EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

TRANSLATING UNDER DICTATORSHIPS: THE END OF HISTORY OR NEVER-ENDING STORY?

Dictatorships have offered rich pickings for translation scholars since the early years of our discipline. Whether understood in the strict autocratic sense of absolute government by a strongman leader, or more broadly to include repressive regimes in general, they offer ample opportunities to study the complex textual transits that occur when closed literary and political systems attempt to negotiate the admission of cultural products from outside. Indeed, it would not be unfair to suggest that translation scholars rather like dictatorships. They dignify our field by providing clear-cut examples of how translations innovate stale repertoires (cf. Evan-Zohar, 1990), and of their power to challenge and subvert. Moreover, in what is often portrayed as a Manichean confrontation between the forces of darkness and light, translators are seen as the heralds of freedom and democratic values, heroically battling to ensure that the conduits of information remain open, sometimes risking their livelihoods, or even their lives, in the process.

Censorship, which takes a particularly overt and crude form in dictatorships, is naturally a major player in translation scholars' analyses. Given the power of literature and other cultural products to influence people's minds, one of the first actions of most totalitarian governments upon coming into power is usually to set up a body charged with overseeing the cultural health of the nation. The role of these institutions, and the foot soldiers that serve them, is to "protect" their citizens from ideas that might jeopardise their moral well-being and/or threaten the system as a whole (Merkle, 2010, p. 19) by, amongst other things, vetting foreign works that seek to enter. This may occur before or after publication, or both. The first category (pre- or prior censorship) includes what Wolf (2002), following Stephen Greenblatt, has called "cultural blockage" (i.e. the exclusion of a work at the point of entry), as well as preventive intervention in the text in order to control the form in which it reaches the public. In some analyses, it may also include self-censorship by the publisher or translator in a bid to get the piece accepted at any cost. As for post- or punitive censorship, this may involve the seizure or outright banning of the work, or further intervention in the text in order to bring it into line with regime values (Merkle, 2002, 2010).

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been a plethora of studies into the subject of translation and censorship. Book-length anthologies include Billiani's *Modes of censorship and translation: national contexts and diverse media* ([2007] 2014b), with case studies from Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain, Nazi Germany, Communist East Germany and the Greek military junta of 1967-1974, alongside others from more liberal democratic regimes; Ní Chuilleanáin, Ó Cuilleanáin and Parris' *Translation and censorship: patterns of communication and interference* (2009), which has a broader remit, though also includes some studies of dictatorships; and Rundle and Sturge's *Translation and fascism* ([2010] 2014), reviewed here by **Bárbara Oliveira**, which focuses on the authoritarian regimes of

20th century Italy, Germany, Spain and Portugal. There have also been collections and monographs devoted to translation and censorship in particular regimes, such as Portugal's Estado Novo (e.g. Cabrera, 2013; Seruya, 2018 [reviewed here by **Marco Neves**]; Seruya, Moniz and Assis Rosa, 2009), Franco's Spain (Bandín Fuertes, 2007; Lobejón Santos, 2013); Fascist Italy (Ferme, 2002; Rundle, 2010), Nazi Germany (Sturge, 2004), the Soviet Union (Sherry, 2015), and China (Yu, 2015), as well as many shorter studies scattered through all the main Translation Studies journals.

To a large extent, the articles included in this special issue of *Translation Matters* continue this trend. The case studies cluster around the fascist and para-fascist dictatorships of the 20th century (Portugal, Italy, Spain, Brazil, Nazi-occupied Norway) and largely focus on a particular work or genre, or on the agents or organs involved. Most are the fruit of archival and/or genetic research, involving the patient analysis of censors' reports and textual versions in order to establish timelines and patterns of intervention. Quite a number of them describe the delicate dance that often took place between institutionalised censorship and the self-censorship of translators or publishers, in some cases picking up on arguments that censorship offers translators opportunities to exercise their agency (Samareh, 2018; Tymoczko, 2009), that it engenders creativity (Sariz, 2017) or succeeds in "producing new textual spaces and generating new sites of meaning" (Billiani, [2007] 2014a, p. 3).

