

## HAROLD ROBBINS' *THE BETSY* AND ITS SPANISH TRANSLATION UNDER DICTATORSHIP: A RACE AGAINST CENSORSHIP

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**ABSTRACT:** Harold Robbins was one of the most prolific bestselling writers in the United States. He published *The Betsy* in 1971 and the story quickly became a bestseller. The history of this novel within the official book control system in Spain was not an uncomplicated one: the first time the censors read it, it was in the form of a translation into Spanish that had originated in Argentina. This translation, entitled *Betsy*, was deemed inadmissible by the censors, who denied its publication. However, publishers would sometimes resubmit the same book under another title or in another translation to get it published. This was the case with *The Betsy*, which was examined a second time by the censors and hence authorized. The story of this race against censorship is an interesting case study to understand how, in the space of three months, the book went from dangerous and reprehensible to morally acceptable.

**KEYWORDS:** Translation, Censorship, Dictatorship, Bestsellers

### 1. Introduction

Harold Robbins (1916-1997) was one of the most prolific bestselling writers in the United States, especially during the seventies. His novels had all the ingredients that readers love in this kind of publication: sex, money, power and violence. Thanks to them, he became famous and his works, not without controversy, circulated all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

He published *The Betsy* in 1971,<sup>2</sup> having already achieved international success with novels such as *Never love a stranger* (1948) and *The inheritors* (1969). The plot of *The Betsy* focuses on the family saga of the Hardemans, owners of Bethlehem Motors, and the family patriarch's desire to build a new car model to be named "Betsy", after his granddaughter (Robbins, 1971). Among the family members there are conflicts, love affairs, ambitions and betrayals, things that Robbins' regular readers were already used to. This is clear from the review of the novel that *The New York Times* (NYT) published on December 19, 1971, which reads: "Intra-family conflict! Corporate feuding to the near death! Exhaust freaks! (...) All right, you Harold Robbins fans? Nuff said?". Even though the comments it received were not always favorable<sup>3</sup> ("Ol' Harold trades in the jet set for a brand new model on the auto-biz; same sexual *chugalug*, though" (NYT, October 8, 1972), the novel spent 21 weeks on *The New York Times*' bestseller list (see NYT's "Best seller list" of December 26, 1971 or the

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<sup>1</sup> Robbins published more than 20 books, which were translated into 32 languages and sold over 750 million copies (Liukkonen, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> The novel has a sequel entitled *The Stallion*, written by Robbins in 1996, which is beyond the scope of this study since it was not translated under censorship.

<sup>3</sup> The book's reviews published in North American newspapers and magazines include: *Kirkus Reviews*, September 15, 1971, p. 1038; *Publishers' Weekly*, September 27, 1971, p. 65; *Library Journal*, December 1, 1971, p. 4031; *Time*, December 13, 1971, p. E7; *Best Sellers*, December 15, 1971, p. 427; *The New York Times Book Review*, December 19, 1971, p. 20; *Books & Bookman*, February 1972, p. 66; *Publishers' Weekly*, May 22, 1972, p. 52; *Book World*, July 9, 1972, p. 7.

“Pocket Books Best Seller list” of July 26, 1972), also inspiring a film of the same name starring Laurence Olivier, Tommy Lee Jones and Robert Duvall, among others, in a kind of transfer which is usually very common in mass literature: “*The Betsy*, a novel by Harold Robbins about the four-year planning, development and manufacture of a new model of an automobile (...) will be filmed by Warner Bros and Cinema Video Communications next year” (*NYT*, July 13, 1971). The book had not been received with praise, and the film did not receive favourable reviews either. As Janet Maslin commented, “without much of a plot, *The Betsy* often sags, and a movie this frivolous has no business being dull” (*NYT*, February 10, 1978).

Regarding the publication of *The Betsy* in Spain, the history of this novel within the official book control system was not an easy one, as we are about to confirm.

## **2. *The Betsy* in Spain under dictatorship: an intricate case**

When Robbins' book arrived in Spain in 1973 through a translation entitled *Betsy*, undertaken a year earlier in Argentina by Raquel Albornoz (Robbins, 1972), it had to pass through the official control system that had been established by Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975 and beyond) in order to regulate printed material entering the country and the publication of “pernicious content”. This system of regulation was launched with the Press Law of 1938,<sup>4</sup> after which all books had to be submitted to the scrutiny of the censors prior to publication. The outcome of the inspection would vary, depending on the material's level of offensiveness, but the verdicts of “authorized”, “authorized with certain restrictions” or “rejected” were the most common ones. After 1966, and with a different minister in charge, a new Press Law<sup>5</sup> was released, regulating the control of books in a slightly different way. With the new law, prior permission to publish was no longer a compulsory requirement, and control was based mainly on two procedures: “prior consultation” or “advance censorship”, which were similar to prior permission but voluntary and which could result in a positive or negative report about the book under review; and the legal deposit (*depósito*) of the printed work in the aforementioned Ministry, without the need for a censor's judgement. All publishers, however, regardless of whether they had submitted their books for prior consultation or not, were required to deposit all titles with the censors prior to distribution. This could mean confiscation of the book by the authorities if, once on the market, its distribution had been prohibited. Thus, although the legal deposit system granted permission for book production to go ahead without the regime's direct supervision, it could result in significant economic losses for publishers, making the business of publishing books much riskier than it had been before.

