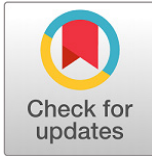


(Self)Censored at Home and Away: Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) in Spanish



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Abstract

Native Son (Harper & Brothers, 1940), by Richard Wright (1908, Roxie, Mississippi–1960, Paris, France), contained a scene rewritten by the author to satisfy the Book of the Month Club, which had selected a Black author for the first time. In the censored scene, the main character, Bigger Thomas, engages in a lewd sexual act; other potentially offensive contents, however, were not subjected to the same treatment. The first Spanish translation, *Sangre negra* (Sudamericana, 1941), was banned in Spain twice (1944 and 1953) when the Argentinian publishers attempted to import it into the strongly autocratic country ruled by Francisco Franco from 1939 to 1975. The translation, by Pedro Lecuona, was finally published in Spain in 1987, under the literal title *Hijo nativo* (Ediciones Versal and Círculo de Lectores), with a revised text for the European-Spanish readership. The state censorship that banned this translation from Spain, the self-censorship that the Argentinian translation contains, and the Iberian revisions are all examined closely. In 1991, the Library of America published an uncensored edition which restored the unexpurgated text. However, Lecuona's (revised) translation circulated until 2022, when an unexpurgated text, *Hijo de esta tierra* (Alianza Editorial) by Eduardo Hojman, was made from the restored text of this hugely significant example of African-American literature. This edition restores all previously (self)censored segments and also contains the first Spanish version of the epilogue "How Bigger Was Born". Book reviews and social media reception pinpoint the importance of Wright's contribution but are neglectful of this retranslation's fascinating history.

Keywords: African-American literature, restoration of literary works, self-censorship, state censorship, Spanish translation

(Auto)censurada en casa y en el extranjero: *Native Son* (1940) de Richard Wright en español

Resumen

La novela *Native Son* (Harper & Brothers, 1940), de Richard Wright (1908, Roxie, Misisipi-1960, París, Francia), contenía una escena reescrita por el autor para satisfacer al Book of the Month Club, que había seleccionado por primera vez a un autor negro. En la escena censurada, el protagonista, Bigger Thomas, comete un acto sexual lascivo; sin embargo, otros contenidos potencialmente ofensivos no fueron tratados con la misma rigurosidad. La primera traducción al español, *Sangre negra* (Sudamericana, 1941), fue prohibida en España en dos ocasiones (1944 y 1953) durante la dictadura autocrática de Francisco Franco (1939-1975). Esta traducción, de Pedro Lecuona, se publicó por fin en España en 1987, con el título literal *Hijo nativo* (Ediciones Versal y Círculo de Lectores) y con un texto revisado



para lectores ibéricos. Se analiza la censura estatal que prohibió la traducción en España, las autocensuras que contiene la traducción argentina y las versiones revisadas publicadas en España. En 1991, Library of America publicó una edición no censurada en inglés, que restauraba el texto completo. Sin embargo, la traducción (revisada) de Lecuona circuló hasta 2022, cuando se publicó la primera edición íntegra en español, *Hijo de esta tierra* (Alianza Editorial) del traductor Eduardo Hojman, creada a partir del texto en inglés restaurado de este importante ejemplo de la literatura afroamericana. Esta edición restaura todos los segmentos anteriormente (auto)censurados y contiene la primera traducción al español del epílogo “Cómo nació ‘Bigger’”. Las reseñas en prensa y las menciones en redes sociales señalan la importancia de la contribución cultural inicial de Wright, pero pasan por alto la fascinante historia de esta retraducción.

Palabras clave: autocensura, censura estatal, literatura afroamericana, restauración de obras literarias, traducción al español

(Auto)censuré chez lui et à l'étranger : *Native Son* de Richard Wright (1940) en espagnol

Résumé

Native Son (Harper & Brothers, 1940) de Richard Wright (1908, Roxie, Mississippi-1960, Paris, France) contenait une scène réécrite par l'auteur lui-même pour complaire le Book of the Month Club qui avait sélectionné un écrivain noir pour la première fois. Dans la scène censurée, le protagoniste, Bigger Thomas, se livre à un acte sexuel obscène ; mais le roman contient d'autres contenus potentiellement choquants qui n'ont pas été traités avec la même rigueur. La première traduction en espagnol, *Sangre negra* (Sudamericana, 1941) a été interdite à deux reprises en Espagne (1944 et 1953) lorsque les éditeurs argentins ont tenté de l'y importer sous le régime autocratique de Francisco Franco (1939-1975). La traduction de Lecuona a finalement été publiée en 1987 sous le titre littéral *Hijo nativo* (Ediciones Versal et Círculo de Lectores) dans une version révisée pour des lecteurs castillans. La censure d'État dont a été victime le roman, l'autocensure de la traduction argentine et les révisions pour l'Espagne sont ici toutes étudiées en détail. En 1994, la Library of America a édité le texte non expurgé, mais la traduction de Lecuona a malgré tout circulé jusqu'en 2022, date à laquelle Eduardo Hojman a publié *Hijo de esta tierra* (Alianza Editorial) à partir du texte restauré de cette œuvre significative de la littérature afro-américaine. Cette édition rétablit tous les segments précédemment (auto)censurés et contient également la première version espagnole de l'épilogue « How Bigger Was Born ». La critique et l'accueil sur les réseaux sociaux soulignent l'importance de la contribution de Wright, mais négligent généralement l'histoire fascinante de cette retraduction.

Mots clés : autocensure, censure d'État, littérature afro-américaine, restauration d'œuvres littéraires, traduction espagnole

Introduction

The first uncensored translation of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (Harper & Brothers, 1940) into Spanish appeared in April 2022 as *Hijo de esta tierra* ("Son of this Land,"¹ trans. Eduardo Hojman; Alianza Editorial). A glance back in time to the first translation in 1941 (*Sangre negra*, trans. Pedro Lecuona; Editorial Sudamericana) and a revised edition of this translation in 1987 (*Hijo nativo*; Versal Editores/Círculo de Lectores), reveals a history of translator/editorial self-censorship and of external, state censorship. A look back even further reveals that the source text itself was subjected to external, editorial censorship and self-censorship by Wright himself: in order to appease the Book-of-the-Month Club, the Mississippi-born author agreed to "revise" a sexually explicit scene that they considered too "raw" (Rampersad, 1991a, p. 912). In 1991, Wright's original manuscript was restored in the two-volume Library of America anthology, which Eduardo Hojman used as his source text. I would like to explore the complex publication history of *Native Son* in Spanish, focusing closely on the self-censorship in Lecuona's translation in Argentina, the failed attempts to obtain official authorization for importing *Sangre negra* into Spain during the Franco era (1944 and 1953), the eventual publication of Lecuona's slightly revised, through still self-censored, text in Spain in 1987, and the unexpurgated and uncensored translation by Hojman in 2022. This exploratory study will visit some of the novel's most sensitive contents that were susceptible to (self)censorship, particularly sex-related language. The ultimate lesson we learn from this case study in history may be that, for all the ambition Wright had to "shock his public" and "deliver an ideological bomb in case it would be his last chance to speak out," censorious gatekeepers were able to attenuate or eliminate

the author's authentic representation of his community and lose control of the discourse used to denounce "the extent of racism and the hatred it engenders" (Fabre, 1993, pp. 183–184).

