

## The Reception of Doris Lessing's Novels in Franco's Spain

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Nobel Prize winner Doris Lessing's serious concerns with political and social issues, as well as her constant experimentation with genre and style, have made her a highly prestigious literary figure in the English language. In Spain, her work was recognised in 2001 when she was awarded the Prince of Asturias Award for Letters. However, for years, some of her novels were practically unknown to Spanish readers. The first Spanish version of *The Golden Notebook* appeared in 1978, sixteen years after its publication in London. Why did it take so long? Did Spanish publishers ignore Lessing in the 1960s and 1970s? Did her controversial spirit clash with the traditional views of Franco's censors? This article describes information found in censorship office files in an attempt to provide an explanation for the attitudes to Lessing's novels in the Franco era. They contain valuable data regarding publisher and bookseller interest in Lessing at the time, with reference to Spanish and imported editions of her work, and, more importantly, provide some insight into the censors' opinion of her fiction.

Keywords: Doris Lessing; fiction; reception; censorship; Spain; Franco

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## La recepción de la narrativa de Doris Lessing en la España de Franco

Doris Lessing, ganadora del Premio Nobel de Literatura en 2007, es una escritora prolífica cuyo interés por temas sociales y políticos, junto a sus innovaciones en el tratamiento de los géneros y el estilo, la han convertido en una figura destacada del panorama literario inglés. En España, la obra de Lessing fue reconocida en 2001 cuando se le concedió el Premio Príncipe de Asturias de las Letras. Sin embargo, durante muchos años sus novelas no llegaron al lector español. La primera traducción al español de *The Golden Notebook* apareció en 1978, dieciséis años después de su publicación en Londres. ¿Por qué tardó tanto? ¿Ignoraron las editoriales españolas a Lessing en los años sesenta y setenta? ¿Chocaba su espíritu controvertido con los puntos de vista de la censura establecida por el régimen de Franco? Este artículo tiene como objetivo explorar los expedientes de censura de la época con el fin de analizar las actitudes de los censores españoles hacia las novelas de Lessing. Estos expedientes proporcionan información muy valiosa sobre el interés de las editoriales y los libreros por la obra de Lessing, las ediciones publicadas o importadas en aquellos años y, lo que es más importante, las opiniones críticas de los censores sobre su narrativa.

Palabras clave: Doris Lessing; narrativa; recepción; censura; España; Franco

Doris Lessing's international reputation as a novelist and short story writer was established during the 1950s and 1960s with the publication of works like *Martha Quest* (1952), *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *African Stories* (1964). Her prolific literary career culminated in her winning the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature, just before her 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Swedish Academy described her as "that epicist of the female experience, who with skepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny."<sup>1</sup> Her work reflects a long history of controversial issues concerning colonial Africa and communism, as well as engagement in detailed examinations of women's issues through their personal experiences and sexual relationships. Lessing's early work, set in Africa, denounces the colonialist oppression of the black population, exposing the sterility of white culture. Her outspoken views on racism attracted the attention of the government of white South Africa, who declared her a "prohibited alien" in 1956 (Lessing 1956).<sup>2</sup> A member of the Communist Party for several years and a campaigner against nuclear weapons, Lessing also wrote radically on social issues in the 1950s, returning to them in *The Good Terrorist* in 1985. Similarly, characters like Martha Quest in the "Children of Violence" series and Anna Wulf in *The Golden Notebook* shocked readers with their desires and frustrations, representing for some critics some of the "early voices of the feminist movement" (Whittaker 1988, 8). Later novels, like *The Summer before the Dark* (1973) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), also expose the thoughts and feelings of her heroines in detail. Lessing's serious concerns with political and social issues, as well as her constant experimentation with genre and style, have made her a highly prestigious figure in the English language (Klein 2000, 252).

In Spain, Lessing's work was recognised in 2001 when she was awarded the Prince of Asturias Award for Letters (Premio Príncipe de Asturias de las Letras). The judges declared her a major figure of world literature, "a passionate fighter for freedom who has spared no effort in her commitment to Third World causes."<sup>3</sup> Today, Spanish readers have access to a wide selection of her novels and short stories, and Spanish-scholars, critics and reviewers have examined her work from many different perspectives.<sup>4</sup> But this has not always been the case. In 1987, Fernando Galván painted a very different picture in his introduction

<sup>1</sup> See the official website of the Nobel Prize: [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/press.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/press.html)

<sup>2</sup> Lessing provides a more general discussion on censorship in a chapter first included in Derek Jones's *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia* (2001) and reprinted in her collection of essays *Time Bites* (2004).

<sup>3</sup> In the English section of the website of La Fundación Príncipe de Asturias, the full quotation from the record reads: "The Jury thus recognises not only one of the unquestionably major figures of world literature, whose work is the fruit of a lifetime's dedication to the narrative, but also a passionate fighter for freedom who has spared no effort in her commitment to Third World causes, both in her literature and in the personal experience that her eventful life has provided her."