While “legal deposit” and “prior consultation” were designed to expedite the distribution of printed material, another meaningful change in the law was the definition of the response of *silencio administrativo* or “official silence”. This formula was used by censors when they had objections to the content of a work but still saw benefits in

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<sup>4</sup> Ley de Prensa, April 22, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> Ley de Prensa e Imprenta, March 18, 1966.

authorizing its publication. By remaining officially silent, the authorities did not explicitly approve of a given book nor support its moral content; they simply abstained from blocking its commercial distribution.

Today, when researching the topic of censorship, researchers can have access to the files issued during the Francoist dictatorship in the Official Archive called Archivo General de la Administración (AGA), located in Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain. A search for *The Betsy* in the database yields the following data (Table 1):<sup>6</sup>

Title	Author	File number	Publishing house	Entry date	Exit date
Betsy	Robbins, Harold	1349-73	Luis de Caralt	06/02/1973	24/02/1973
C de T. <sup>7</sup> Familia la. El ejecutivo	Robbins, Harold	5514-73	Caralt	05/05/1973	27/04/1974
ejecutivos, Los	Robbins, Harold	1778-77	Luis de Caralt	08/02/1977	09/02/1977
ejecutivos, los. 2 ed. Col buc <sup>8</sup>	Robbins, Harold	2391-77	Luis de Caralt	21/02/1977	22/02/1977
ejecutivos, los. 3 ed. c buc	Robbins, Harold	2489-78	Luis de Caralt	02/03/1978	03/03/1978
ejecutivos, los. 7 edic colec gigante	Robbins, <sup>9</sup> Harold	2760-78	Caralt	08/03/1978	09/03/1978
ejecutivos los. 4 edic. colec buc	Robbins, Harold	4066-79	Caralt	18/04/1979	19/04/1979
Los ejecutivos. 5 edc. col buc	Robbins, Harold	926-80	Caralt	22/01/1980	07/02/1980
ejecutivos, los. 14 edc. Col gigante	Robbins, Harold	11783-80	Luis de Caralt	18/11/1980	19/11/1980
ejecutivos, los. 14 edic. col buc	Robbins, Harold	2438-81	Luis de Caralt Editor S A	06/03/1981	09/03/1981
ejecutivos, los. 15 edc. Col buc	Robbins, Harold	309-82	Luis de Caralt S A	13/01/1982	14/01/1982

Table 1. Censorship files for *Betsy/Los ejecutivos* in the AGA.

The first censorship file that can be found of the book, file number 1349-73, dates from February 1973. It refers to the publishing house Luis de Caralt, which submitted Albornoz's translation, entitled *Betsy*, for voluntary inspection with the intention of getting approval and subsequently publishing the book. After the censors had read the work, they issued the following report:<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> A search for results containing "Betsy" in the title yields only the first file. It is only by consulting the records for "Robbins" that the rest of the files appear. Inspection of files and of their content confirms that they concern the same book, though presented with a different title.

<sup>7</sup> The note "C de T" refers to "Change of Title", explained later in this section.

<sup>8</sup> The initials "buc" indicate the name of the collection in which the book was published, entitled "Biblioteca Universal Caralt". This was the collection that included more re-editions of the novel.

<sup>9</sup> The table reproduces literally the content found in the AGA and thus sometimes includes spelling mistakes.

<sup>10</sup> The version in English offered here is the translation of the Spanish source text, which goes as follows (the grammar and spelling mistakes included were all present in the original report and, as such, are reproduced here): "Tema: Puede decirse que es la historia de una familia americana – productores de coches – a través de tres generaciones, apareando desde sus primeras páginas el personaje central fundador de la dimastía:

C.

Topic: it can be said this is the story of an American family – car makers – through three generations, with the central character, founder of the dynasty, present from the first page: Number One, as he is called by the family.

Another one of the most relevant characters is a test driver of Italian origin, strongly related to them. This one tries to launch a new model of car, “the Betsy”, and while the vicissitudes suffered while trying to achieve this are narrated, the story of the people involved in this car world is told in retrospect.

The whole plot is woven on the background of the crudest pornography and it can be said that there is no chapter where complete paragraphs and sometimes even the entire chapter do not have to be deleted in their entirety.

Thus, if all that rubbish is cut out, the book would stop making sense.

REJECTED.

