Enforcing and Eluding Censorship

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Edited by

Giuliana Iannaccaro and Giovanni Iamartino

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INTRODUCTION

THE WAYS OF CENSORSHIP: NEW TRENDS, NEW CHALLENGES

GIULIANA IANNACCARO

When intentional, censoring people, texts, or ideas presupposes a strategy of some kind. As the censor well knows, trying to silence someone is never a one-way procedure, since a form of reaction necessarily occurs, and has to be taken into consideration. At the same time, opposing censorship means finding the appropriate response to the specific situation, be it overt resistance or more complex, often indirect, ways of eluding control. This should not lead us to think that all the strategies involved in the censorship process are carried out consciously: both censorship and counter-censorship are most effective when they succeed in adapting to the particular time and place in which they operate—and this means behaving intuitively as well as rationally.

Likewise, exclusively envisioning the relationship between the censor and the censored as a struggle between human agents endowed with an individual will means simplifying a process which is instead very complex. Suffice it to think that the "censorship net" is often laid out by institutions, rather than by single agents, and that it is not always easy to identify the individuals responsible for specific measures. Most people trying to contrast the practice of institutional censorship share a feeling of frustration, due to an impression of fighting against "ghosts", or against a nameless, shapeless monster. To the protean nature of the phenomenon contributes the fact that other social and cultural occurrences can produce a censorship effect: for instance, the law of custom, the pressures of the market, or even seemingly neutral textual constraints.

Very often, to the various forms of institutional and cultural censorship can be added the elusive, albeit fascinating, phenomenon of self-censorship, which is no doubt the outcome of a form of coercion on the part of the political and cultural milieu in which the artist operates, but which can also be interpreted as an adaptation of the work of art to the

demands and expectations of its audience. From this standpoint, a form of self-censorship is always present at the conception and realization of a cultural product.

The chapters contained in this volume explore the "ways of censorship"[1] in a linguistic, literary and cultural perspective. The broad timespan of the book—from the sixteenth to the twentieth century—is functional to the basic assumption of our research, which is to tackle the phenomenon of censorship in its complexity, rather than simply investigate its specific applications in a given period, or its most resounding and glaring cases. The sixteenth century, with its profound religious crisis that was greatly influenced by the early development of movable type printing, is a good starting point to introduce the question of the danger of books on the one hand, and the danger of being a writer on the other. The essays on the twentieth century, for their part, are there to remind us that we still have a long way to go in the comprehension of the ways of censorship. It is a debate deeply rooted in Western cultural tradition, which has progressively become richer and ever more multifaceted, especially in recent times. The current critical output tends to look at censorship from multiple perspectives, including the exploration of the stimulating effects that restrictions in the liberty of expression paradoxically have on the development of a cultural community.[2] Our contribution to the investigation of the ways of censorship is similarly wide-ranging; being conscious of the limitations of a critical stance that aims primarily at glorifying "victims" and stigmatizing "executioners", we instead attempt a more complex approach to the cultural phenomenon, to stimulate reflection and inquiry.

The volume offers a dialogue between the Italian and the Anglo/American scene. Almost half the essays presented deal with cross-cultural phenomena, such as the exportation of a cultural item from one country to the other, or the complex process of translation, adaptation, domestication of a given book or film from a foreign language and culture. We have restricted the analysis mainly to the European and closely linked North American dimensions, even if contemporary cultural horizons obviously stretch far beyond the borders of Europe and the United States; nevertheless, we believe that a careful look at relatively circumscribed cultural dynamics is valuable, due to the opportunity it offers to examine the matter in depth. Even the essays that do not specifically investigate the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon world and Italy do, nonetheless, provide a European backdrop—be it the deeply troubled period of the Protestant Reformation, or the eighteenth-century drive at the codification of knowledge, which is rooted in Continental philosophy.

Enforcing and Eluding Censorship is divided into two main sections, entitled "Discourse Regulation" and "Textual and Ideological Manipulations". While being useful to draw attention to the two major themes dealt with in the volume, this distinction should be considered neither rigid nor absolute: forms of discourse regulation pertain to all textual productions, translation and lexicography included; likewise, some of the essays of the first section tackle the issue of textual and ideological manipulation as well. The layout of the Table of Contents reveals the multifarious and interconnected nature of the essays presented, and shows the design of a volume meant to go beyond the discussion of official, easily recognizable forms of censorship—namely, those enforced by an institution upon cultural agents and products. The titles of the subsections have been chosen to help identify the different ways in which pressure can be exercised, as well as to highlight the various strategies that can be adopted to elude that pressure. Therefore, whilst the subsection "Repression and Containment" mainly discusses instances of institutionalized and regulatory censorship, its counterpart, entitled "Circumvention and Adaptation", hosts contributions in which the focus of analysis regards forms of reaction against pressure and control. The second part of the book, entitled "Textual and Ideological Manipulations", debates some of the ways in which cultural products are used to exert censorial influence upon society. This can be done either by adopting specific strategies of manipulation in a given text ("Forms of Translation"), or by suggesting (and often enforcing) the way in which reality has to be perceived and classified, whilst performing an apparently neutral task: that of defining language, and, through language, the world it refers to ("Defining and Proscribing").

