

## CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN FRANCO'S SPAIN: THE EFFECTS OF CENSORSHIP ON TRANSLATIONS

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### Resumen

Las peculiares características ideológicas del régimen de Franco: un pastiche de fascismo de raíces mediterráneas, integrista católico propio del siglo XIX y comportamientos cuarteleros, junto con la especial habilidad para la metamorfosis ideológica cuando los tiempos y aliados cambiaban, se reflejaron en la forma de ejercer la censura. En el caso de la literatura infantil ésta se aplicó en tres niveles: el estatal que procuraba evitar que determinados textos, o fragmentos considerados peligrosos, llegaran a los jóvenes lectores; la censura autónoma de la iglesia católica, que actuaba como guía, pero que en la práctica influía en los estamentos que controlaban a los jóvenes (docencia, bibliotecas, familia) y finalmente, a un nivel previo a la oficial, la autocensura de autores, traductores y editores, deseosos de evitar problemas con vigilante y poco amistoso aparato estatal.

El resultado de la investigación en los fondos del *AGA (Archivo General de la Administración)*, inmenso depósito documental donde se guardan todos los escritos, comentarios, textos etc. tratados por la censura durante su larga existencia, de 1939 a 1978 muestra las características de los censores, las estrategias de editores y traductores para conseguir que las obras seleccionadas pasaran los distintos controles.

**Palabras clave:** literatura infantil, censura, traducción.

**Abstract**

The peculiar ideological characteristics of the Franco régime, a pastiche of Fascist views of Mediterranean origin, diehard Catholicism of a nineteenth-century style and militaristic tendencies, together with its particular aptitude for tweaking its ideology when times or allies changed, were reflected in the way that censorship worked. In the case of children's literature, it operated at three levels: the State tried to prevent specific texts, or sections of them considered dangerous, from reaching young readers; there was independent censorship by the Catholic Church, which in theory merely provided guidelines, but in practice had great sway over those controlling young people (teachers, libraries, families); and finally, at a level prior to any official scrutiny, there was self-censorship by authors, translators and publishers, anxious to avoid problems with the ever-watchful and generally hostile state apparatus.

The results of searching through the exceptional *AGA* (General Administrative Archive), a huge deposit of documents and other materials handled by the censorship during its long span of existence from 1939 to 1978 show the characteristics of the censors, together with the strategies adopted by publishers and translators so as to ensure that the works they selected would get through the various checks.

**Key words:** children's literature, censorship, translation.



Children's literature (CL) is probably the area of literature in which activities related to censorship are to be found most continuously and systematically. This effect doubtless arises from the importance accorded to such materials by society, as it considers them to be a shaping factor in childhood and in adolescence. Hence, society "cleanses" those texts that do not fit the paedagogical or ethical and moral principles in force at a given moment in time. From this point of view, the people charged with this task are not acting as defenders of specific political attitudes but as sharers in the romantic idea that the printed word has power over the minds of the young (Fernández López, 2000:233). Thus, this sort of censoring (normally self-censorship by authors and in some

instances by publishers) has mostly been seen, not so much as an indication of intolerance, but rather as a positive intervention to safeguard young folk from manipulation. Hence, this is an area of literature in which traditionally there have been few shocks or surprises. Overlying this censorship based on didactic and moral principles that is permanently exercised over CL, during the Franco era in Spain there was also the censorship of a totalitarian régime of Fascist type. This was put into action when the agents of the régime interpreted a text as attacking the mythical values that sustained the political system. What they did was to eliminate or modify those parts of the text causing the problem or, in extreme cases, prohibit publication of the work. CL thus suffered a double censorship effect. The long persistence of this extreme right-wing political régime (continuing until the dictator died) gives study of the Francoist censorship a particular interest because of the unusual nature of the experience. In this case translations will be the point on which the study concentrates, since they allow a more objective methodology to be applied.