My main objective is to explore the connections between the novel's sexually explicit content and the differing reasons for objecting to some of that content in the United States and subsequently in Argentina and Spain, each country possessing its own complex censorship construct which impressed constraints on the text. The revisions to the source text were likely inserted in order to make the text more marketable, or at least less objectionable, to the US readership, while the changes to the first target text were probably enacted in order to prevent the most objectionable contents (masturbation, infidelity and rape) from raising the suspicions of vigilant, vindictive censors in Argentina.

Native Son is a three-part novel that follows the events in the life of the main character, Bigger Thomas, as he accepts a job as a driver for a wealthy family, kills both the daughter of the family and his own girlfriend (Book One: Fear), is apprehended by the police after a massive pursuit (Book Two: Flight), tried for his crimes and sentenced to the death penalty (Book Three: Fate). An unlikely representative of his race and class, Bigger Thomas is young and poor, uneducated and unscrupulous, and he becomes unrestrained and alienated, though many of the difficult situations he faces are rooted in the unjust racial and social discrimination against African Americans in the United States. Despite criticism for creating such an unsavory character rather than a more agreeable representative, Wright proclaimed that in his first major novel he intended to "speak his mind" in case he was never allowed to write another again (Fabre, 1993, p. 174). In the United States, the book was received positively, though James Baldwin famously criticized the novel in his 1955 essay

1 All translations from Spanish into English are created by the author, who is the sole person responsible for any errors there may be.

“Everybody’s Protest Novel,” deriding the depiction of Bigger’s subhuman life, “controlled, defined by his hatred,” which drove him to rape, and panning Wright for denying Bigger’s humanity, the power to fight against “those brutal criteria bequeathed him at his birth” and ultimately his life (Baldwin, 1955, pp. 22, 23). In Wright’s epilogue “How ‘Bigger’ Was Born. The Story of *Native Son*, one of the most significant novels of our time, and how it came to be written,” the author described how he “felt a censor” as he wrote: “Like Bigger himself, I felt a mental censor — product of the fears which a Negro feels from living in America — standing over me, warning me not to write,” imagining negative reactions from his black audience and also from potentially reactionary white readers (Wright, 1991a, p. 867). Despite his refusal to censor all but the most explicit sexual scene, Wright felt the need to tell it as he saw it: “I knew that I could not write of Bigger convincingly if I did not depict him as he *was*” (Wright, 1991a, pp. 867–868, emphasis in the original).

Baldwin describes *Native Son* as a “web of lust and fury” where “black and white can only thrust and counter-thrust,” which seems a good lead-in to discuss the sexual contents of Wright’s novel and their connection to race relations in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century (Baldwin, 1955, p. 22). In a *New York Times Book Review* article, the author made this connection:

Bigger’s vibrant sexuality had historic significance. Never before in literature, except in scurrilous attacks on black men as rapists or likely rapists, had black male sexuality been represented with such frankness. Wright understood that, with few exceptions, there could be no serious discussion of race in the United States without reference to sexuality (...) To nullify Bigger’s sexual drive was to dilute or even to sabotage the central power of *Native Son* as a commentary on race in this country. (cited in Burks, 2001, p. 1685)

Wright’s inner censor considered how and why these sexually loaded contents might reinforce

race stereotypes espoused by white people: “This censor’s warnings were translated into my own thought processes thus: ‘What will white people think if I draw the picture of such a Negro boy? Will they not at once say: ‘See, didn’t we tell you all along that niggers are like that?’” (Wright, 1991a, p. 867). *Native Son*’s sexual content is often alluded to as the reason for the novel being challenged in the United States, particularly in the South. Immediately after publication, *Native Son* was banned in Birmingham, Alabama public libraries (Rampersad, 1991c, p. 893). All six of the listings on the American Library Association’s website of Banned & Challenged Classics mention sex, sexuality or sexual explicitness or graphicness, the most recent in a high school library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1998². Wright’s self-censorship erased the most objectionable passage in the source text (male masturbation); however, enough explicit material survives (fondling breasts, sexual intercourse) to convey the frank and authentic black male sexuality that is a part of who Bigger Thomas is.

A secondary objective is to shed light on the previously unstudied Lecuona translation in its original version, hidden from Translation Studies scholars behind a title change and the lesser-known process of importation of translations into Spain, and describe the currently available translation by Hojman, which restores previously self-censored fragments and intensifies one of the novel’s most sensitive scenes. This research effort is timely for both the source-text and target-text languages and cultures: the Black Lives Matters movement has emerged and grown in the aftermath of police brutality in the United States (the novel describes a Chicago police manhunt for Bigger Thomas); the *Procesos de Memoria, Verdad y Justicia* (Memory, Truth and Justice Processes) in Argentina are a series of trials for crimes against humanity committed between

2 See <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/classics>

1976 and 1983; and the *Ley de Memoria Histórica* (Law of Historic Memory, 2007) in Spain continues to open spaces of citizen debate and community action in an attempt to revive and retain the memory of victims of the autocratic government, ruled by General Francisco Franco with a National Catholic ideology (1936–1975), including silenced or muted authors, translators, editors and other literary actors.

At least four major scholars based in Spain, Ana María Fraile, María Frías-Rudolphi, Rosalía Cornejo Parriego and Isabel Soto, have studied Wright, his novel *Native Son* and other Black American authors and their specific relationships with Spain. In 2020, Rosalía Cornejo Parriego published an edited volume entitled *Black USA and Spain: Shared Memories in the 20th Century* (2020), with four chapters focusing on the Franco period. María Frías's chapter in that section looks at Chester Himes, an expatriate author and friend of Richard Wright's in Paris, and his three lengthy residences in Spain (2020). Isabel Soto's chapter in that book examines "Langston Hughes and the Spanish 'Context'" (2020); her article "Black Atlantic (Dis)Entanglements: Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and Spain" draws attention to Richard Wright, who visited the country and wrote an influential book called *Pagan Spain* (1957) (Soto, 2017), which has been translated three times into Spanish. In 2007, Ana María Fraile published a monographic collection of eleven essays on *Richard Wright's Native Son*, which approaches the novel from a wide range of multidirectional perspectives, including its critical reception and adaptations of the novel to other artistic media such as theater, film and music (Fraile, 2007). However, none of these major voices in Richard Wright studies has looked at the into-Spanish translations of his works nor those of *Native Son* specifically.