<sup>4</sup> See Andreu Jiménez (1991), Anievas Gamillo (1994 and 1995) Arias Doblas (2002), Concha Muñoz (2006), Durán Rico (2000), Galván Reula (1982), García Navarro (2001 and 2003), Halbach (1994), Hidalgo Andreu (1981 and 1984) and Moya (1992).

to the *Doris Lessing Newsletter*. He described Lessing's work as "partly unknown and partly misunderstood" in Spain, adding: "Although she achieved some renown in the later seventies with the translation of *The Golden Notebook* and the first volumes of the *Children of Violence* series, her reception after that date has been very weak" (1987, 2).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the first Spanish version of *The Golden Notebook* appeared as *El cuaderno dorado* in 1978, sixteen years after its publication in London. Why did it take so long? Did Spanish publishing houses ignore Lessing in the 1960s and 1970s? Did her controversial spirit clash with the traditional views of Franco's censors? This article describes information found in files from the censorship office in an attempt to provide an explanation for the attitudes to Lessing's novels in the Franco era. They contain valuable data regarding publisher and bookseller literary interest in Lessing at the time, with reference to Spanish and imported editions of her work, and, more importantly, provide some insight into the censors' opinion of her fiction.<sup>6</sup>

The first attempt to introduce Lessing to Spanish readers was in 1953, when Editorial Spinelli applied to import 20 copies of an English edition of *The Grass is Singing*, her first novel. Published in Britain three years earlier, in 1950, *The Grass* examines the issue of racism in colonial Africa through the relationship between a black servant and an unhappy white woman, the wife of a colonial farmer. In it, Lessing highlights the cruel and exploitative nature of colonialism, an undoubtedly unwelcome criticism of her native Southern Rhodesia (then a British colony, now Zimbabwe). It was accepted by the Spanish censor, who authorised the import, describing the novel as "excellent" and justifying this verdict by stating that the immoral behaviour of the adulterous wife was rightly punished: "Death is the price of her crime," he wrote.<sup>7</sup> Following this precedent, ten more censorship importation reports in the 1960s and 1970s were also favourable. In fact, when the publisher Seix Barral decided to print a Spanish version of the novel with the title *Canta la hierba* in 1964, the censor approved it again, praising Lessing's "appealing style."<sup>8</sup> Curiously enough, although the censorship office gave permission for the publication of *The Grass is Singing* in Spanish, Seix Barral did not in fact bring it out until 1968. When the censors reconsidered the work in that year, they were decidedly more complimentary:

<sup>5</sup> Following on from this introductory note, the newsletter also includes Galván's article "The Spanish Confusion: The Reception of Doris Lessing in Spain"; a revised and enlarged version of this essay is also included in *In Pursuit of Doris Lessing* (1990).

<sup>6</sup> On censorship in post-war Spain, see Abellán (1980), Beneyto (1977) and Cisqueña (1977). Most censorship files of this period can be found in the Archivo General de la Administración (Alcalá de Henares, Madrid). I am indebted to the archive staff for their unstinting help and friendly guidance on how to find my way through the complexities of these files.

<sup>7</sup> "Excelente novela sobre la vida en el interior de Sudáfrica y las relaciones entre blancos y negros. El código no escrito, pero inexorable, que regula estas relaciones se cumple al faltar una mujer casada, que ha perdido la conciencia de su propia personalidad por la tremenda soledad en que se encuentra, a las normas de convivencia con los negros. La muerte es el precio de su delito, y el negro objeto de sus preferencias liquida con el puñal la inminente fuga de la mujer. Creo que se puede autorizar." See File 2190-53, Reference (03)50.02SIG21/10275.

<sup>8</sup> File 7456-64, Reference (03)50.02SIG21/15742.

“A novel of great quality, written with perfect knowledge of background and types, and with enormous literary dignity.”<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting to note the apparent acceptance of Lessing’s condemnation of European colonialism on the part of the Spanish censors. They did not seem to object to her harsh criticism of the brutal colonisation of Africa or her attacks against the gross injustices of racial inequality and prejudice. We should take into account that twentieth-century Spain also had colonies in Africa; Equatorial Guinea, a central African nation under Spanish rule for 190 years, did not gain its independence until 1968. Similarly, Spain waged colonial campaigns in Africa at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and Francoist discourse made much of “Spain’s African vocation,” a concept that was to be central during the postwar period (Nerín 1997, 11). Clearly the censors who read *The Grass is Singing* believed the target of Lessing’s criticism was the British Empire, never considering the possibility that Spain’s colonial policy could also be construed as an object of Lessing’s satire.