Under a totalitarian régime it is virtually impossible to find out what level of self-censorship authors have exercised over themselves, in the absence of any explicit statement from them. Likewise, it is not easy to discern what motivated a publisher to bring out a given work. Hence, the only field in which it is possible to detect acts of censorship, if there are any such, is that of external censoring, carried out by the guardians of the system. Greater depth of knowledge of the behaviour of censors can be attained when translations are studied. On the one hand, there is a text outside the system, which may have undergone censorship at its point of origin, but which is known in its entirety at the stage when it reaches the system being investigated (as the original or source text, ST). By means of a series of comparisons it is feasible to gain an awareness, not merely of the effects of official censorship on the translated text, but also of similar prior actions undertaken by the publisher. In this study only narrative works intended for adolescent readers have been considered, these being books of a certain length which constituted the core of translation of CL in Spain at the peak of the dictatorship. It is further limited to translations from English, these being the most numerous, since in the area of CL in twentieth-century Spain they amounted to between half and two-thirds of what was translated (Fernández López, 1996: 94).

So as to comprehend the strategies and actions of the Francoist censorship it is necessary for at least a summary description to be given of the power bases of the dictatorship and their changes over time. The Franco dictatorship emerged as a result of the Spanish Civil War of 1936 to 1939 in which the legal government of the Republic was supplanted by a putschist authoritarian régime under the control of one of the generals who had led the rebellion against the legitimate authorities, Francisco Franco. The pillars of his power stood on a foundation of collaboration between a Fascist organization (the Phalange), the Army itself and the Catholic Church.

The dictator skilfully mixed these three components in varying proportions, altering his régime from totalitarian Fascist in the early years of the dictatorship to authoritarian dictatorial in the 1950s and then towards its end turning it in the direction of a political movement linked to the clear economic achievements it had attained. His success is evident, since the dictatorship persisted throughout the whole of Franco's life, although, as often happens in such cases, it proved unable to survive after the dictator's death.

While the Army always had the rôle of essential supporter of the régime and was represented in all its governments, the Phalange only had any real protagonism in the first few years after the Civil War, up to 1943. This major part played by the Phalange aroused the suspicions of the Church and led to complaints by it, since it felt the system was tending dangerously towards Italian and German models. This worried it in the light of the very poor relations with Catholics of Nazi Germany. The fall of Mussolini in 1943 and the excessive powers which were being accumulated by the supporter of the Fascist option (Franco's brother-in-law, Serrano Suñer) triggered a change in the make-up of the organs of government in favour of the military and the Church. This, as far as censorship was concerned, meant that control over it fell into the hands of a die-hard Catholic, Gabriel Arias Salgado, who ran it almost continuously up to 1962. Franco never completely eliminated any one of the three pillars of his régime from any of his governments, but rather manipulated them from his habitual barrack-room stance, showing them clearly who was boss. For this reason, keeping in mind that the Army censorship functioned only during the Civil War itself, among the staff of censors there were to be found a mixture of people. Some had Phalangist sympathies, being more interested in the ideologi-

cal side of the régime and in protecting Spanish society from the pernicious influences of the Allied nations, along the lines of Italian Fascist ideology, while others were linked to fundamentalist Catholicism, being obsessed with questions of morals and anything related to education, which was practically a Church monopoly. The mythical ideal was created of eternal Spain, Christian and defender of Western values against an equally timeless enemy, Communism, in this case taking the shape of the Soviet régime<sup>1</sup>. Prior censorship, as a useful institution, was maintained officially until several years after the death of the dictator in 1975<sup>2</sup>. One really fortunate fact for those studying it is that a considerable number of case-papers<sup>3</sup> have survived, well catalogued, in the "Archivo General de la Administración", AGA, (or General Administrative Archive) in Alcalá de Henares, near Madrid. For this reason and in order to take advantage of the wealth of documents available, a research project was jointly drawn up by the University of Leon and the University of the Basque Country in Spain, under the terms of which several groups of researchers are working on an in-depth study of the effects of censorship on the translation of narrative texts, theatre and films (dubbed and subtitled) during the Franco dictatorship. One of the sections of this project covers censoring of prose texts in CL.

<sup>1</sup> To gain an idea of the obsession of the Franco hierarchy with the perils of Soviet Communism and the depths of intellectual absurdity that they reached, Abella reproduces a statement made by Arias Salgado in 1952 to the effect that Stalin travelled a great deal without any explanation being given of where he went. The Spanish régime, however, was aware of his destination. He went to the Republic of Azerbaijan and there in an abandoned oil-well the Devil appeared to him, emerging from the depths of the earth. Stalin then received the diabolical instructions on what had to be done in politics. He followed them to the letter, and this explained his temporary successes. (1996: 173). Similarly surrealist is the way that Little Red Riding Hood was transformed into Little Blue Riding Hood (Abella, 1978:28)

