

# The Spanish Translation of *Manhattan Transfer* and Censorship

ROSA MARÍA BAUTISTA CORDERO

Universidad Alfonso X El Sabio  
rosa@rosenvinge.org

Recibido: 10 de diciembre de 2012

Aceptado: 7 de marzo de 2013

## ABSTRACT

Censorship during Franco's regime was an obstacle to the publication and circulation of books in Spain, particularly until the late 1950's, when certain signs of a change in attitude were visible, and censors started to authorize previously censored or banned books. Such censorship also had an impact on the publication of translated works by the direct intervention of censors when pronouncing their opinions upon application for permission by publishers. This article deals with the results of our research into the censorship files at the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares regarding the publication in Spain of the translation of John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*.

**Keywords:** censorship, John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, José Robles Pazos.

Censura y Traducción en España: el caso de *Manhattan Transfer*

## RESUMEN

La censura del régimen de Franco afectó a la publicación y circulación de libros en España, especialmente hasta finales de los años 50, cuando los censores comenzaron a aceptar gradualmente obras que hasta entonces habían sido censuradas, total o parcialmente. Esta censura afectó también de forma directa a las obras traducidas que se pretendían publicar en España durante esos años. En nuestro trabajo presentamos los resultados de la investigación llevada a cabo en el Archivo General de la Administración de Alcalá de Henares en relación con los expedientes de censura referidos a la traducción al español de *Manhattan Transfer*, de John Dos Passos.

**Palabras clave:** traducción, censura, John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*.

**Sumario:** 1. About the novel and its translation into Spanish. 2. *Manhattan Transfer* and censorship. 3. An analysis of the translation of censored passages. 4. Conclusion.

## 1. About the novel

*Manhattan Transfer* was first published in the United States in 1925 when Dos Passos was only 29 years of age. The publication of the novel positioned Dos Passos as one of the most innovative writers of his time, and meant the beginning of a period of immense popularity which would reach its peak with the publication of the USA trilogy in 1938, when Sartre wrote that Dos Passos was “the greatest writer of our time” (in Sanders: 302). Dos Passos’s career as a writer may be divided into two distinct periods. His early years marked by extensive travel to various parts of the world including Spain plus a political commitment to the left, and his mature years, mostly spent at his Baltimore home, when he became more interested in history and American politics with a conservative perspective.

The Spanish Civil War played a determining role in the reception of John Dos Passos as a writer both in The United States and in Spain, but with different effects; in the US, Dos Passos’s political shift triggered by the execution in Valencia –presumably by the Russians– of his friend and Spanish translator of *Manhattan Transfer*, Pepe Robles, made him less and less popular among critics, fellow writers and the reading public in the 1930’s, and his status was never fully recovered; by contrast, Robles’s death linked Dos Passos and *Manhattan Transfer* to Spain’s historical and cultural identity<sup>1</sup>. The fact that much has already been said about it does not however make it less interesting. From Baggio to Martínez de Pisón, it has caught the attention of a whole generation of scholars and readers and has translated into a renewed interest in the author of *Manhattan Transfer* in Spain, and thus in the novel itself.

The novel’s status in the US today is that of a modernist urban novel that has played an important role in the forging of 20<sup>th</sup> century American identity. With time, it has become generally accepted by American critics that *Manhattan Transfer* was the foreword to Dos Passos’s best fiction, exemplified in the USA trilogy.

In Spain, the early reception of the translation of *Manhattan Transfer* was an extremely positive one, as seen in the reviews by José (Pepe) Robles Pazos himself, Francisco Ayala –who mentioned the enormous challenge of rendering its prose into Spanish– and *La Revista Blanca*; Hemingway’s testimony regarding Dos Passos’s popularity in Spain in 1931 saying “nobody has read *Manhattan* less than four times” confirms this fact. However, there is also evidence of a not so warm early reception by other, less influential critics<sup>2</sup>. In the years that followed, all Spanish critics writing about *Manhattan Transfer* have invariably had a positive view<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> A topic related to all of this has already been studied in some depth by other critics and scholars, that is, the story of the Hemingway-Dos Passos-Robles triangle during the Spanish Civil War.

<sup>2</sup> Salaverría in *ABC* acknowledged the novel’s literary worth but longed for the old times of Emerson, Whitman or James, regretting the moral transformations in American society; Andrenio in *La Voz* was impressed by the extraordinary intuitive force of its scenes but disliked what he considered to be “lack of structure”.

<sup>3</sup> However, despite the novel’s popularity, no in-depth or extensive studies have been published, other than the prologues to various editions; among them, Rojas (1964), Gopegui (1995), Vargas Llosa (1989) and Fuentes (2000), which have all contributed to a positive reception of *Manhattan Transfer* in Spain from different perspectives.

Nowadays, it is considered a modernist novel that has stood the passage of time extremely well; it is praised for its technique but also for its validity— Spanish readers are still interested in early-20<sup>th</sup> century New York. The fact that the novel's original translator and an officer on the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War, José Robles Pazos, was presumably executed by the Russians, has kept the novel alive among critics and the reading public in the last decade<sup>4</sup>. However, there was a long period during which *Manhattan Transfer* was banned by Franco's censors in post-war years. This will be the main topic of this article.

