

**MANIPULATION OF TRANSLATOR:  
UNCONSCIOUS TRANSLATION CENSORSHIP  
OF IDEOLOGICAL PHENOMENA  
(ON THE BASIS OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS  
OF VALERIAN PIDMOHYLNYI'S NOVELS)**

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The problem of censorship is essential for all forms of social activity. Every society strives to disrupt the ideas that it sees as detrimental to its existence in the field of translation. This article presents an insight into unique cases of censorship regarding the ideological phenomena of the Soviet Union striving to unveil the all-pervasive nature of the occurrence. Two translated novels which became a subject of analysis, “The City” (“Місто”) and “A Little Touch of Drama” (“Невеличка драма”), belong to Valerian Pidmohylnyi and were translated by Prof. Maxim Tarnawsky and George and Moira Luckyj, respectively. The analysis indicates that translation censorship in these texts was, in many ways, unconscious as they involve either the preservation of censorship decisions made by other people or the acceptance of social stereotypes about a certain period.

*Key words:* Pidmohylnyi, censorship, translation, unconscious, socialism, social.

**Introduction.** Censorship plays a tremendous role in the existence of any society, with translation often becoming a major target of the phenomenon. Due to bringing about the ideas that may be foreign to a certain community, translation can represent a menace to society from the standpoint of bureaucracy and average citizens. In Ukrainian context, the focus on censorship in translation primarily touches upon the Soviet era. However, the reality shows that the situation with censorship is much more complex. Censorship may also be common among Western societies and their proponents. In this regard, the presented research will test the following hypothesis: English translations of the Ukrainian prose related to the Soviet period feature instances of censorship (especially unconscious). The main aim of the presented research is to highlight these instances of censorship and explain their appearance by analyzing two English translations of Valerian Pidmohylnyi's prose.

**Previous Research in the Area.** The research on the topic of censorship plays a rather significant role in the Western discourse on Translation Studies. In this regard, two key pieces of research undoubtedly involve the studies of Andre Lefevere and Anna Bogic. The former researcher offers a perfect representation of the censorship issues in a chapter on the translations of Anne Franke into German in “Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame.” As the scholar indicates, references to the brutal nature of the German nation during the Holocaust encountered a very definite resistance on the part of the translator in the 1950s [16, p. 72].

The latter researcher, Anna Bogic, also offers a study where she shows that Western societies seek to manipulate elements of ideology incapable of fitting their needs. In her article, she describes the translation history of Simone de Beauvoir’s “Second Sex” treatise. Bogic shows that, in reality, its first translation became a victim of interventions on the part of the publishing house in question, Knopf [11, p. 183–190]. The distortion later had a great impact on the perceptions of feminism in the West.

The last 10–15 years of studies produced a large number of research articles and even encyclopedia entries on the issue of censorship regarding translation. Above all, one should highlight two entries in the “The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics.” Christina Schäffner, in her article on “Translation and Institutions,” shows that institutional mechanisms play a tremendous role in the promotion of censorship practices within translation [23, p. 204–210]. Denise Merkle offers an even more radical insight on the topic in the material on “Translation and Censorship.” In this respect, the author highlights that instances of censorship characterize almost every society in the modern world [18, p. 238].

A rather significant topic to consider involves self-censorship in many cases. One of the best articles on this issue undoubtedly stems from Zaixi Tan, who, using the examples of Chinese translations, shows that society conditions translators to accept certain norms of censorship and then proliferate them in a rather radical nature [26, p. 50–60]. In this regard, one can indicate that the Bourdieusian analysis of Simeoni, which likens translators to slaves, is vindicated [25, p. 7–14].

In the end, a society can arrive at the openly militarized applications of translations. Here, one should note a recent publication by V. Chernetsky (2022) presented in the *Translation under Communism* collection. The article is notable for showing that many Communist states viewed translation as a full-scale weapon [12, p. 411–420]. Its goal was to promote the vision of the world advanced by the ideologues of the Marxian type. Thus, authors were clearly split into progressive and non-progressive. In a set of articles, N. Rudnytska shows that the “incorrect” authors were dehumanized [6, p. 198–203; 7, p. 97–103].