The main body of this article is comprised of four main parts, i.e., a literature review, the methodology, the results — subdivided into five parts, and the conclusions.

1. Contexts and Connections

In this section, I would like to examine the state of the art regarding research into translations of Black American Literature (especially into Spanish), into the (self) censorship of translated books in Argentina and Spain, and into the translation of sex-related language (especially into Spanish). These areas mark three vantage points from which to examine Wright's (self) censored source text and the (self) censored target texts.

1.1. Research into Translations of Black American Literature (into Spanish)

I want to examine the loaded, sexually-explicit content in this novel precisely because it illustrates the specific challenges of translating a novel about race and discrimination from one social setting to others, i.e., from the United States to Argentina and Spain, which have different histories of race and racism. Research into translations of Black American literature from English has tended to focus on major figures such as James Baldwin, Chester Himes, and Langston Hughes, with recent attention being paid to the translations of women writers such as Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker. Several scholars have studied the works of Richard Wright in translation, with particular interest in his French (Fabre, 1997) and Japanese target texts (Kiuchi & Hakutani, 1997). Cornellà-Detrell has written specifically on the censorship of James Baldwin's novels into Spanish and Catalan (2015), Frías-Rudolphi has studied the into-Spanish translation of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1996), and Linder has studied the translation of slang in Chester Himes's fiction (2014). The study by Cornellà-Detrell will be used below for its innovative methodology that allows researchers to detect illegal translations circulating in Spain during the Franco period and for the data it reveals about publishers in Spain who brought out works by both Wright and Baldwin (Wright's *Hijo Nativo* and Baldwin's

Ve y dilo en la montaña [*Go Tell it on the Mountain*] appear in a joint volume by Círculo de Lectores, 2001). An M. A. dissertation by Carla Perissinotto studied three authors, Chester Himes, Harper Lee and Richard Wright, and the into-Spanish translations of derogatory terms used to refer to Black Americans and other people of color in three novels, including *Native Son* (2016).

Vera Kutzinski has studied the specific challenges of translating literature dealing with race and racism in the United States into a Latin American context where “race” is quite differently understood. My focus is on the translation of sex-related language rather than the translation of race-related terms such as those mentioned above, and Kutzinski’s study provides analyses of examples containing sexual references.

1.2. (Self)Censorship of Translated Books in Argentina and Spain

The first translation of *Native Son* into Spanish was published in Argentina in 1944, then banned for importation in Spain in 1944 and 1953, both of which occurred during times when differing censorship constructs were being used in each country. The period between 1944 and 1959, the year of the eighth edition of *Sangre negra*—used as the source text for all references in the results section below—was marked by world events that included the aftermath of the fall of the communist Second Republic in Spain, the defeat of most fascist regimes in Europe, the post-wwii reconstruction of Europe and the beginning of the Cold War. In Argentina, these events brought large numbers of immigrants from Spain and other European nations, a rise in nationalism and small-scale despotism, and eventually the election of Juan Domingo Perón to the presidency in 1946 (Ferreira, 2000, pp. 89, 125). During the mid-to-late 1940s, the national book industry was rapidly rising and consolidating its importance to the point that these were considered the “golden years” (De Sagastizábal, 1995, p. 128).

However, the censorship that in 1976 shackled the country’s cultural activity had “gradually and cumulatively” been imposed during alternating stages of expansion and consolidation since the 1950s and 60s, as Andrés Avellaneda explains in his two-volume classic study *Censura, autoritarismo y cultura: Argentina 1960-1983* (1986, p. 13). While no centralized authority or policies were ever clearly established, the means to enforce censorship were those of repressive punishments by the government or the military (Avellaneda, 1986, p. 14). Contents that could become the target of repressive post-publication censorship were references to “sexuality, religion and national security” which went against the grain of the “Argentinian style of life,” understood to be a “Catholic/Christian” respect for God, property, religion, freedom and family, among others (Avellaneda, 1986, p. 21). The contents considered “external and anomalous were, among others, atheism, antireligious sentiment, antihumanism and materialism” (Avellaneda, 1986, p. 20). Although film and radio were scrutinized closely, with clear codes of conduct, highbrow and lowbrow literature, music and the arts were also surveilled.

As we shall see below, Pedro Lecuona, translator of *Sangre negra*, found a way to self-censor his translation and avoid a fate similar to what befell publisher Miguel Losada and translator Miguel Amibilia in 1961; after translating and publishing Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, they were sentenced to one month and six months in prison, respectively (De Sagastizábal, 1995, p. 120; Ferreira, 2000, p. 165). In the field of translation, Falcón has traced the sequestration of the first Spanish version of Nabokov’s *Lolita* in 1958 for its “immoral” content that could “end up in the hands of children and adolescents” (Falcón, 2019, p. 86). The criminal charges against the publisher, the printers and the translator were upheld by the Supreme Court years later. The kind of censorship that existed in Argentina during this time, i.e.

post-publication censorship, is the predominant model of censorship deployed in contemporary media in the developed world, triggered by reactionary stakeholders such as cultural, religious and political groups who use the state and the media to denounce perceived transgressions against their interests.

In both 1944 and 1953, a representative of Editorial Sudamericana filed for authorization for the importation of the self-censored translation *Sangre negra* into Spain, but was unsuccessful each time. In fact, as we shall see below, the reactions of the censors were extremely harsh. Since the approval of the Ley de Prensa (Press Law) of 1938, before the Spanish Civil War had even finished, pre-publication censorship was mandated for all books within the conquered territories and later throughout all of Spain. In 1966 a new law called the Ley de Prensa e Imprenta (Law of Press and Print) was enacted, which no longer required *censura previa* (prior censorship) but *consulta voluntaria* (voluntary consultation), purportedly a more lenient legal requirement that offered publishers the choice of either making the mandatory legal deposit with the Spanish National Library or requesting voluntary consultation. However, the *consulta voluntaria* followed basically the same process as *censura previa* and used a similar reader's report form.

Both forms asked readers whether the book presented for censorship attacked religious beliefs, morals, the Church or any of its members, the Regime and any of its institutions, or the people who collaborate or have collaborated with the Regime (Gómez Castro, 2009, p. 134; Rabadán, 2000, pp. 282, 288). The censors, called readers, were prompted to add a personal report with their observations in the space below the questions; these reader's reports constitute the most valuable sources of information about the books presented and the reasons for their authorization, suspension, or other verdicts. In the 1938–1966 period, many publishers would present non-translated texts to the censors,

though they often required the into-Spanish translations for final approval. The publishers could present either the manuscripts prepared by translators or the galley proofs, or both.

Not only were all books published in Spain required to be presented for authorization, but all books to be imported into Spain were also subject to this stipulation. Although this process was essentially the same as the one for books published nationally in that the readers would fill out the reports, make their comments and could mark in red or blue the books presented, the implications of the verdicts were either authorization or suspension. For books already printed in foreign countries, the possibility of suggesting cross-outs and other changes did not exist.