It would be tempting to say that the ways of censorship are infinite. Censorship can take hold of a written text before or after its public appearance; it can strike the cultural item as well as the very individual/s who created it; it can also catch in its net the agents responsible for its publication and diffusion (in the case of a printed text, authors, editors, printers, publishers, librarians and booksellers). It can be directed against a single person or against a group, an organization, a political party, a religious confession. A "text" (in its broad meaning of cultural product) can be prohibited *in toto*, or it can be subject to cuts, amendments, or adaptations. The name of the author can be eliminated and the work kept, if the latter is considered harmless or even useful but has the disadvantage of originating from a tainted source. A text can be allowed in the original version (because difficult to understand for the general public, and therefore intended for an intellectual elite) and prohibited in translation;[3]

the translation, where admitted, can be made and manipulated in a number of ways. Censorship, above all, can be official, like the well-known Catholic *Index librorum prohibitorum* published in 1559 (and in the following centuries, until 1966); or it can be implicit in the cultural practices of a specific time and place—its unofficial character being often an element of strength rather than weakness in its effectiveness.

The most popular image linked to the censorship of texts is the spectacular (and unfortunately by no means outmoded) practice of book-burning. Books, notoriously, can be considered dangerous in themselves. Endowed with a "potency of life"—as John Milton wrote in his *Areopagitica* in 1644—that transcends their materiality, books can elevate the human mind to the highest intellectual regions, or, according to the censors of all times, precipitate it into an abyss of depravation. The written word (and the printed word even more effectively) can encourage heresy, blasphemy, and perversion; it can instill sedition, rebellion, and murder; it can be dangerous, in other words, both for the life of the individual and for the security of Church and State. The subversive and the offensive are the traditional targets of censorship, which can choose to take measures against the publication itself, against its author, or against both. Official bans and indexes of forbidden publications can also work, paradoxically, as a form of advertising. The Catholic *Index*, in particular, listing the books and authors proscribed by Rome, aroused the curiosity of readers and their feeling of challenge, both in Italy and abroad (see Eisenstein 1983 and Wolf 2006; see also Clare and Petrina in this volume).[4]

Geoff Kemp and Jason McElligott, in their "General Introduction" to the four-volume publication *Censorship and the Press, 1580-1720*, indicate the "reasonably standard notion" to adopt in defining press censorship: "the use of official power against presses and printed texts, and their authors, producers and distributors, in order to constrain public discourse" (2009, I, xviii). This definition—though limited for the purposes of the present volume, as discussed above—is very useful to clarify the aim of the first subsection, "Repression and Containment", since it perfectly illustrates the climate of the second half of the sixteenth century, which saw the birth of important institutions specifically devised to regulate the unstoppable growth and diffusion of printed publications. The above mentioned *Index* of prohibited books (1559), and the successive foundation of a specific "Congregation of the Index" (1571), are two outstanding examples of the Roman Catholic Church's effort to keep men and ideas under control.[5] For their part, reformed countries like England "struck back", and devised various forms of repression against Catholic orthodoxy, as well as against the most radical forms of Protestantism.

Among the institutions created (or re-defined) under Elizabeth I to procure religious conformity and take measures against treason or sedition, the Courts of High Commission and Star Chamber had also the task of inspecting publications and, when needed, of regulating the press market. Susan Clegg reminds us, however, that both courts' executive orders regarding press control were mainly issued in response to specific cases, rather than with the purpose of dealing with the problem of press censorship *per se*; the courts would take measures against heretical, blasphemous or seditious books, and punish actions endangering the printing establishment.[6] Another form of control on the press market was represented by the charter granted to the Stationer's Company of London by Mary Tudor in 1557. The privilege gave the members of the guild a monopoly on printing and publishing which entailed forms of press censorship:

> As a means of assuring the integrity of Company licenses, the Stationers could confiscate books and presses of non-member printers or of members who printed another's copyrighted work. Since illegal (non-members') presses often printed transgressive books, this meant that the Stationers might be employed to destroy offending presses […]" (Clegg 2009, xl).[7]

A literary work could be the object of censorship also because it appeared at the wrong time, that is in the midst of an adverse historical moment, and its author could be persecuted as a consequence of political manoeuvring. This is, of course, true for all times and places, since all acts of censorship are essentially political; in her contribution to the volume, Janet Clare takes into consideration late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England, and shows that both the anxieties regarding the Queen's succession, and the first difficult years of James I's reign, contributed to rendering "the writing of history […] particularly prone to adverse construction". The simple fact of dealing with the past made seemingly non-offensive works liable to be read as seditious: "At times of instability and faction, as were the last years of the Elizabethan polity, any work could be manipulated to interpret the past as a gloss on the present, and considered treason" (Clare). It is important to point out, though, that the writing of a history, or of any literary work set in the past, could indeed prove an effective strategy to level criticism at the present time: it was always possible to "taint" with subversion a negative depiction of a given period of British history.