For those unfamiliar with the novel, *Manhattan Transfer* is set in New York City from the turn of the 20th century up to the start of The Great Depression. It is hard to summarize the plot, as it is a huge puzzle of characters coming and going, of stories that interweave at times but often disconnect, with New York as the only point in common. Many characters appear and disappear throughout the novel, but there are two central ones: Ellen Thatcher and Jimmy Herf, who grow up in the city. Ellen's father, Ed Thatcher, is a hard working man who does his best to look after Ellen when his wife dies. Jimmy's mother also dies when he is a young boy after a long illness, an autobiographical echo of Dos Passos's own childhood experience. Ellen marries and gets divorced several times, while Jimmy tries to find his place as a writer in the city. Ellen and Jimmy get married and have a son, Martin, but their marriage breaks up too. Ellen stays in the city and marries again, while Jimmy decides to leave New York at the end of the novel. Many other characters appear and disappear, some of them directly connected to the central ones, others as part of the multitude that peoples the city. Bud Korpening, a farm boy, tries to find a job in the city, but commits suicide in despair when he does not succeed. Congo, a French sailor and barkeep becomes rich as a bootlegger during Prohibition, while his friend Emile marries a businesswoman. Lawyer George Baldwin becomes a politician, and so does Gus McNeal. Ellen manages to start a career in Broadway by marrying John Oglethorpe. Failed businesses, crime, World War I and the Great Depression are present through the lives of more than a hundred characters.

In 1928, when Dos Passos was asked about his view of the multi-faceted, collage-like writing technique he had used in *Manhattan Transfer*, he declared that his way of writing had a parallel with modernist art in painting, in that it “aims to express sensations rather than to tell about them”. He added that people trying to “understand” such writing according to the method of plain narrative are “likely to be seized by panic”. (In Pizer: 10)

Extremely innovative in its use of language, techniques and themes, *Manhattan Transfer* has aged well in the opinion of most critics, and a good proof of it is the number of editions and reprints that keep coming out regularly –almost one each year in Spain within the last decade.

---

<sup>4</sup> For an account of the death of José Robles see Ignacio Martínez de Pisón's *Enterrar a los Muertos*, Seix Barral, 2006.

## 2. Manhattan Transfer and Censorship

*Manhattan Transfer* by John Dos Passos and translated by José Robles Pazos was first published in Spain in 1929. After a second edition in 1930, there are no traces of further editions until 1960, after Planeta was authorized to print in Spain two thousand copies of the novel. The authorization had come in 1957 from the censorship office known as “Sección de Inspección de Libros” within the Spanish Ministerio de Educación Nacional, after some failed attempts by other publishers in the previous decade. These twenty seven years of silence are due to historical circumstances: the Civil War years (1936-39) stalled much of the editorial production; many intellectuals went into exile. In the post-war years under Franco, all works published in Spain had to be submitted to the authorities for permission. It is generally known that during Franco’s regime (1939-1975) censorship played a determining role not only in the publication of literary works, but also in the press, cinema, theatre productions and arts in general. Therefore, in order to make any bibliographical study covering post-war years in Spain, it is advisable to look into the effect of censorship on any particular work and/or author.

Several authors have written about the subject of book and press censorship<sup>5</sup>. However, the subject of censorship and foreign literature published in Spain during this historical period is yet to be explored –with few exceptions, if we consider the enormous power censors exercised over what could and could not be read. Until recently, only works on particular aspects or authors had been published, thus with a limited scope.

Rabadán *et al* (2000) carried out an interesting research project<sup>6</sup> between 1994 and 2000 that covered the issue of translation and censorship between 1939 and 1985. Although my research dates were outside their research scope<sup>7</sup>, I found their analytical approach useful for my work on *Manhattan Transfer* and censorship. Their work covers an extensive period of time and various genres, including the translation of theatre plays, films and prose fiction, mostly American and British. I am also indebted to La Prade (1991) and his work *La censura de Hemingway en España* as the starting point of my research in censorship.

It was after reading La Prade’s work that I learned about the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares. This Archive is part of the Spanish State Archive Network (*Red de Archivos Estatales*) under the custody of the Ministerio de Cultura. The access to these archives is free. The Archivo General de la Administración (AGA) keeps all the documentation generated by the various Spanish State Agencies and Government Departments, some of its sources dating as far back as 1711 through to the 1990’s. My specific search area is kept under the General Administration Archives of the Ministerio de Cultura. Archives belonging to this section include documents from 1927 to 1991.

<sup>5</sup> ABELLÁN (1980); ÁLVAREZ PALACIOS (1975); BENEYTO (1975); MARTÍNEZ CACHERO (1979).

<sup>6</sup> TRACE, acronym of Traducciones Censuradas.

<sup>7</sup> The original translation of *Manhattan Transfer* dates from 1929.

