

The Censorship of George Orwell's Essays in Spain¹

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While much of George Orwell's popularity rests on his political fiction, particularly *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), his achievements as an essayist have also been widely celebrated. Apart from his books of extended reportage published in the 1930s — *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) and *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) — Orwell's literary production of the 1940s included a very large number of reviews, articles and essays that appeared in a wide variety of periodical publications, such as the *Observer*, *London Tribune*, *Manchester Evening News*, *The Listener*, *Partisan Review*, *Horizon*, *Left News* and *New Leader*. Orwell only published two important collections of essays during his lifetime, *Inside the Whale* (1940) and *Critical Essays* (1946), but immediately after his death in 1950 several other volumes were produced, which gave English-speaking readers access to a wide variety of his autobiographical, literary, political, sociological and cultural essays. In 1968 the four-volume *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, arrived as a brilliant climax to Orwell's literary production, and gave further weight to the claim that here indeed was a perceptive critic with a keen analytical eye and a persistent ability to tell unpleasant truths. During the Cold War period his essays were a much-quoted source in discussions of the threat of totalitarianism, imperialism in the East, the hypocrisy of intellectuals or the manipulation of the press during the Spanish Civil War. In J. R.

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Hammond's words, Orwell as an essayist became "known and respected throughout the English-speaking world and beyond."² But, does this "beyond" refer to Spain? What was the reception of Orwell's essays in Spain during Franco's regime (1939–1975)? Which documentaries and essay collections were available to Spanish readers?

It is true that in the decades of the 1950s and 1960s the presence of Orwell's fiction was clearly felt on the Spanish literary scene. A brief glance at the catalogue of the Spanish National Library reveals the existence at that time of a Spanish version of *Burmese Days*, published in Barcelona in 1955, and several editions of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* translated into Spanish and Catalan. Then, *A Clergyman's Daughter*, *Homage to Catalonia*, *Coming Up For Air* and *Down and Out in Paris and London* arrived in the early 1970s. However, the printing of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* and some collections of essays had to wait until after the end of Franco's regime. Obviously, the ideas of a left-wing intellectual who had been fighting on the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War were bound to have problems with Franco's censors. This paper sets out to explore the files from the censorship office in order to provide a survey of the troubled publication history of Orwell's essays in Spain. A look at these files will also provide valuable data about the interest of publishers and booksellers in Orwell and, most importantly, the critical views the censors entertained about Orwell's writings. When using the term "essays," one of the most flexible and adaptable of all literary forms, I refer to what is usually known as Orwell's non-fictional writings, including his book-length documentaries, his book reviews and journalism, as well as his collected essays.

The Spanish response to Orwell's works seemed slight for many years when compared with the attention accorded to him in other European countries. As early as 1935, for instance, there is a first French translation of *Down and Out in Paris and London* published by Gallimard.³ Obviously the French must have been interested in the account of a foreign "travel writer" who revealed the life of the underdog in what was for them a familiar landscape. Nearly twenty

² J. R. Hammond, *A George Orwell Companion* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 187.

³ George Orwell, *La Vache enragée*, trans. R. N. Raimbault and Gwen Gilbert (Paris: Gallimard, 1935).

years had to pass before we can see the first attempt to publish this autobiographical reportage in Spain. In August 1951 José Janés, a publisher who made a great contribution to bringing British authors to Spanish readers,⁴ applied for permission to print 2,000 copies of a Spanish translation of *Down and Out in Paris and London*, which was to be called *París y Londres, el interior y exterior*.⁵ Three weeks later a censor signed a report affirming that the book was of “unquestionable literary and thematic interest,” but it had to be banned on moral grounds because of the “excessive crudity of the style.”⁶ The file contains a 1949 Secker & Warburg edition of the book without any marked or underlined passages, but the censor had folded the top and bottom corners of many pages that supposedly included those crude remarks. We should remember that the manuscript of *Down and Out in Paris and London* had already passed the filter of the English publisher Victor Gollancz, who asked Orwell to cut out some passages and swearwords in order to avoid possible libel action in Britain,⁷ but it appears that the language of the book still seemed offensive in Franco's Spain. In theory, one could also expect problems with a documentary that bluntly presents the theme of class exploitation and shows how workers suffer all kinds of injustices in a corrupted, capitalist society. It is well known that post-war Spain was as firmly as ever dominated by class; the country's wealth was still in a few hands, and there was widespread poverty and disease among the people. Therefore, it would have been consistent with their censorship

⁴ He published novels by D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Graham Greene and many more; for an enlightening study of Janés's work as an editor, see Jacqueline Hurtle, *José Janés, editor de literatura inglesa* (Barcelona: PPU, 1992).

⁵ See File 3704–51, Box 9616, No IDD 50.02. Most files on censorship of this period are found in the “Fondo de Cultura” at the Archivo General de la Administración (Alcalá de Henares, Madrid). I would like to express my gratitude to the archive staff for their unstinting help and friendly guidance on how to find my way through the complexities of these files.

⁶ “A pesar de su indudable interés literario y temático no podemos aconsejar la autorización de esta obra de Orwell, por la excesiva crudeza de su estilo y la abundancia de detalles censurables en la pintura de los bajos fondos de París y Londres.”

⁷ See the letter that Orwell wrote to his literary agent Leonard Moore on 1 July 1932, in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), I, 107–108.

policy if the censor had also suppressed the book on political grounds. But that was not the case. He only referred to moral issues.