The next novel to attempt the journey into the Spanish literary world was *The Golden Notebook*, a daring narrative that presents a detailed description of the life of a sexually liberated woman, Anna Wulf, and the crises she faces, both personal and professional. Anna, a 40-year-old writer and single mother, reflects frankly on her youthful wartime experiences in Africa, her later life in London’s leftist circles, her troubled relationships with men and her attempts at writing fiction. A book fusing sex with politics would surely encounter difficulties with the Spanish censors. Indeed, the publisher Seix Barral was subjected to objections in 1962 when they applied to publish 4,000 copies of *El cuaderno dorado*. A first censor identified over sixty pages which he found offensive to morality or to the regime. After a brief description of the novel, he stated two main reasons for banning the novel: first, its “sexual degeneration,” which included adultery, homosexuality, masturbation, Freudianism, etc.; and secondly, its politics, with communist characters portrayed as “idealistic, completely human characters.”<sup>10</sup>

The publisher appealed, explaining that the story actually showed great respect for Christian morality principles by clearly demonstrating how “a woman who attempts to evade her true mission in life inevitably heads for neurosis.” He added that the publication of this already important book, given Lessing’s prestige as one of the best contemporary British novelists, would be of great interest to readers. Despite these arguments, a new ecclesiastical censor confirmed that the protagonist’s immoral behaviour and her links with the Communist Party were enough in themselves to prevent publication of the novel.<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that the Spanish publisher intended to publish *The Golden*

<sup>9</sup> “Novela de gran calidad, escrita con un conocimiento perfecto del ambiente y de los tipos y con una enorme dignidad literaria. No hay absolutamente nada que objetar.” See File 4753-68, Reference (03)50.06SIG21/19001.

<sup>10</sup> See File 3486-62, Reference (03)50.05SIG21/14016.

<sup>11</sup> “Diario de una mujer divorciada, que aspira a vivir una vida libre. Tal vida se mueve en el amplio campo de la más perfecta amoralidad: perfecto libertinaje en las relaciones sexuales, adhesión (no bien definida) al partido comunista. . . . Se mantiene, es cierto, fiel a unos principios en los que estima consiste la dignidad humana, pero el nivel de los mismos es

*Notebook* in 1962, the very same year in which the novel came out both in Britain and the United States, clearly demonstrating the publisher's keen interest in Lessing, and in this book in particular. It is also interesting that while in Spain Lessing was being banned for her communist characters, in the Soviet Union she was having similar problems, but for the opposite reasons.<sup>12</sup> Her work was banned by the Kremlin because she had left the Communist Party when the Soviets invaded Hungary in 1956. After a very positive reception of the Russian translation of her African stories and *Martha Quest* in the 1950s, she was now "a traitor," and was banned in the Soviet Union between 1957 and 1977 (Peterson 1990, 142).

Following Seix Barral's frustrated request to publish *The Golden Notebook* in Spain, some booksellers ventured to import the novel in the 1960s and 1970s. There were eleven importation requests altogether, for a total of 327 copies in English, and only two were refused.<sup>13</sup> In 1964, two booksellers were allowed to sell the book, although some censors still found it problematic. There were clear discrepancies between the views of the censors: whereas one insisted that the novel should be banned for being "Crude, immoral, descriptive," with "clear communist connections" written into the plot, another was more favourable: "In the form of a diary or notebook, the author expresses her thoughts on women and their problems: feminism, love, marriage, religion, politics, etc. Many points are opinions and therefore open to interpretation. I believe that there is nothing to cut. In any case, it is an import in English. IT CAN BE AUTHORISED."<sup>14</sup> The description of the book in this report is worth reading in detail. What was previously described by the first censor as "sexual degeneration," "libertinism," "adultery" and "communism," here is referred to as "love," "marriage" and "politics." Eventually, this request was granted, only on this occasion. But they authorised only fifty copies, and in English, so very few Spanish readers had access to this work since French, rather than English, was the language taught in schools at the time.

As of 1968 the ban on *The Golden Notebook* was permanently lifted. This time, a very different interpretation of the book prevailed. Although the protagonist's belief in free love was deemed immoral, the story did contain a moral: "it was Anna Wulf's need for happiness and the impossibility of finding it that drove her to the search for new and useless sensations."<sup>15</sup> This is an early psychological approach to *The Golden Notebook*

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tan bajo y tan fuera de lo que normalmente se entiende por principio, que prácticamente carecen de vigencia, y la obra transcurre al margen de toda moral. Abundan además las escenas íntimas descritas con desenvuelta crudeza."

<sup>12</sup> I briefly wrote about the paradoxes and radical changes of censoring attitudes towards some of Lessing's novels that occurred in various European censorship systems in "The Censorship of British Fiction in Twentieth-Century Europe: Paradoxes and Inconsistencies" (Lázaro 2012).

<sup>13</sup> See File 742-64, Reference (03)52.117SIG66/6455, and File 254-67, Reference (03)52.117SIG66/6478.

<sup>14</sup> "En forma de diario o libro de notas, la autora va exponiendo su pensamiento sobre la mujer y sus problemas: feminismo, el amor, el matrimonio, religión, política, etc. En muchos puntos son opiniones muy discutibles. No creo que haya nada suprimible. De todas las maneras se trata de una importación en inglés. PROCEDE SU AUTORIZACIÓN." See File 670-64, Reference (03)52.117SIG66/6455.