There are two different sets of documentation related to book censorship: one dealing with censored books (Spanish editions of national or foreign authors that were either allowed or banned); and the other, with applications for imported copies of foreign editions. The results of my research were divided into two different types of applications and replies by the censors: those records or *expedientes* containing the requests for circulation of imported copies (dating from 1962 onwards) and those containing requests for printing them in Spain (the oldest one being from 1948). I will not go into detail regarding the application for circulation of foreign editions, since it is not the subject matter of this article, but it is worth noting that between 1962 and 1974 no restrictions were imposed by Government officials, since the replies were in all cases favourable for *Manhattan Transfer*; coincidentally, during our search in these files we found that, the circulation of imported books by authors such as Diderot, Beauvoir, Henry Miller or Kerouac was banned in Spain until as late as 1973.

Under the heading *censura de libros* or book censorship I found a total of 65 entries for John Dos Passos, referred to as Dos Passos, J.; Dos Passos, John; Dos Passos, Juan, and even Dos Passos, Ojhn. For each of the entries the list always contains 10 different fields, as follows: book title; author's name; file; AGA catalogue number; number of copies; entry date; name of censor (in Spanish euphemistically referred to as *lector* or reader); date of resolution; other comments. Unfortunately, some of the fields were blank, i.e., catalogue number (reference to the exact location in the Archives); number of copies; name of censor; comments. Therefore, I was left to work from a list that included the title of the book, author, file number, publisher and dates. The missing information needed further searching.

There were seven files<sup>8</sup> listed for *Manhattan Transfer*, with inconsistent names: Manhatan transfer or Manhattan transfer (sic). Three of the files that were listed in the computerized database were not in their boxes, but, on the other hand, I found five new files that had not been entered into the computer. Finding unlisted files was possible because censors always made reference to the previous reports or *informes* on each particular work (if any); so each file leads you to the previous one, they are all "linked".

I will briefly explain the contents of these files, for those unfamiliar with the system. The files are contained in brown envelopes; sometimes these only include the official/administrative documentation, sometimes also things like book-covers or even the books themselves with the annotations of the readers. Going through all of it is very interesting. But let us describe the type of documents first. On the front page, there is a report by the authorities on whether the work/book has been submitted for inspection before. This page includes the file number, the date in which the work was submitted for inspection, the signature of the chief censor to confirm the content of their records and the censor that is to read the work and report back on its "quality". As La Prade also points out, the names of the censors are difficult to trace, as they are often referred to by numbers; and when by name, the handwriting

---

<sup>8</sup> For copies of the original book censorship files on *Manhattan Transfer* see Appendix I.

is illegible. The second page is the *informe* or report itself. It consists of 6 questions La Prade (10) also mentions, and they can be translated approximately as follows: Is the work against Dogma? Against the Church? Against the Church Ministers? Against moral principles? Against the Regime and its Institutions? Against the persons that have cooperated with the Regime? There is a space below for further comments. And finally, the date and the censor's signature. The third page of the report or file is the *resolución* or pronouncement, stating whether the work can be authorised or not, and signed by another three officials, the highest in rank being the Director General. All of it is duly stamped and dated. There is usually a fourth page stating the number of copies that remain under custody. There may be other documents attached to each file, usually depending on the nature of the request. I will now go through the specific contents of the files that refer to *Manhattan Transfer*.

The oldest file in the book censorship records regarding *Manhattan Transfer* is from July 23, 1948. This is in our opinion the most interesting file, since it is the only report that includes exhaustive comments by the censor. I would like to note that it was not included in any of the lists provided by the computerized database. The file consists of an import request for 29 copies of an Argentinian edition of José Robles's translation of *Manhattan Transfer* plus the censor's report, a total of 6 pages. The publisher was Santiago Rueda (Buenos Aires), and the importer's name Iber-Amer Publicaciones Hispanoamericanas S.A. The request was denied. The censor's report, which I have translated into English, is as follows:

Is the work against Dogma? Yes. Pages 48, 110, 141  
 Against the Church? No.  
 Against the Church Ministers? No.  
 Against moral principles? Yes. Pages 31, 32, 42, 65, 66, 82, 140, 158, 159, 193, 195, 200, 201, 213, 214, 241, 168, 271, 273, 302, 393, 394.  
 Against the Regime and its Institutions? No.  
 Against persons that have co-operated with the Regime? No.  
 Comments: Novel. It is a novel about New York. The whole book is dominated by immorality. Corrupted morals presented naturally in the everyday life of the city. Abortion, adultery, divorce, sodomy, and a variety of nefarious sins.

The report was signed on August 9, 1948 by censor no. 19, Mr de Lorenzo. The final pronouncement denied authorisation of the novel. It was issued on August 13, 1948. Within the file was a copy of the novel, in which the "immoral" paragraphs had been marked.