Even in the midst of such an ideologically repressive cultural climate, censorship and counter-censorship could also operate less officially. It is possible, for instance, to exert an efficacious form of censorship on written texts by trying to limit their circulation, as Alessandra Petrina argues in

her essay on the diffusion of Machiavelli's *Il Principe* in the British cultural milieu of the sixteenth century. Under Queen Elizabeth I, the book was not rigorously prohibited like in Italy: it mainly circulated among an intellectual elite, for the most part belonging to the royal entourage, which tried to "contain" its diffusion among the general public, rather than censuring it officially.

Another case which has more to do with containment than with direct forms of repression is Allen Reddick's essay on the diffusion of John Milton's prose works in eighteenth-century Britain: "with two minor exceptions, Milton's prose works were hardly to be found in the British Isles until Richard Baron's edition of 1753-6—and this was an expensive edition in consequently limited circulation" (Reddick). Whilst celebrating Milton's *Paradise Lost* as one of the highest literary achievements of the nation, the eighteenth century tended to avoid the circulation of the poet's potentially subversive republican and liberal ideas. *Areopagitica* itself—one of the best-known arguments against pre-publication censorship formulated in the early modern period[8]—"appears to have been almost virtually unknown". This, Reddick argues, is due to the fact that the existing editions of Milton's prose works were extremely scarce and difficult to trace, even during the second half of the century. The counter-strategy devised by people who, instead, sought to promote the reading and the re-publication of Milton's "achievements of the left hand", was to smuggle as many works as possible to the Continent, towards Protestant countries which could provide a safer cultural environment and preserve the precious tracts from disappearance or destruction.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the possibilities afforded by print and the importance of a book market had become much clearer to the agents involved in the production and distribution of "literature" (in its broad sense), as Martin Dzelzainis reminds us in his contribution, which aims at enlarging "our understanding of censorship under the later Stuarts". Dzelzainis writes of a "media-conscious environment", in which the relationship between speech and print had become entangled, and new possibilities of exploiting the force of the press against censorious drives had fully emerged. The particular instances examined in Dzelzainis's chapter highlight, above all, the "speed factor" inherent in the printing process, which rendered useless any attempt at forbidding the publication and distribution of subversive dying speeches, carefully composed and only partially delivered on the scaffold by two Whig leaders, Lord Russell and Algernon Sidney (both executed in 1683 because involved in the Rye House Plot, a failed conspiracy to assassinate Charles II and his brother). In addition to the exploration of the advantages that the printing process

brought to those who challenged and opposed political power, Dzelzainis argues that the last decades of the seventeenth century saw a change of strategy on the part of the authorities, who "were in the process of switching their policy from seeking to suppress dissident ideologies to trying to manage them". One of the ways to manage opposition was to discredit subversive texts rather than repress them, thus exploiting the power that the media already had more than three hundred years ago. If the targets of censorship, predictably, put much effort into the circumvention of prohibitions, the censorious institutions themselves learned to adapt their practices to the opportunities made available by modern times and modern technologies.

Strategies of circumvention and adaptation regard very closely Nicoletta Brazzelli's essay on Mary Kingsley. Censorship proper is much more effective when it combines with the more general cultural censure stemming from prejudice and custom. Even though it is not discussed in our volume, George Bernard Shaw's defence of the theatre against the assaults of the British stage censorship system in 1909 is an outstanding example of thought-provoking criticism of the tyranny of public opinion. In his *Statement of the Evidence* he deplores the zealous practices of the Lord Chamberlain—in charge of the licensing of plays in England until 1968—directed towards his own stage productions, but does not refrain from discussing the reasons why censorship should be considered a social evil: "I object to censorship not merely because the existing form of it grievously injures and hinders me individually, but on public grounds" (Shaw 1909, 8). He provocatively defines himself "a specialist in immoral and heretical plays" (1909, 8), and insists throughout the statement that in dealing with the question of censorship it is vital to agree on the correct use of the word "immorality". Since "whatever is contrary to established manners and customs is immoral", then "immorality should be protected jealously against the attacks of those who have no standard except the standard of custom, and who regard any attack on custom—that is, on morals—as an attack on society, on religion, and on virtue" (1909, 9).