Four years later, in 1955, *Down and Out in Paris and London* visited the Spanish censorship office again. The book had just been published in Argentina by Guillermo Kraft under the title *Los desplazados*⁸ and the Spanish censors were now confronted with a request to import 300 copies of this edition.⁹ This time the censor's report did not find fault with Orwell's style. It mainly focused on the hardships of being poor in Paris and London in those pre-war years, but surprisingly this censor pointed out that even the harsh moments in the narrative could help cure us of "our bourgeois comfort."¹⁰ The book was therefore authorised without any restriction. Perhaps, the fact that it was the importation of 300 copies, rather than an ordinary printing of the book, was the reason behind this positive report. However, the same favourable result was obtained when the Barcelona publisher of Editorial Destino applied for permission to publish 3,000 copies of this book in 1973, nearly twenty years later.¹¹ It is interesting to note that in these two last cases *Down and Out in Paris and London* was considered a work of fiction, rather than a documentary or an autobiographical account of Orwell's experiences among poor working people in Paris and among tramps in England in the late 1920s. Perhaps those Spanish censors were not familiar with Orwell's biographical background. Were they also ignorant of the fact that he had been a member of the Marxist POUM and had fought Franco's forces on the Aragon front? It appears that those details were not relevant on these occasions.

In 1955, a couple of months after *Down and Out* was examined by the censorship board, some of Orwell's essays also made their way to Spain. This time it was a request from José Oteyza y García to import

⁸ George Orwell, *Los desplazados*, trans. Raquel N. de Ortíz (Buenos Aires: Guillermo Kraft, 1955).

⁹ See File 4422-55, Box 11194, No IDD 50.03.

¹⁰ "Describe los días largos del que no come, las noches de pesadilla del que duerme en un banco, etc. etc. Todo esto en París y en Londres en los años anteriores a la guerra. Hay algunos momentos de dureza, lo pide el tema, pero la novela es revulsiva para nuestra comodidad burguesa y hace pensar un poco."

¹¹ See File 13647-73, Box 833, No IDD 50.07. Other requests to import a total of 725 copies in English and Spanish were also approved between 1962 and 1975.

fifty copies of the Argentine edition of *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays* (1950).¹² Once more, the censors raised no objection whatsoever and the importation was authorised in November 1955.¹³ Other requests to import up to fifty-two copies of this collection of essays in the 1960s also got the green light,¹⁴ which was logical since Spanish censors used to take into account the precedents of each book that was to be examined. However, altogether this positive response from the Spanish censors comes as a surprise. One should not forget that among the essays included in this collection is "The Prevention of Literature," a piece that clearly expresses Orwell's condemnation of political censorship. In around fifteen pages he openly criticises "the enemies of intellectual liberty" and what he calls "the organised lying practised by totalitarian states" (*Collected Essays*, IV, 83,85). It seems that the censor who read the book did not consider the possibility that Orwell's criticism might also refer to Franco's regime. Although his report acknowledges that Orwell discusses "liberty in literary matters," he authorised the importation. It is true that the number of copies to be imported was not very large (only fifty), but the message should have been offensive in a censorship system whose policy was to ban literature on moral, religious or political grounds, particularly those books that attacked the regime and its institutions. And few will dispute the fact that the censorship office was an essential institution of Franco's totalitarian regime. It seems that in this case the censor's benevolent attitude towards Orwell's "The Prevention of Literature" contradicts a very sensible statement made by W. L. Webb in his essay on censorship entitled "An Embarrassment of Tyrannies":

Taking censorship seriously can be a seriously subversive business, as authority has always been aware. Insist effectively on freedom of the word and the unearthly radiance of thrones and altars fades, while dictators, chiefs of staff, armaments manufacturers and media imperialists begin to look humanly vulnerable, and nothing distresses them more than that.¹⁵

¹² George Orwell, *Cazando un elefante*, trans. Myrian E. Friedesthal (Buenos Aires: Guillermo Kraft, 1955).

¹³ See File 5795-55, Box 11271, No IDD 50.03.

¹⁴ See File 979-64, Box 77365, No IDD 52.117 and File 459-66, Box 77372, No IDD 52.117.

¹⁵ W. L. Webb, "An Embarrassment of Tyrannies," in W. L. Webb and Rose Bell, eds., *An Embarrassment of Tyrannies: Twenty-five Years of Index on Censorship* (New York: George Braziller, 1998), 20.

Incidentally, this would not be the only occasion when Spanish censors underestimated the significance of Orwell's critical judgements. His sharp attack on censorship and other characteristic elements of dictatorships that emerge in *Animal Farm* also seemed rather irrelevant to the Spanish censors. When in 1963 they examined an application from Editorial Vergara to publish 3,000 copies of this fable, they indeed saw the story as a critical look at totalitarian regimes, but they simply believed that the target was Stalinist Russia and did not consider the possibility that Franco's regime might also be included as part of the satire, so they allowed its publication.¹⁶ In fact, this is not an uncommon event when dealing with Orwell's books. His writings have been subject to multiple, conflicting interpretations, and both the Left and Right have tried at one time or another to claim Orwell as one of their own. Similarly, his works have been harshly treated by critics, publishers and authorities of very different political persuasions. If a book like *Animal Farm* was authorised by Spanish censors and banned in the Soviet Union because it was seen as an instrument of anti-Soviet propaganda, the same pages were also sometimes banned from classroom teaching in various American schools because "Orwell was a Communist" and the book included dangerous words such as "masses will revolt."¹⁷

Although the importation of *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays* fared quite well with the Spanish censors, other attempts to introduce Orwell's essays to Spanish readers were to meet with more resistance. In 1965, a year after Editorial Vergara had successfully brought out a Catalan version of *Animal Farm*,¹⁸ another publisher from Barcelona, Verrié Editor, applied to the Spanish Ministry of Information for permission to print 2,000 copies of Orwell's *Collected Essays* (1961) in Catalan under the title *Assaigs*.¹⁹ In the application

¹⁶ See File 5178-63, Box 14749, No IDD 50.05. Cf. Alberto Lázaro, "La sátira de George Orwell ante la censura española," in Marta Falces Sierra, Mercedes Díaz Dueñas and José María Pérez Fernández, eds., *Proceedings of the XXVth A.E.D.E.A.N. Conference* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2002), 1-15.