As befits a journal published in Portugal, the issue opens with a survey of translation under the Estado Novo by **Teresa Seruya**, the doyenne of the field. After a brief discussion about the extent to which this regime can properly be called "fascist", Seruya looks at the dominant ideas about translation circulating in Portugal at this time, concluding that the attitude depended largely upon the positioning of the agent concerned: that is to say, while the interested parties (publishers, booksellers, writers or critics) often saw translation as a way of compensating for a lack of home-grown talent or of internationalising literary life in Portugal, the general press, like the authorities, tended to view it more negatively as a form of contamination or social hazard. Using broad strokes, though dotted through with many fascinating concrete examples, Seruya traces the influence upon translation of the various political developments that marked the history of the Estado Novo, from the establishment of the book censorship board in 1934 through the "iron years" of 1933-1949 (when the state's cultural policy was controlled by António Ferro), the "lead years" of apparent political calm (1950-1958) to the start of the colonial wars in the 1960s, looking for patterns in the kinds of works translated into Portuguese and the censorial practices. Unusually for a dictatorship study, she also examines the translation of Portuguese cultural material into other European languages for propaganda purposes. Given the depth and breadth of the research informing this article, it is not surprising that Seruya's final conclusions are far from simplistic, suggesting the coexistence of contradictory attitudes and practices as regards translation in this period of Portugal's history.

The next article, by **Hélder Nascimento Lopes**, remains in Portugal but switches the lens. Instead of a panoramic view, we now home in on a particular translator, "jack of all

trades" Sérgio Guimarães, and his version of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a hot tin roof*, commissioned in 1959 by the impresario Vasco Morgado for performance at the Monumental Theatre. Probably because of their broader appeal, theatre plays seem to have been subject to more intense scrutiny than the book translations covered by Seruya in her article, involving not only the translated script but also the staged performance. Lopes' analysis of the censorship documents stored in the national archives at Torre do Tombo reveals a complex series of interventions, not only by the official censors but also by Guimarães himself, who apparently attempted to tone down some of the more risqué passages before the translation was even submitted for assessment. This act of self-censorship – presumably designed to ensure that the play would be approved and staged, so it could go on to generate revenue for the company he worked with – is interpreted by Lopes as a way of taking ownership of the text, thereby contributing to the ongoing debate about translator agency in censorship situations (Billiani, [2007] 2014b; Samareh, 2018; Tymoczko, 2009).

The next article moves from the theatre to the cinema, with a study by **Katrin Pieper** of two German films in Portuguese translation. During the Estado Novo, Pieper tells us, many films were banned outright, while others were mutilated by the cutting of scenes and suppression and manipulation of subtitles. Again with recourse to the national archives at the Torre do Tombo, Pieper studies the various censors' reports for the two films in question (one selected because of its sexual content and the other because it contains scenes of violence) in an attempt to gauge the extent to which each of them was modified prior to release. As well as recording the complex negotiations between the distributors and the censors, and their respective interventions in the two films, Pieper's aim is also to create a methodology for measuring the degree of "censoredness" undergone by an individual work in order to (eventually) enable comparisons between much larger corpora of cinematographic material.

The next study concerns a different genre – poetry, more specifically, the poetry of the French Resistance and Spanish Civil War – translated into Portuguese and Italian during those countries' respective dictatorships. **Serena Cacchioli**'s objective is to compare the reception of this poetry in the two regimes and to assess the extent to which it was being used as a critical and subversive tool. In both countries, she tells us, literary periodicals were a privileged site of debate, where it was possible to avoid censorship and communicate messages that fell outside the constraints of the "official culture". However, the presence of distinct literary subsystems (hermeticism in Italy and neo-realism in Portugal) meant that different filters were applied in the importation of works from abroad. This classic descriptivist study is concerned not so much with the individual translated texts as with the macro level of the receptor cultures' literary systems, looking at the significance of the poets and themes selected for translation, the mediation of particular agents (who were often high-profile literary figures) and the role of certain independent literary magazines in filtering and diffusing this potentially subversive material.