As for the objects of censorship, one can summarize that they touch upon a wide variety of topics. For instance, an article on censorship in Turkey produced by I. Üstünsöz indicates that sexual and generally obscene themes of diverging kinds often fall under strict control in Islam-influenced societies [28, p. 222–228]. More political topics also found a reflection in research literature, with translation in East Germany receiving some attention [27, p. 53–64]. Some ethnic elements can also become a subject of censorship in certain cases [8, p. 318–326].

One tendency is notable regarding the literature: a clear disposition towards the studies of censorship in non-democratic contexts exist. Some articles that are critical of the Western

societies concerning censorship are indeed present [2, p. 367–373]. Nonetheless, most of the attention undoubtedly goes to authoritarian states. One of the goals of this study is to counteract the tendency in question.

**Methodology.** The presented research starts from a set of key assumptions. Above all, one should note some of its philosophical underpinnings. In this respect, the author proceeds from a belief that, being biological creatures, who primarily seek to adapt to their environments, humans strive to survive in society. As modern biologists and medical professionals note, the “survival of the fittest” remains a major factor in the existence of humankind [10, p. 852–854]. This aspect leads to the society-wide survival-centric acceptance of varying views that are seen as positive by the ruling classes of a society. Other needs, as, for instance, the famous Maslow Pyramid indicates, come only after an individual ensured their long-term safety [14, p. 26–37]. In this light, an analysis of the translators based on the biographies, translator prefaces, and even some published interviews occurs, following the framework of Translator Studies outlined by Holmes and Chesterman [13, p. 14–20].

Lastly, to facilitate a full-scale comparison, one should have a clear contrastive mechanism. A strong method appears in the writings of George Lakoff, who have managed to offer a unique notation for conceptual statements of various kinds [15, p. 202–210]. Essentially, as he claims, almost every statement in the modern languages is of metaphorical nature. For instance, one can state that Time = Money as people usually spend time or waste it. The method received rather significant usage in the Western Translation Studies research. For example, the article titled “Metaphor and translation” by Christina G. E. Schäffner highlights that one of the key reasons for the common conflicts concerning translation in the Western discourse lies in the changes of the metaphorical associations rather than the metaphors themselves [22, p. 1253–1269]. This research, thus, will represent various elements of ideology via the notation outlined above.

The overall algorithm of the research will involve the following steps:

- 1) analysis of the conceptual metaphors for censored elements;
- 2) contrastive comparison of the translation and original metaphors;
- 3) usage of the translation sociology based on the analysis of translator backgrounds to promote the analysis of the potential reasons for censorship.

**Results.** Two novels by Valerian Pidmohylnyi, “The City” or “Місто” (translated into English by Prof. Maxim Tarnawsky) and “A Little Touch of Drama” or “Невеличка драма” (translated into English by George and Moira Luckyj) will receive the attention of the author. Both novels are of interest because they depict the early Soviet reality (NEP/initial Stalinist industrialization) from the standpoint of a person who supports the system. One of the main conceptual metaphors in it, that of the Soviet reality, takes on a positive connotation (Pidmohylnyi viewed some aspects of the phenomenon from a skeptical standpoint; however, his goal was to ‘remove errors’ of the system rather than the system itself) (Soviet Reality = Positive/Neutral).

Translation of “A Little Touch of Drama” (1972) is of interest because it involves a situation in which translators were misled by the decisions made on the part of the outsiders. One of the expectations for translators is their ability to transfer the main meaning of the text. In case the original meaning is disrupted in one form or another, it becomes more or less

impossible to convey a correct translation. If one compares the discussed translation with the current editions, it is simple to discover omissions, with the following fragment being absent:

Original: *Раптом вона згадала, що за кілька днів Перше травня, і це видалось їй значущим, їй хотілось вийти на вулицю, бачити демонстрацію, силу-силенну людей, прапори, чути бадьорий спів, міцні промови, самій ходити, перейнятись цим святом праці й весни. І вона декламувала пошепки з Олеся: Червоні прапори, куди не кинеш оком, цвітуть на вулицях, як макові квітки...* [4, p. 726].

Translation (note: made by the author of this article): *Suddenly, she recalled that the First of May was close. This fact seemed highly important to her. She wanted to go out, see a public meeting, myriads of people, banners, vivid singing, and strong speeches. In the end, she sought to walk around there and let the emotions of this spring and labor festivity take over her. Then, she started to murmur the poetry of Oles': Red banners, wherever you look, They blossom in the streets like poppy flowers.*

It is obvious from this fragment that Pidmohylnyi sought to show the Soviet Union as a positive phenomenon from the standpoint of people involved in it. In this regard, he likens the red banners and Soviet Reality in general to spring and flowers (Soviet Reality = Spring/Renewal = Blossoming Flowers = Positivity).