¹⁷ See Nicholas J., Karolidis, *Banned Books: Literature Suppressed on Political Grounds* (New York: Facts on File, 1998), 36-9.

¹⁸ George Orwell, *La revolta dels animals*, trans. Eduard Cardona and Joaquim Ferrer Mallol (Barcelona: Vergara, 1964).

¹⁹ See File 3023-65, Box 16177, No IDD 50.06.

form Verrié stated that he did not intend to publish all the essays of the English volume, but only a selection of fourteen pieces plus the second chapter of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, "Down the Mine," which had been included in previous collections such as *England Your England and Other Essays* (1953) and *Selected Essays* (1957). It is interesting to see the list of essays that Verrié wanted to leave out: "Charles Dickens," "Boys," "Weeklies," "Inside the Whale," "The Art of Donald McGill," "Rudyard Kipling," "W. B. Yeats," "Looking Back on the Spanish War," "Arthur Koestler," "Raffles and Miss Blandish," "In Defence of P. G. Wodehouse," "Anti-Semitism in Britain," "Second Thoughts on James Burnham" and "Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool." On the one hand, the Catalan editor seemed to be little concerned with Orwell's literary criticism, excluding critical essays on English authors such as Dickens, Kipling, Yeats and Wodehouse. On the other hand, in what can be seen as an act of self-censorship, Verrié probably excluded those essays that censors might have considered politically incorrect. This could be the case of essays such as "Arthur Koestler" and "Looking Back on the Spanish War," the first one a laudatory piece on a political writer who was taken prisoner in Spain when Franco's army captured Málaga, and the second one vividly portraying Orwell's memories of his experiences in the Spanish Civil War.

Despite this previous sifting out two different censors found fault with Verrié's venture. One praised Orwell's style, but did not recommend the publication of the book because there were some negative comments on Spain and its political regime which revealed "a certain ignorance of reality."²⁰ The other censor identified Orwell as an English correspondent in the Spanish war working for the "Red side," although he was by then a "convert."²¹ However, this censor authorised the publication of the book with the deletion of some thirteen pages, which mainly alluded to the Spanish war and the essay "Notes on Nationalism," a piece that criticises, among other things, the nationalist spirit of Nazism, Communism and political

²⁰ "Su estilo suelto, agradable y realista, sobre diversas materias (colonias, literatura, ...), revela, refiriéndose a España, a nuestro régimen y mentalidad, un cierto desconocimiento de la realidad, o más bien, un ataque o perjuicio de principios."

²¹ Perhaps this censor knew about *Animal Farm* and also read it simply as a satire on Communist Russia, which made him see Orwell as a "convert."

Catholicism. Eventually, this was the opinion that prevailed: the book was authorised on the condition that the publisher excluded the essay “Notes on Nationalism.” It is difficult to know how Verrié reacted to this resolution, but I have not found any trace of a book by Orwell entitled *Assaigs* published in Spain.

What could be found in 1970 were the Spanish and the Catalan versions of *Homage to Catalonia*.²² Nevertheless, the history of the reception of this book in Spain does not begin here, but a few years earlier. Given the nature of the events narrated and the amount of criticism the author included about Franco’s military rebellion, it is only natural that we have to wait until the 1960s to see the first attempts to introduce the book into Spain. These attempts consisted of five importation requests dated in 1962, which, contrary to expectations, were approved. A possible explanation may lie in the fact that the number of copies requested was very limited (one or five copies in some cases) and that they were English editions; therefore the censors would not expect them to actually reach a wide reading audience.²³ On the other hand, two requests to import the Argentine edition of *Cataluña 1937: testimonio sobre la revolución española* in 1964 and 1969 were not so lucky.²⁴ Although they intended to introduce a mere 60 copies altogether, the Spanish text presupposed a much larger reception, and it was banned. Likewise, the two attempts to publish this war memoir in Catalan by Verrié Editor and Editorial Portic in 1964 and 1967 respectively were turned down.²⁵ In both cases, despite Orwell’s critical views of the Communists, the author was found to be too “red” and critical of Franco’s dictatorship.²⁶

²² George Orwell, *Homenaje a Cataluña: un testimonio sobre la revolución española*, trans. Carlos Pujol (Barcelona: Ariel, 1970); *Homenatge a Catalunya: un testimoni sobre la revolució espanyola*, trans. Ramón Folch i Camarasa (Barcelona: Ariel, 1969).

²³ See Files 490–62, 507–62, 536–62, 548–62, 650–62, in Box 77352, No IDD 52.117. Other eight importation requests of English editions of *Homage to Catalonia* were authorised between 1966 and 1970.

²⁴ George Orwell, *Cataluña 1937: testimonio sobre la revolución española*, trans. Noemí Rosemblatt (Buenos Aires: Proyección, 1963). See File 844–64, Box 77365, No IDD 52.117, and File 1292–69, Box 77392, No IDD 52.117.

²⁵ See File 2355–64, Box 15171, No IDD 50.06 and File 9381–67, Box 18570, No IDD 50.06.

