

## **XIX. Translation and Censorship**

Studying translation in the shadow of censorship means investigating the manipulatory mechanisms used as an assault on original texts in order to alter their meaning and exclude the reader from the choices made in the Source Language. In strong nationalistic European environments, censorship in translation has been used as a powerful tool in order to help safeguard the nations' cultures from outside influences and promote the regimes' ideologies. The focus here will be directed to Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain.

**Fascist Italy:** Mussolini's true and seductive motives under his mask of innocence can easily be discerned. His government's aim was to be popular and impose its ideology on Italian society. Mussolini wished to convince the Italian people that he would lead them into an era of cultural prosperity and national achievements. On the other hand, he wanted to avoid any kind of criticism from his people or abroad concerning his government's tactics. Thus, he established control over all forms of mass communication, such as the radio, cinema, theatre, press and books.

During the 1920's there was no centralized censor for books, no distinction was made between Italian and foreign literature, and there were no specific criteria for censoring translations. However, during the 1930's Italy published more translations, mostly of English and American popular fiction, than any other European country. It was, however,

obvious that "the regime did not want Italy to appear too receptive to foreign influences since excessive receptivity would imply a failure on the part of the fascist revolution to create a culture of its own" (Rundle, 1999:428). This fact along with the regime's wish to promote Italian culture led the Ministry of Popular Culture (Ministerio di Cultura Popolare) to enact strict preventive laws concerning translations.

**Nazi Germany:** In Nazi Germany, translators were viewed as enemies of the domestic culture. Nazi journals referred to translation as a threat to the authenticity and integrity of German society and a danger to its cultural production. Thus the regime wished to reduce the invasion of foreign elements by promoting pro-Nazi literature and banning all publications that were against the Nazi ideology. "The approved book would express the German soul, working with elements like race, health, purity, leadership, manliness/womanliness, rural life in conflict with a demonized city" (Sturge, 1999:137). Therefore, censorship was considered essential in order to preserve all consonant elements with the Nazi ideology and protect the people from influences of "insidious" nature.

During the 1930's, control of books and translations was unregulated and unpredictable and this provoked fear and insecurity in the publishers. Self-censorship was therefore essential, as they could not afford the financial loss that potential banning of their works could bring about. After

1933, control over publications and especially translations became more regulated and pre-publication censorship was established. Censorship was exercised by Goebbels's propaganda Ministry and the Gestapo and it was invisible to the readers as "it worked via the (non-) availability of books for sale and in libraries" (Sturge, 1999:138).

**Franco's Spain:** "Cultural censorship played a vital role in Franco's regime. It was perhaps the most effective element of the dictatorship, without which Franco would not have been able to control Spanish society" (Itziar, 1999:54). Franco's aim was to preserve his regime's ideology and isolate Spanish culture from foreign influences. In order to achieve that, his censorship had to be concerted and it was thus carried out by three departments: the Book Censorship section, the Cinema and Theater Department and the Information and Censorship section.

All three departments were responsible for banning every artistic work that posed a threat to the regime's ideology. Sexual morality, politics, religion and the use of language were the main sensitive issues with regard to censorship. As far as books were concerned, not only was pre-publication censorship by the government established, but works were also subjected to self-censorship by the author or translator and editorial censorship by publishers. Only works that viewed the Spanish political situation positively were authorised and this fact led most Spanish Republican writers to become exiles for rejecting francoist tactics.

Text extracted from: Translation and Censorship in European Environments by Antonia Keratsa

**Reading Guidelines:**

Readers must develop the power of reading between the lines and know to reflect and analyze things beyond their appearances. Every activity is deeply influenced by ideological implications like our "innocent" profession here.

**Q.I** Give the exact meaning of the following words first in English and second in Arabic: censorship, safeguard, tactics, seductive, prosperity, receptivity, enact, authenticity, integrity , pro, manliness, womanliness, consonant, insidious, afford, provoked, via, posed, subjected, editorial, exiles.

**Q.II** Derive as many words as you can from the following words: censorship, exclude, tactics, promote, impose, avoid, centralized, create, reduce, demonized, essential, regulated, vital, morality, subjected.

**Q.III** Give the opposites of the words below and use them in good English sentences of your own: alter, exclude, powerful, popular, mass, foreign, strict, domestic, reduce, approved, pre, effective.

**Q.IV** Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What do the manipulatory mechanisms of translation mean? Why were they used?
2. What was the aim of Mussolini's government , and what was Mussolini's wish?
3. Was Mussolini tolerant of criticism from home or abroad? How?
4. Why did not the fascist government like to appear too receptive to foreign translations?
5. How were translators and translation viewed in Nazi Germany?
6. What was the Nazi strategy to reduce the invasion of foreign books?
7. What should approved books express?
8. Why was self-censorship essential in the Nazi era?
9. What were the sensitive issues that posed a threat to Franco's regime? Which departments were made responsible to root out such threats?
10. What kinds of censorship were developed in Franco's time?

**Q.V** Make a good list of the terms used in the text and translate them into Arabic.

Research Activity:

Are you aware of the mechanisms manipulated by the before 2003 regime in Iraq against the use of English or translation? Consult Kadhim Al-Ali's article in bulletin of The Irish Society of Translators entitled " The Return to Marshes, The Return to Translation: Translation and Culture Under Totalitarianism " and paper in the Australian Translation Watch Quarterly " Is Translation Halal? Are Translators Traitors? A Study in the Narratives of Iraqi Interpreters and Translators".

**Quote of the Day:**

**The language of translation ought never to attract attention to itself.”**

John Hookham Frere