It is precisely the "standard of custom" which has influenced both the form and the content of literature in the course of history; propriety, manners, and conventions have often determined the way in which writers have both conformed to expectations and challenged them. Women writers, for that matter, have been more subject to restrictions; until relatively recent times their approach to literature has been at the very least controversial, seeing that it was considered a form of public activity (and therefore of public exposure) potentially shameful for the "weaker vessel". A figure like Mary Kingsley, who lived and wrote in the second half of the

nineteenth century, is a case in point to tackle the many variations on the theme of censorship that feminine textual expression had to undergo and negotiate with, in order to justify its incursion into a traditionally masculine domain. Brazzelli's chapter explores both the social and textual constraints shaping Kingsley's travel writings, and the counter-strategies that her texts adopted in order to survive censorship and become well-known and widely-read testimonies of the nineteenth-century cultural encounter between Northern Europe and West Africa. Self-censorship, parody, and, above all, a fairly good amount of irony and self-irony are some of the narrative strategies which supported Kingsley's textual negotiations, and gave her writings their distinctive and engaging features.

Textual negotiations, self-censorship, and the increasingly compelling pressures of the market are the fundamental issues to be found in the essays that explore the twentieth century's relationship with overt and concealed forms of censorship. Nicoletta Vallorani's contribution to the volume deals with the circumvention of social norms and, to a certain extent, with forms of artistic adaptation, but on a more overtly political and oppositional level. The twentieth-century British artist Derek Jarman was the target of a social stigma which had nothing to do with the artistic value of his cultural production, but was based on prejudice, ignorance, and political opportunity. In Vallorani's view, his film *Caravaggio* (1986) is the outcome of closely related public and personal stances, and it anticipates Jarman's subsequent commitment to oppose the criminalization of homosexuals, which took place chiefly during the 1980s (due to the increasing number of reported cases of AIDS in the United Kingdom). A self-declared homosexual, Jarman was further marginalized from the society of "normal people" when, in 1986, he realized he was HIV-positive. His growing consciousness of his social and political role as an emarginated artist was developed whilst struggling with the production of *Caravaggio*, when he understood that "his intensely *private* tragedy [was] to be played out as a *collective* struggle" (Vallorani). Jarman's instance brings to the fore the relationship between art and crime, and, in the censor's perspective, the notion of art *as* crime, which represents the darkest side of censorship, as far as cultural productions are concerned.

Besides institutionalized forms of cultural repression, there are several, less apparent ways of silencing or manipulating texts in order to promote and even enforce a given interpretation of a cultural artefact. In relatively recent years (roughly from the 1980s onwards) research on the subject has witnessed an epistemological expansion of the very concept of censorship, which nowadays takes into consideration a wider range of cultural phenomena, including some aspects of translation, adaptation, and

rewriting.[9] As Beate Müller suggests in her introduction to *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*, broad interpretations of the term "censorship" risk to flatten its significance, by identifying it with unavoidable social norms: "[…] one could criticize such a wider view of censorship as misleading because it runs the risk of equating very different forms of control by confusing censorship with social norms affecting and controlling communication" (2004: 9. See also Post 1998). Nevertheless, it is also apparent by now that more circumscribed notions of discourse regulation are insufficient to investigate a number of phenomena that cannot always come under the umbrella of institutionalized, interventionist actions carried out with the specific purpose of repressing undesired cultural expressions. The essays presented in the second section of the book debate challenging notions of censorship, by discussing the way in which different forms of textual and ideological manipulation can affect literary practices considered "neutral" until a fairly recent past.

A plunge into the Restoration period allows a survey of the politics of rewriting. In particular, the essays of both Romana Zacchi and Massimiliano Morini deal with William Davenant's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for the stage in the early 1670s. The contributors highlight the issues of intra-lingual (Morini) and intra-cultural (Zacchi) "translation" entailed by the manipulation of Shakespeare's texts; both discuss the process of re-codification of the play, which includes the notion of censorship. Rather than dealing with repressive censorship, Zacchi and Morini analyse in detail, from different perspectives, the much more elusive phenomenon of "cultural censorship", which exerts pressure on artists of all times to produce a literary text deemed acceptable by their own culture. In the case of Restoration playwrights, the rewriting process scrupulously avoided a number of religious and political issues contained in Shakespeare's lines, which were liable to cause uneasiness to contemporary audiences: "They re-wrote because they did not understand what it was all about; because they were disturbed by what they understood; because they wanted to make more accessible what they understood/did not understand in linguistic, aesthetic and ideological terms" (Zacchi). As Morini points out, Davenant's manipulation of the original *Macbeth* entails a process of intra-lingual translation, in which also the language of Shakespeare's play was subject to a cultural "filter" analogous to self-censorship.