<sup>2</sup> During the 1960s there was a slight opening up by the Franco régime coinciding with an improvement in economic circumstances and the need to present a jovial face of the dictatorship to the outside world, since tourism was beginning to be the country's chief industry and a dictatorship was not the best letter of introduction. For this reason 1966 saw the promulgation of a Press Law that replaced the 1938 legislation, with the requirement for prior censor's approval being eliminated. In its actual application this was trickery, since the official censors had a free hand to prohibit *a posteriori*, withdraw publications from the market and impose sanctions on publishers whenever they saw fit, hence transferring the job of censorship to the publishers themselves. In the case of CL, the prior approval requisite was not dropped, which shows that the régime took special care over texts intended for children and young people.

<sup>3</sup> The censorship had powers over both news publications and all other types of printed materials, and likewise over radio broadcasts, theatre and the cinema, with films shown exclusively in dubbed versions

The most extreme and unrelenting censorship was applied to daily newspapers, and already in 1938, before the end of the Civil War in 1938, a Press Law was promulgated to guarantee control over them, being based on legislation in Mussolini's Italy (Gracia, 2004:74). This document served as the reference for censors up to the 1960s, not only for newspapers and magazines, but in general for all printed matter. In the case of CL there was total ambiguity: it was not until 1952 that an organization, the "Junta Asesora de Prensa Infantil" (or Children's Press Assessment Board), was created to take specific responsibility for examining works of CL (Cendán Pazos, 1986:54). Only in 1955 were regulations published to indicate the limits of what the regime would tolerate in this area<sup>4</sup>. Before that date, isolated guidelines were circulated, such as, for example, the memorandum from 1943 in which publishers were warned that their output should be rigorously edifying and educational (Cendán Pazos, 1986:52). On the basis of work done at the AGA it can be concluded that from the mid-1950s the actions of censorship for translated CL constituted just a bureaucratic hoop to jump through, without there being any significant proportion of prohibitions or modifications among the texts presented for prior censoring. The most interesting period for study thus comprises the first fifteen years (1940 to 1955), the harsh period of the Franco dictatorship.

A study was undertaken of 166 case-files from this period, selected from among those relating to works and authors of importance in the post-Civil-War publishing world. Of these, only 16 were affected by a complete ban on their being published or had major changes introduced into their text (normally with sections being cut out).

<sup>4</sup> The 1955 regulations classified books in accordance with whether they were intended for children or for adolescents and explicitly pointed out the need to classify them as for male or female young people. With respect to their contents, any items related to religion had to refrain from slights on the Catholic Church and the presentation of the rituals of other creeds that might cause confusion among young readers. In relation to morals, education and patriotic values, anything relating to sex should be avoided, even illustrations that might excite readers, as should praise for aggressiveness or revenge, the ridiculing of family values and the traditions of Spanish society, the use of a type of humour (irony) not appropriate for Spanish children, the inclusion of expressions influenced by foreign languages, and so forth. At least it constituted the first catalogue of the "boundaries" of the Franco régime's permissiveness

During the latter part of the Civil War and the early years of Francoism, as Abellán states, there was a strong desire to destroy whatever did not fit the ideology of the new state (1987:22). The suppression of controversial texts was in some ways similar to what was done by the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s, although it never reached the scale and meticulousness of the Germans' actions. In Germany CL was seen as a tool for education and propaganda and texts were either banned or changed to make them acceptable to the dictates of "National Socialist Realism", an aesthetic ideology rooted in racial attitudes (Kamenetsky, 1996:435).

Until 1942 CL did not seem to attract the attention of the Francoist censorship machinery which was in Phalangist hands and was more preoccupied with control of the press and the destruction of subversive material brought out during the Republican period. From 1943 onwards, after Franco's change of direction triggered by the negative developments for the Axis Powers in the European theatre of war, Arias Salgado replaced Serrano Suñer at the head of the censoring machinery. The new "Censorship Czar" was a representative of the most die-hard sector of the Catholic Church. The importance that control over youth had for the Church<sup>5</sup> caused CL to cease to be a secondary field of action. Spanish censorship shared with Italian its lack of coherence (in the Spanish case the outcome of the motley ideological origins of the censors and the scarcity of any clear guidelines). It also shared a defence to the bitter end of whatever was native against anything imported, and thence came its vigilance with regard to translations, seen as potential transmitters of strange views alien to the country's traditions. In both instances an attempt was made to defend traditional family values, stereotyped rôles for family members and the monopoly power of the Catholic Church to set up moral rules (Dunnnett, 2002:101). The Spanish Church grasped control of censorship both within the State apparatus and in the form of "*a posteriori*" censoring by publications from organizations linked with the Church, such as the critical catalogues issued by the "Gabinete de Lectura Santa Teresa" (or Saint Theresa Reading Office), a collection of critical opinions on CL books that had already been published. These not merely gave details of the plot and indications of the age group for which the