Table 1 below shows the transcription of the censored passages, the page reference being that of the actual *galerada* or prospective edition that required approval and that is kept at the Archivo together with the files about it. On it, the censor marked or crossed out the type of material which was unacceptable. The following passages were censored on the grounds of morality or because they attacked the dogma of the Catholic Church. The censor found the following pages included content against morality: 31, 32, 42, 65, 66, 82, 140, 158, 159, 193, 195, 200, 201, 213, 214, 241, 268, 271, 273, 302, 393, 394. And the following, against the Catholic dogma: 48, 110, 141. Looking at the censor's marks on the book, it is easy to tell

where the censored passage starts, but not where it ends, since he did not always mark it. The most significant phrases are shown below, although not the full text of the controversial parts indicated by the censor. For a better understanding of the censored contents, I have included the English version too. The translated version corresponds to the *galerada* in the Archivo files, which belongs to the 1941 Santiago Rueda edition, Buenos Aires, credited to José Robles; the English original page references are based on the Penguin edition of 1986.

Table 1: Censored passages

Page 31- Oye, ¿Cuánto cuesta una mujer en Nueva York?	Page 30-Say how much does a woman cost in New York?
Page 32- Y si hubiera ahora aquí una buena hembra cachonda, aquí mismo en la cubierta, ¿no te gustaría revolcarte con ella?.../... Soñaba con una rubia. La hubiera atrapado...si no me despiertas.	Page 30, 31- And if there was a nice passionate little woman right here now where the deck's warm, wouldn't you like to love her up? [.../...] I dreamed of a little blonde girl. I'd have had her if you hadn't waked me.
Page 42 – Tas de sacréns cochons, ¡madonna!.../... La morena se ha estado timando contigo toda la noche...No quiero nada con ellas ni con sus puercas enfermedades.	Page 40- Tas de sacréns cochons...sporca madonna! [.../...] That brunette girl makes eyes at you all night... [.../...] I don't want any of them or their dirty diseases either.
Page 48-Dios está de su parte, como un policía... Cuando llegue la hora mataremos a Dios... Yo soy anarquista	Page 44- God's on their side, like a policeman... When the day comes we'll kill God... I am an anarchist
Pages 65/66- Mira, Georgy, tenemos que ser prudentes. No debes venir aquí tan a menudo,, Yo no soy un hombre de esos...Se agarraron, vacilantes, sus bocas furiosamente unidas...y la abrazó torpemente, respirando fuerte, como un loco.	Page 59- But honest. Georgey, we've got to be careful. You mustn't come here so often. [.../...] I've never done anything like this before [.../...] They clung to each other swaying, mouths furiously mingling [.../...] look out, we almost had the lamp over.
Page 82- Ella le echó los brazos al cuello y le besó fuerte en la boca	Page 75- She put her arms round his neck and kissed him hard on the mouth
Page 110-Dentro de diez años un cristiano ya no podrá ganarse la vida aquí...Le digo que los católicos y los judíos acabarán por echarnos de nuestro país...	Page 99- In ten years a Christian won't be able to make a living...I tell you the Catholics and the Jews are going to run us out of our own country...
Page 140-Mire a esa mujer de enfrente. Por causa de ella tengo que dejar los visillos bajados todo el tiempo... ¿por qué? Oh, eres demasiado joven para saber ciertas cosas. Te chocaría, Jimmy.	Page 125-It's on account of her I have to keep my shades drawn all the time...Why? Oh, you're much too young to know. You'd be shocked, Jimmy.
Page 141-Al encogerse de hombros la bata se le escurrió, descubriendo un tórax plano, liso, sin pelos. -Zabe usted, el señor Oglethorpe y yo vamos a interpretar el <i>Cantar de los Cantares</i> . Él lo lee y yo lo interpreto bailando.../... -Tu ombligo es taza torneada, que nunca está falta de bebida, tu vientre como un montón de trigo, cercado de lirios...	Page 126-127-When he shrugged his shoulders the bathrobe fell away exposing a flat smooth hairless chest. 'You see Mr Oglethorpe and I are going to do the Song of Songs. He weads it and I interpwet it in dancing.../...' 'Thy navel is like a round goblet which wanteth no liquor, thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies...

