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A Glimpse into French Surrealism in Spain: The Translation and Censorship of André Breton's *Manifestes du Surréalisme*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to show the reception of the French surrealist André Breton's most significant book, *Manifestos del surrealismo* (*Manifestoes of Surrealism* in English), in Spain during the second period of Francoism (1959-1975). As this literary work was examined beforehand by censors to validate its publication, the main aspect explored in this study is the censorship of *Manifestos del surrealismo*, since the book was partly modified before being officially published. The book was first translated into Spanish in 1964, forty years after the publication of the First Surrealist Manifesto in France. An analysis of the censorship files has proven that the modified segments were primarily related to politics and that, even though André Breton was considered a Marxist, the book was not completely censored before being released. This also confirms that the second period of Francoism was not as strict as the previous one during which Spanish publishing houses did not even try to release literary works related to the Surrealist movement.

KEY WORDS

André Breton, Surrealism, Francoism, Censorship, Translation

1. Introduction

André Breton (1896-1966) was a French writer and the main theorist of the surrealist movement. He was the author of several important literary works such as *Nadja*, *L'Amour fou* (*Mad Love* in English) or *Les Manifestes du surréalisme* (*Manifestoes of Surrealism* in English). During the First World War, he lived in Brittany with his parents. He returned to Paris in 1917 and founded the literary magazine *Littérature* along with Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault two years later. During these years he discovered Dadaism but was, nonetheless, quite disappointed after meeting Tristan Tzara, founder of the Dadaist

movement. This is why he decided to write *Le Manifeste du surréalisme* in 1924, defining a new concept which asserted the right to imagination, to the marvellous; and supported inspiration, childhood, the objective hazard, etc. According to Anderson (2013, p. 48),

Breton wanted to retain a spontaneous element within his notion of the chance encounter whilst also seeing it as suffused with unconscious meaning. Whereas for Freud the “uncanny” aspect of chance was governed by a compulsion to repeat, an unconscious that predetermines experience, replaying the traumatic event or fantasy because it cannot remember, for Breton objective hazard could signal something external and in the future.

In 1927, Breton became a member of the French Communist Party with other French authors like Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard and Benjamin Péret. That is one of the reasons why in 1941, during the Second World War, he decided to leave Paris and live in New York until returning to France in 1946. He tried then to resume his surrealist activities and foster a second group of surrealists by way of reviews and exhibitions, but this did not have the same impact as it used to. By the end of World War II, he decided to embrace anarchism explicitly. André Breton died in 1966 due to a respiratory failure and was buried in Paris.

2. The Spanish translations of *Manifestes du surréalisme* (1962) and their censorship during Francoism

In order to analyze André Breton’s translations into Spanish, we sought out numerous files on the National Spanish Library’s (BNE) database without finding any translation of André Breton’s works during the Spanish Second Republic (1931-1939) or the first period of Francoism (1939-1959).¹ Upon searching for André Breton’s literary works on the *Archivo General de la Administración’s*² (AGA) database to uncover more about his translated books during this period,³ the following files related to this author were found:

Table 1 André Breton’s books on the AGA

¹ The first period of Francoism (1939-1959) was the time between the end of the Spanish Civil War and the abandonment of autocratic policies with the implementation of the 1959 stabilization programme. This gave way to the second period of Francoism which lasted from 1959 until Franco’s death.

² The Archivo General de la Administración (AGA) is one the main archives in Spain containing publications and media from the 19th and 20th centuries. It is located in Alcalá de Henares.

³ The second period of Francoism (1959-1975) was the period of time during Franco’s dictatorship in which impressive economic growth paved the way for profound social transformation and political change.

