

# 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Czech Translations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: What Has Been Left Unspoken

## Las traducciones checas decimonónicas de *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: lo que se ha quedado sin decir

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**Abstract:** The article aims to explore the translation strategies and politics of the two mid-19th century Czech translations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life among the Lowly* (1852). Among other European cultures, Czechs (one of the nations of the multinational Austrian Empire) responded to Stowe's abolitionist novel immediately –both translations were published in 1853. However, the thesis of the article is that the response in each “local” European context carried and expressed its social and cultural characteristics. Therefore, we consider the social and political experience of Czechs around 1848, the year of first liberal democratic revolutions in Europe, as a possible influence over the approach of the publishers and translators in the Czech versions. These are viewed as results of what we call “productive reception”. Because both are shorter adaptations, the comparative analysis is aimed at the strategies of “rewritings”. As such, it discovers very different strategies being used for adaptation in these two mid-19<sup>th</sup> century versions, which led to the creation of texts with very different messages. On the basis of researching subsequent history of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Czech, we suggest that the influence of one of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century adaptations has prevailed in later Czech reception and belittled its political importance up to the present.

**Keywords:** Harriet Beecher Stowe; *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; translation; adaptation; Czech culture; mid-19th century.

**Resumen:** Este artículo busca explorar las políticas y estrategias de traducción de las dos traducciones checas de mediados del siglo XIX de *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life among the Lowly* (1852), de Harriet Beecher Stowe. Entre otras culturas europeas, los checos (una de las naciones del multinacional Imperio austriaco) reaccionaron ante esta novela abolicionista de inmediato, ya que ambas traducciones se publicaron en 1853. Además, en este artículo se defiende que las respuestas en cada contexto “local” estuvieron marcada por sus propias características culturales y sociales. La experiencia política y social del pueblo checo alrededor de 1848, el año de las primeras revoluciones liberales y democráticas de Europa, fue una de las posibles

influencias en el enfoque adoptado por los editores y traductores que produjeron las versiones en checo. Se la considerará, por lo tanto, como un claro resultado de lo que podríamos llamar «recepción productiva». Al ser ambas adaptaciones más cortas, el análisis comparativo buscará descubrir las estrategias presentes en dichas «reescrituras». Se descubrirá que se emplearon estrategias muy diferentes para la adaptación de estas dos versiones de mediados del siglo XIX, lo que llevó a la producción de textos dotados de mensajes muy diferentes. Basándonos en la historia posterior de *Uncle Tom's Cabin* en checo, defenderemos que la influencia de una de las adaptaciones de mediados del XIX prevaleció sobre la otra por lo que respecta a la recepción posterior en checo, lo que disminuyó su impacto político hasta el presente.

**Palabras clave:** Harriet Beecher Stowe; *La cabaña del Tío Tom*; traducción; adaptación; cultura checa; mediados del siglo XIX.

**Summary:** 1. Translation in the emerging modern Czech culture, 1.1. Czechs in the mid-19th century; 2. Translation as rewriting; 3. Towards political intensification; 4. To conclude: Two translations in competition.

**Sumario:** 1. La traducción en la cultura emergente checa contemporánea, 1.1. Los checos en la mitad del siglo XIX; 2. Traducción como reescritura; 3. Hacia la intensificación política; 4. Como conclusión: dos traducciones en competencia.

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## 1. TRANSLATION IN THE EMERGING MODERN CZECH CULTURE<sup>1</sup>

The novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life among the Lowly*, published as a serial in the *National Era* (in Washington, D.C.) in 1851, soon became an unprecedented bestseller in the United States and spread almost simultaneously as a sensation all over Europe. It most probably hastened the onset of the Civil War between the US South and North. In the context of –we dare say, global– literary and cultural studies, it has been criticized as literary kitsch and camp; accused of distorting the picture of American social reality; blamed for imposing the stereotype of a servile Uncle-Tom figure onto American culture while inhibiting the growth of autonomous African-American literature.

In our opinion, writing a comprehensive history of the reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not a feasible task. In the 1850s, the novel provoked dramatically conflicting response in the United States, and it agitated readers all over Europe. We would like to explore its impact in one particular European context –the Czech lands, a part of the Austrian Empire at that time. For this purpose, we will approach two Czech translations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* while adopting the perspective of

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<sup>1</sup>The history of this article goes back to my Czech conference paper that was later published in a Czech anthology devoted to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Czech culture and its current legacy (Kalivodová, 2008). However, the content and argumentation of the text presented here have considerably changed, in facts and ideas.

reception history. The method of reception research<sup>2</sup> requires close attention to the historic of a “historic” reader. While applying the method to studying a translation, we approach it as an outcome of “productive reception” (Kalivodová, 2010: 48-53). The translator’s interpretation of the original, which is based in the historic context, and the degree to which he or she adopts, or breaks, translation norms valid in that particular context show in the translated text and may help the researcher to recognize a translation strategy. Its explanation and description are prime objectives of such translation research rather than value judgments.