<sup>15</sup> "Aunque el tema es escabroso y el ambiente de la novela amoral (la protagonista, Ana, practica libremente el amor y la unión sexual con cuantos hombres le agradan), apruebo la obra por su conclusión moralizadora: a pesar

that later critics would also include in their discussions of the novel.<sup>16</sup> The door was now open for this very controversial book to be imported five more times before the publication of Spanish versions, by Noguer in 1978 and then by Luis de Caralt the following year. By then Franco had died, and, although the censorship system was still in place, the previous regime's strict policy concerning morality and political correctness had disappeared.

If *The Golden Notebook* encountered difficulties in the censorship office, the first in the "Children of Violence" series, *Martha Quest*, met with more problems. This comes as no surprise, as the story of Martha Quest, a young girl growing up in a British colony in Africa just before World War II, once more focuses on the protagonist's relationships with men, and her reactions to sex and politics. This time, several passages were censored after a publication request by Ediciones 62 was examined in 1965.<sup>17</sup> The report notes the literary value of the novel and the celebrity of the author, but points out unwelcome references to birth control and abortion. Nevertheless, the banned passages actually referred to improper political comments about Franco and the Spanish republican government during the Civil War, as well as a number of "nearly pornographic" love scenes involving the sexual awakening of the protagonist. The political passage referred to is in fact an apparently harmless conversation in which Martha has a political argument in her office and tries to explain to Mrs Buss that those who led the coup against an elected government in Spain in 1936 were not the republicans, but Franco's army:

Martha said the Government in Spain was not Communist, but Liberal. Mrs Buss looked blank for a moment, and then said that was what she had said all the time, the Government was Liberal, so why did Abraham have to go and fight it? Martha was confused, then she understood, and said that Mrs Buss was making a mistake, Franco had never been elected, but... Mrs Buss listened, frowning doubtfully, while her hands rested on the keys, her bright face looking stubborn. (Lessing 1965, 244)

The censor noticed the author's sympathy for the Spanish Republican government rejecting the use of the label "Liberal" for the government that Franco had overthrown, the official line being that Franco's troops saved the country from the communists. The publishers were asked to omit these passages, something they refused to do and the book was not published.

Nevertheless, *Martha Quest*'s luck changed the following year. From 1966 to 1972 five importation requests made it through without a hitch. One hundred and eighty copies

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de su libertad sentimental y sexual, Ana nunca envidió la felicidad; fue su necesidad de ésta y la imposibilidad de encontrarla la que críticamente le impulsó a la búsqueda de nuevas e inútiles sensaciones." See File 565-68, Reference (03)52.117SIG66/6490.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Jeannette King's reading of this novel in "The Golden Notebook and Reflective Form" (1989) and Linda Kauffman's "The Golden Notebook: Anna Wulf's Schizoanalysis" (1992).

<sup>17</sup> File 4005-65, Reference (03)50.06SIG21/16293.

of the Signet and Panther editions arrived in Spanish bookshops. So when in 1973 Seix Barral took the risk of publishing a Spanish version of *Martha Quest*, the censors did not pose too many objections. On this occasion, despite a request to remove one of the sexual passages, another more tolerant censor decided to approve the novel.<sup>18</sup> Censorship relaxed somewhat during the 1970s and of the seven allegedly obscene passages of the previous report only one, in which Martha is in bed with Douglas, her future husband, continued to be seen as problematic: "He pulled aside her dress, and fell in an ecstasy of humble adoration on her breasts, cupping them in his hands and explaining how they were so sweet" (Lessing 1965, 265). It is tempting to suspect that the Spanish translation of those "nearly pornographic" passages spotted by the censor in 1965 had been deliberately "moderated" in an exercise of self-censorship. However, I have investigated this and have come to the conclusion that the translator, Francesc Parcerisas, submitted a faithful version of the text to the censors.

The remaining four novels of "The Children of Violence" series did not attract the interest of Spanish publishers during Franco's regime. It was only at the end of the 1970s, beginning of 1980s that the publishers Argos Vergara decided to release the continuation of Martha Quest's experiences, struggles and intellectual development: *Un casamiento convencional (A Proper Marriage)* in 1979, *Al final de la tormenta (A Ripple from the Storm)* in 1980, *Cerco de tierra (Landlocked)* in 1980, and *La ciudad de las cuatro puertas (The Four-Gated City)* in 1982. By then Franco's censorship machine was a thing of the past. What is surprising is that the Archive holds no previous record of these novels in its database. Did Spanish publishers ignore the less popular novels of the series? Were they afraid of a negative response and did not bother to try? It is difficult to say. What we know is that three of these novels—*A Proper Marriage*, *A Ripple from the Storm* and *Landlocked*—were allowed to enter Spain in the 1960s, since several import requests were granted without objection. A request for only 150 copies of *The Four-Gated City* was banned in 1970, and again in 1972, due to an "erotic passage" in the second chapter, in which Martha is in bed with her friend Jack.<sup>19</sup>