*A glimpse into French Surrealism in Spain: the Translation and Censorship of
André Breton's Manifestes du surréalisme*

Título	Nombre	Expe_nº	Expe_año	SignAGA	Editor
Manifiestos del surrealismo	Bretón, André	3569	64	21/15293	Guadarrama
Manifiestos del Surrealismo	Bretón, André	776	69	66/02468	Guadarrama
El surrealismo. Puntos de vista y manifestación. Conversaciones 1913-1952	Bretón, André	6755	70	66/05805	Barral
Perspectiva caballeresca	Bretón, André	11367	71	73/01353	Gutiérrez y Palerm
Antología del humor negro	Bretón, André	4752	72	73/01859	Anagrama
Pasos perdidos, Los	Bretón, André	6518	72	73/01995	Alianza
Arcane 17	Bretón, André	11173	72	73/02358	Al Borak
Ajours	Bretón, André	11173	72	73/02358	Al Borak
Luz Negra	Bretón, André	11173	72	73/02358	Al Borak
Documentos políticos del surrealismo	Bretón, André	3633	73	73/02949	Fundamentos
Antología	Bretón, André	7871	73	73/03207	Siglo Xxi
Surrealismo frente a realismo socialista	Bretón, André	7179	73	73/03207	Tusquets
Léxico sucinto del erotismo	Bretón, André	4670	74	73/04035	Anagrama
Manifiesto del surrealismo. 2 ed	Bretón, André	7987	74	73/04253	Guadarrama
Magia cotidiana	Bretón, André	11598	75	73/05123	Fundamentos
Campos magnéticos, Los	Bretón, André	2061	76	73/05337	Tusquets
Llave de los campos, La	Bretón, André	6930	76	73/05544	Ayuso

The entries above are listed by arrival date with each entry divided into several sections (the book's title, the author's name, the file number, the year, the catalogue number and

the publisher's name). From 1964 to 1975 there are 15 files in total, 13 of which correspond to literary works that were submitted for publication during those years. As already mentioned, there are no files of André Breton's translations from the first days of Francoism. The publishers that were interested in publishing his books were heterogeneous: some from more well-known Spanish publishing houses like Tusquets or Anagrama and others from more independent houses such as Ayuso or Fundamentos.

Looking at the previous table, one notices that there are several entries for the same book from different years. Thus, *Manifestos del surrealismo* has three different files that belong to the publishing house *Guadarrama*: nº3569 in 1964, nº776 in 1969 and nº7987 in 1975. In addition, the file nº11173, from *Al Borak*, fills three lines as if each work was part of different files. Additionally, two censorship files should be noted: nº2061 and nº6930. Both are from 1976, a year after Franco's death. Censorship was indeed still in force until 1978. According to Muñoz (2007, pp. 95-96), in the case of the theatre,

Even during the first years of transition to democracy, the members of the Censorship Committee and their superiors at the Ministry of Information and Tourism would still sign prohibitions [...], until the 4th March 1978, when Royal Decree 262/1978 loosening restrictions on theatrical performances finally became effective re-establishing the right of free expression on the Spanish stage after four decades of censorship.⁴

It is important to point out that all the books were published from the sixties onward. André Breton's works were not officially translated during the first period of Francoism. This change probably occurred in 1962 when Manuel Fraga Iribarne was elected minister of Information and Tourism in Spain. The slight loosening of restrictions from the Ministry modernised the publishing house industry, adapting itself to the new social and political realities emerging in Europe and North America. On March 18th 1966, a new law on freedom of the press was enacted in Spain invalidating the previous one that had been in place since 1938. This new law made a book's *consulta previa*⁵ optional and the inquiry became voluntary. It is for this reason that some of the translations into Catalan, for instance, started being published (Godayol, 2015, p. 19-20). However, even if the regime considered the new enquiry for publishing books "optional", censorship still occurred.

⁴ My translation.

⁵ *Previous inquiry* (my translation).

Another important consideration is that André Breton's books, as previously explained, had not been published prior to the sixties. According to Cruces (2006, p. 111):

In general, intellectuals and people with university degrees still read in French. Through this language people were able to access novel ideas – the newest trends in literature, philosophy, or economics, for example – that emerged abroad. According to witnesses that lived during that time, there was an intense circulation of books originating in France that were being propagated somewhat clandestinely. Moreover, it was not infrequent to leave Spain, looking for wider cultural horizons.⁶

It is then conceivable that André Breton was already known in “non-official” cultural circles because intellectuals used to understand French. However, Vives (2013, p. 64) thinks the following:

There was hostility of official poetry towards a tendency that, to the regime's intellectuals, reflected the cultural sphere of the Spanish Republic, one that was clearly rejected by the victors. In order to better understand this rejection, the connection of the exiled Alberti or Neruda to the surrealist movement should be noted, as surrealism was considered one of the artistic expressions of communism. Even the non-government supported poets who were against Francoism would progressively mistrust surrealism for different reasons.

