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# Book Lists Between Ideologies: Power Games and Canon Changes in Children's Translated Literature in Poland (1929–1951)

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## Abstract

Itamar Even-Zohar argues that when new literary models emerge, it is translation that often becomes the means of expanding the literary repertoire, especially in those periods in the history of literature when turning points and moments of crisis occur. This paper addresses two such turning points in the Polish culture: the regaining of independence (1918) and the proclamation of the Polish People's Republic (1945). Juvenile literature of the interwar period was subjected to various ideologizing strategies, the most notable of which was the official one expressed in The List of Books Recommended for School Libraries (1929). After WWII, when the communist ideology was proclaimed, the authorities created another list, namely The Inventory of Books to be Immediately Withdrawn (1951)—the secret document disclosed only after the year 2000. Our paper aims to compare these two lists to examine how the collision of ideologies shaped children's translated literature in Poland: which languages dominated the translations; which titles were to be withdrawn after 1951 and which were retained; what reasons may have been underlying the censors' decisions and what impact they had on the canon of juvenile literature; what was the rhetoric of justifications and how to interpret the lists with regard to the canonization techniques. Our research is premised on Pierre Bourdieu's argument about the interdependence between literature and the field of political power.

**Keywords** Book lists and canons · Cultural production · Censorship · Polish children's literature · Politics and ideology · Translations and transfers

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## Introduction

This paper explores two Polish lists of books for children and young people: *Spis książek poleconych do bibliotek szkolnych przez Komisję Oceny Książek do Czytania dla Młodzieży Szkolnej przy MWRiOP w latach od 1923–1928* [The List of Books Recommended for School Libraries by the Committee for the Evaluation of Books to be Read by the School Youth at the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment in the years 1923–1928] published in 1929 and *Wykaz nr 3: Książki dla dzieci* [Inventory No 3: Books for Children] of *Wykaz książek podlegających niezwłóznemu wycofaniu, 1X1951* [The Inventory of Books to be Immediately Withdrawn, 1 October 1951]. In analysing their contents, we focus on translated literature and examine the strategies used by state authorities and their official bodies to control children’s literature transfers. We aim to compare these two lists to explore how the collision of ideologies shaped children’s translated literature in Poland: which languages dominated the translations; what reasons may have been underlying the decision-makers’ judgments and what impact they had on the Polish canon of juvenile literature; what was the rhetoric of justifications and how to interpret the lists in regards to the canonization techniques.

Our research is premised on Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of literature (Bourdieu, 1996; Grenfell et al., 2008). Particularly the dynamics in the field of children’s literature caused by the interdependence between literature, politics and ideology. Within this framework, we interpret the analysed lists as points of “synchronic intersection,” defined after Bourdieu (1996, p. 100) as “the geometric intersection of all perspectives, which is also the point of greatest tension.” Our interest lies also in the “apparatuses of consecration” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 49), particularly including political authorities and the bodies they establish, disposing of a certain symbolic capital. This reflection will be supported by the notion of the canon seen from a socio-cultural perspective as a concept that is never innocent, neutral or autotelic but, as Anne Lundin (2004, p. XVI) argues, constitutes “an ideological construct in its curriculum, its field of power, its choices to represent or not certain groups, certain ideas.”

## Historical Perspective

Both analysed lists relate to Poland’s historical, political, ideological and socio-cultural breakthroughs in the first half of the 20th century. The end of World War I was connected with regaining independence after over one hundred years of partitions and establishing the Second Polish Republic. The end of World War II resulted in the post-war division of influence in Europe and the emergence of a communist Polish People’s Republic in the sphere of direct USSR influence. Both of these turning points were violent and led to a complete paradigm shift; in consequence, the cultural and identity patterns that had been in force thus far were reevaluated or rejected. In the interwar period, the 19th -century model of romantic martyrdom had become obsolete and even undesirable in the efforts to unite society around creating a reborn state. Although various ideological models coexisted at the time, from the far right to the communist, the so-called Sanation paradigm, characterised by conservatism, a

right-wing patriotic approach, Catholicism and Western affiliations, began to dominate. After World War II, when the Polish People's Republic, in its radical Stalinist form, was established, the Sanation model was rejected in favour of the communist ideology as implemented by the USSR (Czernow and Michułka, 2017, p. 84).

In both cases, the new reality resulting from the transformations called for a new type of citizen, free from old habits and burdens and ready to build a new order. The special focus on the child was a logical consequence of these demands, as reflected in the new patterns of upbringing, education, and culture, including children's literature. Both analysed book lists echo this call. The introduction to the 1929 list emphasised the new needs of young readers, stating that novels depicting Poland's "martyrdom of captivity years [were] outdated" and questioning their usefulness for the youth; the Committee saw also "the necessity of revising pre-war descriptions of the country to consider the present state of affairs"<sup>1</sup> (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 11–12). This quote demonstrates that, for the Committee, the needs of the young readers were strongly correlated with the ideological assumptions and demands of the young state.

In the newly-established Polish People's Republic, on the other hand, analogous motivations were presented quite openly in articles summarising the Extended Session of the Central Board of the Polish Writers' Association in 1951 in Szczecin devoted to juvenile literature. These articles should be considered a key context for *The Inventory of Books to be Immediately Withdrawn*. Grzegorz Lasota (1951, p. 113), a Polish literary critic and one of the speakers at the session (Cackowska, 2021, p. 92), argued that "the youth are the cherished architects of a socialist tomorrow." He emphasised the pertinence of literature, calling it "the great educator" and an "awareness-shaping tool, actively influencing people's actions and behaviours," especially in the case of the youth (113). This line of thinking, assigning a key role to children's literature on the front line of ideological revolution and political change, was already adopted in the Soviet Union, where in the early 1920s, Pavel Lebedev-Polianskii, head of the Politatdelgosizdat, the political department responsible for preventive censorship, argued that children's books should follow the general party line and the key ideological tenets should be transferred "to the narrative, to a picturesque image that would educate children and prepare them to be fit for the construction of socialism" (Blum, 1994, p. 246). Therefore, the challenge in both newly-emerged realities was the lack of "new" literature suitable for the "new" young citizen. Translations from foreign languages were supposed to be a specific remedy for this lack—literary transfer was seen as an opportunity to immediately introduce adequate models into the home culture and, at the same time, stimulate and guide future domestic children's literature (Wieczorkiewicz, 2021). For example, Jadwiga Filipkowska-Szemplińska and Maria Gutry (1927, p. VI), the creators of *Katalog biblioteki wzorowej dla dzieci i młodzieży* [The Catalogue of the Model Library for Children and Young People] (1927), pointed to the lack of books democratic in spirit, maintained in a "tone of social equality, despite differences in profession and wealth," aimed at broader social strata, taking into account the fact of the education reforms and the existence of a public school. As a remedy, they proposed translations, in this case, *Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery. Similarly, after 1945, the Soviet Union's socialist real-

<sup>1</sup> If not stated otherwise, all translations from Polish and Russian are by the authors of this paper.

ist literary production served in Poland as a repository of model children's literature. In 1952, Irena Tuwim (1952, p. 10), a celebrated translator of children's literature (both from English and Russian), stated that Soviet literature should become "a model of ideology, the formation of the new man, and the educational system" and that "the vast majority of translations should be from Russian."