Madrid, February 21, 1973,  
The official reader,  
M<sup>a</sup> Dolores Molero<sup>11</sup>

From this it can be inferred that the work contained, according to the censor, too many erotic scenes or passages, which meant it could not be authorized for publication. The word *basura* (rubbish) is used by the censor to refer to those contents, which is also an indication of how Robbins' novels were regarded in Spain at the time. Only two days later, another censor, issued the following report:<sup>12</sup>

Story of the Hardeman family, a dynasty of automobile manufacturers, whose pornographic content stands out from their social and professional life, content which has been underlined or put inside brackets on all pages where it appears, such as pages 24-25-59-71-80-81-82-86-109-111-112-113-114-115-124-138-139-140-142-143-206-208-233-234-253-262-263-288-291 and 310. Besides, chapters 7, 8 and 9 of Book Two (1970) describe in detail the consummation of incest.

Since its moral danger is obvious and since the suppression of so many scenes seriously damages the structure of the novel, I determine that this should be

REJECTED.

Madrid, February 23, 1973,  
Signature: Ángel Aparicio  
Reader no. 18

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Número Uno como lo llaman la familia. Otro de los personajes más relevantes es un piloto de pruebas de origen italiano relacionado fuertemente con ellos. Trata éste de lanzar un nuevo modelo de coche, ‘el Betsy’ y mientras se narran las peripecias habidas para conseguirlo, retrospectivamente se cuenta la historia de las gentes metidas en ese mundo del automóvil. Toda la trama está tejida sobre el fondo de la más cruda pornografía y puede decirse que no existe capítulo donde no haya que suprimir párrafos enteros y a veces los mismos capítulos en su totalidad. Por lo tanto creo que si se elimina toda esta basura el libro dejaría de tener sentido. NO AUTORIZABLE”.

<sup>11</sup> This is one of the few examples where the censor's full name is legible, since reports normally remained anonymous (Abellán, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> “Historia sobre la familia Hardeman, dinastía de fabricantes de automóviles, destacando de su vivir social y profesional el contenido pornográfico de múltiples pasajes subrayados o encerrados entre corchetes, como puede comprobarse en las páginas nº 24-25-59-71-80-81-82-86-109-111-112-113-114-115-124-138-139-140-142-143-206-208-233-234-253-262-263-288-291 y 310. A este inconveniente hay que añadir, que en los capítulos 7, 8 y 9 del Libro Segundo (1970) se describe, pormenorizándola, la consumación de un incesto. Siendo evidente su peligrosidad moral y dado que la supresión de tantas escenas perjudican gravemente la estructura de la novela, considero que esta debe ser NO AUTORIZADA.”

This second opinion corroborates the first reader's impression of the novel, indicating that the most advisable final verdict would be to deny publication due to the "moral danger" the novel represents. In the last case, the censor even indicates the pages on which the reprehensible passages appear. While on some other occasions the deletion of such passages would have sufficed to authorize publication,<sup>13</sup> in this case, they were so profuse that their deletion would have affected the plot development; thus, rejection of the whole work seemed to be the most logical solution. And that was the verdict the publishing house received: Luis de Caralt's wager on this novel by the famous Robbins did not have a successful outcome, at least in this first attempt.

But if there was anything publishers at the time were used to doing during the dictatorship, it was negotiating with the administration and thinking up possible manoeuvres to get their works on the market (see Gómez Castro 2008 for examples of these strategies). Hence, only a few months later, the same work was presented to the authorities for voluntary consultation, this time under a different title and in a different Spanish translation. File number 5514-73 entered the administration on May 5, 1973, introduced now as *La familia* ["The family"], by Harold Robbins. The censor's report about it reads:<sup>14</sup>

The plot of this novel consists of a story of a family – from grandparents to grandchildren – that manufactures cars and in which the family problems are intermingled within a case, central in the novel, of industrial espionage.

There are adulterous love affairs, a murder and a suicide, but treated with absolute integrity, as if in passing, in a way that does not constitute a serious burden.

Beyond that, there is no further comment to make.

AUTHORIZED

Madrid, May 18, 1973

Reader no. 12

[Illegible signature]

With this report, it can be seen how, in a period of a few months, the novel went from dangerous and morally reprehensible, and thus rejected, to being authorized for publication, with controversial themes apparently being treated with "absolute integrity". The fact that the publisher decided to present it as a different translation and under a different title led to the authorization of a novel which had been previously rejected. This censorship file does not indicate any relation to the previous one, which confirms that the censors had not identified it as the same book and thus did not relate it to the previous file.

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<sup>13</sup> That was the case of other novels by Robbins, such as *The inheritors* (file number 4081-70), and of novels by other authors, such as Mario Puzo's *The godfather* (file number 13192-70), Evan Hunter's *Last summer* (file number 1192-70) or Joseph Wambaugh's *The new centurions* (file number 4089-71), among others.

