator in Slovenia, renowned both for the sheer volume of his translated works and for the diversity of languages, cultures, literary forms, genres, and styles he engaged with. He was Christian-oriented and he actively collaborated with the Catholic publishing house Mohorjeva družba both be-

[4] *Lawines Razen*.
[5] *Sterrekinderen*.
[6] *Sterrekinderen*.
[7] *Padu is gek*.

fore and after World War II. This might explain why he faithfully preserved all Christian elements in his translations, and it is likely that the editor of *De scheepsjongens van Bontekoe*, the aforementioned Ivan Minatti, did not provide "a hint or direction about what to tone down or simply omit" (Minatti, 1984, pp. 69–70) as he did to the traslator of Karl May.

This type of research must also consider that almost all of the Dutch-language works in Slovene from the period under study are indirect translations from German or French, with very few from English. The fact that Dutch texts were predominantly translated into Slovene via an intermediary language during this period is not unusual. This practice is common in translations between peripheral languages, where a core or semi-peripheral language[8] typically serves as the intermediary. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that, until 1989, it was not possible to study Dutch at Slovene universities, which meant there were few qualified translators capable of translating directly from Dutch, with some rare exceptions, such as the renowned translator Janko Moder, who translated two of the six mentioned works.[9] However, even in his case, it is possible to assume that he also relied on translations from other languages. The intermediary language chosen for each respective work must often be inferred from the translator's biographical and bibliographical details since at that time, editors seldom noted the language from which a work was translated. Of the six mentioned works, only one explicitly states that it was translated from German.[10] In two cases, we can only assume that the translators used a German version. We can be almost certain of this for *Lawines Razen* and *Sterrekinderen*, both translated by Jože Dolenc, who primarily translated from German.

The only book that could likely have been translated directly from Dutch is Harriët Laurey's *Verhalen van de spinnende kater*, translated by Nada Makarovič Žagar. Although this is not actually stated in the book itself, it can be inferred from the cover of her second Dutch translation, Harry Mulisch's *De aanslag* (*The Assault*), where it is explicitly noted that the book was translated directly from Dutch.

[8] The terms "peripheral", "semi-peripheral" and "core" languages are borrowed from Heilbron (2010), who classifies both Dutch and Slovene as peripheral languages, defined as those with less than 1% share in the international translation economy. This classification is notable given that Dutch has nearly 12 times more speakers than Slovene.

[9] Janko Moder translated works such as *Padu is gek* (*Padu Is Nuts*) by Miep Diekmann and *De Scheepsjongens van Bontekoe* (*Java Ho!*) by Johan Fabricius. It is likely that he also relied on a German translation when working from the original text.

[10] The text refers to the work *Ik ben Fedde* (*I Am Fedde*) by Ann Rutgers Van Der Loeff, which was translated from German by Vladka Žener.

It is important to note that when we speak of translations from Dutch via German, we are referring to German translations originating from the Federal Republic of Germany, not from the German Democratic Republic. Therefore, ideological shifts as a consequence of the (Slovene) Kulturkampf were unlikely to be reflected in these texts. This claim is furthermore supported by my analysis of a corpus of works for adult readers translated from Dutch into Slovene between 1945 and 1990, where I found that none of the indirect translations from German were based on works produced in the German Democratic Republic. The post-war dissemination of Dutch-language literature into Central and Eastern Europe, as well as its circulation within this region, followed a distinct trajectory in Socialist Yugoslavia, different from that in other Central and Eastern European countries.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, it should be noted that the findings presented in this study are not representative as the corpus of translated works of juvenile fiction from Dutch into Slovene is quite small. However, these examples sufficiently warrant a claim that the results of the study are (partly) consistent with those of other scholars who have studied Slovene translations of children's and juvenile literature from the same period and from other languages, particularly English and German.[11] Based on her extensive research, Kocijančič Pokorn (2012a, pp. 152–158) concludes that Christian elements were systematically excluded from translations. This applies to texts where such elements were only minimally present – as is the case with all the above analysed Dutch to Slovene translations – as well as such source texts that were strongly characterized by Christian elements.

Both the general readership in Slovenia and literary experts remain largely unaware which texts were altered. Nevertheless, no trace of official directives requiring or mandating the omission of religious elements from translations can be found in the Slovene archives. This scarcity in official censorship documents, together with the notable presence of ideological purifications in translations, suggests the presence of a widespread self-censorship among translators and editors. Having said that, there does, however, exist a document that confirms the existence – and awareness – of such instructions. This document, originating in 1983 from the Committee for Public Information and

[11] See Kocijančič Pokorn (2012a, 2012b, 2022), Gabrič (2008), and Smolik (1998).

Propaganda "calls for an end to the practice of eliminating religious references from translations and movies". That committee stated that purging literature and film of religious expressions was morally and legally unacceptable as it violates the integrity of copyright. Translations, the document emphasized, have to be authentic and professionally executed, that is, adhering to the norms of translational deontology in all fields: in translations for TV, in film and television subtitling, in books or any other printed matter.[12]

In the 1980s, Slovenia experienced a wave of liberalization across all sectors of society, a phenomenon which later spread to the rest of Socialist Yugoslavia. During this period, state publishers not only began releasing translations of religious works (e.g., the Slovene translation of the Dutch *New Catechism* and biblical stories for children) but also translations of otherwise controversial works such as *Turks Fruit* (*Turkish Delight*) by Jan Wolkers and *De schaamte voorbij* (*The Shame Is Over*) Anja Meulenbelt, which symbolized the sexual liberation of an entire generation, as well as an anthology of 20th-century homoerotic poetry, featuring contributions from Dutch poets.[13]

With the eventual collapse of communism and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the legislation that had long restricted freedom of speech and press – most notably the infamous Article 133 – was finally abolished, marking the end of (communist) censorship.

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[12] AS [Archives of the Republic of Slovenia] 1589, a.u. 697 in Kocijančič Pokorn, *Ideological Control*, 223–224.

[13] Brane Mozetič was the editor of the anthology *Drobci stekla v ustih. Antologija poezije dvajsetega stoletja s homoerotično motiviko* [Fragments of glass in the mouth. An anthology of 20th-century poetry with homoerotic themes] (Aleph, 1989).

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