A helpful framework for the issue of literary transfers thus outlined is the theory proposed by Itamar Even-Zohar (1990, p. 47), according to which, under specific circumstances, translated literature occupies a central position in a given polysystem. Even-Zohar lists three iterations of the law governing literary transfer and the "very principles of selecting the works to be translated." These are situations in which the target literature is "«young», in the process of being established," peripheral and/or "weak," and—most notably, from the point of view of our considerations—"when there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature."

The latter law is perfectly applicable to both periods discussed in this paper. The realities of the young states, the Second Polish Republic and the Polish People's Republic, faced a lack of books relevant to the new political and ideological needs, and thus a particular crisis that needed to be resolved with the help of literature available outside the domestic context. Thus, both the 1929 and 1951 lists were ideological products born of the political needs of the hour. By consecrating and desecrating individual titles, authors and even entire genres, they reconstructed a literary canon that mirrored their particular agendas. Lists and catalogues of (recommended/withdrawn) books can, therefore, be seen as a testing ground for the relationship between the field of political power and the field of cultural (literary) production, proving that children's reading is under particular ideological pressure, especially at times of historical, political and systemic change.

## The Two Book Lists

*The List of Books Recommended for School Libraries* was a venture of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, i.e. the governmental organ in the Second Polish Republic "directing the educational and cultural policy of the state" (Michalska, 2011, p. 164) and performing the state's tasks in religious concerns. As a governmental institution, it possessed a consecration apparatus due to, among other things, the awarding of prizes in literature, music and fine arts. *The List of Books* presented the results of the five-year work of the Committee for the Evaluation of Books to be Read by the School Youth, first appointed on the 28th November of 1923 for a three-year term; its second term covered the years 1927–1928. During the five-year existence of the Committee, its membership was modified several times; all changes, as well as the names of the experts, were made public.

Its chairman in both terms was Tadeusz Łopuszański, Minister for Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment from 1919 to 1920. The Committee was a carefully selected body of experts representing one or more fields such as science, pedagogy, education, politics as well as social, literary and translational activities. It included, among others, historians and theoreticians of literature, literary critics, editors of children's magazines, translators, teachers, educators, scout movement lead-

ers, feminist activists and state officials. Constructed in this way, the evaluating body had at its disposal the symbolic capitals of its members and, thus, the cumulative power of consecration. *The List of Books Recommended for School Libraries* was published serially in *Bibliografia Pedagogiczna* [Pedagogical Bibliography] between 1924 and 1929, as well as in the Journal of Laws and catalogues (Michalska, 2011, p. 168); in 1929 it also appeared in a separate book edition.

Compiling the ministerial list went hand in hand with a broader legislative initiative of the Polish authorities aimed at unifying (considered necessary after more than a century of partitions) and universalising the education system (Kijek, 2018, p. 123–124). It also seems that the Polish case of such a state-initiated recommended book list—proving the involvement and interference of political powers in the field of children’s literature—is unique compared to other Western countries. The mention of one similar case can be found in a Polish pedagogical magazine *Życie Dziecka* [A Child’s Life], where in 1937 appeared a reference to an analogous project planned by the state authorities in Czechoslovakia (Michalska, 2011, p. 165). In addition to this much later Czechoslovak example, in a certain Polish children’s book we can find a trace of a corresponding initiative in Great Britain, dating back to the 1890s and thus much earlier than the Polish one<sup>2</sup>. Lists of recommended children’s books created by other circles with a strong consecrating power—pedagogical, librarian, publishing or religious, all taking a keen interest in upbringing and moral issues—appeared in large numbers in various countries at the time. Such initiatives in Germany, France, Switzerland, Great Britain and the United States were described by Zygmunt Ziemiński (1928, p. 138–140), vice-chairman of the ministerial Committee responsible for the 1929 list. In Poland, similar projects included the above-mentioned *Catalogue of the Model Library* originating from the library circles and *Polskie książki dla dzieci i młodzieży. Katalog historyczny rozumowany* [Polish Books for Children and Young People. A Historical Annotated Catalogue] (1931) published by the Jesuits. Both of them took the ministerial list as their reference point, testifying to the wide reception and significant impact of the governmental initiative.

A notable intervention by state authorities in the field of children’s literature was *Inventory No 3*, part of *The Inventory of Books to be Immediately Withdrawn [from Libraries]*, devoted entirely to juvenile books. The inventory was a part of a broader plan; it concerned a large-scale clean-up through the physical destruction of the unwanted part of the library collections. Thus, “the revision of the literary canon introduced in the Polish People’s Republic at the turn from the 1940s to the 1950s was exceptionally oppressive” (Czernow and Michułka, 2016, p. 86). The model for such repressive measures against literature came from the Soviet Union, where libraries were purged in the early 1920s shortly after the state’s founding (Rogachevskii, 2002, p. 985–986). The books were mostly destroyed or, to a lesser extent, removed

<sup>2</sup> This was mentioned by Michalina Wesołowska in her paper *Invisible Storytellers? Translation and the Problem of Authorship in Reworkings for Young Readers*, presented at the New Voices in Children’s Literature in Translation conference at the University of Stockholm, 22–23 August 2024. The reference appears in *Burek i jego przyjaciele* [Burek and his friends] (1908), Maria Gerson-Dąbrowska’s adaptation of *Rover and his Friends* (1895) by Edith Carrington; on the book’s title page, it is referred to as recommended by an act of the British Parliament for reading for primary schools. Despite our efforts, this act has not yet been traced.

from library shelves and stored in special stocks, the spetskhrams. In contemporary research, such “mass destruction of books for ideological reasons” is referred to as “bibliocide.” In the Russian context, the term was used by Arlen Blum, a researcher of Soviet censorship (Dróżdź, 2017, p. 66), who also applied it to children’s literature (Blum, 1994, p. 258).