The reason for the absence of the fragment in translation appears much more difficult than one could predict. An original assumption was that the censorship in question was a result of the translators' work. In reality, the presented fragment is absent in the likely original chosen by the translators, the 1956 Ukrainian version of the novel [5, p. 319]. As a result, George and Moira Luckyj are not the original censors in the outlined case. Instead, they can be called secondary censors since they proliferate a translation published by a clearly biased group of individuals (as indicated, for example, by the preface and the affiliation of the relevant publishing house with nationalist organizations). The individuals unknowingly manipulate the image of Pidmohylnyi in the eyes of the Western audiences.

As the translators mention in the preface, one of the key directions of the novel lies in its "sardonic" nature regarding the Soviet reality) [19, p. 7–9]. Indeed, Pidmohylnyi saw the totalitarian elements in it. However, he definitely believed in the ability of the system to defeat these issues. The removal of such fragments turns pro-Soviet/neutral novel with sardonic elements into something that it does not represent: an anti-Soviet/anti-totalitarian novel (Soviet = Totalitarian).

The manipulation of literature and, hence, translators continues to be a potent aspect in further fragments of the novel if one compares the translation with the contemporary versions available in Ukrainian language. Another strong example involves the de facto criticism of Jesus and religion, which is also a result of the omissions in the 1956 version. Pidmohylnyi, through the protagonist, represents religion/Jesus as something reprehensible (Jesus/Religion = Negativity): Original: *Який же з вас, Льово, тухтій! Який ви непристойно м'який та добросердий! Справжній Ісус Христос... І нікому ви не потрібні* [4, p. 584].

The relevant fragment features the following meaning: *You're just like Jesus... And nobody needs you.*

Translation removes the presented elements, once again, following the 1956 version of the novel [5, p. 97]. In it, the reference to Jesus is not present:

*You're a weakling, Liova. And so kind-hearted too. No one needs you.*

Pidmohylnyi is no longer represented as an anti-religious author. Instead, he becomes at the very least neutral regarding religion in translation.

A clear bias in favor of omitting the Soviet visions of festivities and religion is evident in the case of the 1956 version editors. An analysis of the existing information indicates that the publishers of the complete 1991 version and the “censored” one used identical sources, the edition of the novel published in “Life and Revolution” journal in 1930 (№ 3–6) [4, p. 780–782]. Omissions of this type do not look like a coincidence because of them occurring more than once. An anti-leftist preface by Prof. Yu. Boyko for the 1956 version confirms the assumptions: the editors had an anti-Soviet set of intentions that led to censorship despite their proclaiming no modifications [5, p. 5–23].

In this situation, a natural question occurs: why can one call the translators secondary censors in the presented case? After all, they simply recreated the version that was apparently available to them. The overall reason lies in the aforementioned clear bias of the 1956 editors. It is reasonable to expect manipulation from individuals who criticize the Soviet Union with openly derogatory terms [5, p. 5–23]. The translators further proliferate this overall attitude, with the preface, for instance, calling the novel sardonic, as mentioned previously (even though its anti-system nature is questionable) [19, p. 7–9]. It might have been very difficult to avoid censorship due to the fact that the original version from the 1930s was not published in a book format during the 1970s. Nonetheless, a preface with a clear warning about the 1956 editors' biases could have at least prepared the readers to be skeptical.

As mentioned previously, two translators worked on the text of Pidmohylnyi, George Luckyj and his wife Moira. In this respect, the existing information indicates that George Luckyj was the dominant party regarding translation. His wife, Moira, was primarily engaged in the editing of the text since she was of British origin and was not a native speaker of the Ukrainian language.

George Luckyj was a migrant from Western Ukraine, who had left the region shortly before the joint invasion of the Soviet and German armies. His father immediately became a target of repression for the Soviets after their occupation of the then-Polish territory. In the end, he died in one of the GULAG concentration camps. Obviously, an event of this type is highly likely to provoke a severe dislike of the Soviet regime and its entire ideology. Further academic work of the translator confirms this hypothesis. He became a researcher of Ukrainian writers who were victims of the Communist repression in the 1930s [24]. In this light, the lack of criticism towards the 1956 version and its editors is not surprising. It is highly probable that the idea of finding and consulting the original text from the 1930s did not even occur because the translators trusted the original censors.