Inter-lingual translation is instead the target of Marialuisa Bignami's contribution, which analyses eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italian translations of *Paradise Lost*. Bignami deals with a period in which the "importation" of a foreign text into the Italian literary and cultural tradition was mainly carried out according to the artistic and linguistic

sensibility of the translators. Milton's epic in the course of a century—roughly between the 1750s and the 1850s—was subject to domesticating translations, which went in the direction of redressing its unorthodox religious passages and of "reforming" its poetic style. *Paradise Lost*, in Bignami's words, was "guilty in the [translators'] eyes of a sin and a crime: the sin of heterodoxy in Christian doctrine and the crime of inelegant style". Paradoxically, the writers who worked on the Italian versions of Milton's epic altered the text by going simultaneously in two opposite directions: on the one hand, they censored some passages altogether, by cutting off or modifying several groups of lines in order to render them acceptable to the Italian religious culture; on the other hand, many of them ended up by adding a significant number of lines in their search for a poetic style they considered more appropriate to the loftiness of the poem's subject.

Following the track of an inter-lingual/inter-cultural dialogue between English and Italian literary texts, Antonio Bibbò's chapter takes the reader into fascist Italy. Bibbò deals with the first Italian translation of John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* by Alessandra Scalero in 1932, which was published with the title *Nuova York*. In examining the characteristics of the source text in relation to the Italian version, Bibbò has the opportunity of discussing the politics of importation of literary texts in a critical period for the fascist regime, and the ways in which cultural issues were dealt with; what follows is that "in comparison to other media, books in general, and translations in particular, received a slightly more tolerant treatment on the part of the ruling class" (Bibbò). This is probably due to the fact that many cultural products coming from abroad—and especially those which employed avant-garde techniques, as in the case of *Manhattan Transfer*—circulated among an intellectual elite and were considered less dangerous, because uninteresting for a mass audience.[10] *Nuova York* came out uncensored, but the Italian version cannot be considered a faithful translation of the original: deletions of entire passages and modifications of the language of the source text are present, even if they are not easily detectable. A form of self-censorship is certainly at stake in Scalero's translation, in this case more "an instinctive adjustment to unwritten norms" than "a deliberate acceptance of hegemonic power", to use the very words of the essay.

Still in dialogue with the United States, and still addressing the question of inter-lingual translation, Ilaria Parini's chapter investigates the modalities of dubbing into Italian of some Hollywood Mafia movies released between 1990 and 1997. There is a form of silent censorship in dubbing which mainly regards vulgar language: the general tendency is "to

reduce the level and attenuate the effect of vulgar expressions present in the original versions of films" (Parini). The assumption behind that choice is that the Italian public is not accustomed to the offensive language that American audiences are exposed to, and therefore needs to be "protected" from disturbing expressions through a limitation of the level of obscenities present in the American dialogues. As a consequence, Italian Mafiosi in American films employ a language that is more violent in the original version than in the purged Italian translation.

The last subsection of our volume, entitled "Defining and Proscribing", hosts essays dealing with the definition and classification of general and linguistic knowledge. In encyclopedias and dictionaries the ideological pressure exerted upon the reader is detectable in the cultural role of the products themselves—which, paradoxically, are usually considered "neutral" instruments for attaining knowledge. Their informative and instructional function both disguises and reveals the social, political and religious assumptions at the basis of their conception, irrespective of the historical period in which they make their appearance. The challenge to received notions of censorship presented in this section is particularly thought-provoking, and for this very reason we have decided to devote a specific portion of the volume to its discussion.

The censoring and censorship of language in early modern English dictionaries is the subject of Giovanni Iamartino's essay. Lexicographers, whose status has varied in time from "harmless drudges"—to repeat Samuel Johnson's well-known phrase—to deities, often played and still play the role of censors: linguistic censors, since their books usually focus on the dominant variety of the language, as opposed to the non-standard or deviant ones; and socio-cultural censors, since words mirror extra-linguistic reality, and dictionaries become a form of ideological commentary on society. Iamartino analyses English and English-Italian dictionaries from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century, as a historical perspective makes it easier to understand and—if one may say so—justify the ways of godlike lexicographers to men; yet, what is concluded is not irrelevant to present-day dictionary-making, and it should be taken into consideration when reading Pinnavaia's essay in this volume.

Silent omissions, reformulations, ideological adjustments: the linguistic and rhetorical manipulation of informative texts is also fundamental in influencing the way in which the world is perceived by readers in search of "knowledge". Elisabetta Lonati's chapter explores the classification of knowledge proposed in seemingly neutral lexicographical tools like British dictionaries and encyclopedias in the second half of the eighteenth century—a period in which their number and specialization increased,

both in Britain and in Continental Europe. These "systematic collections of knowledge(s)" (Lonati) also gave their compilers ample, though hardly recognized, opportunity to influence their readers' opinion on different aspects of the world they inhabited. Lonati investigates the way in which a number of British encyclopedias, which had recently become "an important vehicle for popularizing knowledge", present to their readers the image of a nation whose increased power and wealth is strongly linked with the expansion of commerce. A close analysis of the entries dealing with commerce and the promotion of trade indicates, however, that in order to convey to the English public the image of an "impressive civilizing process" (Lonati), which took place thanks to commercial activities, most of the descriptions provided must necessarily obliterate the deeply uncivilized, actually barbarous practices, that were at the basis of British wealth—in a word, slavery. Once again, it is not a question of overt censorship: entries having to do with slavery, the slave trade, and "the negroes", were subject to no prohibition, nor were those topics intentionally avoided by lexicographers. Rather, the compilers employed effective rhetorical strategies in order to minimize either the phenomenon of slavery itself, or the whites' responsibility for the shameful kind of "trade" which was enriching Europe.