As early as 1923, the Inotdel, the foreign department of the Glavlit (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press), issued secret guidelines on banning foreign publications that were not in line with the prevailing ideology (Markwick, 2013, p. 377–378). Among the books “not allowed to enter the USSR” they mention “children’s literature containing elements of bourgeois morality and praising the old conditions of life” (Blum, 1994, p. 194), which complied with the call from Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin’s wife, from the end of the October Revolution occupying a top position in the People’s Commissariat for Education (Hellman, 2013, p. 357). She stated: “It is quite obvious that a relentless fight against children’s books steeped in a foreign ideology is necessary [...]. The class enemy uses artistic merit for their purposes. Artistic merit does not diminish but increases the harmfulness of such a book” (Blum, 1994, p. 246–247). Lebedev-Polianskii specified this “fight” as the necessity of ruthlessly purging children’s books: “Our children’s literature is worse than any other at promoting political education. And here, of course, we should be particularly cruel despite the fact that we have so few children’s books” (Blum, 1994, p. 246). The withdrawal of “harmful” books from Polish libraries after World War II similarly was a specific sign of the new system<sup>3</sup>. It occurred in many communist countries subordinated to the USSR, such as Czechoslovakia (Šmejkalová and Lishaugen 2023) and the German Democratic Republic (Di Napoli, 1984, p. 283).

Like the Inotdel circular of 1923, *The Inventory of Books to be Immediately Withdrawn* was secret; it was disclosed only after year 2000 (*Cenzura PRL...*, 2002)<sup>4</sup>. Its confidentiality, on the one hand, and urgency, on the other, had a specific effect on its character. Firstly, the details concerning the body responsible for the inventory are unknown; the members were mostly anonymous censors and ministry officials belonging to the Central Board of Libraries of the Ministry of Art and Culture and the Central Control Office of the Press, Publications and Public Performances (Dróżdź, 2017, p. 87). Secondly, the inventory does not explicitly reveal the strategies adopted with regard to its criteria and structure: it is not clear why specific authors, titles or editions were selected for withdrawal, and the enumeration of 562 items on the *Inventory No 3* indicates incoherence and haste (for example, missing authors’ names). Compared to the 1929 list, the inventory seems brief and “naked” due to the general lack of paratext (explanations, comments, descriptions, introduction). The

<sup>3</sup> However, we should note that the withdrawal of books from libraries did not only take place in communist countries: for example, in the 1930s, Anne Carroll Moore, chair of the children’s section at the New York Public Library, removed L.F. Baum’s Oz series from the library shelves, and other libraries in the USA followed her example (Skowera, 2022, p. 258). Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was also regularly withdrawn: two decades after its publication, it was banned from the children’s reading room in the New York Public Library for moral issues (Prudy, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> It was not the first one of this kind in the service of the bibliocide: between 1945 and 1950, the authorities created several such lists, including local ones (Ciszewska-Pawłowska, 2020, pp. 126–132). We can assume that the 1951 inventory was collective and country-wide.

only exception is the commentary to the *Inventory No 3*, which provides guidelines for removing only specific editions on a case-by-case basis. Thus, the resulting list appears to be random on the one hand and highly detailed on the other, which can be attributed to its immediate nature implied by the title but also to the fact that it is utilitarian, in-house (never intended for publication) and purely “negative,” containing no recommended or even tolerated titles. Since the particular background of this inventory is not available, it should be looked for in the context of other authorities’ actions concerning children’s books, such as the above-mentioned Extended Session of the Polish Writers’ Union in Szczecin devoted to children’s literature. It was held to proclaim socialist realism in children’s literature as the only valid ideological and aesthetic paradigm<sup>5</sup>. A particularly helpful context is provided by articles recapitulating the speeches and discussions at the Session, published in *Twórczość* [Creation] magazine in 1951.

In contrast to the 1951 inventory, the 1929 list was public and transparent. In a comprehensive foreword, it overtly communicated not only its strategies and tools but also the goal, which was to create an annotated list (containing book reviews) that “would serve as a guide for book purchases for school principals and school librarians, and to no lesser extent for parents and caregivers” (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 5) as well as to evaluate the books in terms of suitability for school libraries. The Committee was free to choose the criteria for evaluation, both positive and negative; they were detailed and multifaceted, demonstrating an open, modern and holistic approach to youth reading. The rating covered pedagogical and educational aspects: moral, national and social tendencies; compliance with acknowledged educational ideals and current scientific knowledge; suitability for young age; literary aspects (linguistic correctness, construction and form, artistic value, translation quality) and others. The Committee emphasised their openness to revisions and adjustments to meet the changing needs of young readers, stating that “this list therefore not only does not constitute an untouchable canon but will be willingly revised as life brings us new criteria or problems” (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 12).

The negative criteria were based on unsuitability for school libraries and included, for example, the publication’s price, the target audience’s age, inaccessibility, and insufficient educational and artistic quality. However, the books rejected according to these criteria were revealed exclusively in the numbers stated in the introduction: if out of 1015 evaluated books, 675 were shortlisted as recommended, 340 were not considered suitable. The titles that made it onto the list were categorised according to the age of the readers, the type of school, and, to some extent, the topic; they were assigned three categories: essential, desirable, and permitted. The Ministry’s act on the Committee’s appointment reveals a fourth category in the project’s assumptions: “forbidden” books that are “not to be announced” (*Rozporządzenie Ministra...*, 1923, p. 365). In the introduction to the book edition of the list, i.e. at the end of the project, the notion “forbidden” does not appear, and the Committee notes that among the negatively classified titles, there were “many harmless and even valuable

<sup>5</sup> Similar sessions were held in other fields of cultural production— socialist realism was proclaimed in architecture and painting, theatre, music and general literature (all took place in 1949; Zawodniak, 2002, p. 27–28). The Szczecin Extended Session was the last in this sequence.