²⁶ I wrote about this in “George Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*: A Politically Incorrect Story,” in Alberto Lázaro, ed., *The Road from George Orwell: His*

Editorial Ariel encountered the same kind of problems in 1968 when they tried to publish *Homage to Catalonia*, this time in Spanish.²⁷ After reading the Argentine edition *Cataluña 1937*, the censor suggested “polishing” the book by substituting the terms “pro-Franco” for “Fascist,” “government-supporters” for “Loyalists” and “rising” for “revolt.”²⁸ He also pointed out a few words and phrases that should be suppressed, such as the word “national” in the phrase “the Catalan national flag” (147), the adjective “terrible” used to describe Franco’s dictatorship (81), the reference to “the more naked and developed Fascism of Franco and Hitler” (196), as well as several comments which presented Franco as “the puppet of Italy and Germany,” somebody “tied to the big feudal landlords,” “an anachronism” supported only by millionaires or romantics (196–97). Furthermore, this censor recommended including some explanatory footnotes that corrected or elucidated various inappropriate remarks:

- The first footnote explained what the censor perceived to be an error when Orwell wrote that almost all military maps were in the possession of the Fascists: “Completely false, the military cartographic archive was in the Geographical Service of the Ministry of the War in Madrid.”²⁹
- When Orwell described how the Fascists conquered Málaga and the Italians fell upon “the wretched civilian population, some of whom were pursued and machined-gunned for a hundred miles” (54), there should also be a footnote specifying that “[s]uch members of the civilian population were the popular militias who ran away in confusion.”³⁰

Achievement and Legacy (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), 71–91. Some material regarding the Files 10904–68 and 6605–69 will be reproduced here.

²⁷ See File 10904–68, Box 19476, No IDD 50.06.

²⁸ “habría que limarla de expresiones como ‘Fascista’ por franquista (págs. 24, 29, 32–34, 42, 44, 49, 51–54, 56, 59, 60, 63, 85–86, 88, 94–97, 100–106, 108–116, 121, 126, 159, 174, 187, 189–192, 199 202, 210, 231); sustituir ‘leales’ por gubernamentales a la pág. 33, ‘revuelta’ por sublevación a la pág. 35.” The page numbers refer to the Argentine edition, *Cataluña 1937*, used by the censor and included in the File.

²⁹ “Completamente falso, el depósito cartográfico militar se hallaba en el Servicio Geográfico del Ministerio de la Guerra en Madrid.”

³⁰ “Tales miembros de la población civil eran las milicias populares que huían a la desbandada.”

- In the fifth chapter, the reader did not like Orwell's statement that "the Spanish people" had risen against Franco when he tried to overthrow the lawful government (59); therefore the publisher had to explain the following: "It cannot be stated that it has been the Spanish 'people' who opposed the National Movement, but the Socialist, Communist and Anarchist workers' organisations which practically monopolised working-class trade unionism."³¹
- In the same chapter, Orwell's opinion that Franco's coup was initially an attempt "not so much to impose Fascism as to restore feudalism" (59), should be modulated by the following footnote: "What the National Movement, led by Franco, attempted was to restore the national spirit, disintegrated and nearly dissolved by the Popular Front, for whom it was seditious to say 'Viva España'."³²
- A few lines later, when Orwell asserted that Franco's rising "had been foreseen for a long time past" (60), another footnote had to be included: "What was undoubtedly being expected for still a longer time was the outbreak of the revolutionary movement instigated by the Socialists, which had already shown its face clearly in October 1934."³³
- Then, Orwell referred to the "appalling lies" about the atrocities that were being circulated by the pro-Fascist press (61) and the censor suggested the following footnote: "Unfortunately they were not lies but proven facts, as comes out of the legal proceedings of the public prosecutor's office."³⁴
- Finally, the censor corrected what he thought was another inaccuracy when Orwell wrote that the shortage of tobacco on the Republican side was due to the fact that Franco held the Canaries, where all the Spanish tobacco is grown. The censor added that "all

³¹ "No se puede afirmar que haya sido el 'pueblo' español quien se opuso al Movimiento nacional, sino las organizaciones obreras socialistas, comunistas y anarquistas que prácticamente poseían el monopolio del sindicalismo obrero."

³² "Lo que el Movimiento nacional, dirigido por Franco, pretendía [sic] era restaurar el sentido nacional, disgregado y casi disuelto por el Frente Popular, para el que era sedicioso decir 'Viva España.'"

³³ "Lo que sin duda se esperaba desde hacía aún más tiempo era el estallido del movimiento revolucionario propugnado por los socialistas y que ya había mostrado claramente su faz en Octubre de 1934."

³⁴ "Desgraciadamente no eran mentiras sino realidades comprobadas, como aparece de lo actuado por la Fiscalía de la Causa General."

the tobacco then produced in the Canaries was not enough to supply the people of the islands. The so-called Canarian tobacco is nurtured moreover and mainly by importation.”³⁵

In January 1969 the publisher was informed that the book could be printed if they made the above-mentioned modifications. However, Editorial Ariel had second thoughts about this publishing project and decided to print a Catalan version first, for “commercial reasons,” they said. Accordingly, they sent a new application in June 1969 including proofs of the Catalan translation entitled *Homenatge a Catalunya*, where they declared that they had tried to “smooth things over” and had made all the changes indicated by the previous censor.³⁶ However, the censorship office did not share that encouraging view. The same censor who wrote the report in January examined the Catalan edition and considered that only some changes had been made. Thus, he insisted that the adjective “Fascist” should be replaced by “pro-Franco” in many pages, and that the word “feudalism” should be substituted by “Catholic nationalism” in the passage in which Orwell states that Franco’s coup was initially an attempt “not so much to impose Fascism as to restore feudalism (59).”³⁷ Therefore, the censorship board wrote to the publisher rejecting their application. It was only when the publisher complied with all the censor’s suggestions in February 1970 that a first printing of 3,000 copies of the Catalan edition of *Homage to Catalonia* was authorised.³⁸ It was a

³⁵ “Todo el tabaco que entonces producían las Canarias era insuficiente para abastecer a la población de las Islas. El llamado tabaco canario se nutre además y principalmente de la importación.”