The idea that the general public must be both protected from "evil" and duly educated characterizes the censorial strategies of a good number of present-day English dictionaries for foreign language learners. Laura Pinnavaia's chapter explores the different levels of prescriptivism contained in some EFL dictionaries published in the last twenty years. Whilst some of them assume a descriptive attitude by simply defining bad language words, others take on a much more prescriptive and proscriptive attitude, either by warning users not to employ them, or by excluding them altogether. People in search of knowledge—especially pragmatic linguistic knowledge—must be guided and educated; giving information about the world, as discussed in Lonati's essay, also means being in the position of manipulating the readers' world view. The prerogative of lexicographers (today as well as yesterday) extends to the possibility of indicating "a 'correct' usage of the English language, thus focusing on what users ought not to say rather than what can be heard", to the point of "legislating" in matters of language (Pinnavaia).

The more we explore the complex and often indirect ways in which it is possible to shape the perception of the world and the production of culture, the closer we get to a notion of censorship which defies strict boundaries and definitions. By analysing the driving forces at the basis of all attempts to control, repress, and modify the cultural expressions of a

given social context, this volume aims at offering one more challenge to received ideas on cultural practices. The discussion which emerges from the different contributions goes in the direction of encouraging the recent trend in investigation, which opposes the tendency to simplify the issues at stake, and, instead, recognizes the need to look into the phenomenon in its complexity—an approach which is, however, very far from justifying the "ways of [censorship] to men".

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Notes

[1] The expression echoes Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which the lyrical I invokes the help of the "Heavenly Muse" in order to reach the heights of inspiration necessary to "[…] assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men" (Book 1, ll. 25-26).

[2] The number of recent studies on the subject of censorship is considerable: it would be no easy task to attempt a survey of the various fields pertaining to such a broad area of research. Suffice it to think of the vast range of both scholarly and popular publications; of materials dealing either with national issues, or with international cross-currents; of literary, broadly cultural, or media-oriented studies. In recent years, moreover, researchers and commentators are particularly inclined to discuss the attempts at regulating (or even repressing) the Internet, as the most recent and widely used instrument of communication. Since our approach to the phenomenon of censorship is mainly literary (with a couple of contributions on the cinema) and linguistic, we have chiefly relied upon texts that explored the interconnections of history, culture, and the study of language and literature. The following are just a few examples of recent volumes that proved particularly helpful for our research (in chronological order): Clegg 1997, Post (ed.) 1998,

Dutton 2000, Müller (ed.) 2004, Allan and Burridge (2006), Morini and Zacchi (eds) 2006, Billiani (ed.) 2007, Ní Chuilleanáin, Ó Cuilleanáin, and Parris (eds) 2008, Kemp and McElligott (eds) 2009.

[3] As an example, the well-known rigorousness in prohibiting the translation of the Bible within the Catholic Counter-Reformation wave can be taken into account (see Wolf 2006, 17-38).

[4] Any reference to the essays contained in this volume is simply made by mentioning the author's surname.

[5] The implementation of an official proscribing system for written texts proved no easy task for the Catholic religious hierarchies during the second half of the sixteenth century. It meant facing an enormous amount of work, since a list of prohibited books and authors, in order to be efficacious, had to be updated, corrected and revised constantly. The procedure and its agents, moreover, kept changing in the space of every few years, and the general confusion of people and regulations even brought unexpected and undesired effects. See for instance the paradoxical inclusion into the *Index* of the work of a Pope, Pius II (1405-1464), under his name of birth, Enea Silvio Piccolomini; or even the presence (in the *Index* of Pope Sixtus V) of the well-known censor Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, who, as Hubert Wolf humorously states, thus found himself a "censured censor" (Wolf 2006, 34).

[6] Among specific regulations, an instance of more general and long-lasting orders concerning press control are the 1586 decrees, "commonly referred to as the '1586 Star Chamber decrees' and viewed as having considerable impact on printing and licensing practices well into the seventeenth century […]. Of the nine items in this decree, eight sought to remedy the problems that had arisen from a proliferation of printing presses, many of which were being used to print works that violated royal patents and Company licenses" (Clegg 2009, xlviii).