Another set of examples involves a more elaborate case of unconscious censorship. Prof. Maxim Tarnawsky produced a translation of “The City” by Valerian Pidmohylnyi between 2013 and 2018. This translation used the original text, featuring no omissions of the kind mentioned previously. In many ways, the translation in question appears to be very mindful of the ideology and seems to represent it in a manner that is rather close to the “constructive” (in the sense of being pro-Soviet) irony of Pidmohylnyi. Soviet Reality is either positive or, at least, neutral in both the translation and the original (Soviet Reality = Positive/Neutral).

For example, one of the fragments in translation receives an addition that repeats the Marxist rhetoric common of the Soviet Union:

Original: *А, профспілка кусається з прислугою* [3, p. 12];

Translation: *Sure, now it's not so easy to boss around the organized proletariat!* [20, p. 21]

In many ways, the analysis of the translator biography and, more importantly, environment, once again plays a tremendous role. Prof. Maxim Tarnawsky is a Ukrainian-Canadian/American Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures who actively studies some of the seminal literary works produced by the Ukrainian writers [17]. His parents, according to certain open sources, were post-WWII Ukrainian migrants. Most likely, an element of repression was present in this decision; however, the rather scarce information given by the researcher does not allow making a full-scale conclusion [9]. One element is obvious: repressions are not central to the research of Professor Tarnawsky, who, while definitely patriotic regarding Ukraine, does not seem to have overly radical anti-Communist views.

The environment also plays a rather significant role. “The City” received a translation between 2014 and 2018, at the time when capitalist Russia began its aggression against Ukraine. By that point, an enemy in the form of black-hundred/vlasovite Russian imperialism rather than the now archaic Soviet internationalism arose. A much more impartial translation became possible.

Still, one case highlights that even the most thorough and non-ideological translation can fall victim to the ideas prevailing in a certain society:

Original 1: *Були в драмі й комічні елементи, наприклад, тюхтій-куркуль* [3, p. 101];

Translation 1: *There were comic elements in the drama, too: for example, the character of the kurkul, that slouch of a rich farmer* [21, p. 124].

Original 2: *Її компаньйонка, молода куркулівна, кінчила, згідно з своїми планами, курси машинопису* [3, p. 27];

Translation 2: *Her companion, a successful farmer's young daughter, was completing, in accord with her plans, a typing course* [20, p. 39].

In the presented case, the word “куркуль,” which stands, according to the Dictionary of Ukrainian Language compiled in the Soviet Union, for “Багатий селянин-власник, на якого працюють наймити і незаможники” (a rich farmer-proprietor, who can employ people without property or poor individuals), is clearly distorted [1]. If one looks at the definitions, it may seem that no problems with translating the word “куркуль” as a rich farmer exist. However, the Dictionary of Ukrainian Language reveals the true attitude towards this social group in its examples. For instance, it features the following quote: “Його батько, Максим Сергійович, був за нове життя, виступав проти куркулів. Куркулі ж ховали від держави хліб, гноїли його в ямах (Юрій Збанацький, Т. Шашло, 1949, 21)” [1]. A kurkul was seen as the enemy of the state due to exploiting labor and opposing the Soviet Union (Kurkul = Exploiter = Enemy of the State). An accusation that a person was a *kurkul* often signified death.

A counterpoint from a modern reader may be of the following type: Soviet Union saw all rich people as evil and, hence, the translation is at least partially valid. The problem with this approach is that it is rather stereotypical. It indeed can work for the audience that does not understand the local and time-bound context. However, from the standpoint of history, the method is not valid. Orthodox Marxism never sought to destroy rich people per se. Instead,

the ideology targeted exploitation, which it saw as the main threat for humankind due to it pushing *excessive* inequality. The examples of the Stakhanovite movement as well as the exorbitant rewards for certain scientific projects (such as the atomic one) during Stalinism perfectly disprove the vision.

This mistranslation (even if it has a significant element of irony) is primarily a result of a historical perspective/trauma that proved the inhumane nature of the Soviet regime. Hence, it does not disrupt the quality of the translation. Nonetheless, the fragments do not cease to be a mistranslation. The Kurkul as Exploiter/Enemy of the State in the novel of Pidmohylnyi turns into the Kurkul as a Rich Farmer.