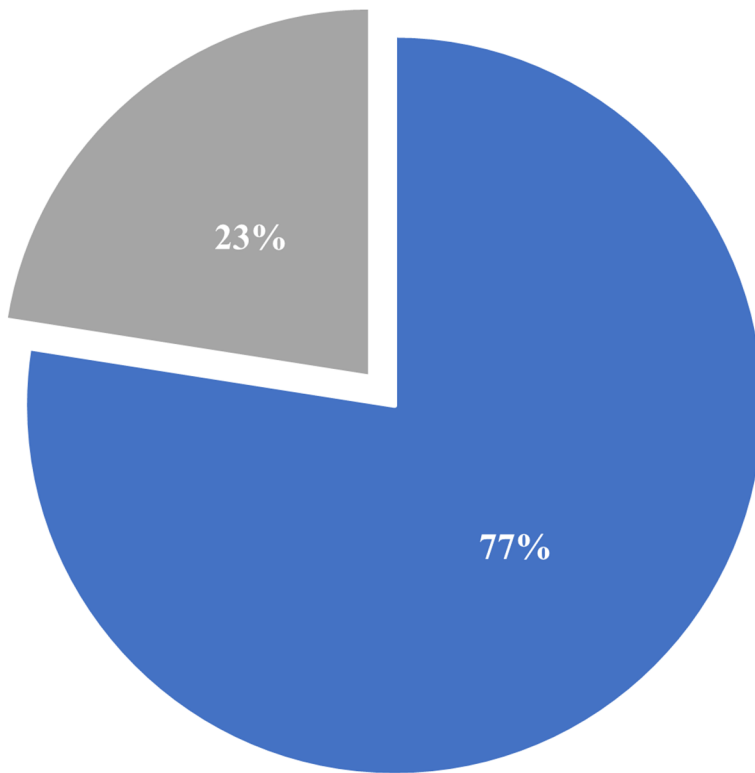
books, but not useful for school libraries” (*Spis...*, 1929, pp. 9–10). This remark, as well as the exhaustive description of the evaluation criteria, echoes the controversy surrounding the Committee’s work, which arose in 1927 after the dissemination of *Okólnik Nr 24* [Circular No 24]—not endorsed by the Committee—and the accompanying list of more than one hundred books not qualified for school libraries (Michalska 2011, p. 169). In an anonymous article signed by K.B. and published in *Praca Szkolna* [School Work] magazine, the author criticised the Committee’s actions, questioning the legitimacy of their decisions regarding individual positions on the list of the “forbidden” titles. The Committee commented on the accusations in the same magazine, explaining the reasons for not recommending these books for the school libraries. The discussion that followed and the growing doubts about the Committee’s judgement led to its suspension in mid-1928. In 1929, a new evaluation body was appointed with a significantly reduced membership and operating according to new rules (Michalska, 2011, pp. 169–170).

The two lists, therefore, contradict each other: the affirmative list from 1929 only contains approved books and does not reveal the undesirable ones, while the purgatory inventory from 1951 only includes the undesirable ones and does not present the approved titles. On the other hand, however, they complement each other in a sense—each represents the missing part of the other. The dialogue between them is particularly evident because *de facto* both are concerned with the same era—the interwar period—with the former participating in shaping its paradigm, while the latter destroys it to make room for new ideas.

### Focus on Translations in the 1929 List

*The List of Books Recommended for School Libraries* included 675 titles; among them, 152 were translations, accounting for 23% of the total (**Fig. 1**). The significant proportion of translated literature is therefore noteworthy: one in five books recommended in the ministerial list did not belong to Polish literature. These 152 titles can be further classified in terms of source literature (**Fig. 2**), bearing in mind, however, that some works may have been translated indirectly via other languages, which was then a common practice. Striking here is the predominance of English—the source of more than half of the translations (86 titles—57%); the next most numerous group belongs to French (30 titles—20%), followed by German (11 titles—7%), Italian (12 titles—8%) and Scandinavian (six titles—4%). The list also includes single titles from Hungarian, Czech, Spanish, Japanese and Latin, as well as one collection of short stories from multiple languages—this group comprises a total of six titles i.e. 4% of all translations.

It is evident that in respect of translations the 1929 list is dominated by Western literatures. Interestingly enough, the “great absentee” is Russian literature, from which no title was recommended, although translations from Russian were published and eagerly read in the interwar period (especially, for example, Lidia Charskaya’s novels). Thus, in respect of the ministerial list, we can speak of a controlled “turn to the West,” in line with the political directives of the Second Polish Republic. Such a selection of literary translations shows that the Committee’s consecrating decisions

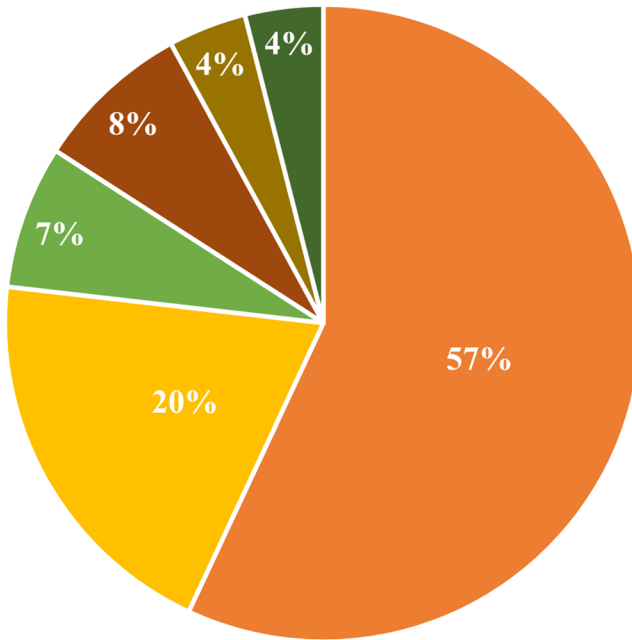


- Polish books (523 titles)
- Translated books (152 titles)

**Fig. 1** Translations in the 1929 list

were influenced by the field of political power, with which this body was, after all, directly connected. Regarding the genres of recommended translations, a substantial share of girls' literature, adventure novels, and popular-science books is noticeable. As for the authors, the list contains many names considered today as classics such as L.M. Alcott, Hans Christian Andersen, Carlo Collodi, F.H. Burnett, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, Selma Lagerlöf, Ferenc Molnár, L.M. Montgomery, Edith Nesbit, Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, and Jules Verne.

The Committee regarded the quality of translation as an essential factor in determining the literary and linguistic value of a book—the criterion for assessing it, right down to the comparison with the original, is mentioned in the introduction: “Insofar as the book is a translation or a reworking, its relationship to the original (whether the original has not been distorted) should be, if possible, determined” (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 9). Comments indicating an implementation of this prescription can be found in most entries (86 out of 152). These remarks—concerning translations' quality or translators' strategies—are characterised by varying degrees of precision and commitment: most often, they appear as short, one-sentence comments (“Language of translation



- English (86)
- French (30)
- German (11)
- Italian (12)
- Scandinavian (6)
- Other (6)

**Fig. 2** Source languages in the 1929 list

nice;” “Translation rather careless,” *Spis...*, 1929, p. 63, 333). Occasionally, however, they take on a more elaborate form up to the pointing out of linguistic details. A good example here is the reference to Russian currency (which, before 1918, was in force in the Russian partition), preserved in *Nad dalekim, cichym fjordem*, Janina Mortkowiczowa’s translation of Ågot Gjems-Selmer’s *Smaapigernes bog* (original published in 1900, first Polish edition in 1904); the expert evaluating this position noted that in the new editions, the Russian currency should be updated to the Polish one, valid after the regaining of independence.