This means that neither partisans of Francoism nor traditional writers viewed surrealism favorably. While not necessarily supporters of the regime, they nonetheless had misgivings about the innovative and improvised writing techniques of surrealist writers.

2.1. Manifestes du surréalisme (1962) / Manifiestos del surrealismo (1964, 1969, 1974), André Breton

The *Premier Manifeste du surréalisme* (*First Manifesto of Surrealism* in English) was written by André Breton in 1924. In this book, Breton (1969, p. 26) defines surrealism as “psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express — verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner — the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.”

⁶ My translation.

In this definition there are psychoanalytical notions, the idea of automatic and unconscious writing, as well as of moral and aesthetic liberty. One of the most important techniques in surrealism is automatic writing. This is characterized by registering words that come into the artist's head immediately without leaving him or her time for reflection.

The importance of dreams is also highlighted in this book. Dreams are there to resolve fundamental questions in life and allow the surrealists to be inspired to access absolute knowledge. The hypnotic dream is also one of the techniques that artists used to create surrealist texts. Some surrealists met in homes and practiced hypnotic dream sessions where the hypnotized explained what he or she was dreaming while another artist transcribed their dreams. The text includes numerous examples of the application of surrealism to poetry and literature, but makes it clear that its basic tenets can be applied to any circumstance in life and is not merely restricted to the artistic realm.

Breton (1969, p. 18) pays homage to imagination, encouraged in children but forbidden for adults. He also refuses the psychological analysis and the rationality of feelings and thinks that dreams and reality are complementary and that liberty can be reasserted through them: "Man proposes and disposes. He and he alone can determine whether he is completely master of himself, that is, whether he maintains the body of his desires, more formidable by the day, in a state of anarchy."

The *Second Manifest* was written in 1930 and reminds readers of the core principles of surrealism (Breton, 1969, p. 123-124):

Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions. Now, search as one may one will never find any other motivating force in the activities of the Surrealists than the hope of finding and fixing this point.

Breton (1969, p. 177) also explains his attraction to esotericism and, lastly, does not accept any involvement in mercantile considerations of success. Through this description, he gives an elitist vision of surrealism: "The approval of the public is to be avoided like a plague. It is absolutely essential to keep the public from *entering* if one wishes to avoid confusion."

2.1.1. Study of the official censorship files

When the work *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (*Manifiestos del surrealismo* in Spanish) was translated into Spanish in 1964 by Andrés Bosch, the Spanish publishing house Guadarrama had to request authorization in order to translate and publish the book in Spain. Therefore, this book had to undergo an evaluation by the *Administración* in charge of reviewing publications for release. If we look for the title of this work in the AGA's database, we find the following entries related to *Manifiestos del surrealismo*:

Table 2 AGA's database: *Manifiestos del surrealismo*

Título	Nombre	Expe_nº	Expe_año	SignAGA	Editor
Manifiestos del surrealismo	Bretón, André	3569	64	21/15293	Guadarrama
Manifiestos del Surrealismo	Bretón, André	776	69	66/02468	Guadarrama
Manifiesto del surrealismo. 2 ed.	Bretón, André	7987	74	73/04253	Guadarrama

As we can see in the table, there are three entries in relation to this book: the first one is from 1964, the second one from 1969 and the third and last one from 1974. The first file, num. 3569-64, was submitted to the Spanish Ministry of Information and Tourism June 11th 1964 by the Guadarrama publishing house in order to release 3000 copies after the censors' approval. The book consisted of 354 pages and would be sold for 200 pesetas. Two censors judged this literary work: the first one, identified with the number 27 (his signature being illegible was left blank) and included direct questions that appear under the chapter heading *Informe* ("report" in English). Those questions guided the censors in the formulation and composition of their opinions:

Does it attack the Dogma?