In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century tumultuous reception of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a reception historian can identify many kinds of interpretation and many kinds of “productive reception” of this text. The novel was not only reproduced in numerous editions; its English version was pirated in a number of British and other European editions. In the United States, it was counter-attacked in pamphlets and rewritings of the story by Southern authors. It was transformed, simplified, and deformed in abridgements and stage adaptations. Its translation history was stormy – and has hardly been studied exhaustively. Different translations with their individual strategies affected different receptions in which the reading of the novel may or may not have combined with cultural and political interests in new contexts. My focus is on the immediate response to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel and its politics among mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Czechs, a people who lived as one national segment in the multinational Austrian Empire.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Czechs were experiencing their National Revival,<sup>3</sup> the politics of which was mainly cultural – Czech intellectuals tried to revive Czech as a modern language hoping that it

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<sup>2</sup> See the seminal essay by Hans Robert Jauss, “Literaturgeschichte als Provokation für die Literaturwissenschaft” [Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory], in which the principles of reception theory (first introduced in 1967) were published in 1975. I have used the Czech translation of the essay (Jauss, 2001: 7–38).

<sup>3</sup> The National Revival is a historical term that refers to the period of Czech history in which Czechs were trying to reestablish their national identity while forming one segment of the multinational Austrian Empire. Their struggle had romantic –and nationalistic– characteristics, but it enabled the gradual constitution of a modern national culture as well as structures, institutions and mechanisms of a modern society. Czech historians do not fully agree on the length of this period, but it is generally seen as beginning in the last two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and culminating in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of the Czech (and Austrian, Hungarian, Slovak and German) revolution of 1848.

would represent a modern culture in the future. This task was realized through linguistic efforts, and through Czech literary production and translation of valued texts of European literature into Czech. Only from the 1840s on, Czech actually started to spread among Czech middle classes as a means of communication and as a literary language, replacing German. The use of Czech was to prove the existence of the nation and Czechs thought it to be a principal sign of cultural importance – only gradually they also came to consider it an essential prerequisite of their national political voice, which they raised audibly for the first time in the Revolution of 1848.

While the Czech modern literary language was being created in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, translation into Czech was used as a means of enrichment for its expressive possibilities, and as a way of appropriation of cultural values which were productive and acknowledged in the contemporary Euro-American context. Czech literary scholar and semiotician Vladimír Macura speaks about “translationality” of Czech culture in the period of the National Revival; about the building of Czech culture by translation in the belief that there existed “the world of universal culture” in which Czechs had to “become able to compete through analogy with other cultures” (Macura, 1990: 69). However, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the National Revival was accomplished and Czech culture was already less an idea and more a reality. Though translation from other literatures into Czech was no less important in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and in its second half (as well as in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, for this small, and therefore “translating” culture), its functions were changing, together with changing cultural and social dynamics. Translation started to serve less to the cultivation of Czech as a high literary language<sup>4</sup> and more to actual cultural and political objectives. Though the Czech Revolution of 1848 was suppressed, Czech national consciousness was not, and Czechs already felt like a national agent in the world that they started to see, after 1848, as a space of conceivable and realizable social and political changes. Translation was

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<sup>4</sup> Josef Jungmann (1773–1847), a prominent Czech literary scholar, linguist, writer and translator, advanced literary Czech substantially during the National Revival by his *Slovník česko-německý* [The Czech-German Dictionary] in 1834–1839, and by his Czech translations of Chateaubriand's *Atala* (1805) and Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1811). A short conceptual overview of the development of Czech literary translation in the 19th and early 20th century is given by Jiří Levý in (Králová–Cuenca Drouhard 2013: 41-45).

becoming a channel of communication with this world, a way of introducing texts that were interpreted as topical for what was understood as cultural and social development. Without any doubt, Stowe's novel was a prime text of that kind. In his work on the history of theories and policies of Czech translation, Czech scholar Jiří Levý (1926-1967) identified (Levý, 1996: 156-158) a shift in the 1850s in translators' and publishers' interests towards current, internationally topical works. This shift, being caused by the political transformation of Czech consciousness during the revolution, and awakened awareness of the democratic movements in the world, was manifested, among others by the immediate information about the original publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel in the only Czech literary review of the 1850s, *Lumír*.<sup>5</sup> Václav Čeněk Bendl, one of the prominent Czech literati of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and translator of Pushkin, among others) used it for announcing this publication in the USA in 1852 saying that this work "would do more for the liberation of the Negroes than all parliamentary speeches, sermons, debates and the most dutiful marine guards" (Bendl, 1852: 73-75). He also announced an upcoming Czech translation while an anonymous contributor on another page (75) of this issue, proving attentiveness to contemporary European and world news, informed about the published Italian and Hungarian translations, but also, critically, about anti-Uncle Tom stories of the advocates of slavery in the USA.

It is remarkable that two translators, Josef Vojáček (1828?-1921) and František Matouš Klácel (1808-1882), worked in fact simultaneously on two different translations of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* soon after its original publication. Both of them largely adapted and shortened the original text. (Such was the current Czech translation norm in the treatment of long novels. It persisted through the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One reason for that was an assumption that Czech readers were not mature enough to keep reading long stories in Czech). Both translations were published in 1853 – Vojáček's by Jaroslav Pospíšil (1812-1889), an important figure of the nascent Czech publishing scene in Prague, and Klácel's by Karel Winiker in Brno, the capital of Moravia.<sup>6</sup> Did such interest really signal that the Czech translators, or

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<sup>5</sup> Named by a mythical Czech hero.