All of the censorship files are kept in the *Archivo General de la Administración* (AGA) in Alcalá de Henares (Madrid), where they are part of the *Sección de cultura* (SC). The TRACE (TRANSLATIONS and CENSORSHIP, <https://trace.unileon.es/>) research group, founded by Raquel Merino and Rosa Rabadán, and currently led by Camino Gutiérrez Lanza, uses the tools of Descriptive Translation Studies and archival research, particularly to collect information about censored translations in Spain between 1939 and 1985.³

Both the Argentinian model of post-publication censorship and the by-gone Spanish model of pre-publication censorship can condition new publications by unchaining self-censorship, which is a major focus of this research effort. Manuel L. Abellán described how

3 A recent article entitled “Archival Research in Translation and Censorship: Digging into the ‘True Museum of Francoism,’” (Lobejón Santos et al., 2021) summarizes the group's history since 1997 and their plans for the future. Currently underway is an effort to make their various catalogues (narrative texts (TRACEN), poetry (TRACEP), theatre plays (TRACET), cinema: (TRACEC) and television (TRACETV) available through the TRACE DB 1.0 database (<https://trace.unileon.es/tracebd>).

government-mandated prior censorship, or voluntary consultation, and oppressive models of post-publication censorship can curtail writers and translators, forcing them to look for alternative avenues of expression yet not allowing them to express themselves freely:

By self-censorship we understand the preventive measures that, consciously or unconsciously, writers may adopt with the purpose of avoiding the potentially negative reactions or rejection that their texts may provoke in all or some of the groups or bodies of the State [who are] empowered to impose deletions or modifications with or without their consent (2007).

The “groups” Abellán refers to represent cultural, political, religious and societal ideologies that may cause writers, editors and translators to attenuate or eliminate sensitive texts or fragments of texts. In a 1974 survey of 95 Spanish writers, 37% said they always self-censored and 31% said they sometimes did (Abellán, 2007). To detect self-censorship in translations, the published text can be compared side-by-side to the source text the translator probably used. However, this time-consuming method can be refined: Translation Studies researchers can locate sensitive passages that have content which may offend empowered cultural, political, religious and societal groups and then compare the source text with the published text in those locations. A Translation Studies scholar’s familiarity with the source text and with specialized criticism of these texts can help locate passages where self-censorship is likely. In the case of Richard Wright’s *Native Son* and its first Spanish translation, *Sangre negra*, this is precisely the technique used. Sources such as Rampersad (1991b, p. 912) discuss the raw masturbation scene censored in 1940 and restored in 1991, and others such as Keady (1995, pp. 45–46) discuss the rape scene, providing excellent clues for where self-censored passages may be located.

1.3. The Translation of Sex-Related Language (into Spanish)

Sex-related language varies widely across Spanish-speaking countries, including between Argentina and Spain, and the actual effect on these audiences is difficult to judge. During the gradually cumulative period of post-publication censorship in Argentina, immoral sexual contents that were considered alien to the national style of life were “adultery, abortion, disaffection between couples and anything that undermines marriage” (Avellaneda, 1986, p. 20). Cultural elements that popular media such as the novel could damage were “the family, patriotic symbols, modesty, religious beliefs, rectitude, honesty, peace and morality” (Avellaneda, 1986, p. 22). Interestingly, Avellaneda also identifies “familiarity with violence as the only way to achieve one’s ends, whether they be just or unjust” as another objectionable topic (Avellaneda, 1986, p. 25). The first into-Spanish translator, Pedro Lecuona, self-censored the mention of infidelity and the rape scene, expectedly prompted by the criteria which precluded adultery and violence, and if the source text of *Native Son* had not been excised of the masturbation scene, he would likely have censored it himself for being immodest and immoral.

Fernández Cuesta and Gozalbo Gimeno examine the censorial practices of the Franco dictatorship in the media, the arts, the cinema, the theater and the publishing industry, concluding “There was active control and dominance, both administrative and legal, over everyone, but also over all artistic, literary, and even scientific, expressions which proposed an alternative to established sexual discourse” (2017, p. 200). These authors enumerate the kinds of materials that were censored in all “cultural forms of expression” in 1963:

the justification of suicide, mercy killing, revenge and bereavement; divorce, adultery, illicit sexual relations, prostitution, and anything else that would be contrary to marriage

and the family; the presentation of sexual perversions, drug addiction and alcoholism; the presentation of crime in a pedagogical way; the presentation of “images that may provoke low passions in the normal spectator and allusions made in such a way as to be more suggestive than the presentation of the fact itself”; images and scenes that offend the intimacy of conjugal love; images and scenes of brutality, cruelty and terror presented in a morbid or unjustified way, etc. (2017, p. 211, emphasis added).

In the above quote, the prohibitions of a sexual nature amount to well over half.

José Santaemilia describes sex-related language, or “the language of sex,” as terms, words, phrases and expressions that contain references to sexual organs, acts and attitudes that may be used as profanity, insults, expletives, blasphemous remarks, informal banter, and so on (Santaemilia, 2008). He has examined the translation of explicit language in John Cleland's *Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (2005), the word “fuck” in two Bridget Jones novels (2008) and the sex-related language in Almudena Grandes' novel *Las edades de Lulú* in English (Santaemilia, 2015). His conclusions are particularly interesting in what they can reveal about self-censorship and the translator:

Eliminating sexual terms—or qualifying or attenuating or even intensifying them—in translation does usually betray the translator's personal attitude towards human sexual behaviour(s) and their verbalization. The translator basically transfers into his/her rewriting the level of acceptability or respectability he/she accords to certain sex-related words or phrases. Analyzing the translation of sexual language into (a) specific language(s) helps draw the imaginary limits of the translators' sexual morality and, perhaps, gain insights into the moral fabric of a specific community at a specific historical moment (Santaemilia, 2008, pp. 227–228).

The University of Valencia researcher points to the interesting possibility of using the self-censored fragments to understand what the translator's sexual mores were and/or what the sexual mores of the surrounding society were. I feel that when we make such tenuous extrapolations, we must do so in the knowledge that the translators are certainly responsible for the majority of the texts they translate, but there are other actors who may also have intervened in the translated text production process, particularly the commissioning editor.

2. Methodology

In this section I will describe the materials to be examined—namely the censored 1940 and the restored 1991 source texts in English, and the 1941, 1987 and 2022 target texts in Spanish—and the methods used to analyze them. The first edition of *Native Son* and all editions until 1991 contained a sexually-explicit scene rewritten by the author to satisfy the demands of the Book-of-the-Month Club, which was considering choosing Wright's book (Burks, 2001, p. 1684). Editor Edward Aswell wrote to Wright:

The Book Club wants to know whether, if they do choose *Native Son*, you would be willing to make some changes in that scene early in the book where Bigger and his friends are sitting in the moving picture theatre. I think you will recognize the scene I mean and will understand why the Book Club finds it objectionable. They are not a particularly squeamish crowd, but that scene, after all, is a bit on the raw side. I daresay you could revise it in a way to suggest what happens rather than to tell it explicitly. (Rampersad, 1991a, p. 912).