Page 158- Sentados sobre el borde de la cama, el uno al lado del otro, reían. En la atmósfera cargada de la alcoba, llena de prendas de seda tiradas sobre las sillas, flotaba la frescura marchita de un ramo de rosas amarillas que había sobre la cómoda. Estaban abrazados. De repente él se desasíó e inclinándose sobre ella la besó en la boca.	Page 142- Giggling they sat side by side on the edge of the bed. Through the stuffy smell of the room full of little silky bits of clothing falling off chairs a fading freshness came from a bunch of yellow roses on the bureau. Their arms tightened round each other's shoulders; suddenly he wrenched himself away and leaned over her to kiss her mouth.
Page 159- Creo que el ladrón ese lo sabía...Dios...robo, adulterio, escaparse por la escalera de incendios, andar a gatas por los canalones...¡La gran vida!	Page 143-I guess that Western Union burglar knew that...Gosh...Burglary, adultery, sneaking down fireescapes, cattareading along gutters. Judas it's a great life.
Page 193- Conozco a una mujer que te sacará de apuros...	Page 174- I know a woman who'll help you...
Page 195- Por favor dejémoslo para otro día (el aborto) Hija mía, es lo único que se puede hacer	Page 175- Please let's go another time. I'm too frightened to go now. My dear child, it's the only thing to do.
Page 200- Ven aquí zorra .../...Mi sangre caerá sobre tu cabeza	Page 180, 181- Slut come here [.../...] My blood will be on your head Elaine forever
Page 213-Fíjate qué socia, qué andares...	Page 191- Look at the swell dame...Look at the way she walks...Ain't she a peacherino
Page 214-Yo no sé por qué la gente tiene hijos...la procreación es la confesión de una derrota.	Page 193- God I don't see why people have children. ...Procreation is an admission of defeat
Page 241- SE SUICIDA CON UNA ESCOPETA	Page 215- SLAYS SELF WITH SHOTGUN
Page 268-¿Puede usted comprender que una mujer sea una prostituta, una vulgar zorra?	Page 238- Can you understand a woman who wants to be a harlot, a common tart sometimes?
Page 271- Voy a tener un hijo, un hijo de Stan.	Page 241- I'm going to have a baby...Stan's baby
Page 273- TIMBRE DE NOCHE Y TIMBRE DE DÍA...hasta el final del capítulo (final segunda parte) Dutch la acercó a sí y sus bocas se juntaron	Page 242-243 NIGHT BELL AND DAY BELL...
Page 302- ¿Eh, no saben ustedes que no se puede hacer eso aquí de noche?...Vamos a tu cuarto. Page 393-baja la cortina...	Page 269- 'Hay dere dont you know you cant come out here at night this way?...'[.../...] Let's go to your room
Page 393-baja la cortina...	Page 346- Pull down the shade...
Page 394-...porque quiero darte gusto vas y me llamas prostituta	Page 347-cause I take a shine on you and want to give you a good time you call me a goddam whore

According to the censorship files, *Manhattan Transfer* continued to be banned until 1957, when its publication was finally permitted. In the late 40's Spanish censors were reluctant to allow works where sex or religion were talked about explicitly, and *Manhattan Transfer* was no exception. Themes or opinions that may pass unadverted for many readers today, were seen as evil, "nefandous sins" in the words of the censors. It is worth noting that the fact that *Manhattan Transfer* was banned for a number of years did not have a negative effect on its acceptance by the Spanish reading public and critics. In 1960, Planeta published the novel in Spain making it available for the first time after the 1930 edition of *Cenit*. According to La Prade (1991), Planeta became the strongest publisher due to the power of his chief editor, José Manuel Lara. Not only did he create a true publishing empire, becoming the

first and most popular publisher in the history of Spanish printing tradition, but also managed to get round censors in a way no one had dared before as evidenced by the correspondence he kept up with the Ministerio regarding the applications for publication of previously censored works, according to Abellán (1980). There were probably powerful economic reasons for the change, and also an increasing demand from the newly emerging intellectuals who were slowly but gradually trying to recover their freedoms.

Censorship was an obstacle in the reception of translated works during Franco's regime, mostly in the early years and up to the 60's. When some of those translated works which had been previously censored and published have been reprinted without careful review, the effect of censorship has been extended in time. This is a fascinating area for exploration. In the case of Hemingway's short stories, for example, the full uncensored version in Spanish of the *First Forty-Nine Stories* titled *Cuentos* was first published in 2007 by Lumen, translated by Damián Alou. If we take 1975 as a turning point in Spanish politics and the beginning of a democratic period, free of censorship, we can say it has taken more than forty years to recover the full texts of Hemingway's short stories for Spanish readers. This may have been due to the publishers' reluctance to invest in new translations, particularly in the case of renowned or classic authors whose books seem to be popular anyway, irrespective of the quality of the translations.

This was not the case of *Manhattan Transfer*. The novel was banned as a whole, and no censored versions were published during Franco's years. Thus, after Planeta succeeded in its 1957 application for the publication of Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, they eventually published a version which did include the above listed passages that had been seen as "inadequate" by the censors years before; the new editions were based on José Robles Pazos's translation of 1929, fortunately uncensored.

### 3. An analysis of the translation of censored passages

From a translation point of view, *Manhattan Transfer* is an extremely difficult text, given the number of cultural connotations, innovative techniques and Dos Passos's poetic language. In one of the first reviews of the novel published in 1929 in *Revista de Occidente*, Spanish writer and critic Francisco Ayala praised Robles's translation, but he also mentioned the enormous difficulties in rendering into Spanish the local accents and inflexions of the characters' speech or the finer shades of meaning, admitting to the impossibility of such a task:

Bien se mide la dificultad vencida por José Robles Pazos, traductor del libro, para verter un lenguaje de modulación peculiar, de inflexiones locales, de deformaciones especialísimas, con vocablos que en castellano reverberan un sentido verbal, directo, quizás ausente en la intención de los originales, pero inevitable. (Ayala: 124)