<sup>6</sup> Klácel lived in Brno, a large town in the South of Moravia. Moravia was ethnically Czech, but it cherished its past of a geographically and politically important part of the

publishers, found the novel politically important, or even relevant for reflecting the plight of their countrymen? Czechs were not enslaved, but they (or at least their intellectual elite) felt deprived of social and political rights. And the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* might have been read as a call for justice – justice understood as the right of every human to be free and to have social and economic control of one's own life.

### 1. 1. Czechs in the mid-19th century

Let us examine the circumstances conditioning the 1853 translations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into Czech and their possible appeal to Czech readers more closely. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Czechs resented their situation in the Austrian Empire. After becoming part of it in 1526, they lost their statehood and political sovereignty, and the rule of German as the official language meant the ebbing of Czech-language culture. Czechs felt they had to fight for their national emancipation against Austria as well as against the neighboring and historically more powerful German nation that endangered them. However, they spoke German and were in contact with the social, economic and cultural developments in Europe, or even in the United States, especially through German. In the revolutionary years of 1848 and 1849, Czechs organized themselves into different alliances and were already able to voice their own political will in protests articulating various social, national and democratic objectives.

The Czech Revolution in 1848-1849 was part of the revolutionary wave in Europe to which Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) paid eager attention. She hoped that the awakening democratic consciousness of her European readers could give birth to international pressure upon the abolition of slavery in the United States. She voiced such hopes in her prefaces to the authorized French and German editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852, 1853 respectively), and she also expressed them in some of the motifs of the novel. As for the English-language preface to the German edition<sup>7</sup> –the so-called “European”, according to Stowe's formulation– she might have believed that it was a message sent to the

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historical Czech state (kingdom). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bohemia and Moravia were both striving for national emancipation while having difficult relations. Prague was the main center of Czech cultural and political activity. It had Moravian support, but it also met with Moravian criticism.

<sup>7</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Onkel Toms Hütte oder Negerleben in den Sklavenstaaten von Amerika*, 1852.

center of Europe. Trying to take sides with European democrats against the American system protecting slavery, she started her preface as follows: “In authorizing the circulation of this work on the continent of Europe the author has only the apology that the love of man is higher than the love of country” (Diller, 2006: 14).

Also, Stowe may have been aware that more emigrants from Europe were heading for the United States after 1848, and in the German preface, she addressed them directly:

The internal struggles of no other nation in the world can be so interesting to the European as those of America, for America is fast filling up from Europe and every European who lands on her shores has almost immediately his vote in her counsels.

If, therefore, the oppressed of the other nations desire to find in America an asylum of permanent freedom let them come prepared heart, hand, and vote, against the institution of slavery, for they who enslave others cannot long themselves remain free (Diller, 2006: 15-16).

If Germans were leaving Europe for Stowe’s mother country, which promised democracy and a better life, Czechs were doing so, too. The Austrian persecution of Czechs after the suppressed Revolution of 1848 continued through the 1850s, implemented by the policies of Alexander Bach, the Austrian Minister of the Interior.<sup>8</sup> These policies, and also economic reasons,<sup>9</sup> sent the historical first wave of Czech emigration to the United States. It was helped by the “emigration industry” developed successfully by European (mainly German) and American transport companies that operated railways and provided shipping. It is noteworthy that, by the end of the 1880s, over 50 thousand Czechs in the United States made up 80% of all emigration from Austria (Dubovický, 2003: 14). From the perspective of Czech emigration, it is also interesting that, during the Civil War, Czechs were politically conscious supporters of the

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<sup>8</sup> From 1852 to 1859, Bach centralized the executive power in the Austrian Empire in an attempt to restore a strong state. He also endorsed reactionary policies that reduced freedom of the press and avoided public trials. He became a prominent representative of the absolutist (or *Klerikalabsolutist*) political direction in Austria, which culminated in the concordat of August 1855 that gave the Roman Catholic Church control over education and family life.

<sup>9</sup> The country people in Austria were freed from the obligatory manorial labor for feudal lords in 1848, unless financially compensated (?). Thus they often ended up worse off, with fewer resources.

Union and many enlisted in the Union Army (*Ibid*, 2003: 26; Čermák 1889).<sup>10</sup>

In 1852, those Czechs in Austria who had some formal education and broader social and political interests could easily read Stowe's novel, including her human rights appeal in the "European" preface (quoted above), in nearly full-length German translations.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps, even some potential Czech emigrants did. Middle-class Czechs were still more fluent in German than in Czech. But it was also members of the middle class who produced the Czech translations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In doing so, they wanted to introduce the international bestseller into Czech culture. But what was the purpose of producing and publishing *two adaptations* of the original in an emerging literary language, and into a social context void of African slavery? Did the translators intend to broaden the outlook of lower classes speaking Czech and reading some Czech (because Austrian elementary schools in the Czech lands provided education in Czech)? Could they aim at raising political consciousness of the economically desperate whose emigration to the United States outnumbered that of the middle class? Or, did the publishers and translators want to adapt Stowe's novel, a sort of political manifesto, to some other purposes? Let us look for possible answers to these questions.