In that scene, Bigger and his friend Jack masturbate in a public movie theater before the film starts. They race each other, admiring each other's speed in reaching climax, thinking of their girlfriends, fantasizing about showing their penises to a woman who has seen them, then ejaculating

on the floor and moving to other seats. Below, we include an extract from the first half of the masturbation scene. In part 3.4, we will look at the second half of this scene, the most explicit and potentially offensive, and how it was translated into Spanish.

The picture had not yet started and they sat listening to the pipe organ playing low and soft. Bigger moved restlessly and his breath quickened; he looked round the shadows to see if any attendant was near, then slouched far down in his seat. He glanced at Jack and saw that Jack was watching him out of the corners of his eyes. They both laughed.

"You at it again?" Jack asked.

"I'm polishing my nightstick," Bigger said.

They giggled.

"I'll beat you," Jack said.

"Go to hell."

The organ played for a long moment on a single note, then died away.

"I bet you ain't even hard yet," Jack whispered.

"I'm getting hard."

"Mine's like a rod," Jack said with intense pride.

"I wished I had Bessie here now," Bigger said.

"I could make old Clara moan now."

"I believe that woman who passed saw us."

"So what?"

"If she comes back I'll throw it in her."

"You a killer."

"If she saw it she'd faint."

"Or grab it, maybe."

"Yeah." (Wright, 1991b, pp. 472-473)

Despite the fact that Aswell asked Wright to attenuate the scene by making it suggestive rather than explicit, the above passage (and the second half, which appears in 3.4 below) was entirely omitted. The scene was rewritten by Richard Wright himself in such a way that it had the same number of lines as the original. According to Arnold Rampersad, the editor of the restored the 1991 Library of America edition, "this may have been done to avoid resetting long stretches of type" (1991, p. 912).

However, rather than simply replacing the scene with another less "objectionable" and less "raw" one, as the Book-of-the-Month Club suggested, Wright broadened the amount of text changed and revised the entire scene, thus self-censoring his own work. In the original scene, Bigger and Jack watch a gossipy newsreel that also features Mary Dalton's family, her friends and her communist boyfriend, Jan. In the "drastically altered" scene, Wright "eliminated all mention of Mary Dalton (who is featured in the newsreel in the original scene) and all references to masturbation" (Rampersad, 1991a, p. 912). Wright's changes were accepted, the book was published by Harper & Bros and recommended as the first-ever Book-of-the-Month Club choice by a Black author.

Almost immediately after the book came out in English, a Spanish version, entitled *Sangre negra* [Black Blood] was published by Editorial Sudamericana (Buenos Aires) in 1941. As we shall see below, the translator, Pedro Lecuona, crafted a Spanish text that was acclaimed for its overall quality (Mutis, 2000b, 2000a), but which also contained passages that were omitted or rewritten. Because the censored scene published in the 1940 source text contained no references to any objectionable material, there is no need to examine and analyze examples from this part of Lecuona's translation. However, the omitted and rewritten passages in which Bigger Thomas fondles his girlfriend Bessie Mears (see Example 1) and later rapes and murders her (see Example 3) need to be examined closely. In my view, these textual changes in the first Spanish target text are deliberate attempts to avoid offending the readers by exposing them to explicit descriptions of sexual conduct. Even though the translator may not be the sole person responsible for omissions, as these could be attributed to consultants, editors and copyeditors, among others, the translator is certainly responsible for the lengthy rewritten passages.

Despite the censorship in English and the self-censorship in Spanish, Lecuona's translation was banned in Spain twice. In 1944, shortly after its original publication, Editorial Sudamericana filed for authorization to import *Sangre negra*, presenting a recently published copy of the novel. However, it was suspended, with the censor reporting that it contained explicit references to sex and to communism that were intolerable in Spain (see 3.2 below). In 1953, the Argentinian publisher wanted to make the book available more widely in Spanish-speaking countries near the time when the first movie adaptation (*Esclavos del miedo*, Dir. Pierre Chenal, 1951; see *The Spanish Film Catalogue*, Ministry of Culture and Sport, Government of Spain) came out. However, Editorial Sudamericana's appeal met with the same fate: the second censor reported that the novel continued to attack the principles held by the regime, particularly the National Catholic morals and political ideals of the post-Civil-War dictatorship.

In 1987, Lecuona's translation was finally published in Spain, though it had two major alterations: the title was changed to the literal *Hijo nativo*, causing the impression it was a new translation and removing the explicit reference to race, and the text was revised in such a way that it no longer had any Latin Americanisms nor Argentinisms but only European Spanish lexis and idioms, further reinforcing the idea that the translation was fresh when it was actually 48 years old. None of the segments were restored in any way and it is unlikely that the uncredited revisor looked at the source text at all.

Hojman's translation drew from the 1991 Library of America edition, which was billed as an "unexpurgated edition" (Rampersad, 1991a, p. 913). The segments rewritten by Wright and published in the March 1940 first edition appear in the "Notes" section of the edition restored by Rampersad (1991b, pp. 924–928). As we shall see in section 3.4, Hojman even intensifies aspects of the "movie masturbation" scene.

3. Results

My observations will bring to light previously unstudied censored texts and the lesser-known process of importation of translations into Spain during Francoism, and it will contribute new data, especially on (self-)censored translations.

3.1. Self-Censored: The First Spanish Translation, (1941)

The first Spanish version, entitled *Sangre negra* [*Black Blood*] (Sudamericana, 1941), was translated by Pedro Lecuona and appeared in the Horizonte collection. Sudamericana was one of the "big three" publishers in Argentina, along with Emecé and Losada, the latter of which Lecuona also translated for (Loedel Rois, 2018). The Horizonte collection sought to publish first-time translations into Spanish sourced from a wide range of foreign literatures and artistic sensitivities (Loedel Rois, 2018). In addition to authors such as Thomas Mann, André Malraux, Hermann Hesse, Aldous Huxley, Somerset Maugham, and John Dos Passos, Richard Wright was considered a top figure in the collection. Pedro Lecuona Ibarzábal (Elgoibar, Spain, 1897–1955) was a consul for the Second Republic of Spain [1932–1939], stationed first in La Plata, Argentina, then in Bayonne and later in Bordeaux, France, and lastly in Washington, DC. Apparently, he traveled directly from Washington to Buenos Aires, Argentina, after the Nationalist forces ended the Spanish Civil War in 1939. According to the entry for this translator in the *Elgoibar 1936 Memoria Historikoa* website, the victorious, right-wing nationalist government, in absentia, sentenced Lecuona to five years of disqualification to act as a diplomat and a fine of 25 000 pesetas. He spent the last fifteen years of his life exiled in Buenos Aires⁴.