<sup>14</sup> "El argumento de esta novela está constituido por la historia de una familia –de abuelos a nietos– fabricantes de automóviles, en la que se entremezclan los problemas familiares con un caso, central en la novela, de espionaje industria. Hay amores adulterinos, un asesinato y un suicidio, pero tratados con absoluta limpieza, como de pasada, en forma que no constituye inconveniente grave. Fuera de esto, no hay ninguna observación que hacer. AUTORIZADO."

Despite the fact that the novel was authorized after this voluntary submission under the title of *La familia*, when the publisher deposited the required copies of the book, it requested authorization for a new change of title: now the book was to be called *Los ejecutivos* ["The executives"] (Robbins, 1974). No reason was given for this change, but permission for it was granted without any problem. However, it took almost a year for this to be carried out, as 1974 is given as the date of resolution for the file, once the work had been put on the market in the first edition of March that year. Although this may seem a long time, no further reasons were specified, and the outcome was that Robbins' book was finally published and reached Spanish readers. What remains to be seen is how much of the original work had survived translation into Spanish, an analysis which is tackled in the next section of this article. After the publication in 1974, the publishing house Luis de Caralt repeatedly re-edited the novel from 1977 onwards within their collections Gigante and Biblioteca Universal Caralt. The censorship files belonging to these records were only deposit files that do not offer any kind of value judgment about the work, except for the one numbered 1778-77, which is reproduced below:<sup>15</sup>

#### C. Novel

Peroni, a former car racing driver, together with the founder of a dynasty of car manufacturers, tries to create a revolutionary prototype based on a turbine. His own grandson will oppose the project. There will be a lot of fighting, industrial espionage, and even attacks...

A story, very much in the style of Robbins, in which he exposes the problems of American manufacturers and their conflicts of power and wealth, and where ambition prevails over any other values.

It should be noted that the narrative lacks any significant erotic description.

NON-CONTESTABLE.<sup>16</sup>

COMPLETE Imprint.<sup>17</sup>

Madrid, February 8, 1977

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<sup>15</sup> "C. Novela. Peroni, antiguo corredor automovilístico, intenta junto al iniciador de una dinastía de fabricantes de coches, la creación de un prototipo revolucionario a turbina. Su propio nieto irá en contra del proyecto. Se sucederán rencillas, espionajes industriales y hasta los atentados... Narración, muy al estilo de Robbins, en donde expone la problemática de los fabricantes americanos y sus conflictos de poder y riqueza y donde la ambición prevalece sobre cualquier otro valor. Hay que destacar que la narración carece de descripciones de carácter erótico de importancia. NO IMPUGNABLE. Pie de imprenta COMPLETO."

<sup>16</sup> This kind of verdict started being common following the dictator's death in 1975, with the system still operative as a mere means of control. This mechanism implies that everything is legally correct on the part of the publishing house to proceed with the publication.

<sup>17</sup> The compulsory nature of the Imprint for all types of publications, if they were not to be considered clandestine, had been legitimized by a decree on July 11, 1957 (BOE 07-VIII-1957). It was later qualified by the decree from March 31, 1966 (BOE 04-IV-1966), which does not represent a substantial change from the previous one. This reference is relevant because sometimes the works presented for prior consultation included an incomplete imprint or this was deliberately distorted in order to clear the way for publication: these works thus appeared as if they had been commissioned from another country, thereby implying that if the latter were more lenient in any of the requirements, the reason was precisely this. For example, that was the case of file number 4878-73, corresponding to the novel *Once is not enough*, by Jacqueline Susan. Too many deletions were advised in the report, and the publisher, Grijalbo, asked for permission to export the complete novel with the imprint "Grijalbo-México" as if it were a commission from Mexico to the Spanish publisher, a trick that worked.

Once again, nothing seemed to be objectionable in the novel: indeed, the official reader expresses some surprise at not finding descriptions of an erotic nature in a work authored by Robbins. However, in the end, there was no reason to take any legal action against it. From the point of view of translation research, it is certainly interesting to find how a work which had been rejected due to its almost pornographic nature had now become a book that was completely unobjectionable. An analysis of how the translation into Spanish rendered those passages is thus necessary to shed some light on the matter.

### **3. *The Betsy* vs. *Los ejecutivos*: a look at the Spanish translations**

The book that readers in Spain had access to in the officially approved translation was the version by Domingo Manfredi Cano published in 1974, and not Raquel Albornoz's earlier one that had been sold in Argentina and imported without success to Spain.<sup>18</sup>

On the macrotextual level, both Albornoz and Manfredi's renderings into Spanish respected the structure of the English source text, which was divided into four books and several chapters (Table 2):

<b>BOOKS</b>	<b>CHAPTERS</b>
BOOK 1 (1969)	1-15
BOOK 2 (1970)	1-13
BOOK 3 (1971)	1-16
BOOK 4 (1972)	1-12

Table 2. Chapter distribution in *The Betsy*.