In search of them we will turn our attention to the texts of the Czech translations published in the Austrian Empire – which must have embodied the oppressor of nations to Stowe: She knew about the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 (which was stronger than the Czech or Slovak ones) and she is said to have taken the closing statement of her "European" preface from Lajos Kossuth (1802-1894), the leading Hungarian revolutionary: "True are the great living words, NO NATION CAN REMAIN FREE WITH WHOM FREEDOM IS A PRIVILEGE AND NOT A PRINCIPLE" (CIT. Diller, 2004: 15-16).

<sup>10</sup> The theme of Czech emigrants and the US Civil War also appears in the novel *The Bride of Texas* by internationally-renowned Czech writer Josef Škvorecký (1924-2012). Škvorecký, a political emigrant living in Canada since 1968, also explored historical experience of Czech emigrants in North America in some of his writings. *The Bride of Texas* was first published in English in Canada (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995; English translation by Kaca Polackova Henley).

<sup>11</sup> Two German translations that we studied were published in Leipzig, in [1852 or 1853] and in 1853 respectively. Their texts are identical, including the title: *Onkel Toms Hütte oder Negerleben in den Sklavenstaaten von Amerika*. They are faithful, full translations with the same structure as the original with one exception: they both omit chapter 25 called "The Little Evangelist" – which the Czech translations incorporate.



## 2. TRANSLATION AS REWRITING

We view any instance of literary translation as productive reception. According to Jiří Levý, the stages leading to a translation are the “apprehension of the source”, which is dependent on the translator’s position in a particular historical and ideological context, “interpretation of the source” (individual as well as socially dependent on the same context), and “re-stylization of the source” that follows to some degree (or, in extreme cases does not follow) the linguistic, literary and publishing norms valid in the given context. (Levý, 2011: 58-60). In Gideon Toury’s more general conceptualization, the result of a translation process is re-creation of *some* sense of the original. The process and its result are always dependent on a particular context of translation. Not even contexts of two synchronic translations in one culture are expected to be similar and exerting the same influence upon the translation processes. Toury deems that the *invariant* content of a translation is what is *really* translated, or transferred from the original, i.e., the re-created parts of the original text, its motifs and facts and their meanings, aspects of style, while he assumes that there are always features of the original that are *not* transferred. As Toury acknowledges the power of the contexts, and seeks crucial influences upon all stages of the translation process in their “norms” (i.e., tendencies), he prepares grounds for studying translations as productive reception, and for interrelating translation studies with the reception history of literature (Toury, 1995: 24-67). The researcher is encouraged to study the present and missing features of the original in the translation as evidence of the translator’s interpretation and relate it, as well as the translation strategy and “re-stylization”, to the context of the translation’s origin.

Even though both Czech versions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* of 1853 offer shorter and changed stories, we consider them to be translations, in accord with the theory of Gideon Toury (1995). The comparison of two such synchronic translations, or, adaptations, offers a rare insight into two possible Czech interpretations of the original in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century – the bigger the changes are, the clearer the sense of translating strategies that we can get (Toury, 1995; Simon, 1996).<sup>12</sup> It was not uncommon (up

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<sup>12</sup> Manipulative, ideological translation strategies of Czech adapting translators in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were thoroughly described by Czech literary historian

to the mid-war period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the independent Czechoslovak state began functioning) that Czech publishers, not being and feeling obliged by copy rights, competed by publishing the same titles in translation, authored on contract by different translators. Moreover, Prague and Brno, centers of Czech cultural activities, the impact of which was mainly regional, were 250 kilometers apart, with not much Czech cultural life between them, and – as we will explain further – the motives and contexts of the two publications varied for its differently located “agents” – publishers, translators and editors (see also footnote 6).

František Matouš Klácel, author of the “Brno translation”, was an important figure and original thinker of the National Revival and of the revolutionary period in the Czech lands. Perhaps, his Moravian perspectives distanced him from the Prague nationalist center. He was a member of the Augustinian order, taught philosophy, and was a man of letters. In 1844, his clerical superiors banned him from teaching because his unorthodox ideas were close to Hegelian thought, and because of his sympathy for Pan-Slavism, a 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural and political vision of unification and emancipation of Slavic peoples all over Europe and Russia. Even prior to 1848, Klácel became a suspicious radical. At the beginning of 1853, he resigned from the editorship of *Moravský Národní list* [The Moravian National Paper], then fully controlled and censored by the Austrian administration (as all Czech-language newspapers and periodicals after 1848), but he managed to publish his serialized translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* there, in the course of the same year. It was an extraordinary text for this small paper bringing Moravian and Austrian political and practical news, and its publication by the editor-in-chief, Klácel's liberal-minded friend Leopold Hansmann, might have been a politically daring act.