³⁶ See File 6605–69, Box 671, No IDD 50.07.

³⁷ “todavía se advierte el empleo del adjetivo ‘feixistas’ en las páginas 40–43, 45, 50–51, 56–57, 60, 80, 85–86, 90, 98, 160, 169, 170–172, 181, el adjetivo debe ser sustituido por franquistes, nacionalistes, etc., en la pág. 170 sustituir ‘antifeixista’ por antifranquista, y ‘filofeixistes’ por filofranquistes, igualmente en la siguiente 171 ‘filofeixista’ por filofranquista, y ‘feixisme’ por franquismo, corrección que igualmente deberá hacerse en las págs. 178, 202, y 208. [...] [y en la pág. 65] sustituir ‘feudalisme’ por naciolisme catolic.”

³⁸ The technical term used to authorise the publication of this book was “silencio administrativo,” which was the policy of doing nothing about a matter. According to the 1956 “Ley de Procedimiento Administrativo” (Act of Administrative Procedures), when an application was answered by “silencio administrativo,” it meant that the result was negative, except with

much distorted version of Orwell's story. Similarly, the Spanish edition of the book, also published by Editorial Ariel in 1970, kept the mutilations and changes of the Catalan version.³⁹ What is more, the same corrections and distortions were maintained in later editions of the book until 2003, Orwell's centenary year, when at last new complete and more reliable editions appeared in Spain, both in Spanish and Catalan.⁴⁰

The fact that *Homage to Catalonia* had all these censorship problems as late as 1970 shows the unremitting strictness of censorship rules even in the final years of Franco's regime. This also proves the difficulties Spanish readers had to gain an understanding of Orwell's political thought over twenty years after his death. It is not surprising, then, that the following attempt to publish a collection of his essays received equally harsh treatment. This time it was Editorial Destino that in 1972 wanted to publish a selection of forty distinguished pieces under the title of *Los ingleses y otros ensayos* (*The English People and Other Essays*).⁴¹ The file contains the galley proofs of a volume which does not correspond to any particular collection of essays by Orwell published in Britain or America, but it gathers together a wide range of literary, political, social, cultural and autobiographical pieces. Among these were "The English People," "Such, Such Were the Joys," "A Hanging," "Shooting an Elephant," "How the Poor Die," "The Spike," "Hop-Picking," "Clink," "Marrakech," "Inside the Whale," "Notes on the Way," "Wells, Hitler and the World State," "Rudyard Kipling," "Raffles and Miss Blandish," "Spilling the Spanish Beans," "Decline of the English Murder," "Looking Back on the Spanish War," "Why I Write," "Lear,

regard to requests for permission, which is the case here. The year of publication that appears in this first Catalan edition of *Homage to Catalonia* is 1969, although in fact, it was authorised and published a year later.

³⁹ See File 7399-70, Box 474, No IDD 50.07. Importations requests of the complete Argentinian version were still banned in 1974 and 1976. See File 219-74, Box 77417, No IDD 52.117; File 1806-74, Box 77423, No IDD 52.117; and File 449-76, Box 77431, No IDD 52.117. Oddly enough, the importation of one single copy of a Penguin edition of *Homage to Catalonia* was also forbidden in 1971; see File 180-71, Box 77399, No IDD 52.117.

⁴⁰ George Orwell, *Orwell en España*, trans. Antonio Prometeo Moya (Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2003); Orwell, *Homenatge a Catalunya*, trans. Ramon Floch i Camarasa (Barcelona: Destino, 2003).

⁴¹ See File 2899-72, Box 191, No IDD 50.07.

Tolstoy and the Fool," "Diary for *The Road to Wigan Pier*," "Reflections on Ghandi," some articles from his "As I Please" column, and some reviews of books on the Spanish Civil War.

Once again, it was the essays on the Spanish Civil War that stimulated the censors' outrage. They asked the publisher to suppress the translation of "Spilling the Spanish Beans," "Looking Back on the Spanish War," Orwell's review of *The Spanish Cockpit* by Franz Borkenau, an extract from "Arthur Koestler" and some other excerpts of letters with comments about Spain. Obviously, Orwell's unsafe political background in the Spanish war was still well remembered. One of the censors pointed out that Orwell served in the "Red ranks," although he justified his negative report by alluding to Orwell's "pretension of objectivity" as well as to his "lack of insight and historical perspective."⁴² Another reader also wrote that Orwell was an "international pinko" who had come "to kill Spaniards. Naturally on the Red side. And naturally, this is reflected in his essays."⁴³

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the objections raised by the censors were not only of a political nature, but also related to moral issues. They asked to cut a couple of obscenities.⁴⁴ The first obscene observation marked on the galley proofs of the book corresponds to a passage from "Hop-Picking" in which an old deaf tramp named Deafie is engaged in exhibitionist practices:

He lifted it [a newspaper] aside, and we saw that he had his trousers undone and was exhibiting his penis to the women and children as they passed. I was surprised — such a decent old man, really; but there is hardly a tramp who has not some sexual abnormality. (*Collected Essays I*, 93)

⁴² "pese a su pretensión de objetividad, no puede ocultar sus prejuicios contra el régimen de Franco. [...] El espíritu y la mentalidad general del autor es: a) tendenciosa socialista sin ser comunista. b) Falta de visión profunda y de perspectiva histórica."