[7] The royal charter was granted by Catholic Mary Tudor to the Stationers' Company as a form of protection from the attacks of Protestant publications; paradoxically, it soon became a tool against the Roman Catholic Church in the hands of Elizabeth I, who maintained the charter when she acceded to the throne one year later, in 1558 (see Clegg 2009, 1).

[8] On the actual ideological stance of *Areopagitica*—often regarded as a "modern" text defending the liberty of the press against any institutionalized force—a number of scholars have recently adopted a more cautious approach. See McElligott's position (2009, xxi): "*Areopagitica*, which has often been held up as the first iteration of the modern position of the freedom of the press, certainly had a broader concept of free access to the press than anything else published at the time, but it did not go as far in its concept of press freedom as many later commentators assumed. It is true that Milton argued against pre-publication licensing, but he did not believe that the press should be open to Jews, Muslims, atheists, blasphemers, Roman Catholics or defenders of the traditional Episcopal settlement of the Church of England. Furthermore, Milton believed that the *minority* of Englishmen whom he believed should have access to the press—it needs to be stressed that the supporters of the 'Church as by law established' constituted the majority of the

English nation—should be liable to post-publication punishment for anything they might print which was subsequently deemed to be objectionable".

[9] See the references in the various chapters, especially those by Morini, Bibbò, and Parini.

[10] Moreover, as Billiani argues, it was mainly after 1938 that the regulation of artistic expressions in Italy became particularly strict. Before that time, however, a circular appeared in 1934 which obliged the publishers to ask for an official permit (*nulla osta*) to publish foreign texts (see Billiani 2007, 190 and note 87).

PART I

DISCOURSE REGULATION

REPRESSION AND CONTAINMENT

CHAPTER ONE

"OF SEDITIONS AND TROUBLES": CENSORSHIP AND THE LATE ELIZABETHAN CRISIS

JANET CLARE

Representing Censorship

In Ben Jonson's early Jacobean tragedy, *Sejanus His Fall* (1605),[1] taken from the *Annals* of Tacitus, Rome is depicted as riven by faction, intrigue and a noxious intelligencing system. Public interest is sacrificed to personal advancement as Sejanus attempts to destroy all those who stand in his path to power. In one scene the historian Cremutius Cordus is accused by Sejanus's client, Satirius, of seditious writing. Cordus is, claims Satirius, "a sower of sedition in the state": his published work "bit'st the present age" (Actus Tertius, I, 381-385).[2] Natta and Afer, also Sejanus's clients, expand the charge: Cordus has raised Rome's dead heroes, claiming that "Cassius was the last of all the Romans" and has "disprized" the present time, including the Emperor, Tiberius, by the "oblique glance of his licentious pen" (Actus Tertius, I, 391-406). The consuls order that Cordus's books be burnt. Later we learn that Cordus has starved himself to death.

Cordus responds with an eloquent defence of his work and of the historian in general. He argues that he has not written about the present, and therefore, since the law of treason can only apply to the contemporary prince and the prince's parent, he cannot be accused of treason. Moreover, he asserts, there are ample precedents for his praise of Pompey, Cassius and Brutus in the work of other historians; at the same time, Tiberius's predecessors, Julius Caesar and Augustus, allowed a degree of free speech. In composing the historian's defence, Jonson is translating quite faithfully Cordus's oration as he found it in Tacitus, but the dialogue between the senator Arruntius—whom editors have seen as Jonson's mouthpiece—and

Sabinus, in which they condemn the act of burning licentious books, is Jonson's own. This rage of burning can only purchase writers an eternal name, and it is "brainless diligence" to think that present power can "extinguish/ The memory of all succeeding times" (ll. 471-480). Here, then, is an early seventeenth-century reflection on one of the truisms of censorship: that, paradoxically, censorship enhances the authority of the writer and his books. As various chapters in this volume attest, works which are censored or prohibited are inscribed in historical and cultural memory.

Cases of Censorship

A certain irony attaches to a play which offers such an insightful representation of censorship and which was itself investigated by the Jacobean Privy Council. We know from paratextual material in his previous play, the late Elizabethan *Poetaster*—set in Augustan Rome—that Jonson was moving from comical satire to tragedy in the hope that the change of genre would render his work less contentious. In his last comical satire, Jonson informs the reader: "There's something come into my thought / That must, and shall be sung, high, and aloof / Safe from the wolf's black jaw, and the dull ass's hoof" (ll. 224-6).[3] Here Jonson alludes cryptically to censorship—the devouring, predatory wolf—and censure—the dull auditory unable to understand his work. Although the evidence is fragmentary, we know that the change of genre did not pre-empt either censure or censorship. *Sejanus* was a commercial failure. In his record of conversations with Jonson, the Scots poet, William Drummond, recalled Jonson's allusion to the controversy caused by *Sejanus*:

> Northampton was his mortal enemy for brawling, on a St George's Day, one of his attendants. He was called before the Council for his *Sejanus,* and accused both of popery and treason by him.[4]