Josef Vojáček came from a rich family of a landowner and farmer who was a zealous Czech patriot. The family lived near Prague and supported Czech literati; religiously it was Protestant and had contacts with England. Josef Vojáček, apparently sharing the concerns about Czech culture with his family, worked as a translator from English to Czech only in his young age when he was studying and preparing for a

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Vladimír Macura in his semiotic work on the Czech National Revival, *Znamení zrodu* [Signs of Birth] of 1995.

successful career of a lawyer.<sup>13</sup> He collaborated with Jaroslav Pospíšil, Prague publisher of Czech books but also many translations, including Vojáček's version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. At the time of its publication, Pospíšil was launching an ambitious project of "American Series" consisting of selected remarkable works of American literature translated into Czech. His advertisement for the first volume of this series, Washington Irving's *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828), expressed admiration for the growth and expansion of the American states proving the superiority of European civilization over indigenous forms of life. Instead of including the translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the "American Series" (which might have questioned the praised qualities of Euro-American civilization), he presented it as popular reading "for both young and adult readers". The popular character is signaled by the publisher's instruction itself on the frontispiece (then quite common) as well as by the format of the publication – two inexpensive paperback booklets. This format was characteristic of Pospíšil's extensive "library" of popular stories, either translations or Czech originals, offering adventure, thrill, shocking experience with a possible moral message, exotic themes, and indulgence in sentimentality. A selection of the titles of such popular stories suggests that the theme of slave trade was not unusual in them<sup>14</sup> – it was likely to evoke strong emotions. And popular books for young adults especially secured good sales.

Already the titles of the two translations show significant differences: František Matouš Klácel named the first part of the serial *Strýc Tomáš* [the closest lexical equivalent of "Uncle Tom"]; for the second part, he used a descriptive title *Obrazy ze života černých otroků v Americe* [Pictures from the Life of Black Slaves in America]. In Vojáček's title, *Strejček Tom čili Otroctví ve svobodné Americe*, the word "Strejček" is not an exact lexical equivalent to "Uncle"; it is a stylistically different diminutive – it sounds more familiar and affectionate (though the paternalistic sense of the Southern American collocation is lost in Czech). The second part of Vojáček's title [meaning: Or, Slavery in Free America] is paradoxical, sensational and

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<sup>13</sup> Our thorough historical and archival research has not brought more information about him.

<sup>14</sup> We refer to a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century selection of titles of this kind of literature advertised on the covers of such cheap booklets published by several Czech publishers.

may even be read as ironic. Czech readers of *Strejček Tom* in Vojáček's translation<sup>15</sup> could follow the two main story lines on which H.B. Stowe built her novel – one being Tom's, the other the Harrises'.<sup>16</sup> Vojáček's Tom is a hard-working slave resigned to his fate, a Christian – but not really much more devoted than George Harris. His religious remarks and comments are often more like idioms of speech. As the Harris of this Czech version is not blasphemous at all, the two characters do not present as strong a contrast as they do in the original. Among other losses that we notice while focusing on the Christian dimension of this Czech story there is Tom's religiously philosophical, existential debate with the once distinguished quadroon, Cassy. Little remains of the Tom who is a self-confident, superior Christian, ready-to-suffer-and-die in his faith, and nearly nothing is left of the skeptical Cassy whose ordeal destroyed her faith, but who is still ready to fight for her own and Emmeline's life and dignity. Moreover, Vojáček's "Kassy" is simply "an elderly housekeeper of Legree (Stowe, 1853d: 179);" the entire motif of her sexual abuse (and potentially Emmeline's) is omitted. Thus Czech readers may have wondered: why did the two women need to escape? Could their housework duties be worse than toiling on a plantation? The dramatic escape lacks psychological motivation.

<sup>15</sup> The publication itself does not cite the translator's name, which was common practice though not the universal norm – for example, the literary review *Lumír* (mentioned above) paid attention both to authors and to translators acknowledging the latter to be important literary agents. However, the fact that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was translated by Vojáček was announced in the newspaper before and after the translation was published.

<sup>16</sup> When we researched a possibility that the Czech translators may have adopted a translation strategy of a German translation or adaptation (see also footnote 11), we also compared them with a didactic and pious German adaptation for children that was published in 1853, the same year as Czech texts. This adaptation omits the Harrises' line altogether (Stowe, 1853e) and its rewriting strategy differs profoundly from both Vojáček's adventuresome and religiously lacking-in-zealous adaptation, and from Klácel's much more politically serious one as well. Though the German publication claims that Stowe herself authored the adaptation, she has not been verified as the author of any early adaptation for young readers. Neither the early English *Pictures and Stories from Uncle Tom's Cabin* of 1853 nor *A Peep into Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the same year were written by her. *Pictures* were published first in England, and then by Stowe's American publisher Jewett. Their author, or "authoress" to whom the prefatory material refers, remains unnamed. So does "Aunt Mary", the narrator of *A Peep*. The latter English adaptation also omits The Harrises' story line, but the former one does not.

What this selective account of Vojáček's adapted story may already suggest is not only the evaporation of the Christian argument – the argument in which Stowe's Tom is the winning hero. Also, the other two characters, George Harris and Cassy, do not pronounce psychologically probable alternatives of despair and anger. With the reduced motifs and simplified personal qualities of heroes and heroines, this Czech adaptation becomes just a coarse adventure story. It loses the psychological variety and the degree of complexity of the characters attained in the original that were, in the opinion of some critics, remarkable with regard to American novel writing of the time.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Vojáček's story as reception combined with production may represent a process of surface reading and vulgarization similar to some kinds of popular response to Stowe's novel in general, including its complex processes in the United States.