Interestingly, even in such short reviews, different approaches to translation are distinctly reflected, best seen in the valuation of various adaptation strategies (abridgements, alterations, etc.), extremely popular in translation for children in the turn-of-the-century Poland. *Robinson Crusoe* in Władysław Ludwik Anczyc’s adaptation, for instance, is praised for abridgements (“the book is more entertaining and useful for young people than the original;” *Spis...*, 1929, p. 63), while abridgements and omissions are considered a defect in Cecylia Niewiadomska’s reworking of *David Copperfield*, in which—according to the reviewer—part of the novel’s original value, humour and uniqueness was lost. Most experts are unanimous in their praise of translational “moral censorship” i.e. a removal of scenes considered inap-

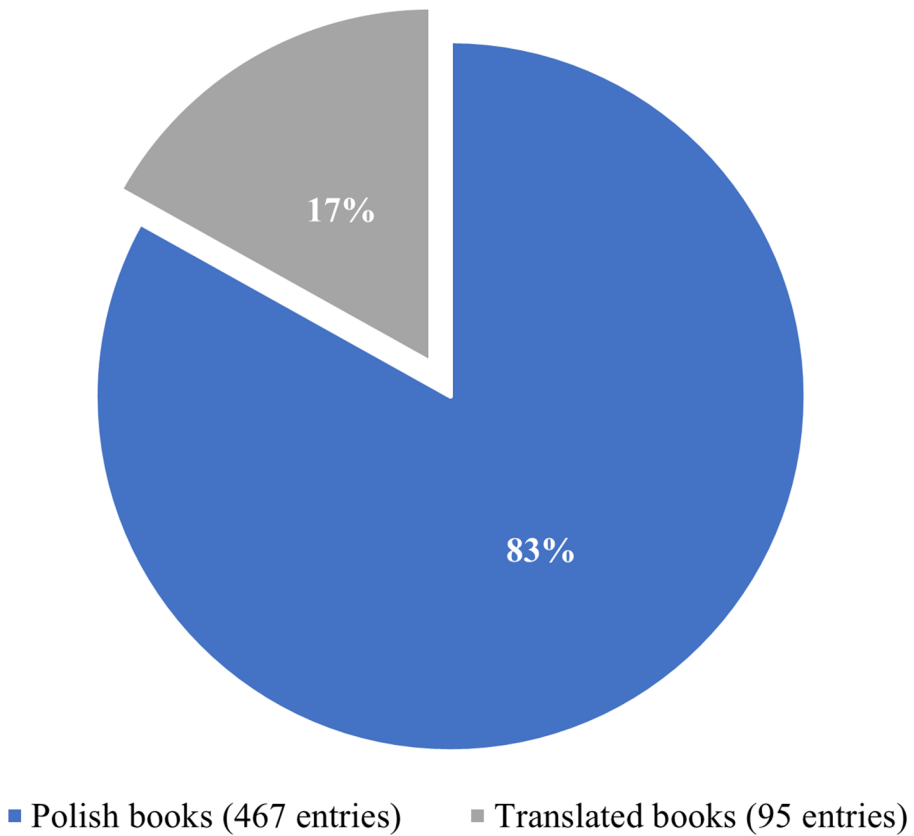
propriate for young readers, especially those of brutality and bloodshed. For instance, the anonymous translation of *Powieści z tysiąca i jednej nocy* [The Tales of the Thousand and One Nights], Albert Ludwig Grimm's reworking of the *Arabian Nights*, is praised for eliminating such elements ("With the exception of the scene of Sidi Numan's wife digging up the corpses, all details undesirable in a reading for young people have been removed"; *Spis...*, 1929, p. 152). Insufficient censorship, on the other hand, was applied by the translator (signed K. S.) of J. F. Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, which, according to the reviewer, differs unfavourably from the previous, much more abridged Polish adaptation, from which "bloody scenes, such as the slaughter of defenceless Englishmen leaving the fortress, and the frequent disparaging proclamations of book knowledge, have been omitted to the book's advantage" (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 97).

### Focus on Translations in the 1951 List

*Inventory No 3 of The Inventory of Books to be Immediately Withdrawn* contains 562 entries, of which translated literature represents 95, accounting for 17% of the total (Fig. 3). It may seem a small number, unless we consider that the single positions on the list do not necessarily correspond to single publications. In some cases, all books by a particular author were withdrawn. A prime example is Karl May, extremely popular in Poland in the first half of the 20th century: at least 18 of his works came out between 1909 and 1916, while at least 60 appeared between 1921 and 1938. This entire range of adventure novels was summarised in a point no 343, stating succinctly but emphatically: "May Karl, all works are subject to withdrawal" (*Cenzura PRL...*, 2002, p. 94). A similar case is girls' novels by L.T. Meade (Elisabeth Thomasina Meade Smith), all listed under no 349. Due to these collective withdrawals, which also included authors such as E. Marlitt (Eugenie John) and Charskaya, it is not as easy to determine the percentage share of source languages as it was in the case of the 1929 list. An estimated bibliographic analysis of the Polish book market before 1950 suggests that, in terms of the number of titles, German is the dominant source language on the 1951 inventory (approx. 56%), with English in second place (approx. 20%). In third, not included in the 1929 list, is Russian (approx. 16%), represented exclusively by Charskaya's novels. 13 titles were removed from the French literature (approx. 6%), a few from Italian (approx. 2%) and one from Czech (less than 1%) (Fig. 4).

Despite the chaotic and random nature of the 1951 inventory, a closer analysis reveals clear strategies governing the selection of titles to be withdrawn. In the case of translations, one of the dominant criteria was undoubtedly the "genre principle". It is particularly evident in the light of collective withdrawals of the output of authors writing girls' and adventure novels, such as Charskaya and May. The articles summarising the Extended Session proclaiming socialist realism in children's literature support this hypothesis. Grzegorz Lasota (1951, pp. 115–116) argued:

[T]he overwhelming majority of juvenile literature during bourgeois-landlord rule between 1918 and 1939 served not the cause of education but the cause of spoiling the characters of young boys and girls. [...] Writers from the West propagated the