Anna Maria Cipriani's article stays with Mussolini's Italy but the attention shifts to the reception of a modernist novel, Virginia Woolf's *To the lighthouse*. The publication in 1934 of an Italian translation of this work was surprising, given the experimental nature of Woolf's prose. In fact, Cipriani identifies three distinct kinds of censorship in operation in Italy at the time, each of which might have been expected to view Woolf's writing with suspicion: the political censorship introduced by the fascist regime to control the circulation of foreign ideas and literary forms; the Catholic Church's condemnation of modernism; and the de facto intellectual or cultural dictatorship represented by the idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce (1902), with his advocation of classicism and the art of *bello scrivere* ["beautiful writing"] according to traditional aesthetic principles. Hence, this first Italian translation of Woolf's novel by Giulia Celenza was obliged to carefully navigate these various constraints and forge a compromise between the demands of the foreign text and the need for target culture acceptance. Cipriani first discusses the role of (periodical and book) publishers in preparing the terrain for such potentially controversial works, before going on to analyse specific extracts from Celenza's translation, showing how it effectively mutes Woolf's experimentalism by replacing her polyphonic stream-of-consciousness style with a single narrative voice.

Cristina Gómez Castro's article is also concerned with a novel, but this time with a racy American bestseller – Harold Robbins' *The Betsy* – and its fortunes in Franco's Spain. The history of the Spanish translation of this work is curious. The book first entered Spain in 1973 in the form of a translation that had been done in Argentina, but it was denied publication because of its overtly sexual content. However, just three months later, it was resubmitted to the censors and was authorised without any problem. This article studies the censorship documents and translated versions in order to try to understand how, in the space of three months, the novel passed from being a danger to the moral order to being completely acceptable. Surprisingly, Gómez Castro discovers that the approved version is in fact the same translation, redacted and rebranded under a new name.

The next article, by **Sergio Lobejón Santos**, stays in Franco's Spain but returns to the genre of poetry, more specifically, English-language poetry translated into Spanish in the post-Civil War period (from 1939 through to 1983, which was when censorship officially ended). His study of censorship files and bibliographic indices reveals that poetry suffered less repression than other literary genres, not only because of its limited circulation and educated readership, but also because the censors, who were often not very highly educated themselves (the reports, Lobejón Santos observes, were typically very badly written and full of basic language errors) may have been unable to understand sophisticated allusions. Hence, the vast majority of works passed muster without any cuts or changes being required. However, Lobejón Santos does mention some interesting cases in which censorship mechanisms operated more overtly: a 1942 bilingual version of Shakespeare's Sonnets that was banned in the first instance, though later authorised in a limited edition aimed at academics; a 1946 edition of the *Canterbury tales*, which was "tolerated" (i.e. published), but could not be publicly displayed in bookshops; a 1969

translation of James Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach*, which was modified by the publisher in order to circumvent the censor's order to remove two offending poems; and anthologies of Beat poetry produced in the 1970s, which underwent cuts for obscenity and communism. Above all, what this study reveals is the tension between the need for sociocultural renewal, experienced particularly in the latter part of the Franco era, and the limitations on speech enforced by official censorship apparatus.

John Milton's article, for its part, focuses on the first-ever Brazilian book club, the *Clube do Livro* (1942-1989), and its relationship with the military dictatorship in power from 1964 to 1985. A massive translator and distributor of translated fiction, with print runs of up to 50,000 at its peak, the club did not seek to challenge the military regime, but instead took it upon itself to ensure that its publications were in line with the dominant (anti-communist, Catholic and moralistic) discourses. After a brief discussion of the development of repressive measures in Brazil during these years, Milton examines some of the self-censorship strategies used by the club, uncovering examples of excision, addition and, particularly, reframing. He discusses translations of Rabelais' *Gargantua* (1961), Dickens' *Hard times* (1969) and others, before homing in on two curious works from Romania, whose publication rather complicates any simplistic preconceptions regarding the ideological leanings of the book club and its founder-director, Mario Graciotti.

