



Giuliana Iannaccaro - Giovanni
Iamartino (Eds.)
*Enforcing and Eluding Censorship:
British and Anglo-Italian Perspectives*

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2014, 243 pp.

Enforcing and Eluding Censorship: British and Anglo-Italian Perspectives is a wide-ranging edited collection offering fourteen contributions on the forms and practices of regulation and reaction connected with censorship. The collection spans several historical periods, media, methodologies and disciplines, from English literature to Linguistics and Translation Studies, thus offering a very broad – yet fragmentary at stages – set of perspectives on the complex and often not overt phenomena of (counter)censorship in the Anglo-American culture and Anglo-Italian cultural relationships. The edited collection is introduced by a preface by one of the editors, Giuliana Iannaccaro, who outlines in rich detail the structure of the book. The two main sections, entitled “Discourse Regulation” and “Textual and Ideological Manipulation”, provide case studies devoted to hyper-strategies of enforcing control and to political interference in cultural products, respectively.

Each section contains shorter sub-sections. The first sub-section is entitled “Repression and Containment” and explores institutional forms of censorship enacted in England from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. As Janet Clare in her essay (“‘Of Seditious and Troubles’: Censorship and the Late Elizabethan Crisis”) focused on late Elizabethan/Early Jacobean theatre shows, at times of political



instability, as in late sixteenth-century England, historical writing was particularly surveilled since it was perceived as a site of political manipulation. An example of this is the chronicle play *The Life and Raigne of King Henrie III* by John Hayward, dedicated to the Earl of Essex. When the latter was declared a traitor by Queen Elizabeth I, in response to this political event Hayward's work was censored as seditious. However, forms of censorship can also be more oblique, as analysed in the other two contributions of the sub-section. Alessandra Petrina's essay ("*Damnatio Memoriae* and Surreptitious Printing: Niccolò Machiavelli and the British Isles") deals with the censorship of Machiavelli's works in sixteenth-century Britain; she acutely emphasises the subtle institutional strategy of limiting the works' circulation by not making them available to common readers. In similar terms, Allen Reddick's contribution ("*'A Kindre of Massacre': Censoring John Milton*") focuses on John Milton and the institutional efforts to keep him out of print, and thus, from a publishing and political viewpoint, invisible in eighteenth-century Britain.

The second sub-section, "Circumvention and Adaptation", discusses, in a reverse and specular way with respect to the first sub-section, forms of reaction against censorship, and expands the timeframe, with the subject matter of the essays spanning the seventeenth-century to the 1980s, exploring various media and issues of gender. Drawing on Foucault's analysis of speech, Martin Dzelzainis ("*Saturday 21 July 1683: Oxford and London*") offers an illuminating perspective on the Oxford book-burning incident following the so-called Rye House Plot in 1683. He argues that, not being able to contain the fast circulation of books, authorities had to change their strategies in view of managing and not suppressing dissent through public discredit. Nicoletta Brazzelli's essay ("*Narrative Strategies and Textual Constraints in Women's Travel Writing: The Case of Mary Kingsley*") on nineteenth-century women's travel writing highlights the heterogeneous textual acts and gendered constructions of (self)censorship in female travel accounts. By looking at the narratives enacted within and around Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897), Brazzelli casts light on the negotiation that the female author

had to enact with the traditional male perspective in order to legitimate herself as a writer. Moving a century forward, Nicoletta Vallorani ("The Dis/Order of Things: Jarman's *Caravaggio* and the Criminal Hero") deals with identity representation, homosexuality and people with AIDS (PWA) in 1980s Thatcher's Britain. Drawing on the analysis of the emarginated self-declared gay artist Derek Jarman, Vallorani argues that the elaboration of a narrative of visibility of his personal condition, compared to that of Caravaggio and Pasolini, enforced the artist's political role, thus representing a means of resistance against censorship.