In the appraisal of Robles's version of *Manhattan Transfer*, we must bear in mind that with this novel Dos Passos had started a new way of writing, with his

impressionistic style, his use of language, the innovative structure of the novel, etc... Therefore, Robles had to decide on a translating approach to a new type of text where the form was at least as important as the message, or rather, the message relied a great deal on the form. Furthermore, the theme of the novel was one hundred per cent American, totally alien for most in early twentieth century Spain. I cannot but agree with Ayala when he remarked how difficult it must have been for Robles to translate *Manhattan Transfer*; with its language full of peculiar modulations, localisms, invented words, etc. However, Robles had a couple of cards up his sleeve: he was living in the United States, therefore cultural references and localisms should not have been a problem; he was a friend of Dos Passos's which probably meant he could turn to him when he felt it was necessary; and he was close to Maurice Coindreau, who had started to work on the French version of *Manhattan Transfer* shortly after its publication. Martínez de Pisón mentions his relationship with Coindreau<sup>9</sup> and their visits to Dos Passos as the likely starting point for *Manhattan Transfer*'s translation into Spanish by Robles:

En ese apartamento [Dos Passos's] coincidían a veces con Maurice Coindreau, que al poco de la publicación de *Manhattan Transfer* estaba ya trabajando en su traducción y se acercaba con frecuencia a Nueva York para consultar sus dudas con el autor. No es aventurado suponer que fue durante alguno de esos encuentros cuando Pepe y Mágina concibieron la idea de traducir sus libros al español. A finales de la década consagraron parte de su tiempo a esa labor. Mientras Pepe trabajaba en la versión de *Manhattan Transfer*, su novela más emblemática, Mágina lo hacía en la de *Rocinante vuelve al camino*, recopilación de textos en los que el norteamericano recreaba sus primeros viajes por España. (Martínez de Pisón: 17)

The original translation of *Manhattan Transfer* by Robles Pazos in 1929 has been a success in terms of readers' acceptance since it is regularly available in new editions or re-prints –almost a new re-print every year in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>10</sup>. Although the translation is still credited to José Robles Pazos in current editions, his original translation has suffered various alterations through time. This is probably due to an attempt by publishers to “update” or improve the Spanish text. In our opinion, although the number of changes is small, in some cases and upon close analysis, several translators' voices can be heard. It is also worth noting that for some time the translation has been credited to a different José Robles, a non existing José Robles Piquer<sup>11</sup>. This, however, does not seem to have a connection with the various versions of Robles Pazos's translations that have been published through the years, but rather seems to have been made by mistake<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Although it falls beyond the scope of our paper, it would be interesting to carry out a comparative analysis of Coindreau's version of *Manhattan Transfer* and Robles's version, to see if the latter followed the French translator's criteria when approaching translation difficulties.

<sup>10</sup> Data taken from Spanish ISBN records.

<sup>11</sup> See “The Spanish Translations of *Manhattan Transfer*” by BAUTISTA CORDERO, R., M., in: MARTINO, P. / JARILLA, S. M. (eds.), *Caleidoscopio de Traducción Literaria*. Madrid: Dykinson 2012, 125-137.

<sup>12</sup> See Martínez de Pisón, *Enterrar a los muertos* (2005:199-200).

Beyond our interest in the history of translated literature and censorship, our research was also aimed at finding out whether the fact that the novel had been censored and banned in 1948 had affected the Spanish translations of *Manhattan Transfer* in later editions, i.e. from 1960 onwards. We were also interested in exploring whether later editions of the novel had incorporated any changes, even minor ones, in the censored passages under analysis.

For this purpose, we worked on the comparison of the set of censored passages<sup>13</sup> in various editions. First, we compared the original 1929 edition by Cenit with the edition by Planeta in 1961, credited to José Robles Pazos, and the edition by Círculo de Lectores in 1989, credited to José Robles Piquer. After that, we compared the edition by Cenit 1929 with the two latest editions of *Manhattan Transfer* which are currently in print in Spain, Edhasa 2008 and Debolsillo 2009.

Regarding the integrity of the censored passages in the Spanish texts, we found that no alterations or mutilations had been made in any of the later versions. Some alterations might have been expected in the 1961 edition by Planeta, which we thought might have been subject to modifications by publishers themselves in fear of finding difficulties with the authorities under Franco's regime. However, we found Robles Pazos's text had been respected as far as the integrity of the previously censored passages was concerned.

Our interest then turned to the actual analysis of Robles Pazos's translation of the censored passages and whether they had suffered any variations in recent Spanish editions. We focused on those segments where we found translation issues worth mentioning.