Ida Hove Solberg's article takes a slightly different angle to the preceding ones in that it is interested not in the repressive mechanisms affecting the admission of foreign works, but in the way that translated literature was used as soft propaganda in Nazi-occupied Norway (1940-1945). Having combed the archival material for traces of correspondence between the Reich Commissariat (body in charge of propaganda), the Literature and Library Office (LLO) of the Ministry of Culture and Public Education, and certain publishers, she presents four cases in which the publication of a particular work (a romantic novella, a children's story, an autobiography of a German poet and Jack London's account of living as a down-and-out, *People of the abyss*) was incentivised because of its potential propaganda value. The correspondence between these entities is revealed not to be a "one-way street", with some publishers, and the LLO, actively working to align themselves with the Commissariat. Solberg ends her piece by speculating that the webs of communication in the field of translated literature in occupied Norway may ultimately prove to be much wider and more complex than her material was able to show, possibly even stretching back to Germany itself.

The real outlier of this issue – and arguably the one that most productively complicates the debate about translation and dictatorships – is the final article by **Sabeur Mdallel** about children's literature in the Arab world. This stands out from the rest in terms of its historical framework (it is the only article that discusses autocratic regimes that are largely still in power), geographic span (the only one concerned with non-"Western"[1]

[1] The "West" is of course a problematic concept, having been developed in large part to create an artificial boundary with its Other that is the East (Said, [1978] 1995, p. 3). However, even prior to the "neo-orientalism" provoked by the attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 and the rise of Islamic

regimes) and finally because of its genre (fiction aimed at children rather than adults). All three dimensions disturb the neat categories that have been traced by much of the work that has been done up to now in this field. This is not because of the case study, which offers the most blatant example of censorial manipulation that we have had throughout this issue (a translation of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* distorted to such an extent that the location, plot, character and even the basic narrative have been changed) but because of the challenges it raises to the liberal democratic narrative.[2] It reminds us that many Middle Eastern regimes have remained spectacularly immune to the attractions of liberal democracy as a system and have therefore failed to relegate dictatorships to history as Francis Fukuyama famously predicted in 1991.[3] With its choice of genre, it also reminds us that censorship is by no means the prerogative of repressive regimes.[4] As Merkle (2010, p. 19) states, children's literature is censored in liberal democracies too, "positively connoted through the choice of the noun 'adaptation'" and perceived as being "in the best interests of the ideological positioning of a larger socio-political entity". As with the certification of mainstream films, discussed in detail by Gambier (2002), the implication is that censorship in dictatorships differs from its liberal democratic counterpart only by a matter of degree rather than fundamental substance. Indeed, for Merkle (2002, p. 10), "the covert censorship at work in the free democracies of late modernity (…), though at times difficult to detect, is (…) at times insidiously pervasive".[5]

Let us extend the debate a little further by considering approaches to censorship and translation that have attempted to get beyond the clear-cut scenarios of the dictatorship studies. Some of the translation scholars quoted here (e.g. Billiani, [2007] 2014a; Merkel, 2002; Samareh, 2018; Wolf, 2002) discuss censorship in terms raised by critical theorists such as Foucault, Marcuse and, especially, Bourdieu (1982), for whom it is structural or constitutive, arising inevitably from the social field and imposed upon all producers of symbolic goods. Understood in this sense, they point out, censorship is not so different

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fundamentalism, it was frequently used as a heuristic category to refer to liberal democratic regimes organised in accordance with Enlightenment values (cf. Jansen, 1991; Merkle, 2002, p. 10).

[2] Jansen (1991, p. 4) describes this narrative thus: "Censorship is a devil term. It refers 'back to' a Dark Age in Western history. It refers 'down to' reactionary elements: un-Enlightened or foreign elements which threaten to reverse the tide of progress in Liberal societies. In short, Enlightenment discourse views censorship as something others do: a regressive practice of un-Enlightened (non-Liberal) societies".

[3] Fukuyama (1992, p. xiii), writing shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, argued that "the most remarkable development of the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the revelation of enormous weaknesses at the core of the world's seemingly strong dictatorships". For him, this meant that "liberal democracy remains the only coherent political aspiration that spans different regions and cultures around the globe", thereby constituting the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government" (p. xi).

[4] Some of the authors in this issue also make this point. Cipriani and Lopes mention the repression of homosexual literature in 1920s England and 1950s America respectively, while Mdallel refers to the American censorship of references to the previous regime in Iraqi children's books following the toppling of Saddam Hussein.