The Morals?

The Church and their Ministries?

The Regime and its institutions?

The people that cooperate or did cooperate with the Regime?

The censurable passages: do they describe the whole content of the literary work?⁷

However, in the *Informe y otras observaciones* section (“report and other remarks” in English), the censor wrote in the following remarks by hand:

The book is a collection of the fundamental documents of surrealism from the First Manifesto in 1924. It has documentary value of a cultural movement of our time. It is well known for its bonds with communism. That is why it contains statements praising Marxism, especially in the chapter titled “Posición política del surrealismo” pages 237-274. I would like this chapter to be read by a specialist in political issues.

Apart from that: it can be AUTHORIZED.

Madrid, 27th VI 1964

The reader

(illegible signature)⁸

The reader who wrote the report mentioned that, keeping in mind the pro-Marxist statements, the chapter *Posición política del surrealismo* (“Political position of surrealism” in English) should be reread by an expert in political matters. The second reader, who signs under the name of “Dietta”, provides a similar judgment focusing more on the political aspect. This time the document is typed:

André Breton’s writings related to surrealism. He was the author of the famous manifesto founding this aesthetical movement. The manifesto includes other writings, as well as some conference transcriptions. What the author wrote and said in these documents was, at least in those days, Communist. It was in ‘24 and coming right after the full emergence of communism. The last forty years give “too much rancidity” to these ideas. Much water has flowed under the bridge since then and a lot of signers of this manifesto and

⁷ My translation.

⁸ My translation.

the surrealist descendants got wet and dried. However, we still consider politically inconvenient the chapter “Posición política del surrealismo”⁹ (247 to 274) and the chapter “Du temps que les surrealistes avaient raison” (289 to 302). The opening to these political questions has to be done in small doses and with moderation. The intellectuals or pseudo-intellectuals, possible readers of this work, are sympathetic to these doctrines not because of their conviction but because of their resentment. The “hunger” – in its broadest sense -, and the failure push them into what we call non-conformism, and it is, but only in relation to their own personal fates.

With the cross-outs indicated. ITS AUTHORIZATION IS APPROPRIATE. –

Madrid, 3rd of July 1964

THE READER

Dietta

As we can see, this new report authorizes the publication of this work, on the condition that the chapters mentioned previously be eliminated. In the eyes of the censor, André Breton is a communist, and passages related to his political opinions should not be published. According to Abellán (1980, p. 88), all opposition to the dominant regime was unacceptable, as evidenced by this censorship file. That is why, although we were already in a certain opening period, the censor considers that “these political questions have to be done in small doses and with moderation.”

Thus, this reader has a very negative opinion of this work as he brands it “rancid” and obsolete. Nonetheless, though he does not share the same ideals, the censor knows this artistic movement well and is also aware, that a lot of the artists currently in favor of surrealism were opposed to it in the sixties. He directly addresses the intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals who might be interested in this kind of book, not because of “their conviction but because of their resentment”, alluding to the losers of the Spanish Civil War.

If we compare the first report to the second one, we can see that the latter recommends eliminating more passages than the former. However, when we read the final version of the book, we can see that the translated work was not censored too heavily. As Santamaría (2000, p. 216) states, “the report of the censor or the reader, how it is normally named, no matter the tone or topic of the latter, is not binding and the final decision depends on a

⁹ I preserved the typos of the original text.

superior authority, either to the corresponding General Director, or perhaps even the Minister himself.”¹⁰

We can also appreciate that both readers are not anonymous. In general, the readers remained anonymous and were identified solely by a number. Moreover, their signatures were often illegible. Montejo (2000)¹¹ explains that

The best example of anonymity under which the censors hid themselves was the files. Amongst them – they were called “readers” in the Ministry’s jargon – there were different categories: readership manager, specialist reader, ecclesiastic reader, permanent or temporary reader. There were people of great prestige, professors, political positions assigned to Franco’s regime, writers [...]. They were identified by a number and they signed their decisions – generally – with an illegible signature, especially if they were negative.¹²