Another novel by Lessing which did not attract the attention of Spanish publishers was *Retreat to Innocence* (1956). In this case, it is reasonable to assume that, given the propagandist nature of the work, no publisher deemed an application to the censors worthwhile. It is the story of Julia Barr, a young girl from the English provinces and daughter of a wealthy baronet, who has an affair with a Czech communist refugee, Jan Brod. Socialist ideas abound, in the form of the contrast between old leftists who had opposed fascism in the 1930s and 1940s, and the younger, non-political generation. It includes a long eulogy of Stalin, in which Jan Brod compares him with the Messiah. It is difficult to understand how the censors could have allowed this book to see the light

<sup>18</sup> File 13558-72, Reference (03)50.07SIG73/02543.

<sup>19</sup> See File 1346-70, Reference (03)52.117SIG66/6519, File 1354-70, Reference (03)52.117SIG66/6519, and File 617-72, Reference (03)52.117SIG66/6534.

of day under Franco's regime: No publisher even tried.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, it was not a very well known novel, since the author herself had actually disowned it (Lessing 1997, 214). All I could find in my investigations was an import file from 1967, granting 25 copies of the book in English.<sup>21</sup> This was the sum of the interest the novel awoke in Spain.

Contrary to what occurred in the case of the "Children of Violence" series, *The Summer before the Dark* triggered an immediate response from the Spanish publisher Seix Barral. The very same year the novel was published in London and New York, 1973, the Barcelona firm that had already published *The Grass is Singing* and *Martha Quest* decided to print 6,000 copies of *El último verano de la Sra. Brown*, translated by Francesc Parcerisas. It is the story of a middle-aged housewife from a London suburb, Kate Brown, who is offered a summer job abroad and has an affair with a young American, Jeffrey Merton, while examining her past and present life at the same time. In *Kate Brown* we find another of Lessing's female characters who, escaping traditional roles and values, lives her life fully in terms of her femininity, her sexuality, and, in this case, her own ageing process. Once more, Spanish censors rejected passages from the novel proposing the censorship of five pages. Curiously enough, this time they found no fault with Kate's adultery nor with the explicit references to her sex life. Only a couple of offensive phrases in which the vulgar use of the word "screw" occurs and some critical comments about Spain were considered problematic.<sup>22</sup> The first of these anti-Spanish comments described the way Spain had changed under the pressure of the tourist trade: where previously bikinis were not allowed on the beach, now people even made love openly, "in the warm, treacherous, increasingly odiferous waters—sometimes copulating as openly as cats and dogs." Then, a few lines later, the same kind of criticism is made more explicitly: the country was "sold to tourism," it was "corrupted, ruined, debased." The chapter in which Kate and Jeffrey are in Spain contains numerous negative observations about the country and its people. It is strange that the censors did not ask for the many insulting remarks to be eliminated, since foreign attacks on Spain were usually rejected.<sup>23</sup> However, the publisher agreed to remove the five offending passages and an expurgated version of *El último verano de la Sra. Brown* appeared in 1974.

However, the ban on the English language version of this novel continued for another year. Three import requests submitted in January and July 1975, a few months before Franco's death, were not approved. Again, the reason was that Lessing "speaks badly of

<sup>20</sup> There is, however, a Spanish version entitled *Regreso a la inocencia*, published by Zig Zag in Santiago de Chile in 1969.

<sup>21</sup> File 870-67, Reference (03)52.117SIG66/6482.

<sup>22</sup> File 11795-73, Reference (03)50.07SIG73/03546.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, one can read that in 1970s Spain men were "still owning women's sexuality" (1973, 78), and twenty years earlier, Kate, one of the first tourists in Spain, had seen massive poverty and despair, "children in rags and without shoes, children with sores and with flies crawling on their faces and into their eyes, children with the swollen bellies of malnutrition" (1973, 80).



Spain.”<sup>24</sup> It seems that morality issues were no longer a matter of concern for the censors, but they still kept a tight control on texts which dealt harsh blows to the image of the country. The ban on *The Summer before the Dark* was eventually lifted in 1977, although this in no way represented a watershed moment in the reception of Lessing's works in Spain. It simply meant that 50 copies of a Penguin edition could freely circulate among Spanish readers.<sup>25</sup>