<sup>5</sup> In the 1940s, the Catholic Church controlled 73% of secondary education in Spain (Moradillo, 2003: 76).

book was most suitable, on occasion they advised against certain works which had already been passed by the official censors and so exercised a further level of censorship control aimed at parents, librarians and above all teachers. The influence of the Church reached such a point that its diocesan newsletters and some of its magazines, such as *Ecclesia*, were exempted from being submitted to the censors.

At times the real motives for denying permission to publish were camouflaged by citing purely technical reasons. During the 1940s the shortage of paper was such that it became common for publishers to set up an operation in Argentina and from there to export their publications back to Spain. Sometimes the refusal to allow importation issued by the censors gave as its justification the need to reduce imports to the minimum possible because of the country's precarious economic condition. In other cases publication of a work in Spain was not authorized on the grounds that the scarce stocks of paper available should be reserved for really interesting material.

When the censors started to look more zealously at works read by young people, publishers came up with a number of strategies to get round problems. One very widespread route was to republish classic adventure novels from before the beginning of the Civil War and, for even greater safety, from before the proclamation of the Republic, always assuming that they had not suffered any adverse criticism on the part of the Church (which had traditionally undertaken censorship activities by means of commentaries and critical opinions aimed at parents and educators). Within this category there were republishings of works by very well-known British authors such as Frederick Marryat, Thomas Mayne Reid or Charles J.L. Gilson. Many of the novels by the last-mentioned of these had come out in Spain in the 1920s in translations by Juan Mateos de Diego *Pbro*. The fact that this translator was a priest not only avoided difficulties with the censors for the republishings in the 1940s. It also had a positive effect on the comments made on them in the catalogues from the Gabinete de Lectura Santa Teresa, in which Gilson's books were recommended as being entertaining and suitable for young people.

The pivotal rôle of the Church explains why it was that, from 1943 onwards, there were reissues of a considerable number of works by Catholic

clergymen of various nationalities who from the late nineteenth century had been imitating the output of the Tract Societies. The two English-speaking authors of this sort of adventure tale with the most publications in Spain were the Jesuits Francis James Finn (1859-1928) and Henry Stanislaus Spalding (1865-1934). The first of these (author of *Tom Playfair*) specialized in his own version of *school stories*, a field that he knew well because he worked as a teacher. The second tackled a different type of narrative, Western novels, introducing into them moralizing elements of a Catholic bent. His best-known work is *The Cave by the Beech Fork* (1902). As might be expected, not only did they run into no problems from the censors, their case-papers include laudatory opinions.

Nevertheless, adolescents preferred other authors, like Arthur Conan Doyle (both the Sherlock Holmes stories and his series with Professor Challenger as protagonist), the series by Burroughs and the novels of Jack London. Irony and humour found their best representatives in the works of Mark Twain and above all in the "William" series by Richmal Crompton, this being a character who was a landmark for CL in Spain for decades. Of all these authors only London and Crompton were constantly under attack by the censors.

The two cases are of interest because they allow certain peculiarities of the Francoist censorship to be noted. In the case of Crompton, prior to 1942, authorization had been given without any difficulty for the importation of eight titles from the Argentinean branch of Molino. In contrast, of the ten applications made between 1942 and 1949, seven were rejected. In some instances the publisher did not even consider attempting to issue a given title. This was the case for *William the Dictator*, the explicit front cover of which, with William giving a Fascist salute, had already caused trouble when it was published in Great Britain in 1938. As for *Still William*, this book was brought out in Argentina in 1943 by Molino under the title *Guillermo el Organizador* [William the Organizer]. That same year permission was requested to import it into Spain, but was refused on the grounds that it was hardly suitable for Spanish children, as it described strange British customs and on the religious front only Protestant ministers appeared in the book. In 1949 Molino once again requested permission, in this instance to publish it in Spain, and a copy of the edition printed in Argentina was attached to the request. The censor examined the stories in depth