⁴³ "el autor, un rojillo internacional, vino a matar españoles. Naturalmente en el bando rojo. Y naturalmente, esto se refleja en sus ensayos."

⁴⁴ Spanish censors also found Orwell to be somewhat obscene in some explicit sexual scenes between Flory and his Burmese lover Ma Hla May in *Burmese Days*, and between Winston and Julia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Lázaro, "La sátira de George Orwell," 1–15).

The second obscenity refers to a dialogue between two prisoners, Snouter and Charlie, in the essay entitled “Clink,” where Charlie boasts about his sexual encounters with old women in Dartmoor and swear-words are extensively used:

Snouter: “Four years without cunt — Cripes! Fellers inside’d go ’alf mad if they saw a pair of legs (a woman), eh?”

Charlie: “Ah well, in Dartmoor we used to fuck old women down on the allotments. Take ’em under the ’edge in the mist. Spud-grabbers they was — ole trots seventy years old. Forty of us was caught and went through ’ell for it. Bread and water, chains — everythink. I took my Bible oath as I wouldn’t get no more stretches after that.”

Snouter: “Yes, you! ’Ow come you got in the stir lars’ time, then?”

Charlie: “You wouldn’t ’ardly believe it, boy. I was narked — narked by my own sister! Yes, my own fucking sister. My sister’s a cow if ever there was one. She got married to a religious maniac, and ’e’s so fucking religious that she’s got fifteen kids now [...]. (I, 117)

Moreover, *Los ingleses y otros ensayos* was also banned on religious grounds. The censors marked some anti-Catholic comments from Orwell’s “As I Please” columns for *Tribune*, published on 25 February and 3 March 1944. They consisted of a reference to the similar aims pursued by Christ and Karl Marx, and some subversive remarks against St Teresa, St Joseph of Copertino and Catholic intellectuals. As one of the censors wrote, they were pejorative and tendentious judgments that denoted Orwell’s “authentic ignorance of religion.”⁴⁵ Other marked passages provide clear evidence of the detailed scrutiny that books were subjected to during Franco’s regime and the severity of the censorship guidelines on religious issues. “Inside the Whale” contained a critical remark against Catholic novelists which the censor could not ignore:

The atmosphere of orthodoxy is always damaging to prose, and above all it is completely ruinous to the novel, the most anarchical of all forms of literature. How many Roman Catholics have been good novelists? Even the handful one could name have usually been bad Catholics. (I, 588)

Similarly, in “Notes on the Way,” Orwell’s often-quoted comparison between modern man and a wasp cut into two halves was also

⁴⁵ “sus juicios sobre materia religiosa son peyorativos, tendenciosos y denotando en el autor auténtica ignorancia sobre la religión.”

considered offensive. The whole second paragraph of this essay had to be deleted if the book was to be published. Orwell's diatribe against religious practice and his concept of Christian paradise must have sounded distasteful to a Spanish Catholic censor with strong religious beliefs, even in the 1970s:

It was absolutely necessary that the soul should be cut away. Religious belief, in the form in which we had known it, had to be abandoned. By the nineteenth century it was already in essence a lie, a semi-conscious device for keeping the rich rich and the poor poor. The poor were to be contented with their poverty, because it would all be made up to them in the world beyond the grave, usually pictured as something mid-way between Kew Gardens and a jeweller's shop. Ten thousand a year for me, two pounds a week for you, but we are all the children of God. And through the whole fabric of capitalist society there ran a similar lie, which it was absolutely necessary to rip out. (II, 30)

Another striking example of Orwell's anti-Catholic bias was found in "Reflections on Ghandi." Although the main argument in this famous essay is that Ghandi's politics of non-violence would never work against totalitarian regimes, Orwell also disapproves of the near-sainthood status that Ghandi had attained. The first sentence of the essay already points in that direction: "Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent" (IV, 521). It is precisely this critique of sainthood that Spanish censors viewed as an attack on religious faith. Whereas the Catholic Church emphasises the importance of sainthood both as a lifetime goal and as a way to highlight positive role models for everyone, Orwell here argues that the average human being has never aspired to sainthood, and probably never would. It is no wonder then that the censors marked the following passage:

Many people genuinely do not wish to be saints, and it is probable that some who achieve or aspire to sainthood have never felt much temptation to be human beings. If one could follow it to its psychological roots, one would, I believe, find that the main motive for "non-attachment" is a desire to escape from the pain of living, and above all from love, which, sexual or nonsexual, is hard work. But it is not necessary here to argue whether the other-worldly or the humanistic ideal is "higher." The point is that they are incompatible. One must choose between God and Man, and all "radicals" and "progressives," from the mildest Liberal to the most extreme Anarchist, have in effect chosen Man. (IV, 528)