4 See <https://elgoibar1936.info/pedro-lecuona-ibarzabal>

In the country where he found asylum, Lecuona used his language skills, particularly his English competence, to secure employment as a translator and contribute to the rising publishing industry led by Buenos Aires-based giants Losada, Sudamericana and Emecé. Willson might have described him as a “translator-gentleman” (a politician from a traditional background whose life experiences had exposed him to foreign languages) who became a “translator-translator” (a professionalized, less visible, figure distinct from a “translator-writer”, whose careers as authors often made them prominent public personalities) (2011, p. 151). Part of this rise was due to publishing companies from Spain that had moved their operations to Argentina either during or immediately after the civil war. Loedel Rois sums up the exiled Basque translator’s contribution to the Argentinian canon in this way:

Through Lecuona, the American novel managed to carve out a niche for itself in a genre dominated up to that point by European authors. His versions of *Sangre negra* [1941] (*Native Son*), by Richard Wright; *La luna se ha puesto* [1942] (*The Moon is Down*), by John Steinbeck; and *Tener y no tener* [1959] (*To Have and Have Not*), by Ernest Hemingway, were published in the Horizonte collection. He also translated the British Mary Webb, *Siete para un secreto* [1947] (*Seven for a Secret*) and *Ponzoña mortal* [1944] (*Precious Bane*); Margaret Kennedy, *La ninfa constante* [1941] (*The Constant Nymph*) and *El tonto de la familia* [1945] (*The Fool of the Family*); and Richard Llewellyn, *Cuán verde era mi valle* [1942] (*How Green was my Valley*); or the Russian Nina Fedorova, whose novel *La familia* [1952] (*The Family*) had been a real bestseller in the United States. (2018, p. 115)

The quality of Lecuona’s translation of Faulkner’s *Light in August* (*Luz de agosto*), published one year after Wright’s *Sangre negra*, deserved some praise from the Colombian writer Álvaro Mutis: “Faulkner’s style, which is so difficult to capture, even in his own language, presents insurmountable difficulties in translation,

despite which the present European Spanish version, by Pedro Lecuona, is the best of the very few Faulkner translations in Spanish, without much loss of intensity and freshness” (2000a, p. 15).

I would like to lead this discussion towards the variety of Spanish that the author uses, an issue which Salamanca Zamora mentions briefly, and ultimately towards a discussion of the self-censored passages in the translation that make this work uniquely characteristic of this translator. Salamanca Zamora points out how Lecuona mostly used Peninsular Spanish expressions in his rendition of *Luz de agosto* (*Light in August*) in 1942 for Editorial Sur, many of which were regional or local:

In his version of Faulkner, Lecuona used some Argentinisms (*galpón* for ‘shed’, *nafta* for ‘gasoline’ and some others), but, in general, he made use of terms and expressions from peninsular Spanish to such an extent that in a review of the second edition of Faulkner’s *Santuario* [*Sanctuary*] published in the *Revista de Indias* de Bogotá (85, 1946), the Colombian writer Álvaro Mutis stated that Lecuona’s translation [of *Luz de agosto*]⁵ was «very much marred by the provincial and local turns of phrase that the translator uses too often.» (85, 1946) (2012, p. 246)

In the first pages of the book, there is evidence of what Salamanca Zamora affirms, as there are “some Argentinisms” such as “departamentito” (p. 12) instead of “apartamento” (apartment), “tacho de la basura” (p. 17) instead of “cubo de la basura” (garbage can), and “atorrante” (p. 19) instead of “vago” (lazy). Lecuona had only moved to Argentina a few years before, so used mostly lexis, idioms and syntax

5 The subject of the review in which this quote appears is William Faulkner’s *Sanctuary* translated into Spanish by Lino Novás Calvo, who titled it *Santuario* (Mutis, 2000b, p. 19). The added segment in brackets makes it clear that Mutis was talking about Lecuona’s translation of *Light in August*, not *Sanctuary*.

Example 1. Translation by Lecuona (1941) in which Bigger Thomas's Thoughts of Mary Dalton While Touching Bessie Mears Are Self-Censored

<i>Native Son</i> (1941)	<i>Sangre negra</i> (Trans. Lecuona, 1941)
...his hand circling her waist and the tips of his fingers feeling the soft swelling of her breasts. (Wright, 1991b, p. 522)	Le había echado el brazo por la cintura y sentía con la punta de los dedos la suave coma de sus pechos. (Wright, 1987, p. 120)
...he leaned over her, excited, looking at her face in the dim light, not wanting to take his hands from her breasts. She tossed and mumbled sleepily. He tightened his fingers on her breasts, kissing her again, feeling her move toward him. (Wright, 1991b, p. 524)	...se inclinó sobre ella mirándole a la cara en la tenue claridad y sin querer retirar las manos de los pechos de Mary, quien se agitaba y murmuraba soñolienta. Bigger apretó los dedos contra los pechos de Mary, la besó de nuevo y sintió que se movía hacia él. (Wright, 1987, p. 122)
...his arm about her waist felt her body relax into a softness he knew and wanted. She rested her head on the pillow... (Wright, 1991b, p. 569)	Finalmente, el brazo de Bigger, que la rodeaba por el talle, sintió que el cuerpo de Bessie adquiría la blandura que conocía y deseaba. Bessie reclinó la cabeza en la almohada. (Wright, 1987, p. 189)
<i>He placed his hands on her breasts just as he had placed them on Mary's last night and he was thinking of that while he kissed her.</i> (Wright, 1991b, p. 569)	<i>Lleno de deseo, se inclinó sobre ella, le acercó la cara y la besó.</i> (Wright, 1987, p. 189)

typical of peninsular Spanish, though there may be some which are “too regional and local.”⁶

Self-censorship of sexually-explicit language also occurs, with Lecuona omitting or attenuating key words and rewriting passages. Bigger Thomas is described as touching Mary Dalton's and Bessie Mears' breasts, and other words such as *waist, soft, hands, and kiss/kissing* are repeated in each passage. I believe Wright used these repetitions to create an interesting co-textual relationship between both passages. For ease of comparison, the two first examples refer to Mary and the second two refer to Bessie. However, Lecuona self-censors Bigger Thomas's recollection of how he had touched Mary's breasts while touching Bessie's. The

self-censored portion is highlighted in both columns (Example 1).

In Example 1, Lecuona does not shy away from the explicit references to Bigger's hands or fingers upon Mary's breasts (mentioned three times), but he does omit the line in which Bigger thinks about that while fondling his girlfriend. In place of that omission, the Spanish reader finds no impurity of thought: “Full of desire, he leaned over her, brought his face close to hers and kissed her”.