Nonetheless, Manfredi's total number of pages differed considerably from Robbins': from 502 pages of the English text, the Spanish publication was reduced to 318. Such a large discrepancy cannot be due solely to intrinsic differences between the languages, but probably indicates large changes at the microtextual level as well. A comparative textual analysis can help illustrate what kinds of changes were made and how these modified the final result.

Although Spanish readers in the Iberian Peninsula never officially had access to Albornoz's translation, making it impossible to judge its reception and pragmatic consequences, it is useful to include her translation here as a reference when assessing the massive changes that Manfredi made to the text in relation to its English source. Besides, since official censors had marked some of the pages of her translation as reprehensible (see the report from Reader no. 18 above), it serves as a guide for examining whether the aspects pointed out had been maintained or attenuated in Manfredi's later translation. As explained previously, when the novel was presented to the censors in the first instance, and rejected, the aspect that influenced them the most was the presence of numerous erotic scenes which, according to the official readers, bordered on pornography. On the other hand, when introduced later under another title, and in a translation carried out in

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<sup>18</sup> It is more than probable that this book circulated in the black market, though, being this a common practice among publishers at the time (Pradera, 2004).

Spain, everything seemed to have been treated with “absolute integrity”, as the reader indicated. Only a detailed analysis of the controversial passages can serve to elucidate what happened in between.

The examples chosen for this comparison have been selected according to the main categories that were deemed morally reprehensible during the dictatorship and therefore constantly monitored by the censors, namely: sexual morals, political beliefs, use of language and religion (Abellán, 1980, p. 88). Of all these, the one we will focus on first, due to the nature of the controversial passages indicated by the censors, is the one dealing with sexual morals.

### *i. Sexual morals*

Although the plot of Robbins' novel revolves around the construction of a new car model, the presence of numerous erotic scenes that take place between several of the characters often diverts attention from it. Such sexual encounters are described by the author in great detail, so a literal rendering of them would necessarily be considered pornographic in a context such as the Spanish one during the Franco regime.

By looking at Albornoz's translation of some of these passages, it can be observed how most of them (over 60% of the almost 300 examples detected<sup>19</sup>) have been interpreted literally. However, even in this case it is possible to observe the presence of some erasures and partial elisions, which, in combination, reduced the erotic content of some of the excerpts. These were most probably introduced by the publishing house after the translation had been done in an act of self-censorship.<sup>20</sup> Figure 3 offers some examples of those attenuated instances, compared with the technique of translation adopted by Manfredi when faced with the same passage:

EN-Source Text (1971)	ES-Target Text by Albornoz (1973) <sup>21</sup>	ES-Target Text by Manfredi (1974)
I felt the heat in my balls (Book I, Chapter 2, p. 26)	Sentí que me subía el calor a los testículos. [Literal rendering or transference] (Book I, Chapter 2, p. 24)	Me subió un extraño calor a la cara./ I felt the heat in my face [Modification/commutation] (Book I, Chapter 2, p. 20)
place your hand on her cunt and you came away with a cupful of honey. (Book I, Chapter 2, p. 26)	<u>ponía la mano en su vulva, se podía comprobar su excitación.</u> place your hand on her vulva and you could feel her excitement. [Modification] (Book I, Chapter 2, p. 24)	∅ [Total elision] (Book I, Chapter 2, p. 20)

(continues)

<sup>19</sup> See Gómez Castro (2009) for the complete set of examples.

<sup>20</sup> We can affirm this because the translator herself, in personal communication via e-mail, admitted to not exercising self-censorship when translating because she would have not dared to, but she knew publishing houses practiced self-censorship in order to get their manuscripts published.

<sup>21</sup> The year indicated here refers to the date in which the book was presented for authorization to the Spanish censors, to which the censors made some comments before finally rejecting it. The same applies to the rest of the tables in this article, which include examples of Albornoz's translation.

<p>“Well, then, French it.”          (Book II, Chapter 3, p. 146)</p>	<p>[-Bueno, entonces hazlo al estilo francés.]          [Literal rendering or transference]          (Book II, Chapter 3, p. 111)</p>	<p>∅ [Total elision]          (Book II, Chapter 3, p. 104)</p>
<p>Why didn't you just fuck me when I wanted you to?          (Book III, Chapter 5, p. 280)</p>	<p>¿Por qué, entonces, no se acostó conmigo cuando yo quise?/ Why didn't you just go to bed with me when I wanted you to?          [Modification]          (Book III, Chapter 5, p. 206)</p>	<p>∅ [Total elision]          (Book III, Chapter 5, p. 185)</p>
<p>Come on into the bedroom and let's fuck.          (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 502)</p>	<p>Vamos a acostarnos./ Let's go to bed.          [Modification]          (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 360)</p>	<p>∅ [Total elision]          (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 318)</p>

Table 3. Examples of sexual passages in *The Betsy* and their translation into Spanish.