Let us begin with the first few passages that had been marked as "immoral" by the censors. The scene is set in Chapter 2, *Metropolis*. The censored scene begins with a conversation between two French sailors, Congo and Emile, who are lying on the deck of a boat in New York City harbour. They are day-dreaming and talking about their expectations of the city. At one point in their conversation, one of them says: "And if there was a nice passionate little woman right here now where the deck's warm, wouldn't you like to love her up?" Robles Pazos's translation option is as follows: "*Y si hubiera ahora aquí una buena hembra cachonda, aquí mismo en la cubierta, ¿no te gustaría revolcarte con ella?*" If we read the Spanish translation compared with the original English version, both meaning and tone are adequately rendered. However, the Spanish version makes no reference to the deck being "warm", which is an element that adds up to the sensuality of the sailor's thoughts. Instead, Robles Pazos chose to use the expression "*buena hembra cachonda*" which is more sexually explicit than "nice passionate little woman" and has a lower register than the English original. In the following sentence, the sailor says he was dreaming of a "little blonde girl", which becomes just "a blonde" (*una rubia*) in Robles Pazos's version, more idiomatic in Spanish but failing to render the sense of "little...girl".

In the following passage, the sentence "...that brunette girl makes eyes at you all night" was translated by Robles Pazos as "*se ha estado timando contigo toda la*

---

<sup>13</sup> See Table 1.

*noche*". The Spanish verb *timar* has various different meanings, and one of them is precisely "to make eyes at someone". However, it is very rarely used nowadays in this sense. We checked whether the two latest editions of the novel had changed the wording of this sentence, but they had not. Although we think it is a good translation option, there would perhaps be other possibilities such as "*lanzando miraditas*" or "*echándote el ojo*", which are more commonly used today.

In Chapter I of the Second Section of the book, *Great Lady on a White Horse*, we find one of the central characters of the novel, Jimmy Herf, visiting Ruth, a girlfriend who lives in a rented room. There, Jimmy meets Cassandra Wilkins among others, a girl who wants to become a dancer and cannot pronounce the letter "r". While getting ready to go out for brunch, Jimmy and Ruth have a conversation about Ruth's various neighbours, among them "the lady across the airshaft", nicknamed *Sappo the Monk*, about whom Ruth says: "It's on account of her I have to keep my shades drawn all the time... Why? Oh, you're much too young to know. You'd be shocked, Jimmy". In the Spanish version the segment "keep my shades drawn all the time" became "*dejar los visillos bajados todo el tiempo*". We would like to comment on the use of the Spanish word *visillos* for "shades". All the different editions have kept the word *visillos* in this context. On a first reading and based on what we consider to be standard usage today, we wondered if the Spanish word *cortinas* would have been more neutral and closer to the concept of "shades". According to the definition of the DRAE, the Spanish authoritative dictionary of the Real Academia de la Lengua, *visillo* means: "*Cortina pequeña que se coloca en la parte interior de los cristales para resguardarse del sol o impedir la vista desde fuera.*" Following this definition, the use of the word *visillos* would be completely adequate. However, in current usage *visillos* are a popular type of curtain, normally white or beige in colour and made with almost translucent material, often embroidered and very common in Spanish traditional homes; for us this word has a strong Spanish cultural component and therefore does not seem to be the best option for a New York setting. The "lady across the airshaft", or "*la señora de enfrente*" in all the Spanish versions, seems to like watching the girls through the window across the airshaft, this is why Ruth likes to keep her shades down. When Jimmy asks why she does that, Ruth says he is too young and he'd be shocked to find out, probably referring to the woman being some kind of voyeur. The expression "*te chocaría*" (meaning, colloquially, "surprised" or "amazed") for "you'd be shocked" is, in our opinion, less expressive than the English original.

Cassandra Wilkins, the character that appears in the following censored paragraph, has this peculiar way of speaking that Dos Passos conveyed by substituting the "r" sounds by "w" sounds in her speech. Thus, she says "weads" for "reads"; "interpwet" for "interpret"; "wehearse" for "rehearse", etc. Spanish spelling is generally rigid and we very rarely modify spellings to convey peculiar ways of uttering speech, except for some localisms (i.e. Andalusian accents) or what we call "*ceceo*" (mispronouncing the "s" sounds and turning them into the Spanish "z" sounds). This is probably one of the greatest difficulties in the translation of *Manhattan Transfer*, since many of the characters speak non-standard English. And this is one of the instances where the various editions differ in criteria. In Robles Pazos's version of

1929, Cassandra's peculiar way of speaking is marked by substituting the "r" by "w". Thus the sentence "...Oh I'm afwaid I was indiscweet to say that...I'm dweadfully indiscweet" becomes "*Oh temo haber sido indiscweta...Siempwe soy muy indiscweta.*" Santiago Rueda's edition of 1941 (which constituted the *galeradas*) changed this and, instead, incorporated some words where the letter "s" is substituted by the letter "z", such as "*zabe usted*" for "*sabe usted*".