Another one of the instances of self-censorship occurs in the scene in Book 2: Flight, where Bigger Thomas rapes his girlfriend Bessie Mears immediately before killing her. Bigger does not speak, but his actions are described. Bessie's oppositional exclamations to Bigger's violent actions punctuate each step in the sequence. Bigger becomes sexually aroused (“a huge warm pole of desire rose in him”) and hugs and kisses Bessie violently (“kissing her again, hard and long”); then, he deliberately touches her sexual organs outside (“warm flesh”) and inside (“still warmer and softer

6 Pagni compares a 1941 into-Spanish translation by the “recently exiled” Spanish author Francisco Ayala with another by a native Argentinian translator, Xul Solar, and concludes that they are significantly different, with Ayala's being much more “classic” and Xul Solar's much more “experimental” with the local variety of the language (Pagni, 2014, p. 119).

Example 2. Self-Censored Translation of Sex-Related Language in Lecuona (1941)

Native Son (1940)	Sangre negra (1941)
<p>A huge warm pole of desire rose in him, insistent and demanding; he let his hand slide from her shoulder to her breasts, feeling one, then the other; he slipped his other arm beneath her head, kissing her again, <i>hard and long</i>. "Please Bigger..." (Wright, 1991b, p. 663)</p>	<p>Se le despertó un deseo enorme e insistente, le deslizó la mano izquierda del hombro al seno, y le acarició primero un pecho y luego el otro; le había puesto el otro brazo debajo de la cabeza y le besó <i>apasionadamente</i>. —Bigger, por favor. (Wright, 1959, pp. 319–320)</p>
<p>Her head lay limp in the crook of his arm and his hand reached for the hem of her dress, caught it in his fingers and gathered it up slowly. His cold fingers touched her <i>warm flesh</i> and sought <i>still warmer and softer flesh</i>. Bessie was still, unresisting, without response. His icy fingers touched <i>inside of her</i> and at once she spoke, not a word, but a sound that gave forth a meaning of horror accepted. Her breath went out of her lungs in long soft gasps that turned into a whisper of pleading. "Bigger...Don't!" (Wright, 1991b, p. 664)</p>	<p>La cabeza de Bessie yacía en el ángulo del brazo de Bigger, quien alargó la mano al borde del vestido, lo agarró y empezó a levantárselo lentamente. <i>Arrastrado por un violento soplo de pasión, la estrechó en brazos</i>. Bessie estaba quieta, inerte; no se resistía, pero tampoco respondía. <u>Bigger</u> la besó de nuevo y ella respondió, no con palabras, sino con un prolongado sonido de resignación que expresaba la aceptación del horror. El aire le salía y entraba en los pulmones en unos suspiros entrecortados que se convirtieron finalmente en apremiante murmullo de súplica. —Bigger...no. (Wright, 1959, p. 320)</p>

flesh”) with his “icy fingers”. These instances are highlighted in the source text column of Example 2. In the Spanish text, however, Bigger’s “desire” (no pole is mentioned) causes him to hug and kiss her “passionately” (with no mention of the uncomfortable violence and length), then to continue to hug and kiss her passionately and uncontrollably (“swept by a violent gust of passion”) despite her protests. These are highlighted in the target text column of Example 2.

Also self-censored from the Spanish text are the references to how *cold* and *icy* Bigger’s fingers were and how uncomfortable this must have been for Bessie when he “touched inside her.” Instead of being shown Bigger’s abusive cold-handed groping, the Spanish text replaces “his icy fingers touched inside of her” with “Bigger kissed her again”. Despite Lecuona’s self-censorship, he adds to the Spanish text several adjectives that underline Bessie’s distress (*inerte*=inert, *resignación*=resignation, *apremiante*=urgent); the source text in English does not contain any form of these words. While the Spanish text attenuates Bigger’s actions and

attributes them to his “passion,” it does additionally recognize that Bigger’s “passion” was “violent.”

In the final part of the sequence, Bigger Thomas forcefully penetrates Bessie and climaxes, ignoring her protests though feeling remorseful during the act. In the English text, the rape occurs after the narrator’s voice states, “His desire was naked and hot in his hand and his fingers were touching her,” a fragment which is completely omitted in Spanish. The source text implies, rather than states explicitly, the forced intercourse through lexical repetition (*had to, help it, should, look*) and it also implies Bigger’s climax through specific word choices (*now, all*). However, the Spanish reader is exposed to a completely different description: Bigger metaphorically mounts Bessie compassionately, like a horseman racing downhill against the wind, then he falls off his mount, exhausted. A back translation into English is provided in the third column of Example 3 for the sake of readers who may not understand Spanish and therefore the large degree of self-censorship instigated by Lecuona.

Example 3. Self-Censored Translation by Lecuona (1941) of the Scene in Which Bigger Thomas Rapes Bessie Mears

Native Son (1940)	Sangre negra (1941)	Back-translation
He had to now Yes. His desire was naked and hot in his hand and his fingers were touching her. Yes Bessie. Now. He had to now. <i>don't Bigger don't</i> He was sorry, but he had to. He. He could not help it. Help it. Sorry. Help it. Sorry. Help it. Sorry. Help it now. She should Look! She should should should look. Look at how he was. He. He was. He was feeling bad about how she would feel but he could not help it now. Feeling. Bessie. Now. All. He heard her breathing heavily and heard his own breath going and coming heavily. <i>Bigger</i> Now. All. All. Now. All. <i>Bigger...</i> (Wright, 1991b, p. 664)	Pero ahora tenía que prestársela. Impulsado imperiosamente, saltó por encima de sus quejumbrosas protestas y, sintiendo una gran compasión por ella, galopó en un caballo frenético por una pendiente cuesta abajo frente a un viento en contra. <i>No, no, no, Bigger.</i> Y el viento adquirió tal fuerza que lo levantó; y sobre el gemido del viento oyó vagamente: <i>no, Bigger, no.</i> En un momento del que no se acordaba, había caído; y yacía extenuado, con los labios entreabiertos. (Wright, 1959, p. 321)	But now he had to pay attention to it. Overpoweringly impelled, he leaped over her pitiful protests and, feeling great compassion for her, galloped on a frantic horse down a steep hill with the wind against him. <i>No, no, no, Bigger.</i> And the wind blew so strong that it lifted him, and above the moaning he heard faintly: <i>no, Bigger, no.</i> With no memory of when, he had fallen and lay exhausted, with his lips parted.