But there is another aspect of this Czech adaptation that is quite specific. It is likely that Vojáček (or his publisher) withheld the sexual abuse of Cassy and Emmeline so as not to inflict moral harm on adolescent readers. Thus they suppressed a part of the novel's valuable information about American slavery that would have been important for critical and mature Czech readership. The same kind of childish distancing from the original grossly – or “happily” – affected the fate of Uncle Tom himself. Vojáček's Tom is not tortured to death on Legree's plantation, but is saved in time by Shelby Junior, who takes him home and makes him an honored witness of the liberation of the slaves he owns. The happy ending changes the melodramatic novel into a fairy tale. It is similar in the German adaptation for children mentioned earlier, but other qualities of the Czech rewriting are different from it (see footnote 16). Besides some English full-text version of the novel, untraceable today, Vojáček (and also Klácel) most probably used also German versions (especially middle-class Czechs were bilingual in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), but their adaptations are, according to our knowledge, uniquely retold stories, working independently with most major motifs of the original. From today's point of view, it may be surprising that, both in the German adaptation for children and in Vojáček's Czech version, the tender-hearted rescue of Tom can go very well with a narrative

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<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Carol Farley Kessler's entry “Stowe, Harriet Beecher” in Lorna Sage (1999: 605-606); or Nina Baym's section named “The Rise of the Woman Author” in Elliot (1988: 304-305).

interest in torture. But it seems that such was a paradigm of children's literature in Central Europe at that time: an arbitrary creature (be it a human being or animal) with a horrifying fate was to become an object of young readers' pity for which they were finally rewarded by a happy ending.<sup>18</sup>

Such outcome of Uncle Tom's story in this Czech adaptation may be deemed harmless wishful thinking on the part of the translator Vojáček and the publisher Jaroslav Pospíšil. On the other hand, even if they may have intended the adaptation mainly for young readers, they also invited adults to read it. (The newspapers advertising Vojáček's translation did not rank it as a book for young readers at all). And from an adult point view, their transformation of the story into a violent fairy tale suggests that their productive reception missed a truly serious social and political interest in the matters which made Stowe write her novel. On the part of Czech adult readers, such transformation may have sanctioned a rather simplistic, or ignorant, attitude to the matter. Furthermore, unlike the German readership, who had access to the full-length German translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as well as to its adaptation for children as early as 1853, Czech readers could read only adapted versions of the novel in Czech.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. TOWARDS POLITICAL INTENSIFICATION

However, the second Czech adaptation of 1853, which was serialized in *Moravský Národní list*, reveals a very different strategy of rewriting. Klácel's digested translation not only retains most meanings of the original story – it even emphasizes its abolitionist appeal. This emphasis is an effect of the newly conceived narrator who is less reflective and more focused than Stowe, while relating briefly the content of many

<sup>18</sup> Czech literary scholar Věra Brožová shows how adventurous and exotic fictitious themes infiltrated into Czech literary production for children and young adults through translations from other literatures in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, Czech original writing for children and young adults tended to be dryly moralizing and not very imaginative (Brožová, 2005: 53–73).

<sup>19</sup> The work of Mariana Bernasová, a student in the Institute of Translation Studies of Charles University in Prague, was a substantial help in researching possible influences of German translations and / or adaptations upon the two Czech translations of 1853. While studying the German publications to which this article refers, she has not proved any influence (Bernasová, 2007).

condensed incidents and omitted dialogues. The narrative voice ignores Stowe's humorous diversions, but is occasionally sarcastic with regard to realities of the American South and the behavior of those maintaining slavery. It is fervent, particularly empathizing or even identifying with black characters.

Moreover, Klácel (who was an advocate of women's rights) creates a narrator who is attentive towards both white and black female characters (the latter are largely ignored by Vojáček). Female characters are visibly the doers in the world of Stowe's novel – and they are partly imprints of Stowe's "domestic feminism".<sup>20</sup> Eliza or Cassy, or Mrs. Bird are seen as working out concrete problems while the main male characters are fictitious creations embodying ideals, principles, evils, or paralyzing contradictions. Klácel (unlike Vojáček) reads and carefully interprets this peculiar gender difference in the above mentioned argument between Tom and Cassy (Stowe, 1854: 143-145),<sup>21</sup> but also in another one between senator Bird and his wife who rebels against the second Fugitive Law,<sup>22</sup> and in yet another between Ophelia (who fights her own racial prejudice when freeing Topsy) and St. Clare who dies leaving his slaves to be sold as chattel.<sup>23</sup>

However, Klácel's main hero is George Harris. It is he, in his armed resistance to slave-hunters, who is likened to a Hungarian refugee by Stowe: Imagine that Harris is a Hungarian revolutionary who revolts against persecution, she suggests – a person in such a situation would

<sup>20</sup> Using the concept of "domestic feminism," I am inspired by the work of Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (1978). Douglas explains the growing influence of women in the churches of the United States from the 1830s ("feminine disestablishment"), and also their retroactive insistence upon Christian morals in the family and community life. One of the forms of this kind of insistence was the genre of domestic novel taken up by a number of American women writers in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>21</sup> While studying Klácel's text, I also used its unchanged reprint that was published as a book in 1854.

<sup>22</sup> The Birds' argument about the Fugitive Law is in chapter IX of the original called "A Senator Is But a Man" (Stowe, 1982: 98-115). While Klácel (in his chapter 9) translates the political dynamic of the argument (Stowe, 1854: 29-33), Vojáček (in his chapter 8 titled "Dobří lidé" [Good people]) only speaks about Mr. and Mrs. Bird, does not mention Mr. Bird's political role at all, and omits political and ideological reasoning on both sides (Stowe, 1853d: 64-73).