The second part of the edited collection is mainly devoted to specific textual practices of control and/or elusion. The first subsection, entitled 'Forms of Translation', comprises five essays on intra- and inter-lingual translations, widely spanning centuries and media, from Shakespeare's seventeenth-century adaptations and twentieth-century mafia movies. The first two contributions bring into greater focus the so-called "Restoration filter" on Shakespeare's works; more specifically, they both analyse Davenant's rewriting of *Macbeth*. Drawing more consistently on Descriptive Translation Studies, Massimiliano Morini ("Censorship, Intralingual Translation and Filter: Shakespeare Rewritten in the Restoration Era") outlines how the filter works at an intra-lingual level, whereas Romana Zacchi's contribution ("Re-Written Shakespeare: Religion and Topicality Adaptation") explores adaptors' strategies of cultural censorship that enforce omissions with regard to sensitive religious and political matters, including, for instance, imagery related to witches. Moving towards the eighteenth and then to the twentieth centuries, and from English to Italian translations, Maria Luisa Bignami's essay ("John Milton Drowned in Words and Silenced in Cuts: 18th-and 19th Century Italian Translations of *Paradise Lost*") analyses both religious and stylistic acts of censorship in the Italian translations of John Milton's works. These acts controversially conformed Milton's heretic attitude to Catholic dogmas, and manipulated the style of his epic to adapt it to the translators' own criteria of elegance. Antonio Bibbò's contribution ("Trojan Horses in Fascist Publishing: (Self-)Censored Translations and

Political Criticism”) casts light on the issues of translators’ self-censorship, interestingly taking as a perspective a time when actual (though somehow tolerant) censorship was in force, as under the Fascist regime in Italy. In the case of Dos Passos’s choral novel *Manhattan Transfer*, for instance, the expunction of explicitly controversial passages was strategic and functional in allowing the circulation of a potentially subversive work. However, Bibbò remarks that inaccurate translations of this novel still circulate nowadays in no longer Fascist Italy, highlighting the need for a more accurate and consistent retranslation of classics. Ilaria Parini (“‘I’m Going to F***** Kill You!’ Verbal Censorship in Dubbed Mafia Movies”) closes this dense sub-section, shedding light on forms of censorship in the dubbing of 1990s Mafia films. The scholar offers a meticulous linguistic analysis of the taboo language that is usually mitigated, omitted, or replaced with regional varieties in the dubbed films. This practice runs the risk of undermining the ability to offer an effective portrait of Mafia characters.

The second sub-section, entitled “Defining and Proscribing”, guides the reader through a lexical journey, diachronically structured and cohesively argued. Spanning the early modern period and the contemporary age, it illustrates the various forms in which censorship affects the codification of the lexical, such as in dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Giovanni Iamartino’s contribution (“Lexicographers as Censors: Checking Verbal Abuse in Early English Dictionaries”) interestingly argues that lexicographers, in their theory and practice, feature acts of censorship, as evident in the history of English lexicography. These acts include, more specifically, exclusions from wordlists, as well as the definition, label and illustration of words. Elisabetta Lonati (“‘And trade is so noble a master’: Promoting and Censuring Commerce in 18th century British Enciclopaedias”) analyses lexical entries relating to commercial activities in eighteenth-century British Encyclopaedias as ways of enforcing national ideology and of enhancing the social status of commerce as intrinsically ethical, though controversially slavist. Laura Pinnavaia’s chapter (“Defining and Proscribing Bad Language Words in English Learner’s Dictionaries”)

concludes the collection by offering a stimulating perspective on the paradoxical prescriptiveness and proscriptiveness of offensive language in English learners' dictionaries as opposed to the frequency of bad words in British and American media. This attitude, argues Pinnavaia, is ideologically related to instances of political correctness.

Enforcing and Eluding Censorship offers a cross-disciplinary approach to the issues and forms of censorship and, given its focus on such a broad timespan and media range, it will appeal to a vast scholarly audience, including experts in linguistics, literary criticism and translation. If this variety is generally sustained by academic rigour and intriguing case-studies, the reading can be at times disrupted by the too ambitious chronological spectrum, and the collection may run the risk of losing sight of the methodological relevance of some perspectives. This nonetheless does not diminish the valuable contribution that the edited collection provides to the field of censorship studies.

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