As can be appreciated in the examples above, Albornoz's translation appears to follow the English source text quite closely in some of the erotic scenes, whereas Manfredi's text always attenuates it in one way or another by means of content commutations, as in the first example (“balls” has been rendered as “face” in Spanish), or by simply omitting the whole passage, which seems to be the most common technique throughout his text. What is more, Manfredi's own remarks about his habitual practice as “translator” reveal that he did not actually refer to the English text at all. Rather, he took the Argentinean translation as a starting point and then redacted it in order to ensure that it would not meet with censorial opposition. He stated that this was a common practice in his job:

(...) many English works published in Spain with my signature as translator had already been translated in South America, and I had to take those South American texts and put them into Spanish. And it has been as difficult as, or even more difficult than, translating them directly from English. (Manfredi Cano, 1972, p. 18)<sup>22</sup>

With these words, Manfredi is not only branding his colleagues' translations as of poor quality, but also suggesting that other translators might have done the same when a translation arrived in Spain from South America. Indeed, Larraz Elorriaga (2010) claims that this was common practice at the time due to the establishment of many South American-affiliated publishing houses by Spanish exiles, especially in Mexico and Argentina.

The publisher's main objective – to put the work on the market – was achieved, something that was only possible because 85% of the erotic, suggestive or morbid content

<sup>22</sup> “(...) muchas obras inglesas publicadas en España con mi firma como traductor, habían sido traducidas antes en Sudamérica, y yo he tenido que coger esos textos sudamericanos y ponerlos en castellano. Y me ha costado el mismo trabajo, o quizá más trabajo, que si los hubiera traducido directamente del inglés.” Manfredi's job in this case was mainly reduced to attenuating/eliminating the controversial passages in the book, which referred chiefly to sexual scenes, as was common practice in Robbins' novels and specifically in this one.

had been eliminated. Manfredi's strategy of "whitewashing" Albornoz's text seemed to work.

With regard to the moral issues most commonly monitored by the censors (namely divorce, homosexuality and abortion), Manfredi's version transfers "divorce" literally on a total of 13 occasions out of the 16 in which it appears in the text, which can be interpreted as a sign that it had become more common in translations of this type and also in the country.<sup>23</sup> However, the same cannot be said about "abortion", "contraception" or "homosexuality": the first two were completely omitted from the Spanish text and, as far as homosexuality is concerned, the version was not consistent. It was included fairly unproblematically in some examples, whereas in others it disappeared without a trace. The reference to "incest" that had been made in the novel's first censored files was also attenuated by the omission of the passages in which this was explicitly described, as well as the statement that such an act actually took place. Overall, it can be seen how Manfredi's redaction resulted in an aseptic rendering of sexual aspects, bringing it into harmony with the morals of the regime. Table 4 shows the translation of some of these passages related to moral issues.

EN-Source Text (1971)	ES-Target Text by Albornoz (1973)	ES-Target Text by Manfredi (1974)
Then divorce him. (Book III, Chapter 12, p. 346)	¿Por qué no te divorcias? [Literal rendering or transference] (Book III, Chapter 12, p. 252)	¿Cómo no te divorcias? [Literal rendering or transference] (Book III, Chapter 12, p. 225)
What happens if the doctors think it's too late to have an abortion? (Book III, Chapter 15, p. 377)	¿Y qué pasa si los médicos opinan que es demasiado tarde para provocar un aborto? [Literal rendering or transference] (Book III, Chapter 15, p. 263)	∅ [Total elision] (Book III, Chapter 15, p. 243)
I brought everything to the Riviera with me except my B.C. pills. (Book III, Chapter 15, p. 376)	Me traje todo a la Riviera, salvo los anticonceptivos. [Literal rendering or transference] (Book III, Chapter 15, p. 273)	∅ [Total elision] (Book III, Chapter 15, p. 243)
Loren, your father was a homosexual. (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 496)	Loren, tu padre era homosexual. [Literal rendering or transference] (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 356)	Loren, tu padre era homosexual. [Literal rendering or transference] (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 315)

(continues)

<sup>23</sup> Only a few years later, in 1981, the country legalized divorce. In fact, books published at the end of the dictatorship were already becoming more open with regard to such moral issues, and by the mid-seventies, it was clear that "the spectacular 'corrective' measures of public morality and religiosity that had been in force since the end of the Civil War had not really taken root among the common people" (Gutiérrez Lanza, 2002, p. 151).

EN-Source Text (1971)	ES-Target Text by Albornoz (1973)	ES-Target Text by Manfredi (1974)
You're almost as good a cocksucker as some of the little pansies I know. (Book III, Chapter 9, p. 320)	Sabes hacerlo tan bien como algunos de los amiguitos maricones que conozco./ You know how to do it as well as some of the little pansies I know. [Partial elision] (Book III, Chapter 9, p. 234)	∅ [Total elision] (Book III, Chapter 9, p. 208)
Mike says he was banging his own daughter-in-law. (Book III, Chapter 13, p. 350)	Mike me contó que se acostaba con su propia nuera. [Literal rendering or transference] (Book III, Chapter 13, p. 255)	∅ [Total elision] (Book III, Chapter 13, p. 227)

Table 4. Examples of moral passages in *The Betsy* and their translation into Spanish.