When Editorial Destino learned about all the suppressions suggested by the censorship office, they decided not to publish the book. However, they tried again two years later. On 8 May 1974, the publisher asked for a revision of the file arguing that the volume “only contains historical essays written over thirty years ago” and that its publication does not represent “the slightest danger.”⁴⁶ The answer from the censorship board that I found in the file is double. First, there is a note, dated 17 May 1974, in which they insisted that cuts had to be made in order to publish the volume. However, there is another little piece of paper with three letters and a date, “Aut. 30–5–74,” the usual message censors wrote when they authorised something. Whatever the case, no collection of essays entitled *Los ingleses y otros ensayos* appears in any library catalogue or bibliographic index. However, in 1976 Editorial Destino published 3,000 copies of a volume entitled *A mi manera (As I Please)*, which basically includes the same essays as the previous book.⁴⁷ It seems that the publisher, for whatever reason, waited for two years and published Orwell’s collection of essays under a different title. We should not forget that, by then, Franco had already died and his regime was beginning to dissolve, although the censorship office remained open and controlled the edition of books. In fact, there is a file on *A mi manera* where we can see that the book was authorised on 26 January 1977.⁴⁸ This file does not include any report but it has a copy of the volume in which somebody had folded the top corner of some pages that contain many underlined words. They belong to the essay “Looking Back on the Spanish War.” It seems that, although the book was authorised, the censor could not help marking those passages which still sounded offensive.

The case of *The Road to Wigan Pier* is similar in many respects to that of *A mi manera*. Orwell’s extended essay on working-class life and Socialism was also published in Spanish by Editorial Destino in

⁴⁶ “Teniendo en cuenta que se trata de una obra que contiene únicamente ensayos históricos escritos hace más de treinta años creo que su publicación no ofrece el menor peligro y espero que sea autorizada su edición por nuestra Editorial.”

⁴⁷ George Orwell, *A mi manera*, trans. Rafael Vázquez Zamora (Barcelona: Destino, 1976).

⁴⁸ See File 1128–77, Box 39, No IDD 50.08.

1976, the year after Franco's death.⁴⁹ As in the previous case, the file approving this edition does not include any censorship report, but it has a copy of the volume in which somebody, presumably the censor, had marked three short passages in blue pencil and had also folded the top corner of the pages.⁵⁰ These offensive remarks are all in chapter 11, which begins with the allegedly subversive question "Meanwhile, what about Socialism?" One of the marked passages is included in the first paragraph of this chapter, where Orwell refers once more to the horrible conditions of working-class life and, what is worse, sees no sign of improvement: "And this is merely a preliminary stage, in a country still rich with the loot of a hundred years" (*El camino*, 173). The second passage foresees the arrival of a Fascist government in Spain after the Civil War. We should remember that censors did not like Orwell's use of the word "Fascist" to describe Franco's political stance:

As I write this the Spanish Fascist forces are bombarding Madrid, and it is quite likely that before the book is printed we shall have another Fascist country to add to the list, not to mention a Fascist control of the Mediterranean which may have the effect of delivering British foreign policy into the hands of Mussolini. (174)

In the third passage Orwell establishes a parallel between Communism and Catholicism, which might have sounded inappropriate to any right-wing Catholic censor.

One of the analogies between Communism and Roman Catholicism is that only the "educated" are completely orthodox. The most immediately striking thing about the English Roman Catholics — I don't mean the real Catholics, I mean the converts: Ronald Knox, Arnold Lunn *et hoc genus* — is their intense self-consciousness. Apparently they never think, certainly they never write, about anything but the fact that they *are* Roman Catholics. (180)

Comments like these were surely the reason why five 1962 attempts to import *The Road to Wigan Pier* (167 copies altogether) were unsuccessful, even though the volumes were in English and might not

⁴⁹ George Orwell, *El camino de Wigan Pier*, trans. Ester Donato (Barcelona: Destino, 1976).

⁵⁰ See File 1985-76, Box 81, No IDD 50.08.

have attracted a wide readership.⁵¹ Nevertheless, since 1963 the importation of the book was allowed without any problems. It was thanks to a report provided by a censor who, after examining a request from Editorial Alhambra to import one single copy in English, stated: "In English, and few copies, it can be authorised despite its rabid Socialism."⁵² Naturally, this opened the door to other authorised imports of the same documentary (six cases between 1964 and 1975, which amounted to 597 copies).

In 1978, the same year the Spanish democratic Constitution was passed, Ediciones Destino continued with the task of making Orwell's essays known in Spain. In June they applied for the publication of the volume *Mi guerra civil española (My Spanish Civil War)*.⁵³ This collection gathers together twenty-nine essays, letters and reviews that allude to the Spanish war, including of course the controversial "Looking Back on the Spanish War." As one might expect, this time there were no censorship problems. However, the censor could not resist the temptation of writing a very negative report. First he identified Orwell as a member of the POUM and wrote that his work had only a "testimonial value," since he did not provide evidences or data. Then, the report also highlighted the poor literary quality of the essays. The volume was described as "flat, redundant, dull, partisan, without any substance. Clear evidence that they are willing to write books with materials never meant for that purpose. The buyer will throw away his money. Any anecdote from the most illiterate soldier of our war raises more interest than this scribble by the illustrious Orwell. A swindle."⁵⁴

A look at the files on the importation of Orwell's volumes of essays also reveals some interesting information. In the 1960s and early 1970s the censorship office authorised the seven applications to

⁵¹ See Files 460–62, 507–62, 536–62, 546–62, 650–62, in Box 77352, No IDD 52.117.

⁵² "En inglés, y pocos ejemplares, puede tolerarse pese a su rabioso socialismo." See File 1836–63, Box 77361, No IDD 52.117.

⁵³ See File 6287–78, Box 16, No IDD 50.09.