<sup>23</sup> See original chapters xxv, "The Little Evangelist", and xxvii, "This Is the Last of Earth," (Stowe 1982: 327-332, 347-354); Klácel's short chapters 1, 6 and 8 in "volume" II of his rewriting (Stowe, 1854: 96-101, 112-114, 117-119).

meet with admiration and support in America, without any trace of the violent hatred with which the Harrises are pursued. This comparison is found in original chapter XVII, The Freeman's Defence (Stowe, 1982: 232). Whether Klácel or Vojáček (differing in intellectual orientation, but both working for the Czech national emancipation) liked Stowe's comparison is an unanswerable question. They did not –and could not– translate it because of political censorship. But Klácel paid careful attention to Harris's story line and even restructured the closing part of the novel to reserve the finale for Harris and his anger. While Stowe's novel ended with the scene in which the white man liberated his slaves while paying tribute to Tom the martyr (and Vojáček arranged this spectacle in Tom's presence), Klácel put final emphasis on the existential protest of the black man. In his translation, Harris's final letter, in which he explains his departure for Liberia to a friend is not omitted (as in Vojáček's) or shortened, but it is importantly adapted. The departure of Klácel's Harris for Liberia is not an act of a provident black would-be politician who envisions international cooperation for the advancement of black nations. It is an inevitable way out of the conflict in which the powers of the contenders are uneven. In contrast to Stowe's original, Klácel intensifies Harris's indignation and adds his open attack at white America's humiliation of the black race that is denied education and is dogged by theories of inferiority.

Klácel was deeply frustrated by the outcome of the Revolution of 1848; he was silenced as a thinker and he came to feel that he could not stay in the Augustinian order. His biographers say (Jeřábek, 1964; Dvořáková, 1976) that, already in the mid-1850s, he began to think of emigrating to the United States. He finally realized his plan in 1869. In translating Harris's letter, Klácel did not support Stowe's "colonialist"<sup>24</sup> vision – his version rather sounds like a complaint of an individual whose dignity is hurt when he is deprived of social freedom and equal rights and who is determined to find a place in the world where he would be able to fulfill his human needs and use his abilities. It sounds as if Klácel was speaking about himself. He even let Harris paraphrase a leading idea of his earlier article of 1842, in which he expressed original anti-nationalist ideas, unique in the Czech patriotic context. It was the article "Kosmopolitismus a vlastenectví s obzvláštním ohledem na Moravu"

<sup>24</sup> A historical term referring to plans for repatriation of freed black people (mainly) to Africa.



[Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism with Special Regard to Moravia],<sup>25</sup> in which he explained patriotism as faithfulness to national [or, comparably, racial] differences, and cosmopolitanism as faithfulness to one Godly Spirit that is to be shared by people of all nations [and, comparably, races] and that is accessible to them wherever they are. So Klácel's Harris writes:

Every honest man longs mightily to do useful work for the unity that all people shall become one day; so everyone must find where they belong, as leaves do to a tree or veins to a body. Let everyone decide about their belonging. The human who is dwelling in my heart obliges himself to work for my people, who are black (Stowe, 1854: 179-180).<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, Klácel decided to do his “human work” among Czechs, but in the United States. Working there mainly as a journalist, underpaid or unpaid because the press of the emigrant community was unprofitable business, he also attempted to establish an ideal commune of mainly Czech people who would be able to show other people a spiritual and moral way to the desired human unity that would not erase differences. However, his idealistic project failed.

#### 4. TO CONCLUDE: TWO TRANSLATIONS IN COMPETITION

Klácel's serialized translation was published as a book in 1854 in Brno, but it was never republished. The reason may have been Klácel's disappearance from the Czech scene due to his emigration to the United States and also a lesser agility of the Brno publisher Winiker in the context of Czech social, economic and cultural life that was centered in Prague. In contrast, Vojáček's translation was published again, unrevised, by Jaroslav Pospíšil in 1870, then for the third time in 1880. The latter text offers just a crudely sentimental adventure, but largely suppresses the political spirit of Stowe's novel (for instance, George Harris does not write any letter and instead of going to Liberia he moves to France where his well-to-do sister can support him and his family). As Stowe's novel was not newly translated into Czech up to the end of the

<sup>25</sup> The article, originally published in the leading Czech scholarly journal of the time, *Časopis Českého muzea* [The Journal of the Czech Museum], in 1842, is reprinted by Jeřábek (1964: 35–53).

<sup>26</sup> Translated into English by Eva Kalivodová.