Lastly, it should be mentioned that this file was handed over in 1964 and that the Press Law of 1938 was still current. Thus, in 1964, the obligatory *consulta previa* was still applied. The minister G. Arias Salgado (1957, p. 243), the principal censorship theorist and author, thought that the *consulta previa* option was something necessary for the common good of the country:

Maintaining the *consulta previa* over all the thought dissemination media for the common good is perfectly acceptable in its sphere, and in principle, inside Catholic doctrine. Therefore, the fair liberty of expression, necessary for the existence of upright public opinion, and the validity of this *consulta previa*, even to news and facts, can both objectively coexist in harmony within a system of Press control and inside the confines of Catholic education.¹³

On the other hand, the second file, num. 776-69, was also presented by the Guadarrama publishing house to the Ministry of Information and Tourism. This time it was on January 23rd 1969 in order to release 8000 copies after the censor’s approval. In this case, the inquiry was optional because the 1966 Press Law had already been promulgated and this allowed a greater liberty of publication, in theory if not always in practice (De Diego, 2016, p. 11). The book consists of 311 pages, fewer than the 1964 version, probably because of the censorship

¹⁰ My translation.

¹¹ Retrieved from http://www.represura.es/represura_4_octubre_2007_articulo4.html

¹² My translation.

¹³ My translation.

previously applied in the first file. We can indeed confirm that in the report the term *antecedentes*¹⁴ is present and it is there where the crossed-out words are enumerated. This new file indicates that the book will cost 100 pesetas.

In this case, only one censor, identified with the number 12 and whose signature is illegible, read the work. He also left blank the questions that appear at the beginning of the report and typed the following in the *Otras observaciones*:¹⁵

Manifestoes and surrealist writings of André Breton, the founder of the surrealist movement, so important in times past have become out-dated today, despite his staunch defender Guillermo de Torre. Surrealist positions on the liberty and the automatism in art are more than well known. Less well known is André Breton's communist and atheist attitude, which he makes clear in some of the texts of this volume. However, André Breton evolved too and he went as far as to openly confront communism, at least French communism, while never ceasing to consider himself a Marxist. Even if this work had already been authorized in 1964, it would not be out of line to eliminate, in the spirit of tolerance, the words marked in the pages 191-192, 257, 258, 299 and 305-306.

AUTHORIZED

Madrid, February 18th 1969

The reader

(illegible signature)¹⁶

The censor emphasizes then André Breton's diminished status at the end of the sixties and his communist and Marxist tendencies while separating these from his atheist beliefs. They think that it would be better to censor more pages while adding "in the spirit of tolerance". However, on the same paper and written by hand in blue ink – we suppose that it is written by another censor or by a member of the administration with higher status – we can read the following:

The cross-outs imposed in the year 1964 have been respected.

19-2-69

¹⁴ "records, antecedents", in Spanish.

¹⁵ "other remarks", in Spanish.

¹⁶ My translation.

(illegible signature)¹⁷

On the same paper and a bit further down, we can read another comment written by hand in red ink:

Taking into account the cross-outs initially marked, it seems convenient, under the current circumstances, to extend them to the ones delimited on pages 191-192-299-305-306.

(illegible signature)¹⁸

By “the current circumstances”, the reader may refer to the student riots that took place in January 1969 during which students from the Spanish University of Barcelona attacked the Rectorate. A similar situation occurred in Madrid, when the police reported Enrique Ruano’s death, leader of the *Frente de Liberación Popular* (FLP),¹⁹ who had been arrested and was in custody. On 21st of January of that year, more than two hundred students assembled at the *Ciudad Universitaria*²⁰ for an impressive demonstration. These continued over the next few days until the regime imposed a State of Emergency (Powell, 2001, p. 29). The police, for their part, responded with a serious crackdown of student freedoms, eventually closing the University (Errazuriz, 2009).²¹

The photocopies of the selected pages are showed next, with the censor’s selected deletions. In the letter that the publishing house initially sent to the Ministry, it wrote that “the corrections marked the 6th of July 1964 have been made, Exp. 3569-64”,²² that is, the parts that the readers selected in 1964 had already been censored. However, the censor that previously made the remarks in red ink added the word *comprobar*²³ next to the publishing house’s comment and added “cross-outs pages 191-192-299-305-306. 19-2-69”²⁴ with his or her signature.