[5] See Jansen (1991) for a book-length development of this argument.

from the "constraints" or "norms" assumed by early descriptive translation theorists such as Lefevere (1992) or Toury (1995).[6]

Others (e.g. Woods, 2012) have evoked the concept of *market censorship*, according to which "those who control the market sphere of producing and distributing information determine, prior to publication, what products (such as books, magazines, newspapers, television programmes, computer software) will be mass produced and thus, which opinions officially gain entry to the 'marketplace of opinions'" (Keane, 1998, p. 90). This perspective is developed most fully by Jansen (2010, pp. 13-14), who critiques the air of objectivity and inevitability accruing to it:

> Market censorship points to practices that routinely filter or restrict the production and distribution of selected ideas, perspectives, genres or cultural forms within mainstream media of communication based upon their anticipated profits and/or support for corporate values and consumerism. Such practices are reified, naturalized and integrated into the organizational structures and routine practices of media organizations and re-presented to the public as outcomes of consumer choices within a rational market system rather than as the result of calculated managerial responses to profit imperatives. Over time, these practices have become objectified, understood as "just the way things are" or "how things work".[7]

Jansen's basic argument is taken up by McNaught (2013), who points out that, in a liberal democracy, market values govern not only the kind of cultural material that gets published but also the kind of ideas that get aired. This *free-market censorship* rests on the assumption, enshrined in the US First Amendment, that "any discourse should be allowed, but that incorrect, obscene or hateful speech will be sanctioned in the 'marketplace of ideas'" (McNaught, 2013, § 11).[8] Yet, the turning-off of the TV or withdrawing of advertising revenue has proved to be a very dull weapon against hate speech, he argues, since much of the offensive language heard on talk shows is actually supported by advertisers promoting products or services that conform to the demographic that watches or listens to them. This is the "shadow of free-market theory", which places no limits on offensive discourse "as long as it is commercially viable" (§16).

McNaught was writing in 2013, three years before the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. On the eve of the elections that will determine whether Trump gets to serve a second term in office, the debate has acquired a new urgency. Many early studies of translation under dictatorships were imbued with a sense of the past: the "end of history" as Fukuyama (1992) called it – the sense that liberal democracies had won

[6] Tymoczko (2009, p. 38) makes this equation particularly forcefully. However, it is not uncontroversial. See, for example, Brunette's 2002 article "Normes et censure: ne pas confondre" for the counterargument.

[7] Jansen (2010, p. 17) goes on to list some of the noxious effects of this kind of censorship. They include the subordination of aesthetic or spiritual values to commercial values, the "dumbing down" of public discourse, the skewing of public priorities and values through the privileging of exploitive forms of sensationalism, and the subordination of politics to economic and corporate interests (p. 24).

[8] "If one hears racist or defamatory remarks on TV, one can turn it off and/or complain to the station. If enough people do so, this can put pressure on the station to tell the commentator to tone down his rhetoric and even get him fired" (McNaught, 2013, § 15).

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out and that all the nasty stuff was behind us. But dictatorships are threatening to return, often emerging out of the very liberal democracies that were supposed to supersede them. Just thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, new walls – physical and symbolic – are going up around the world to "protect" supposedly democratic nations from dangerous foreign influences. Strongman leaders in Russia, Turkey and the Philippines have begun altering their countries' constitutions in order to centralise their power and extend their terms of office. Democracies like Hungary and Poland are enacting repressive policies designed to curb the freedoms of minorities and/or political opponents. Even the US, that bastion of liberal democratic values, has been flirting so dangerously with authoritarian ideas that fears have been voiced as to whether President Trump, having lost the election, will actually concede defeat and vacate the White House.

Faced with these scenarios, the debate about censorship in our (for now still) liberal democracies becomes truly pressing. Should anti-liberal values be suppressed on the grounds that extremist ideas, if allowed to circulate, will flourish and spread? Or was it the culture of political correctness or "woke" – itself a kind of censorship – that gave rise to the backlash in the first place?