## ii. Language

Apart from sexual morals, the other main controversial aspect to examine in the book is the one referring to the use of language: Robbins' characters make use of improper language on many occasions and that is part of their characterization. Changing the way they speak thus implies having an effect on how they are depicted to the reader, presenting them as more acceptable in the eyes of the censors.<sup>24</sup>

As is often the case in a type of narrative in which action and therefore dialogic language prevails over description, the protagonists of *The Betsy* frequently use informal language, including many expletives and insults. An analysis of this section yields more than a hundred examples<sup>25</sup> of passages that contain, in one way or another, some kind of offensive language. Once again, in Albornoz's translation, the preferred technique was to literally transfer the content of the English source text (48% of cases). Although the official censorship report did not make any explicit reference to this issue, it may have contributed to the novel's initial rejection. And it did not go unnoticed by Manfredi, who followed the same technique here as for the rest of the controversial categories: he ensured the novel's acceptability by a massive use of total and partial elisions and by moderating some of the expressions. Some of these examples can be seen in Table 5.

<sup>24</sup> This had also been the case, for example, of the main characters in *Love story*, who also saw a change in their way of speaking through a reduction of the vulgarity of their expressions, leading to an improvement of their image and making them appear as more conservative and conformist than in the English source text (Gómez Castro, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> See Gómez Castro (2009) for the complete set of examples.

EN-Source Text (1971)	ES-Target Text by Albornoz (1973)	ES-Target Text by Manfredi (1974)
The little bastards are going to clean up the world. (Book I, Chapter 4, p. 38)	Esos hijos de puta van a barrer con todo. [Literal rendering or transference] (Book I, Chapter 4, p. 33)	∅ [Total elision] (Book I, Chapter 4, p. 29)
You bitch! (Book II, Chapter 7, p. 183)	—¡Puta! — [Literal rendering or transference] (Book II, Chapter 7, p. 138)	∅ [Total elision] (Book II, Chapter 7, p. 126)
“The son-of-a-bitch”, she whispered. (Book III, Chapter 1, p. 244)	—Ese hijo de puta — murmuró ella. [Literal rendering or transference] (Book III, Chapter 1, p. 182)	—Ese sinvergüenza/ That rascal. [Moderation] (Book III, Chapter 1, p. 159)
Where the hell are you? (Book IV, Chapter 6, p. 433)	¿Dónde diablos estás? [Literal rendering or transference] (Book IV, Chapter 6, p. 313)	¿Dónde te metes?/ Where are you? [Partial elision] (Book IV, Chapter 6, p. 278)
You fucked me on the Sundancer too. (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 498)	También me jodiste con el Sundancer. [Literal rendering or transference] (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 358)	∅ [Total elision] (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 316)

Table 5. Examples of linguistically offensive passages in *The Betsy* and their translation into Spanish.

As can be appreciated in the examples, while Albornoz's expressions were offensive in Spanish, the total or partial absence of translated material in Manfredi's case leaves the text almost without any trace of transgression, thereby contributing to the overall goal of moderating the text for publication. The work's race against censorship was fast and going in the right direction this time.

It is time now to turn to the field of politics and religion to see if they were also changed by Manfredi.

### iii. Politics

In this regard, the action is focused on the construction of the new car and on the businesses in which the family is involved in to make the company successful. To this end, they do not hesitate to enter into partnerships with German or Japanese car companies (which were already beginning to dominate the market) and do so without any major ideological problems in terms of politics. The only dubious reference in this section concerns communists and the fact that Loren Hardeman, the president of Bethlehem Motors, was considered to be their friend. To literally transfer the content of such a statement into Spanish would have implied going against the postulates of the dictatorship, so Manfredi conveniently chose to omit this reference (Table 6). However, as indicated,

since only one example of this kind has been located in the whole text, the importance of the topic is secondary in comparison with others, where we can find many more examples.

EN-Source Text (1971)	ES-Target Text by Albornoz (1973)	ES-Target Text by Manfredi (1974)
<p>“You can tell your Commie-loving boss to watch tomorrow and see how a real company handles the union”, her father said, taking off his blouse.                      (Book III, Chapter 13, p. 348)</p>	<p>Puedes ir diciéndole a tu jefe comunistacho que observe mañana cómo una verdadera empresa maneja al sindicato — dijo el padre, sacándose la camisa.                      [Literal rendering or transference]                      (Book III, Chapter 13, p. 254)</p>	<p>Ya puedes ir diciéndole a tu jefe que esté atento a cómo una gran Empresa puede atreverse con el Sindicato./ You can tell your boss to watch tomorrow and see how a real company handles the union.                      [Partial elision]                      (Book III, Chapter 13, p. 226)</p>

Table 6. Example of a political passage in *The Betsy* and its translation into Spanish.