19<sup>th</sup> century (and Klácel's translation went out of print), Vojáček's text was the only Czech version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* available to Czech readers during the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When it was reprinted in 1870, and in 1880, the publisher explicitly placed it in the "Library for Young Adults' Leisure". We believe that it was this placement, together with the depoliticized story and the Czech diminutive for "uncle" in its title, that might have helped to establish the Czech tradition of childish *Uncle Tom's Cabin* already in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1899, a new translation authored by Václav Patejdl was published, under quite a politically correct title *Strýček Tom, aneb, Život mezi porobenými: obraz z dob otroctví*. [Uncle Tom, or, Life among the Enslaved: Pictures from the Times of Slavery] (Stowe, 1899). However, it used the Czech diminutive for the word "uncle" again (though its first appearance in the text itself was in inverted commas announcing the translator's distancing from its usual Czech meaning). This version already followed the narrative voice of the original, was textually closer to "full" translation – but not verbally: it omitted details and diversions of Stowe's talkative narrator and thus some directions of her argumentation (e.g., George Harris is a more devoted Christian than in the original, closer to Tom, which softens the contrast between the two main black characters). It seems important that the second edition of this translation (Stowe, 1947) was published (by the same publisher) under a *changed* title, *Chaloupka strýčka Toma* [The Little Cabin of Uncle Tom], adding the second diminutive – "little cabin". It also contains an unsigned (editor's?, translator's?) note saying that it was necessary "to prune" sensitively the verbose style of the original that slowed down the story. Also, it expresses a hope that the text will appeal to young readers (Stowe, 1947: 295).

In the meantime, since the turn of the centuries, there appeared a number of digested, more or less crude Czech translations and adaptations that were all aimed at young people, and all had diminutives in their titles.<sup>27</sup> This process may have influenced the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Patejdl's translation as well as the latest Czech version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published in 1957. This text was also titled *Chaloupka strýčka Toma* (Stowe, 1957) and thus it actually reiterated the "endearing" title of

<sup>27</sup> We draw the information from the exam paper of Vít Papoušek, a student of Translation Studies, who researched the Czech translation history of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Papoušek, 2013).

the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Patejdl's translation. It was also aimed at young readers – it was produced by SNDK [The State Publishing House for Children's Books] in the socialist period. In contrast to Patejdl's version, it was deprived of the emphatically religious tone of the original (including omissions of some religiously intense paragraphs), and accompanied by an afterword by one of the translators, Emanuel Tilsch, who spoke of Stowe as a “progressive” writer who protested against slavery as a part of the US-system capitalist exploitation and oppression of people. However, he did not explain the historical context of the novel and the facts of slavery that appear in the novel sufficiently, or the role of religion in the characters' life (Tilsch in Stowe, 1957: 487-492; see also Bulínová, 2015: 30-31, 44-62).

The relegation of Czech *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to the realm of children's literature has been an undeserved fate for Stowe's literary experiment, in which she reworked the domestic novel while combining socio-economic analysis with pro-family morals and a humane argument: After all, being moral and humane are main objectives of the many Christian debates in her novel. The political appeal of the novel for abolishing slavery was powerful in the United States as well as in Europe. Czechs heard this appeal, too, and responded with their translations. Whether or not Klácel read Stowe's “European” preface to the German edition of her novel, his adaptation seems to indicate that his early democratic thought<sup>28</sup> intersected with Stowe's concerns. However, it is not true of the other text that seems to have influenced the position of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Czech culture more strongly. In this case, the translator Josef Vojáček and the publisher Jaroslav Pospíšil were daring enough to support the use of Czech language as the vehicle and emblem of the national emancipation, but inscribed in the translation just slight interest in the ordeal of non-Czechs, namely enslaved Africans in America. What can be deduced from the context of the Prague origin and further reprints of this translated text (rather than from the text itself) is the politically immature and, in fact, still provincial character of Czech mainstream cultural policies that Vojáček and Pospíšil pursued and

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<sup>28</sup> Czech writer Eduard Bass, the author of a remarkable popular history of the Czech Revolution of 1848, *Čtení o roce osmačtyřicátém* [Readings about 1848], (Bass, 1963), depicted well how the word – and notion of – “democracy” arrived as a novelty in the circles of Czech intellectuals around 1830, and how different, more, or less democratic attitudes these intellectuals were able to hold in the following decades. Klácel, however, belonged to the convinced and actively working democrats.

represented. For such policies, the notions of freedom and social rights were already well-known, but may have just resonated within the confines of nation, but not class and what was understood as “race” at that time.

The preference of Vojáček’s translation over Klácel’s in the Czech 19<sup>th</sup> century publishing history of Stowe’s political novel seems to suggest that when Czechs struggled for their civil maturity, their consciousness was not captured by slavery, a crucial problem of human coexistence, which was being solved across the ocean, and that their own regional concerns prevailed. It is also clear that thanks to the legacy of Vojáček’s translation they still ignore the paternalistic cultural meaning of the “Uncle Tom” collocation, and let their children approach Tom as a good-hearted fellow without a family name. Today, it is not possible to find out the data about the readership related to the two mid-19<sup>th</sup> century translations in libraries, not even in the central scholarly National Library of the Czech Republic. We can compare it only on the basis of the three publications of Vojáček’s translation by an influential, Prague-centered publisher in the span of three decades, and the two of Klácel’s in 1853-1854. As for the latest translation of 1957 of the novel, aimed at young readers again, we can say that it rather confirms the civically immature approach to Stowe’s novel manifested in Vojáček’s translation and in a number of Czech rewritings published in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup> (Patejdl’s translation seems to have been an exception, but it was also aimed at young readers trying to accentuate the action story). Perhaps, a new critical translation of Stowe’s novel, which would also acknowledge the politically-involved attempt of František Matouš Klácel, could contribute somehow to transformation of surviving Czech provincial and rather ignorant attitudes.

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<sup>29</sup> We can say, on the basis of informal research among university students of the humanities, that year by year the number of those who read this translation at a young age diminishes.

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