We can only speculate, as editors and commentators have done, as to why *Sejanus* was perceived as "treason".[5] In the early modern period censorship was a weapon of political manoeuvring. Like Cordus, Jonson had enemies in high places who might choose to incriminate him by interpreting historical writing as an indictment of the present. It has been variously conjectured that the Privy Council was persuaded to see in such matters as intrigues, corruption of patronage, and the fall of royal favourites, allusions to the treason trials of the Earl of Essex or Walter Raleigh. The accusations evidently did not prevail and Jonson published *Sejanus* in 1605. Nevertheless, he pre-empted adverse responses by

dictating how the play should be interpreted. Attached to "The Argument" of the 1605 quarto text is this assertion:

> This do we advance as a mark of terror to all traitors and treasons, to show how just the heavens are in pouring and thundering down a weighty vengeance on their unnatural intents, even to the worst princes: much more to those for guard of whose piety and virtue, the angels are in continual watch, and God himself miraculously working. (Jonson 2012 [1605], 230)

The imposition of this ideological interpretation suggests that at the time of publication Jonson was still nervous that the play might be appropriated against him. The defence is omitted in the later text—the Folio of 1616—which indicates again that it was the political rivalries and factions in early Jacobean England that made Jonson's political tragedy appear so vulnerable to misinterpretation. Later he could publish with impunity.

Jonson began writing *Sejanus* in 1602, that is, at a time of crisis about the Elizabethan succession, when, as I will argue, the writing of history was particularly prone to adverse construction. *Sejanus* became entangled with Jacobean court politics, but for readers and audiences it is with late Elizabethan politics, sensibilities and censorship that the play would have resonated.

Elizabeth's last years were, as early modern historians generally concur, a time of instability and uncertainty, which in turn produced a fluctuating and unstable censorship. With the Queen nearing the end of her life and reign, the cult of Gloriana with all its chivalric trappings had had its day. For many, including writers, this substantial vacuum promised to be filled by the popular Earl of Essex, whom the Queen had appointed Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland.[6] With the largest army ever to leave England, he was dispatched to Ireland in March 1599 to quell the uprising in Munster. Writers were ready to celebrate Essex in prose and verse. Several texts, like Thomas Churchyard's poem, "The Fortunate Farewell to the most forward and Noble Earl of Essex", which represented Essex as Scipio and Mars "with shining sword in hand",[7] were quickly produced to promote Essex as military hero. The dramatist and poet, George Chapman, dedicated to Essex the first English translation of Homer, *Seaven Bookes of the Iliades of Homere, Prince of Poets* (1598), and praised him as being the living instance of "the Achillein virtues".[8] Shakespeare contributed to the euphoric mood in the first of his plays to be performed in the new Globe theatre. In the fifth and final Chorus of *Henry V* we are invited to compare Henry's entry into London with conquering Caesar's triumphal return to Rome, and to anticipate a similar heroic

return from Ireland and an entry into London on the part of the Earl of Essex:

> As, by a lower but loving likelihood,
> Were now the general of our gracious empress.
> As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
> Bringing rebellion broached on his sword. (ll. 29-32)

Similar high-sounding terms were used by the lawyer John Hayward in the Latin dedication to Essex, also in 1599, of his prose history, *The First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII.* The title is in fact deceptive, perhaps deliberately so, for the history is more to do with the reign and deposition of Richard II—familiar to readers from the Chronicles and Shakespeare's play—than it is with the reign of Henry IV, also recently dramatized by Shakespeare. In his Latin dedication, Hayward flatters Essex as "great" not only in "present judgement" but "in expectation of future time".[9] Once-blinded fortune, Hayward goes on to say, has now regained her sight and recognizes that a man distinguished in all virtues should be heaped with honours. His history, Hayward confidently asserts, will rest safely under the shelter of Essex's name. This prediction was singularly ill-fated, for Hayward's history exemplifies one of those interesting cases of censorship post-licensing.

The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII had been licensed for publication in February 1599, a month before Essex left for Ireland. It was approved by Samuel Harsnett, the chaplain of the Bishop of London (technically press licensing was in the hands of the Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury, but they delegated to other clerics). As often with early modern censorship, we learn about instances of state interference through report and gossip. John Chamberlain, writing in March 1599 to his friend, Dudley Carleton, in Ostend, refers to the—as yet small—controversy generated by Hayward's history:

> The treatise of Henry the fourth is reasonablie well written. The author is a younge man of Cambridge toward the civill lawe. Here hath been much descanting about it, why such a storie shold come out at this time, and many exceptions taken, especially to the epistle which was a short thinge in Latin dedicated to the erle of Essex, and objected to him in goode earnest, whereupon there was commaundment it should be cut out of the booke, yet I have got you a transcript of it that you may picke out the offence if you can; for my part I can finde no such buggeswords but that every thing is as it is taken.[10]