Several years would go by before the unexpurgated Spanish version of the novel came out. It was in 1984 that a new translation by J. Manuel Álvarez Flórez and Julia Ángela Pérez Gómez was published by Argos Vergara. By then, Franco had died, the censorship system had vanished and publishers were taking advantage of the new right to freedom of speech to publish those books that had not been authorised before. One would therefore expect to find this new Spanish version of Lessing's *The Summer before the Dark* to not contain the shortcomings of the previous version. However, a careful look at this new translation reveals that the passages of the original text considered improper were, to a great extent, moderated. Had Franco's censors read this new version ten years earlier, they might even have approved the book without alterations. Vulgar language, for instance, disappeared. If the censor had frowned on Francesc Parcerisas's sentence “Dios mío, si lo que quieres es que te jodan, ¡hazlo y ya está!” (1973, 36), perhaps he would have accepted the new wording in which the swearword disappeared, “¡Por amor de Dios, si lo que quieres es acostarte con él, hazlo de una vez!” (1984, 56):<sup>26</sup> the new translators discreetly using the expression “go to bed with him,” instead of “get yourself screwed.” Similarly, the other instance of offensive language detected by the original censors was also transformed in the new translation. See the three texts below:

Lessing's text:

“She [Mary] thinks we are all crazy. You fancy a man, he fancies you, you screw until one or the other is tired, and then goodbye, no hard feelings” (1973, 220)

Banned text, by Francesc Parcerisas:

“Cree que estamos todos locos. Te gusta un tipo, y tú le gustas a él, pues a chingar hasta que uno de los dos se canse, y luego adiós y si te he visto no me acuerdo” (1973, 135)

Accepted text, by Álvarez Flórez and Pérez Gómez:

“Cree que estamos locos todos. Te gusta un hombre, a él le gustas tú, lo hacéis hasta que uno u otro se cansa y luego adiós, no hay por qué guardar rencor ni por qué lamentarse” (1984, 189)

It is interesting that even the passage from the 1974 translation in which the word “joder” (“fuck”) was used by Parcerisas is again moderated in the new Spanish text. Kate is thinking

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, File 28-75, Reference (03)50.07SIG66/6567.

<sup>25</sup> File 365-77, (03)50.07SIG Reference 66/6591.

<sup>26</sup> “Kate imagined her [Mary] saying. What's wrong with you? For God's sake, if you are going to get yourself screwed, then do it!” (1973, 65).

about how her friend Mary and her husband end their quarrels and says: “she [Mary] screams at him a little and then they make love. Well, sex” (1973, 221). Parcerisas had used more explicit language: “le grita un poco y luego se ponen a hacer el amor. Bueno, a joder” (1973, 135). However, Álvarez Flórez and Pérez Gómez prefer the more politically correct expression “to have sex:” “ella le chilla un poco y luego hacen el amor. Bueno, tienen relaciones sexuales” (1984, 189). Even the critical remarks about Spain were slightly modified so as to sound less pejorative. In the passage where Kate thinks that Spain has been sold to tourism, there was an offensive sentence which the Spanish censor asked to be removed:

The country was corrupted, ruined, debased, compared with when he [Jeffrey] had first come here. (1973, 79)

Parcerisas had provided a good literal translation:

Comparado con la primera vez que había venido, el país estaba corrompido, arruinado, deshecho. (1973, 45)

However, the text by Álvarez Flórez and Pérez Gómez is slightly different:

Comparado con lo que era cuando había estado allí la primera vez, el país le parecía corrompido, destrozado, degradado. (1984, 69)

Note the substitution of the verb “estaba” (was) by the less certain “le parecía” (seemed) in the later version. In the same way, the comment about Spanish “men still owning women’s sexuality” in the 1960s, which Parcerisas translated as “los hombres todavía poseían a las mujeres sexualmente” (men still owned women sexually) (1973, 92), is rendered with more formal language: “los hombres aún eran los propietarios de la sexualidad de las mujeres” (men were still the owners of women’s sexuality, 1984, 69), which though still sounding very chauvinist, is less harsh than in the original.

If this translation by Álvarez Flórez and Pérez Gómez had been written some years earlier, it would have been interpreted as a clear example of conscious self-censorship tactics due to fear of the work being sanctioned or banned by the censors. However, published in 1984, when the censorship system was already dismantled, the choice of wording here appears to be determined by other factors. It is still a case of conscious self-censorship, but instead of being concerned with the censors, the translators might have adapted Lessing’s language to conform to the expectations of the market. That is to say, Lessing was not writing for a Spanish audience, so she felt quite free to include negative descriptions of the country and its people; but Argos Vergara was publishing the book in Spain and in Spanish, and so might logically have anticipated some kind of disapproval or even indignation among Spanish readers, perhaps even rejection of

the author.<sup>27</sup> Other plausible explanations for this type of self-censorship could be that the translators avoided explicit vulgar expressions in deference to the sensibilities of their target readers or even as a matter of personal taste. It is difficult to say whether the self-censorship is conscious or unconscious. The translators may have been trying to avoid embarrassing or offending their readers. Perhaps they were already engaging in political correctness, the so-called “dictatorship of the well-meaning and pure of heart” (Dickstein 1993, 554). In recent decades, political correctness has sometimes been more effective in controlling language than any other kind of institutional proscriptions. Perhaps Álvarez Flórez and Pérez Gómez did not want to use Lessing’s explicit language because they simply did not like it. It is impossible to say. Such is the complexity of literary translation and such is the ambiguity of self-censorship.