In this knotty ethical issue, translators continue to play a vital role, not as passive conduits of someone else's voice and opinion, but as agents who mould texts in order to sanitise, subvert, enable or frame ideas transiting between linguacultures. Back in the early days of Descriptive Translation Studies, as we have seen, Lefevere (1992) and Toury (1995) discussed these issues in terms of the "constraints" or "norms" operating on the translator in any society or culture. But they have also been broached in discussions about translator ethics, not in the sense of the deontologies of the translation providers with their emphasis on source-text fidelity and client loyalty, but rather in a new much broader sense of social responsibility (e.g. Baker and Maier, 2011; Drugan and Tipton, 2017). Anthony Pym shows this particularly clearly in his 2012 book *On translation ethics: principles for mediating between cultures*, when he asks, at the beginning of Chapter 2, whether the messenger should be punished for the messages he carries. Comparing two controversial cases that go to the heart of Western culture (the case of Günter Deckert, who in 1991 translated an inflammatory speech by an American Holocaust denier and was defended in court as being a "mere translator", even though he was a self-professed neo-Nazi; and the case of the translators of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic verses*, condemned to death by the fatwah of Ayatollah Khomeini on the understanding that translators, like authors, are responsible for their words), Pym (2012, pp. 37, 57-60) illuminates the paradox at the heart of Western liberal thinking. While we wish to see the Nazi-disguised-as-a-translator held responsible for the hate he spreads, it is more difficult for us to blame Rushdie's translators, although his words were understood to be very insulting to followers of Islam. This "Gordian Knot", according to which "freedom of expression is achieved through intolerance of the intoler-

ant" (Jansen, 2010, p. 14), is perhaps the fundamental weakness of liberal democracies, producing a raft of inconsistencies[9] which extremists are beginning to exploit.

I would like to end with a few words about the epigraph to this special issue of *Translation Matters*, which condenses much of this reflection into a few lines. Nuno Júdice's poem "Sobreinterpretação" ("Overinterpretation"), translated here by David Swartz, is concerned with the human propensity for symbol-making. This is the voice of a mature man who has observed the cycles of history – the blooming and wilting of ideologies, the come-and-go of dictatorships and revolutions, the endless tussle over meaning(s) that forms such a large part of human interaction. Though at one point, we think we catch a glimpse of the poet's flag-wielding younger self – idealistic, impassioned, full of hope that the world can be made a better place – this voice seems weary, ready to retreat into a quasi-monastic silence where poppies are just poppies, existing in and for themselves alone.

Why has Júdice chosen poppies as the symbol of all that is symbolic (for there is surely an oxymoron at the heart of the poem that begs this question)? Was it just the colour that attracted him, with its connotations of socialism, passion, blood? Or does the flower have deeper associations with Portuguese revolutionary culture that only the profoundly embedded will recognise? As for those new poppies mentioned in the penultimate stanza: it is tempting to read into it a reference to the new left-wing political party Livre, which has adopted the poppy as its symbol… or might this be a classic case of overinterpretation?

To some extent, Swartz's English translation enacts the very semantic slippage that Júdice is critiquing. Few British or American readers will have the background knowledge to associate the poppy with revolution, let alone with the emergence of a new liberal left in Portugal. Instead, they will recall the First World War and the remembrance celebrations that occur on Armistice Day in November every year; or they may think of opium and the heady associations that follow in its wake. Symbols, as Júdice is suggesting, do not travel well, nor do they survive the passing of time.

If we could indeed get beneath the layers of interpretation that human sign systems impose upon the world in order to experience the thing-in-itself in all its pristine neutrality (and it is by no means certain that this is doable, except perhaps with eastern meditative techniques honed through years of practice), the whole vortex of interpretation and counter-interpretation, revolution and reaction, would gradually swing to a halt. Such a place, if it is possible at all to reach, would be very peaceful. But it would offer no refuge for translators. As the Babel myth expresses so well, translators – and by extension, those of us who harvest the fruits of their labour – are creatures of the fallen world.

Karen Bennett

[9] Jansen (2010, p. 15) points out that "ambiguity is (…) built into political covenants that enfranchise freedom of expression" and that "the great theorists of liberty, who crafted the philosophical grounds that weigh so heavily against ecclesiastical and state censorships and in favour of free expression, added qualifying clauses to their claims".

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