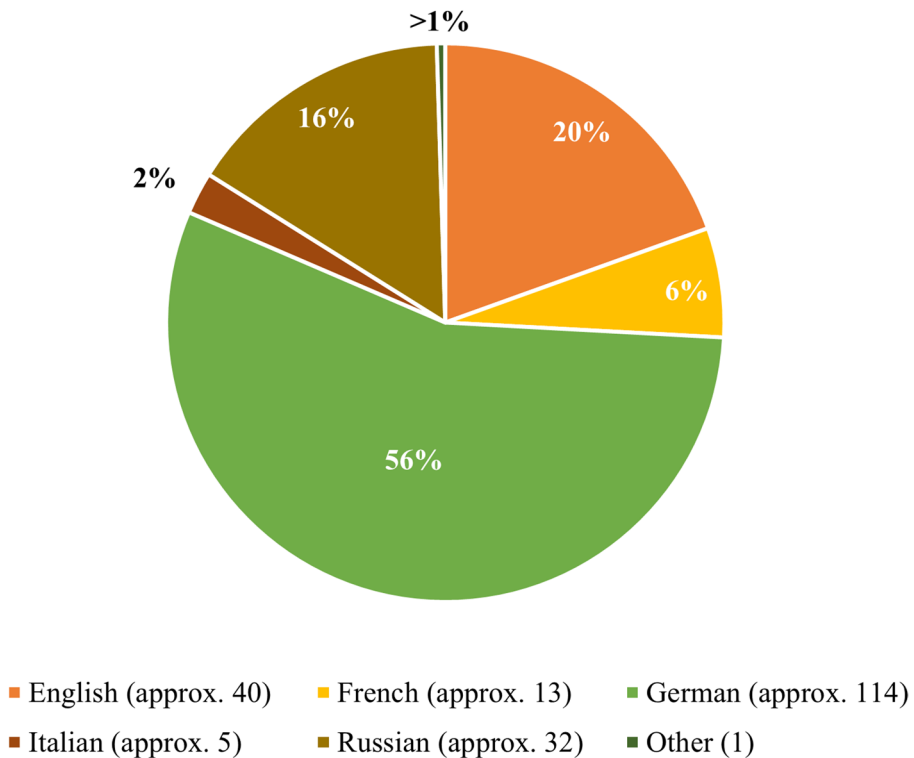


**Fig. 3** Translations in the 1951 list

cult of strength and adventure: Baxter, Brand, May, Maine Reid [...]. Characters of innocent maidens, dreamy and longing, impatiently awaiting their fiancée prince charming—lingered on the pages of sentimental books [...] by Charskaya.

The same genres were “on the hot seat” in the Soviet Union in the 1920s; as Blum (1994, p. 256) notes, “both criticism and censorship persecuted the foreign adventure literature so beloved by children—the books of Jules Verne, Stevenson, Jacolliot and many others.” Women’s writing, especially novels for girls, was also considered hostile to Soviet ideology, as embodying the fundamental evils of “stylistic excess and ineptitude, immoral narcissistic behaviour, illicit sexuality, and a petit-bourgeois materialism and individualism” (Holmgren, 1995, p. 93); Charskaya, as the most popular author of juvenile books in pre-revolutionary Russia (Helmann, 2013, p. 178), especially those for girls, also became a victim of this criticism (Holmgren, 1995, p. 91–92; Helmman, 2013, p. 189).

In Lasota’s statement, another important issue comes to light, also characterising the 1951 inventory. It is a controlled shift away from the West, reflected in the proportion of withdrawn titles from Western literature. It should be noted that the only Russian author on the list whose works were to be withdrawn was Charskaya, who not



**Fig. 4** Source languages in the 1951 list

only wrote denounced novels for girls but was also considered an “enemy of the system” and persecuted because of her upper-class background. Due to the “negative” nature of the inventory, not listing recommended titles, only rejected ones, the “turn to the East” agenda cannot be directly deduced from it. However, articles summarising the Extended Session proclaimed it explicitly. For instance, Lasota (1951, p. 126) called for the “shaping of a socialist identity” in young people through Soviet-style literature: “The best examples of combining educational values with a high-quality artistic form and an interesting plot can be found in Soviet juvenile literature” (p. 130). The relevant remodelling of domestic literature was to take place also by drawing on examples from beyond the eastern border, as Wanda Grodzieńska (1951, p. 150) pointed out: “Becoming familiar with the literature of the Soviet Union, whose high ideological and artistic level should be a model for us, will help us achieve these goals.” This model was to reach the Polish People’s Republic first and foremost through translations as emphasised in Tuwim’s above-mentioned claim about the necessity of literary transfer primarily from the Soviet Union. It is clear, therefore, that both lists reflected, in different ways, the politically and ideologically driven craving for external cultural models useful for the new state. However, their directions were contradictory: the 1929 list manifested a turn to the West while the 1959 inventory, read together with the articles summarising the Extended Session, was a clear sign of a turn to the East.

## Intersections: Authors and Titles

Juxtaposing the two lists in the context of translated literature we can notice a number of intersections in terms of particular authors and titles. Some of them concern the same authors, but their different works, as, for instance, in the case of F.H. Burnett and L.M. Montgomery, extremely popular in the then Poland. While the 1929 list recommended as “desirable” *The Little Lord Fauntleroy* for its educational values and ethical role models, and *The Secret Garden* for its optimistic message and belief in the power of nature, the 1951 inventory removed all editions of *A Little Princess*, due to, as we may assume, its undoubted genre affiliation. In the case of Montgomery, the 1929 list recommended as “desirable” *Anne of Green Gables* for its ethical values and its focus on the young reader and *Anne of Avonlea* for its literary qualities, while the 1951 inventory withdrew all editions of *Kilmeny of the Orchard*, *The Blue Castle* and *Emily’s Quest*. We can speculate that here the romantic threads placing these novels on the borderline of girls’ and women’s literature were the key factor in the censors’ decisions.

The most thought-provoking intersections between the two lists, however, concern individual titles—nine works by six writers. Before moving on to the discussion of these books, it should be emphasised that, while in the case of the 1929 list, the reviews and the introduction made it possible to follow the reasoning of the Committee experts, the lack of such commentaries in the 1951 inventory compelled us to reconstruct the motivations by the means of analysing the political, ideological, cultural and book-market-related context.

The first two examples represent the above-mentioned genre issues concerning the girls’ novels and the adventure stories. Of all the works by L. T. Meade withdrawn in 1951, a single title appeared on the 1929 list: *W świecie dziewcząt* [In the World of Girls], an Eliza Warzycka’s translation of *A World of Girls: The Story of a School* (1886), first published in Poland in 1912 and reprinted several times in the 1920s and 1930s. The story of the girl pupils of an English boarding school was classified as “permitted,” with the reviewer’s justification: “This is a rather mediocre English novel for girls, but one which excites a great deal of interest in girl readers. The unusual nature of the events may arouse scepticism. The psychology of the characters is very simplistic. The moral atmosphere is imbued with noble sentiments” (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 219–220). The ministerial recommendation of Meade’s book— as representing the extremely popular genre of boarding-school novels— is not surprising, nor is the reason for its withdrawal in 1951. Apart from the fact that it belonged to the stigmatised genre, the decision was probably also influenced by the story’s setting in a landed gentry *milieu* (the main character, Hester, is the daughter of an English nobleman).