During the 1970s, Lessing became more interested in psychology and mysticism. Her new novels, such as *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971) and *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), engage in cosmic fantasies and dreamscapes portraying the breakdown of society. The first describes the experiences and visions of Charles Watkins, who is supposedly “mad” and in a psychiatric hospital where doctors are trying to restore him to sanity. The second shows the life of Emily, a young girl who grows up fighting for survival in a barbaric and anarchic future society. No explicit political doctrines or idealised communist characters appear in these novels. What is more, although sexual references are in evidence throughout both stories, they did not prove too explicit for the Spanish censors. Thus, a Spanish version of *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* was authorised in 1974.<sup>28</sup> However, the censor’s report included in this 1974 file is quite critical of Lessing’s writing. He describes the novel as extremely complicated and confusing, without reaching any transcendent conclusion. And, while not to his taste, “the explanations given about certain sexual anatomical features of animals, strange creatures from dreams and nightmares, cannot reasonably be marked as objections.”<sup>29</sup> In contrast, by the time *Memoirs of a Survivor* arrived in Spain, it was already too late for censorship difficulties to have impeded its importation. In July 1976, nine months after Franco’s death, the censors approved the publication of *Memorias de una superviviente*. Even so, the censor could not help referring to what in the past might have prevented its publication: “[Emily] lives in a neighbourhood in which the social conditions are rather low and free, where absolute liberty prevails, strange ambiances in which young people are mixed up with leaders who advocate free love and liberty; there is some drugs and sexual freedom, but without actually constituting a serious matter.”<sup>30</sup> It is

27 Carmen García Navarro in her essay on the translation of Lessing’s writings in Spain explains that the author certainly is an “uncomfortable figure for some sectors” of society (2001, 249).

28 Three import requests of *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* in English had also been granted in 1972.

29 “Las explicaciones que hace de ciertas formas anatómicas sexuales animales, bichos rarísimos de sueños y pesadillas, no pueden razonablemente marcarse como reparos.” File 32.4-74, Reference (03)50.07SIG73/03749.

30 “[Emily] tiene que soportar el ambiente de un barrio y en donde se dan unas circunstancias sociales un tanto bajas y libres, aquí predomina una libertad absoluta, ambientes extraños, en donde se mezclan gente joven con una especie de líderes que preconizan el amor libre y la libertad, hay un poquito de drogas y de libertad sexual, sin llegar a

worth noting the recurrence of the terms “liberty,” “free” and “freedom” in this report. The censor might be missing the focus of the constraints of the old regime.

All this information provides some answers to the questions posed at the beginning of the article regarding the reception of Lessing’s novels in Spain during Franco’s regime. The interest of Spanish publishers and booksellers in Lessing’s work, and the novels available to Spanish readers are summarised in the following table:

Table 1. Interest of Spanish publishers and importers in Lessing’s novels

Novel	Publication request	In the bookshop	Import request	In the bookshop
<i>The Grass is Singing</i> (1950)	1964	1968	1953	1953
<i>Martha Quest</i> (1952)	1965	1973	1966	1966
<i>A Proper Marriage</i> (1954)	1979	1979	1966	1966
<i>Retreat to Innocence</i> (1956)	—	—	1967	1967
<i>A Ripple from the Storm</i> (1958)	1980	1980	1966	1966
<i>The Golden Notebook</i> (1962)	1962	1978	1964	1964
<i>Landlocked</i> (1965)	1980	1980	1967	1967
<i>The Four-Gated City</i> (1969)	1982	1982	1970	—
<i>Briefing for a Descent into Hell</i> (1971)	1974	1974	1972	1972
<i>The Summer before the Dark</i> (1973)	1973	1974	1975	1975
<i>Memoirs of a Survivor</i> (1974)	1976	1976	1976	1976

This table shows that more than half of the novels were requested and were either imported or published in Spain within three years of the original date of publication, whereas only four took over ten years to become available to Spanish readers. It is interesting to note that of these four novels, three belong to “The Children of Violence” series; the fourth is *Retreat to Innocence*, whose English version is now out of print and was rejected by the author herself, as mentioned above. Not so *The Golden Notebook* and *The Summer before Dark*, which emerged as soon as they were published in London. Finally, this table shows that Spanish publishers and importers were most interested in those novels published in the 1960s and 1970s; that is to say, at the end of Franco’s regime.

If we compare Lessing’s reception in Spain and in other European countries, such as France or Germany, there is very little difference. As Claire Sprague points out in *In Pursuit of Doris Lessing: Nine Nations Reading* (1990), *The Grass is Singing* was first published in France in 1953 and after that nothing else by Lessing was translated into French until 1976, when a French version of *The Golden Notebook* appeared (Jouve 1990,

constituir materia grave.” File 7637-76, Reference (03)050SIG73/05566. Two import requests, for a total of 850 copies of *Memoirs of a Survivor* in English, were granted in 1976.