The Guadarrama publishing house sent another letter to the Ministry so it could verify that the text had indeed been modified, attaching two sets of tests of the modified pages the readers decided to censor, that is, the old pages 191, 192, 299, 305-306. Guadarrama

¹⁷ My translation.

¹⁸ My translation.

¹⁹ The *Frente de Liberación Popular* (FLP) was a non-legally recognized political organization between 1958 and 1969 that disagreed with Francoism.

²⁰ The University City of Madrid.

²¹ Retrieved from <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/55886>.

²² My translation.

²³ “check” in English.

²⁴ My translation.

"BEGS that prior to its verification the publication of the work will be authorized."²⁵ The same reader who wrote in red ink adds "Culturado 6-3-69" and signs. We can confirm that the requested changes by the Ministry were indeed made.

Finally the third file, num. 7987-74, was also presented to the Ministry the 15th July 1974. However, on this occasion, the work went directly to *depósito*. This option avoided giving the book to the censors, as this file referred to the second edition of the book that had already been consulted voluntarily five years ago. Seeing this, they decided to accelerate distribution and select the option of *depósito*. In this case, the publishing house noted that the work had 338 pages and that they claimed to be releasing 9000 copies. The reader, whose signature was also illegible, alluded to the second file in the *antecedents* part. For this reason in the comments section the reader simply writes *aceptado*.²⁶

The letter sent by the publishing house to the Ministry contains information about the deposit of six copies of the work, as required by article 12 of the Press and Print Law of the March 18th 1966 and so this book did not have to be submitted a second time to *consulta voluntaria*.

3. Conclusions

An analysis of the official censorship files of French author André Breton's *Manifestos of Surrealism* during the second period of Francoism in Spain showed a clear disagreement of Breton's points of view on the part of the censors, who tried to suppress every opinion that was not in accordance with Francoist dictatorial ideas, namely atheist and pro Marxist beliefs. Politics in particular was heavily censored since Breton considered himself a Marxist and the Francoist leaders were in clear opposition to that. However, the lack of consistency in some censorial choices seems to indicate the absence of generalized guidelines and the existence of a certain level of arbitrariness influencing censorial choices. These results confirm previous studies on the subject of censorship during Francoism stating that the final decision often depended on a superior authority (Santamaría, 2000). More studies are needed in order to provide a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying certain final censorial choices during this period of time. As we can see in the case of this literary work, while not all the censors were anonymous, their signatures were illegible. This was not

²⁵ My translation.

²⁶ "accepted" in English.

always the case in the censorship files: the majority of the censors were anonymous and identified only by a number designation.

In light of the analysis presented here, one should further explore the idea that Breton and the Surrealists were not translated into Spanish until the sixties because the cultural circles at that time spoke French and had the ability to read his books in French and/or because traditional Spanish writers did not view surrealism favorably as Vives (2013) pointed out. These writers belonged to a privileged segment of society that decided what was to be read. Intellectuals that were against communism rejected the Surrealists because of their political beliefs and did not consider them true writers. The same could be said of leftist writers, who did not always support the Surrealists and often saw little value in their works.

It is also worth considering the fact that the 1966 Press Law enabled publishing houses to release different kinds of books, even those against the dictatorship. This Press Law invalidated the previous policy, in place since 1938, and made inquiries optional from that point forward. In the sixties and seventies all of André Breton's books sent to publishing houses were released, even though partial censorship still took place.

It is therefore easy to see that Spanish society quickly changed and became more open-minded, largely aided by the arrival of foreign visitors and new ways of living ushered in by increased tourism (Sánchez, 2001, p. 220). In light of these considerations, it is understandable why censors tried to be less strict. Perhaps they were realizing that Francoism was coming to an end.

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