In the 1961 version by Planeta, Cassandra's speech has no distinctive marks at all. However, in later versions (Círculo 1989, Edhasa 2008 and Debolsillo 2009), Cassandra mispronounces every "s" sound and it is represented by the substitution of the letter "s" by the letter "z" in everything she says. Here is an example: "*Oh, zeñor Herf, eztoy encantada de conocerle al fin, Ruth no hace máz que hablar de uzted. Oh, temo haber zido indizcreta...Ziempre zoy muy indizcreta.*" (Círculo 1989: 157). It is hard to decide which of the above is the best translation option since, given the number of characters with non-standard English that appear in the story, it would be necessary to approach the problem in the novel as a whole. It is fairly clear, though, that the city of New York portrayed as a multicultural setting through the hundreds of characters with different voices is an essential element of the novel and thus, should be rendered in the Spanish versions to the maximum extent possible; therefore, Planeta's option of eliminating any peculiar feature in Cassandra's speech is for us the least convincing strategy.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Spanish translation of *Manhattan Transfer* has a well deserved reputation, but at the same time opens fascinating areas for further research. The overall analysis of these few censored passages shows Robles Pazos mastering dialogue and colloquial language in Spanish, as seen in sentences such as "*fijate qué socia, qué andares*" for "...look at the swell same...look at the way she walks". In other instances, we have found a tendency on the translator's part to omit some of the cultural elements of the original when they do not have a simple, straightforward translation, as for example in the case of the "Western Union burglar" who becomes "*el ladrón ese*". Browsing through various fragments of the different Spanish editions we have found this is a recurrent strategy and possibly not always the best one. Therefore, the analysis of how cultural elements are approached in the translations of *Manhattan Transfer* is one of the most interesting areas for further research on the novel, as well as the approach to the translation of peculiar accents and localisms. We will pay special attention to both in future studies.

The fact that changes have been consistently incorporated in the various editions of the novel through time has been confirmed, as exemplified in the various translation strategies used to render Cassandra's peculiar speech or in minor lexical variations such as "*chicre*" or "*torno*" for "winch" in the scene where the two French sailors are lying on the deck of their boat in New York harbour. This reinforces our thesis that there are various translations of *Manhattan Transfer* available to Spanish readers.

Finally, we can conclude that censorship during Franco's regime never affected the integrity of the Spanish translations of *Manhattan Transfer*, although it inevitably affected the Spanish reception of the novel during the decades when it was banned.

### Bibliographical references

- ABELLÁN, MANUEL, L., *Censura y Creación Literaria en España (1936-1975)*. Barcelona: Península 1980.
- ANDRENIO, «La Novela de Nueva York», *La Voz*, 24 de junio 1929, 1.
- ANÓNIMO, «*Manhattan Transfer*; John Dos Passos», *La Revista Blanca (Suplemento)* 1 de agosto de 1929, VII-VIII.
- AYALA, F., «John Dos Passos: *Manhattan Transfer*», *Revista de Occidente* (1929), 249-251.
- BAUTISTA CORDERO, R. M., «The Spanish Translations of *Manhattan Transfer*», in: MARTINO, P. / JARILLA, S. M. (eds), *Caleidoscopio de Traducción Literaria*. Madrid: Dykinson 2012, 125-137.
- DOS PASSOS, J., *Manhattan Transfer*. Paris: Gallimard 1928.
- DOS PASSOS, J., *Manhattan Transfer*. Madrid: Cenit 1929.
- DOS PASSOS, J., *Manhattan Transfer*. Buenos Aires: Santiago Rueda 1941.
- DOS PASSOS, J., *Manhattan Transfer*. Barcelona: Planeta 1961.
- DOS PASSOS, J., *Manhattan Transfer*. New York / London: Penguin 1987.
- DOS PASSOS, J., *Manhattan Transfer*. Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores 1989.
- DOS PASSOS, J., *Manhattan Transfer*. Barcelona: Edhasa 2008.
- DOS PASSOS, J., *Manhattan Transfer*. Barcelona: Debolsillo 2009.
- LA PRADE, D., *La censura de Hemingway en España*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca 1991.
- MARTÍNEZ DE PISÓN, I., *Enterrar a los muertos*. Barcelona: Seix Barral 2005.
- MINISTERIO DE CULTURA, Expediente núm. 3965-74. Archivo General de la Administración. 1 de abril de 1974.
- MINISTERIO DE CULTURA, Expediente núm. 1171-66. Archivo General de la Administración. 9 de febrero 1966.
- MINISTERIO DE CULTURA, Expediente núm. 880-61. Archivo General de la Administración. 14 de febrero 1961.
- MINISTERIO DE CULTURA, Expediente núm. 20-60. Archivo General de la Administración. 5 de enero 1960.
- MINISTERIO DE CULTURA, Expediente núm 4558-57. Archivo General de la Administración. 8 de octubre 1957.
- MINISTERIO DE CULTURA, Expediente núm. 1435-49. Archivo General de la Administración. 23 de marzo 1949.
- MINISTERIO DE CULTURA, Expediente núm. 3583-48. Archivo General de la Administración. 30 de agosto 1948.
- PIZER, D., *John Dos Passos: The Major Non-fictional Prose*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1988.
- RABADÁN ÁLVAREZ, R., *Traducción y Censura 1936-1975*. León: Universidad de León, 2000.
- SALAVERRÍA, J. M., «*Manhattan Transfer*; por John Dos Passos», *ABC* 26 Junio 1929, 7.
- SANDERS, D., *John Dos Passos: A Comprehensive Bibliography*. New York: Garland 1987.