#### iv. Religion

Something similar to what happened in the case of politics takes place in the field of religion, another problematic issue for the censors, especially during the first years of dictatorship, when the official regime was very close to the Catholic Church (Ruiz Bautista, 2017).

In Robbins' world of vice and pleasure, there is no room for religion; hence, there are few examples that can be spotted in this regard. In total, there are only seven instances where some possible offence is suggested, three of which can be seen in Table 7:

EN-Source Text (1971)	ES-Target Text by Albornoz (1973)	ES-Target Text by Manfredi (1974)
<p>I don't care if you're God, Jesus Christ and Moses, you don't get in here without a pass signed by either Mr. Perino or Mr. Duncan.                      (Book II, Chapter 2, p. 130)</p>	<p>No me importa que sean ustedes Dios, Jesucristo y Moisés. No pueden entrar sin un pase firmado por el señor Perino o el señor Duncan. [Literal rendering or transference]                      (Book II, Chapter 2, p. 101)</p>	<p>No me importa quienes sean ustedes, pero no pueden entrar sin un pase firmado por el señor Perino o el señor Duncan./ I don't care who you are, you don't get in here without a pass signed by either Mr. Perino or Mr. Duncan.                      [Partial elision]                      (Book II, Chapter 2, p. 95)</p>
<p>Two, I want that suicide note that Loren has in his home safe.                      (Book IV, Chapter 9, p. 472)</p>	<p>Segundo, quiero tener la nota del suicidio que Loren Hardeman nieto conserva en la caja fuerte de su casa.                      [Literal rendering or transference]                      (Book IV, Chapter 9, p. 340)</p>	<p>Otra, conseguir la nota que sobre el suicidio de Loren Hardeman su hijo conserva en la caja fuerte.                      [Literal rendering or transference]                      (Book IV, Chapter 9, p. 340)</p>

(continues)

<p>You say this letter is supposedly a suicide note left by my late son?          (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 494)</p>	<p>¿Dices que esta carta supuestamente la dejó mi hijo antes de suicidarse?          [Literal rendering or transference]          (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 355)</p>	<p>¿Dices que esta carta fue dejada por mi hijo antes de su muerte?/ You say this letter is supposedly a note left by my late son before his death?          [Modification/commutation]          (Book IV, Chapter 12, p. 314)</p>
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Table 7. Examples of religious passages in *The Betsy* and their translation into Spanish.

Out of the seven examples in this section, six refer to the subject of suicide and are therefore important in the plot: because Loren Hardeman III accused his grandfather of pushing his father, Loren Hardeman II, to suicide, the family quarrels arose over the construction of the new car by the company. Albornoz's translation gives a full rendering of all the passages in which the topic is present. When Manfredi set out to put Albornoz's text into Spanish (as he described it), he resorted to various techniques that ensured that the final result would be acceptable. This involved avoiding making too many references to "suicide": thus, by means of either elisions or moderations, as in the last example in Table 7, he reduced the offensive content in four of the six occasions. The first example in Table 7 mentions "God, Jesus Christ and Moses" in a derogatory manner which was also opportunely corrected by Manfredi, who avoided alluding to the biblical characters. Once again, and in accordance with the tendency observed in the novel as a whole, the need for acceptability in the target culture seems to be the one dominating the decisions taken by Manfredi, thus guaranteeing that the text would have no problem with the official censors.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

The ingredients that made Harold Robbins famous worldwide are all present in this novel. However, in its Spanish version, these were often changed or attenuated, as we have seen, in order for the work to be publishable under the Franco regime. After Albornoz's Argentinean version had been denied authorization due to its controversial content, Manfredi's redaction of her work seemed to comply with the authorities' standards, thereby making it admissible for publication. These changes had to do with the four problematic areas that were particularly controversial for the regime, namely, sexual morals, offensive language, politics and religion, as seen above. Thus, it could be said that every aspect of the novel has been made acceptable in the target culture, including religion and politics which, by the end of the regime, were no longer so contentious. The result was that the novel was published and remained on the market for a long time under the title *Los ejecutivos*.<sup>26</sup> Manfredi's version was reprinted several times until another translation was published by Plaza y Janés in 1986, this time by Roger Vázquez de Parga. Interestingly,

<sup>26</sup> The reviews published in magazines and journals were exclusively devoted to its film counterpart which achieved considerable success in Spain, mainly due to the famous cast (see, for example, *ABC*, November 17, 1978, p. 54, or *Blanco y Negro*, August 2, 1978, pp. 54-55).

it was entitled *Betsy* once more, presumably recovering those aspects lost in Manfredi's version – though this will have to be corroborated by means of another detailed study beyond the scope of this article.

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