The belief that Soviet Reality = Negative Vision of Richness definitely plays a role in this case. Its source is, in the end, the most interesting element in the outlined analysis. One can discover the statement that the Soviet Union punished farmers for being rich rather than exploiters and potential enemies of its industrial policies among the Canadian conservatives, such as Jordan Peterson. In this light, Prof. Tarnawsky most likely allowed the mistranslation in an honest way. The ideology of the society either pushed the translator to give no additional considerations to the translation of the word *kurkul* or represent it in an intentionally ironic manner. This case features the social manipulation of the translator: ideology/belief systems of his society impacted the decision-making .

**Conclusions.** To summarize, the presented analysis has highlighted that censorship in English translations of Ukrainian prose is a rather potent factor. George and Moira Luckyj apparently had an intention to produce a translation that was close to the original. However, their trust in the 1956 version made them the de facto promoters of its censorship. This case shows that the translators should be very wary of book editions made by outsiders. In another situation, the translator, Prof. Maxim Tarnawsky, most likely, was misled by the traditional vision of the Soviet Union advanced by the Canadian society. Both cases feature some form of manipulation aimed at the translators.

Ultimately, this research enriches the Eastern European discussion regarding censorship by showing that the phenomenon does not touch upon Soviet Union translation alone. The research itself is not without limitations. Above all, the author lacked access to the archival data of the translators and, hence, did not possess a full-scale insight into the key translation decisions. Indeed, censorship decisions are very obvious. However, one can only set up plausible hypotheses about the decisions rather than full-scale definite statements. Future research should focus on the translations that feature complete background data necessary for explicating the aforementioned processes.

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## МАНПУЛЯЦІЯ ПЕРЕКЛАДАЧА: НЕСВІДОМА ЦЕНзуРА ІДЕОЛОГІЧНИХ ФЕНОМЕНІВ В ПЕРЕКЛАДІ (НА ОСНОВІ АНГЛОМОВНИХ ПЕРЕКЛАДІВ РОМАНІВ ВАЛЕР'ЯНА ПІДМОГИЛЬНОГО)

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Цензура безумовно присутня майже в усіх людських суспільствах. Її головна ціль – збереження стабільності суспільства, яка може постраждати від ідей, що є чужими для певної групи людей. Метою цієї статті є дослідження цензури в перекладі як феномена. Попри деякі винятки, основним напрямком досліджень у цій сфері стають авторитарні та тоталітарні держави. У цій статті з'ясовано, що цензура притаманна не тільки таким суспільствам, але й групам людей, які вважають себе прихильниками анти тоталітарних цінностей. Основою цього дослідження стали переклади двох романів Валер'яна Підмогильного (“Місто”, перекладене проф. Максимом Тарнавським у 2014–2018 роках і “Невеличка драма”, перекладені Юрієм та Мойрою Луцькими в 1972 році). Аналіз перекладів дозволив визначити, що цензура в певній формі була присутня в обох випадках. Проте, слід відзначити, що її природа, на відміну від, наприклад, цензури у радянському суспільстві, була несвідомою. Перекладачі або просували рішення щодо цензури, які стосувалися інших людей, або радикально видозмінювали значення ідеологічних термінів під впливом антирадянських інтерпретацій, що домінували в суспільстві. У випадку перекладу “Невеличкої драми” було з'ясовано, що перекладачі перенесли без змін потенційне вилучення деяких фрагментів із закордонного видання української версії роману (1956 рік, Париж). В цій ситуації перекладачі стали де-факто другими цензорами, оскільки вони не піддали сумніву ідеологізовану позицію редакторів, яка була очевидною, наприклад, у передмові. Щодо “Міста,” то основні зміни стосуються перекладу слова “куркуль,” яке втратило своє оригінальне негативне значення в англomовній версії. Аналіз показує, що переклад цього слова повторює консервативне бачення концепту “куркуль” в англomовному дискурсі. Як результат, Підмогильний постає у перекладі більш антирадянським автором, аніж він є насправді. Загалом, це дослідження дало змогу визначити, що кожне суспільство маніпулює перекладом і перекладачами попри свою ідеологію.

*Ключові слова:* Підмогильний, цензура, переклад, несвідомий, соціалізм, соціальний.