On the other hand, *Duch puszczy: opowiadanie z amerykańskich borów* [The Spirit of the Wilderness: A Tale from the American Forests] by Anczyc (first Polish edition in 1872), an adaptation of *Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainesay* (1837) by Robert Montgomery Bird, is mentioned in both lists by title. The 1929 list classifies it as “permitted,” relying primarily, as the reviewer’s note suggests, on its long-standing presence in Polish children’s literature (“This is a typical book of adventures

and battles among Indians<sup>6</sup>, capturing young readers and read by generations with passionate interest”; *Spis...*, 1929, p. 62). The reviewer, while pointing out the book’s flaws (lack of “deeper value,” “excessive cinematographic nature of extraordinary events all too bloody”), emphasises the potential positive impact on young readers in terms of character formation (courage, “love of life in nature, curiosity to learn about distant and foreign lands”) and the final message, which they describe as turning “against acts of revenge and hatred” (p. 62). We should note that in the literary critique of the time adventure novels with a sensational slant and filled with drastic descriptions of violence were also sometimes rated negatively: the writer, columnist and teacher Kazimierz Króliński (1927, p. 18), for example, wrote—most likely referring specifically to *Duch puszczy*—that “descriptions of bloody battles between Redskins and whites, atrocities, crimes, scalplings, bloody revenge according to the laws of the wilderness, are harmful reading for young people.” The socialist realist paradigm, on the other hand, wholly rejected this type of literature, as evidenced by the opinion of Halina Bobińska, a Polish author present at the Extended Session. She was quoted in Wanda Żółkiewska’s (1951, p. 153) article summarising the proceedings of the plenum, describing this kind of literature as “obscurantist books of the Wild West.” Żółkiewska elaborated on this, stating that average schoolchildren “brought up by the private publishing market” of the interwar years, “greedily read about the unbelievable adventures of people who have nothing to do with the ideas of socialist upbringing.” *Duch puszczy*—undoubtedly belonging to the blood-and-thunder type of the adventure novel, and, judging by the number of Polish editions (it appeared regularly from its debut until the late 1940s) and adaptations—could not have escaped the attention of the censors compiling the inventory, alongside other “western” novels by writers such as May, Edward Ellis or Robert B. Leighton.

The next intersection also belongs to the adventure novel genre, albeit not of the Wild West type. Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), first published in Poland in a translation signed M.G. the very next year after the original, was included in the 1929 list as “permitted” in a later translation from 1922 by Wilhelm Mitarski. The justification reads that “the book is written with great talent, and in English literature is universally acknowledged as a masterpiece” (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 177). Nevertheless, the reviewer was critical of the novel’s ethical qualities, denouncing its “complete indifference to social and political issues.” It is arguable that, in addition to its genre affiliation, the novel’s entanglement with the political and social context weighed on the decision of its removal in 1951. *Kim*, an Irish boy raised on the streets of an Indian town, deliberately, eagerly and despite his young age, engages in the so-called Great Game—the political competition between the 19th-century British and Russian Empires for influence in Central Asia—ultimately acting as a British spy. It is worth mentioning that almost all of Kipling’s children’s works were included in the 1929 list, and only *Kim* was withdrawn from libraries in the 1950s, while in one article summarising the Extended Session, *The Jungle Book* was even mentioned as a positive example of a fantasy novel (Grodzieńska and Pollak, 1951, p. 144).

<sup>6</sup> Due to the historical context of the period under discussion, terms that are no longer used or acceptable appear in quotations; they have been retained in translation for historical accuracy.

The books by Jón Sveinsson (Svensson)—a Jesuit priest who mainly wrote in German—set in the Icelandic landscape of his childhood, can, in a sense, also be classified as adventure novels. The 1929 list recommended three of them, all translated anonymously: *Nonni i Manni, dwaj islandzcy chlopcy* [Nonni and Manni: Two Icelandic Boys] (*Nonni und Manni: zwei isländische Knaben*, 1913), published in Poland in 1921, as well as *Z dalekiej północnej wyspy* [From the Far Northern Island] (*Sonntage: Nonni's Jugenderlebnisse auf Island*, 1915) and *Czółnem przez morze* [By Boat Across the Sea] (*Die Stadt am Meer: Nonni's neue Erlebnisse*, 1922), both published in Poland in 1924. The Committee highly rated these works, with the first two being classified as “desirable” and the last attaining the highest category, i.e. “essential.” Sveinsson’s books differ from typical adventure novels: the “exoticism” of the far North, noticed by one reviewer, is not the result of the narrative strategy but relates to their autobiographical profile. Also, the children’s adventures, immersed in their everyday life at the seaside, are devoid of excessive drama and do not have an adventurous character. The Committee appreciated the books’ high moral level, educational and artistic value and authenticity. The review of *Nonni i Manni* also emphasised the “simple, sincere and lively religious feeling,” and in the case of *Z dalekiej północnej wyspy*, “childlike sincere piety” (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 297). This religious element, rather than the genre aspect, was most likely the reason for the withdrawal of the Jesuit-writer’s books from libraries in the 1950s. At the dawn of the new order, which did not tolerate—as Lasota (1951, p. 116) put it—literature “steeped in an atmosphere of obscurantism and medieval clericalism,” all Catholic publications and the works of church-connected writers were particularly stigmatised, and Sveinsson’s publisher in Poland was Wydawnictwo Ks. Jezuitów [Jesuit’s Publishing House]<sup>7</sup>.

Probably quite different reasons led in 1951 to the withdrawal of two novels by the Victorian writer Florence Montgomery. *Misunderstood* (1869), first published in Poland in 1913 under the title *Jur*, translated by Celina Kuszerówna, tells the story of seven-year-old Humphrey Duncombe, whose character, motivations and behaviour are misinterpreted and misunderstood by his loved ones, especially his father. Only when the protagonist dies after an unfortunate accident do his tormented relatives realise their mistake. On the 1929 list, the book—recommended in the translation by Hanna Kuszer-Nitecka from 1922—was classified as “permitted”. The review was not very enthusiastic: it pointed to the lack of genuine pedagogical content as well as psychological depth of the characters and situations, emphasising the drastic ending, which could shock more sensitive readers. Nevertheless, *Misunderstood* was quite popular in Poland, published in three translations and several editions; perhaps this was the reason for including it on the list, as suggested in the review. On the other hand, the reason for its removal in 1951 can be attributed to its social setting, which was the landed gentry *milieu*: the title character is the son of Sir Everard Duncombe, a member of the British aristocracy and parliament, and the family lives in a wealthy estate full of servants.

<sup>7</sup> However, one of Sveinsson’s books, *Wśród rozjuszonych niedźwiedzi* [Among Raging Bears], slipped through the censors’ net. It was also published by the Jesuit’s Publishing House in 1931, in a translation signed by A.P.