102-12). Her reception in Germany was not much better. In what was then known as West Germany, Lessing was largely ignored until 1978, when *The Golden Notebook* was published, and *Martha Quest* did not appear until 1981. On the other hand, her departure from communist orthodoxy made Lessing unwelcome in the communist East Germany of the time, then the German Democratic Republic, until the mid-1980s (Knapp 1990: 113-27). The table below gives information about the first translations of the famous novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962) in four European countries:

Table 2. First editions of *The Golden Notebook* in Europe

Country	Title	Year
Italy	<i>Il taccuino d'oro</i>	1964
France	<i>Le Carnet d'or</i>	1976
Spain	<i>El cuaderno dorado</i>	1978
West Germany	<i>Das Goldene Notizbuch</i>	1978

Despite all this, Franco's censorship is clearly one of the key factors that negatively affected the reading, translation and publication of Lessing's novels in Spain. The table below, showing the novels which were banned or authorised by the censors, confirms that most of the novels that came under the censors' scrutiny were granted permission to be imported or published in Spain. Of the ten novels examined before 1975, only three were banned—*The Golden Notebook*, *The Four-Gated City* and *The Summer before the Dark*—and two were authorised with cuts—*Martha Quest* and *The Summer before the Dark*. However, most of the authorised files were import requests for only a few copies of the novels in English, and very few Spanish readers were at the time capable of understanding them.

Table 3. Lessing novels banned and authorised (import and publication), 1950-1975

Novel	Banned	With cuts	Authorised
<i>The Grass is Singing</i> (1950)			X
<i>Martha Quest</i> (1952)		X	X
<i>A Proper Marriage</i> (1954)			X
<i>Retreat to Innocence</i> (1956)			X
<i>A Ripple from the Storm</i> (1958)			X
<i>The Golden Notebook</i> (1962)	X		X
<i>Landlocked</i> (1965)			X
<i>The Four-Gated City</i> (1969)	X		
<i>Briefing for a Descent into Hell</i> (1971)			X
<i>The Summer before the Dark</i> (1973)	X	X	X

If we ignore the import files and look only at the publication of Lessing's novels in Spanish, the picture is quite different. Three novels were authorised and three were problematic.

Table 4. Lessing novels banned and authorised (publication only), 1950-1975

Novel	Banned	With cuts	Authorised
<i>The Grass is Singing</i> (1950)			1964
<i>Martha Quest</i> (1952)		1965	1973
<i>The Golden Notebook</i> (1962)	1962		
<i>Briefing for a Descent into Hell</i> (1971)			1974
<i>The Summer before the Dark</i> (1973)		1973	

The conclusion that emerges from all this is that Franco's censorship system had a considerable negative impact on the reception of Lessing in Spain. It is not simply a question of the number of books banned. The fact that *The Golden Notebook* had to wait for sixteen years to be published is highly significant. It is likely that many more publishing initiatives would have been taken had it not been for this strict censorship.

Another interesting issue that the censorship files reveal is that Spanish censors objected to Lessing's novels mainly on political and moral grounds. They intervened to forbid explicitly sexual scenes, adulterous relationships and premarital sex. One censorship action refers to immoral behaviour seasoned with crude language, then there were also a few politically incorrect comments in some novels and, of course, the denigratory images of Spain in *The Summer before the Dark*. Had Lessing begun her career with science fiction novels instead of realistic stories reflecting her communist ideas intertwined with explicit sexual scenes, perhaps she would have fared better with the Spanish censors. Fantasy worlds and science-fiction scenarios are often more successful in concealing controversial issues than realistic narrative in which the author's points are made more simply and obviously.

Strange though it may seem, Lessing's devastating criticism of colonialism and the feminism implicit in the portrayal of her female characters found no hostility in Franco's censorship office. This is especially surprising considering Spain's colonial vocation and the efforts of the regime to preserve traditional roles of women as good Christian wives and Spanish patriots, through the activity of the Feminine Section of the Spanish Falange.<sup>31</sup> The censors were not really concerned with Lessing's feminist characters as long as they did not get involved in explicit sexual scenes or immoral behaviour.

Finally, although Spanish censors took issue with Lessing's treatment of political and sexual matters, they also commended her art and writing. Apart from the censor who read *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* finding it complicated and confusing, on the whole Franco's censors praise the quality of Lessing's novels: on three different occasions *The Grass is Singing* is described as an excellent novel, with an appealing style and written

<sup>31</sup> For an illuminating discussion of the situation of women during the Franco regime, see Gallego Méndez (1983)

with enormous literary dignity. Similarly, the report on *Martha Quest* highlights its great literary value. There is no reference made, however, to the quality of the much-admired *The Golden Notebook*. Perhaps the erotic scenes involving Anna prevented the censors from appreciating its importance as a literary work.

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Received 17 July 2013

Revised version accepted 20 October 2014

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