and altered some of them so that it was not practical simply to reprint the text issued in Argentina. The censor had transformed the "Bishop" into a "Government Minister" and the "Vicar" into a "Mayor". He had to twist the tale yet further, since a sermon by the Bishop on "Church History" was transmuted into a lecture given by the Minister on the "History of Ancient Rome", and so in turn "Saint Aidan" had to be transmogrified into the "Emperor Nero" and the "picture of the saint" into the "image of the Emperor". The Molino publishing house, unwilling to modify the work in such a way, gave up for the moment, but a good few years later, in 1961, applied for permission to publish *Guillermo y el Cerdo Premiado* [William and the Prize-Winning Pig], not indicating that it was the translation of *Still William*. This time round the text was accepted, with the censor recording a positive opinion that the stories were comic. This changed attitude probably was due to the fact that of the 14 stories in the original book only 10 appeared in the 1961 edition. This is one of the smallest volumes in the collection, as it runs to 200 page, rather than the around 300 of the Argentinean edition and all the rest of the books in the series). All of the stories that had been censored in 1949 were left out, the title was changed and the original text was not mentioned, so as to avoid possible comparisons. Publishers were "learning" how to behave by undertaking self-censorship.

The motive in the case of Jack London was different. Publication of several of his works (like *The Call of the Wild*, *Jerry of the Islands*, *Michael Brother of Jerry*) was prohibited on political grounds, as shown by files dating from between 1943 and 1951. The publisher that presented these books for censoring (Prometeo, based in Valencia) had been very active during the Republican era in that city and Fernando Valera, who had translated them before the end of the Civil War, was a radical Socialist Member of the Spanish Parliament and a Cabinet Minister in the Republican Government in exile. Some years later these works were published without any difficulty from the censors, when other publishers (and translators) were involved in the applications.

In spite of the insistence on preference for national themes as opposed to foreign, adolescent readers liked escapist texts based on well-known formats from films better. The cinema was a cheap entertainment and American adventure, detective and Western films were favourites. Readers therefore identified

good adventure stories with English-speaking authors. In this way a market in pseudo-translations arose (Rabadán 2000: 266). Translators of adventure tales frequently also worked as writers of adventure stories for one and the same publisher. The advantages for the publisher were obvious: pseudo-translations were less expensive, and the translator was perfectly acquainted with the rules of the game. In their turn, the censors were well aware that these tales were not translations. The result was minimal impact on works of this sort submitted to the censors, as may be deduced from study of the AGA records (Merino & Rabadán, 2002: 142). The use of pseudonyms was habitual, although in some cases a simple adjustment to the real name was enough. For example, Guillermo López Hipkiss, who signed his translations with his full name, also wrote adventure novels using the version G. L. Hipkiss, so that readers took the stories to be translations of originals in English. One extreme instance was *Ojos Verdes*, a novel by Ángel A. Mingote who signed as author with the pseudonym "Anthony Mask", while his genuine name appeared as that of the translator.

To sum up, despite the régime's efforts, it did not prove possible to get rid of the prestige of "the foreign" nor was the road taken of naturalization of texts through a politically acceptable rewriting by native authors, as happened in the USSR according to Nikolajeva (1996: 382).

From the 1960s onwards, no files were found in the search through the AGA records which had any prohibition on the publication of translated narrative works for young people. It is likely that several overlapping circumstances led to this. On the one hand, the State censors were less rigorous, since they were supposed to contribute to showing a "more human face" for a dictatorship that wished to get Spain into international organizations. On the other, there was the conversion of the censors into routine-bound bureaucrats, often poorly paid, who had little enthusiasm for their work. However, it was also an outcome of the success of the policy of indoctrination adopted by the censorship relative to CL over the whole course of the dictatorship. Owing to specific legislation and the daily behaviour pattern of the censorship, publishers and translators came to grasp what the limits of permissiveness were for a system well aware of how to survive. Thus, they did not attempt to publish in Spain those texts which would have had no chance of gaining approval. In others with specific passages that posed a problem, they acted as self-censors, normally by get-

ting rid of the critical parts. This was the sad effect that the Franco régime had in the area of translations of CL. It was only in the last years of Francoism, when it became evident it was unviable to perpetuate the system, that publishers' catalogues of translated CL in Spain started to undergo renovation.

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