The setting of Montgomery's second novel present on both lists is entirely different. *Wild Mike and his Victim* (1875), published in Poland under two titles, first as *Dziki Antek* [Wild Antek] (1925) and then as *Dwaj malcy* [Two Little Boys] (1928), both translated by Jan Plichta, tells the story of a sickly boy, Tim Collins, who lives with his mother, a laundry worker. The review, recommending the book as "permitted", emphasised its positive role models and "good-natured" moral tendency (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 224), although not without a tad of sentimentality. It may surprise that this particular Montgomery's novel, which makes working-class representatives the main characters, was placed on the 1951 inventory. The theme of the lower classes, however, seemingly in line with the requirements of socialist realism, develops in the novel in a completely contradictory direction. The fate of the protagonists—both the bedridden Tim and Mike, who is constantly bullying the sick boy—changes thanks to the intervention of a generous aristocrat: Tim recovers and starts a better life with his mother, while Mike improves his behaviour. A particularly striking transformation occurs in Tim's mother, in the opening parts of the novel rebelling against social injustice, which causes her and her child to suffer poverty while the upper classes overflow with undeserved riches. The kind-hearted attitude of the noble lady who saves Tim's life leads Mrs Collins to change her perception of the rich radically. In the telling final scene, during a parade of luxurious carriages in Hyde Park, Tim and his mother spot "Tim's beautiful lady" (Montgomery, 1875, p. 139) while the narrator makes it clear that her good deeds have shifted the poor woman's perspective. In her opinion all injustice is cancelled out, invalidating her class rebellion replaced by submissiveness and acceptance of the social order. Such a "perverse" representation of the class conflict could not meet with the approval of the body responsible for the 1951 inventory. It is probably also the reason for the extraordinary precision— not at all characteristic of this inventory<sup>8</sup>—with which the censors tracked down and included the novel's first Polish edition, published under a different title.

The last intersection is the collection of Arabian tales *Märchen der Tausend und Einen Nacht* (1869) in the children's edition by A. L. Grimm, immensely popular in Poland and constantly reissued since the 1870s. This anonymous translation was used by the outstanding Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian for his adaptation of *Arabian Nights* for young readers (Zimand, 1971, p. 385). The 1929 list included the eighth edition, which was published by Gebethner and Wolff Publishing House in 1925 and classified it as "desirable." The review mentioned the "richness of imagination in describing extraordinary adventures" and emphasised the validity of the adaptation approach in removing "details that are undesirable for young readers" (*Spis...*, 1929, p. 152). Interestingly enough, the 1951 inventory, out of many editions present in Polish reading circulation, ordered the removal of only one specific issue, published by Księgarnia Popularna [The Popular Bookstore] with an unspecified date, hence a different edition than the one recommended in 1929. It obscured the authorship of Albert Ludwig Grimm and suggested, especially on the cover, that the Brothers Grimm (Wilhelm and Jacob) are the collection's authors; moreover, it was four times shorter than the one recommended by the 1929 list. It is worth recalling that the only

<sup>8</sup> The censors missed, for example, the second Polish edition of Montgomery's *Misunderstood*, published in 1916 under a different title and translated by W.L. Mukułowska.

comment attached to the 1951 *Inventory No 3* advised “close attention to the publishing address of the items on the list, i.e. place, year, publishing company, as in some cases certain titles will be removed due to improper publication” (*Cenzura PRL...*, 2002, p. 81), and “Grimms’ *Fairy Tales*” were given as an example. We can therefore assume that in this particular case, the reason for the withdrawal was not ideological but related to the low quality of the publication.

## Conclusions

The two lists discussed above, both strongly affiliated with the field of political power, show several similarities that are not apparent at a glance. Although their rhetoric and structure indicate opposite motivations—the affirmative 1929 list promoted reading and supported cultural production, while the purgatory 1951 inventory was a tool of control and oppression—a deeper analysis proves that each also had the other (controlling/affirmative) aspect, albeit in a covert form. The undisclosed index of rejected titles underlying the ministerial recommendations and the ensuing controversy in 1927 demonstrate that the controlling element resulting from the political entanglement of this project was apparent to other agents in the field. On the other hand, the purgatory inventory, solely censoring and excluding, paradoxically had an aspect of support for cultural production, preparing the space for a new canon aimed at nurturing new citizenship. Both lists also reveal a certain convergence of assessments of specific literary phenomena noticeable in their approach to genres typical of children’s literature at the time: on the one hand, popular-science books were valued positively in both projects, whereas entertaining literature such as Charskaya’s girls’ novels and May’s adventure stories (not recommended in the 1929 and intended for withdrawal in 1951) were treated with suspicion.

Despite these undercurrents of resemblance, we should not overlook the key issue, namely the radically contrasted identity of the two lists and the children’s literature projects they promoted. Their complete ideological opposition resulted in divergent political strategies, in the translated literature most strikingly reflected in the choice of source of models and transfers. The Committee in charge of the 1929 list turned to the West, situating Polish children’s literature among other Western literatures. On the contrary, the emerging Polish People’s Republic placed itself within the communist East, hence the 1951 inventory sought to cleanse children’s literature of unwanted Western influences. The *modus operandi* inherent in both lists was also contrasting. The 1929 list adopted a form of “soft” control, since the ministerial Committee, although disposing of considerable symbolic capital and consecration power, was not the only agent playing in the field of children’s literature at the time. They had to consider the views of others, such as the educational, librarian, church and publishing circles, which is why their list explicitly declared its readiness to be revised and reformulated. The 1951 inventory, in contrast, was created during the Stalinist years, i.e. at the time when the field of political power had achieved a crushing influence on the field of cultural production and the official discourse on culture was exclusively controlled by the state. As part of the bibliocide, the inventory contributed to the

physical destruction of a large portion of the Polish library stock, which gave it an especially brutal character.

In the context of translated literature, the authorities' actions throughout the communist period have been substantial, resulting in the withdrawal of some titles on the one hand and a delayed and/or incomplete transfer on the other. This is most evident in the case of English and American literature: classics such as L.F. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911) or J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (1937) did not reach Poland until the so-called thaw of the late 1950s and 1960s when political oppression and cultural production relaxed. Similarly, Beatrix Potter's works first appeared on the Polish publishing market during the thaw; her lesser-known *The Tailor of Gloucester* (1903) was then translated, but the Polish translation of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) did not appear until after the 1989 breakthrough (Wieczorkiewicz, 2017, p. 79–80). During the entire communist era, not one new (as yet untranslated) title by L.M. Montgomery was published, and only novels translated in the interwar period were reissued; in the 1990s, however, a flood of her previously untranslated books hit the market. Also in the 1990s, a few books by Enid Blyton, a writer immensely popular in Western Europe, appeared in Poland as a kind of attempt to supplement the canon. However, her works never reached a wider readership, and the attempt failed most probably due to this belated reception. Therefore, the measures taken by the communist authorities in children's literature permanently and irreversibly influenced the Polish canon. By destroying books, banning them and pushing into oblivion, they created a specific phenomenon in Polish juvenile literature's history, which Joanna Papuzińska (2008) described by the metaphor of a Sunken Kingdom—a shadow imaginary space where all forgotten books lay undisturbed by today's readers.

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