⁵⁴ "el libro es de una pobreza desconsoladora. Editar esto, es como editar una nota de Unamuno a su zapatero. Soso, redundante, aburrido, partidista, sin chicha. Clara prueba de que se busca hacer libros con materiales que nunca fueron pensados para eso. El comprador tirará su dinero. Cualquier anécdota del más iletrado soldado de nuestra guerra, tiene más interés que este garrapateo del ilustre Orwell. Una estafa."

import a total of eighty-four copies of *Decline of the English Murder and Other Essays* (1965). Similarly a 1976 application to import forty copies of *Critical Essays* (1946) encountered no difficulties at all. Nevertheless, other titles were not so successful. The following tables show the growing interest of Spanish booksellers in Orwell's essays and how the fate of these books changed in 1975, with the end of Franco's regime.

Inside the Whale and Other Essays (1940)

| File | Box | Importer | Date | No. of copies | Outcome |
|---------|-------|---------------------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| 252-67 | 77376 | Aguilar S.A. de Ediciones | 23-2-1967 | 3 | Banned |
| 1687-68 | 77386 | Editorial Alhambra | 19-11-1968 | 1 | Banned |
| 152-70 | 77394 | Librería Oxford | 9-2-1970 | 500 | Banned |
| 180-71 | 77399 | Editorial Mangold | 13-2-1971 | 1 | Banned |
| 1536-75 | 77429 | Editorial Mangold | 19-12-1975 | 75 | Authorised |
| 725-76 | 77432 | Editorial Mangold | 30-6-1976 | 50 | Authorised |
| 1066-76 | 77434 | Editorial Mangold | 28-10-1976 | 50 | Authorised |
| 1206-76 | 77435 | Editorial Mangold | 24-11-1976 | 50 | Authorised |

Selected Essays (1957)

| File | Box | Importer | Date | No. of copies | Outcome |
|--------|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| 651-62 | 77352 | Espasa-Calpe | 27-3-1962 | 1 | Banned |
| 743-64 | 77364 | Editorial Alambra | 2-6-1964 | 10 | Banned |

The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell (1968)

| File | Box | Importer | Date | No. of copies | Outcome |
|---------|-------|-------------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| 650-69 | 77390 | Librería Buchholz | 10-5-1969 | 1 | Banned |
| 1336-70 | 77398 | Editorial Mangold | 22-12-1970 | 1 | Banned |
| 725-76 | 77432 | Editorial Mangold | 30-6-1976 | 50 | Authorised |
| 1066-76 | 77434 | Editorial Mangold | 28-10-1976 | 50 | Authorised |

In the 1980s the situation improved considerably. In 1984, a small publisher from Madrid, Editorial Revolución, wanted to contribute to

the Orwell year with a book entitled *Dentro y fuera de la ballena* (*Inside and Outside the Whale*), which includes contributions from J. Ignacio Lacosta, Jonah Raskin and E. P. Thompson on Orwell's political thought.⁵⁵ As the title suggests, Orwell's famous essay "Inside the Whale" is the pivot on which the whole volume revolves, and a Spanish version of it is included in the volume. That magic year 1984 Destino also published the diaries that Orwell kept during the first three years of the Second World War, *Diario de guerra, (1940–1942)* (*War-time Diary, 1940–1942*).⁵⁶ And a year later, the same publisher brought out another collection of Orwell's essays, mainly reviews and pieces on literary topics, under the title *Una buena taza de té* (*A Nice Cup of Tea*).⁵⁷ More recently, Ediciones Octaedro from Barcelona have printed a new volume of essays written by Orwell in the nineteen-forties, *Escritos (1940–1948): literatura y política* (2001) (*Writings, 1940–1948: Literature and Politics*).⁵⁸ There is even a Basque translation of "Notes on Nationalism," *Nazionalismoari buruz* (1993).⁵⁹

This brief account of the presence of Orwell's essays in Spain is necessarily limited in scope, but it serves to show the lights and shades in the vicissitudes his works underwent in this country. It goes without saying that for the Spanish censors Orwell was not that "known and respected" literary figure, as Hammond suggested above. On the contrary, many agreed that he was rather ignorant of Spanish political history and of religious matters. Worse still, he was considered biased, obscene and even a bad stylist. As a result of this, censorship was certainly a key factor that hindered the reading, translation or publication of Orwell's essays in Spain. On the one hand, Franco's censorship system had a considerable negative impact on the reception of Orwell's documentary books: the first Spanish edition of *Down and Out in Paris and London* was suppressed in 1951

⁵⁵ J. Ignacio Lacosta, et al., *Dentro y fuera de la ballena*, trans. Ana Cañellas and Tomás del Amo (Madrid: Editorial Revolución, 1984).

⁵⁶ George Orwell, *Diario de guerra, (1940–1942)*, trans. Verónica Teixidor de Ventós (Barcelona: Destino, 1984).

⁵⁷ George Orwell, *Una buena taza de té*, trans. Ester Donato (Barcelona: Destino, 1985).

⁵⁸ *Escritos (1940–1948): literatura y política*, trans. Concepción Bados Ciria (Barcelona: Ediciones Octaedro, 2001).

⁵⁹ George Orwell, *Nazionalismoari buruz*, trans. Ana Ugarte (Pamplona / Iruña: Editorial Pamiela, 1993).

and it did not appear until 1973; *Homage to Catalonia* was banned for several years and distorted beyond recognition when published in 1970; and *The Road to Wigan Pier*, whose importation was prohibited until 1963, was published as late as 1976. As far as his volumes of essays are concerned, apart from those few copies of *Shooting an Elephant* and *Decline of the English Murder* imported in the nineteen-fifties and nineteen-sixties, for many Spanish readers *A mi manera* was really their first taste of Orwell's collected essays; and that was again in 1976. Fortunately, nowadays, thanks to Ediciones Destino and some other publishers, the situation is very different and most of these works are available in various Spanish editions.