In the heavily altered Spanish text, which we attribute to self-censorship, the reader is not told of Bigger's remorse, as the words and expressions *could not help it, sorry* and *feeling bad* are all stricken from the text. Nor is the reader cued into the moment of Bigger's climax with sexually insinuating language, as the English text does ("heard his own breath going and *coming heavily*"); the inverted syntax of the expression "going and coming," most often appearing as "coming and going," draws the reader's attention to the significance of this inversion. However, the Spanish text does cast into words some of the violence of the attack, as it uses words such as "impelled," "frenetic" and "force." Because of Lecuona's self-censorship, this entire morally objectionable scene went unnoticed by the censors in Spain, while the two other scenes described in Example 1 above did draw their attention. For comparison with the uncensored 2022 Hojman translation, see section 3.4.

3.2. Banned in Spain: The First Spanish Translation, *Sangre negra* (1944, 1953)

Pedro Lecuona's into-Spanish translation was banned in Spain twice (1944 and on appeal in

1953) after the prestigious Argentinian publisher Editorial Sudamericana attempted to import it into Spain during the earliest and harshest years of the Franco dictatorship. At the time, the 1938 Press Law, passed during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), required all books to be presented to censors for authorization prior to publication.

Sudamericana's application was suspended on October 7, 1944, because reader number 17 felt that it "attacked the [Catholic] Dogma or Moral standards" and "the institutions of the Regime," in the form of "scenes of the crudest sexual realism" and "indirect attacks on religious principles" (AGA, SC, box N° 21/07487, file N° 5403).⁷ All of the above quotes in the reader's report are underlined in red. The censor pointed specifically to pages 110, 118,⁸ 189, 480 and "the

7 The files are kept in boxes, where each file is inserted into a labeled envelope. The naming convention used here identifies the location of the files, in the AGA, the collection that they belong to, the SC, followed by the box number and the file number.

8 The censor refers to page 118 "y ss," which means "and the following pages." This same

final pages of the book,” which contain sexually explicit references (pp. 118, 189) and references to communism (p. 110), religion (p. 480) and the class struggle (pp. 565–567). As we have seen above, the reader does not mention the rape scene beginning on page 319, because Lecuona’s self-censorship hid the sexual explicitness of the source text. The reader not only proposed suspension but harsher condemnation, stating “In my judgement, this is not only a case of clear suspension, but it indicates either bad faith or irresponsibility on the part of the publisher who I believe should be rebuked” (AGA, SC, box N° 21/07487, file N° 5403). This recommendation is doubly underlined in red. There is no evidence that the *Delegado nacional de propaganda* (National Delegate for Propaganda), who signed the refusal, took any steps in this direction, perhaps because this was a foreign publisher. For publishers based in Spain, there could have been extremely serious consequences, the most drastic of which could have been a complete stripping of their authorization to publish (Álvarez Maylín, 2020).

On January 22, 1953, Sudamericana appealed against the decision and requested a review “alleging that the film based on the novel will soon be shown in Spain” (AGA, SC, box N° 21/07487, file N° 5403). After a re-examination of the novel and the file, however, the *Director general de información* (General Director for Information) denied the appeal and considered the resolution definitive: “having examined the allegations and the new report, this file is declared closed and the previous criteria are upheld” (AGA, SC, box N° 21/07487, file N° 5403). The reader’s report signed by name (Leopoldo) rather than number, though the surname is illegible, is unremarkable, except for the double-underlined judgment that “[*The book*] should not be authorized.”

abbreviation is used after the mention of pages 189 and 480. It is unclear exactly how many subsequent pages the censor refers to.

Despite the ban on importation into Spain, this book certainly circulated illegally. I agree with Cornellà-Detrell that when there are no files in the AGA for a particular book, or, as in this case, when a book did not obtain authorization, plus when there is no copy of it in the Spanish National Library, where a mandatory copy of every book published in Spain must be sent (this is called “depósito legal,” or legal deposit), yet there are copies of the book available through second-hand booksellers located in Spain, “this certainly indicates that a considerable number of [these books] entered the country surreptitiously, though it is difficult to determine how many or when” (2015, p. 43)⁹. However, Cornellà-Detrell provides ample testimony of the existence of secret rooms in bookshops where banned books could be purchased by trusted private readers (Cornellà-Detrell, 2021). After the transition to democracy, these surreptitiously acquired books could be sold freely to second-hand booksellers who could resell them without any restrictions. A much less likely scenario, in my view, is that these books arrived from Argentina after the demise of Franco-era censorship and more than twenty years after their original publication. Their value for consumers in Spain would have been at their peak during their prohibition. A search in the second-hand booksellers Iberlibro and todocoleccion.net will also be used to gather information about the commercial circulation of Lecuona’s translation which finally appeared

9 I purchased a copy of the eight edition (August, 1959) from Iberlibro, a Spanish bookseller associated with ABE Books, in November 2021, and at the time of this writing (November 4, 2022) there were two copies available (a first-edition hard cover in Madrid, and a second or third edition paperback near Valencia). The online second-hand bookseller todocolección.net had four additional copies for sale, with two different hard cover presentations near Barcelona and two soft cover editions in Galicia and the Basque Country. It is impossible to state with absolute certainty that these specific books were held in private libraries in Spain then became available to second-hand booksellers.

in Spain in 1987, though it was revised for standard European Spanish readers.

3.3. Still Self-Censored: *Hijo nativo* (Lecuona) Revised for Publication in Spain (1987)

Lecuona's translation was finally published in Spain in 1987, under the literal title *Hijo nativo* (Ediciones Versal and Círculo de Lectores) and with a revised text for the Castillian-Spanish readership. The state censorship that banned this translation in 1944 and 1953 had been abolished, not in 1975 with the death of the dictator, but in 1978 with the ratification of the Constitution which guaranteed freedom of speech; a later Constitutional Court ruling in 1983 declared that it was so (Vila-Sanjuan, 2003, p. 68), though some censorship constructs remained in place until 1985 (Rabadán, 2000). However, the self-censorship in the Argentinian translation remained; the revision was limited to modifying all Latin Americanisms or Argentinisms. So "departamentito de una sola pieza" became "habitación" (room, p. 12¹⁰), "tacho de la basura" became "cubo de la basura" (trash can, p. 15) "atorrante" became "vago" (lazy, p. 16). The reviser probably did not look at the source text at all. No examples from this revised translation are provided in this section because the changes are mostly on the word level rather the phrase, sentence or paragraph level.

The revised translation was published by Ediciones Versal (Barcelona) and licensed to Círculo de Lectores (Barcelona) in the same year, 1987. The collection in which it appeared, La Biblioteca del Corondel, was active between 1985 to 1988, launching 31 titles, all translations, mostly from English; nine volumes were published in 1987. Several authors had multiple books in the collection; there were five titles by Lawrence Durrell, three by Nadine Gordimer, two by Joseph Brodsky, and two by Jean-Marie

Gustave Le Clézio. This was a collection of literary translations (*corondel* means column-rule, i.e., a thin, vertical line separating columns of type) of major authors, occasionally represented by lesser works (Philip Roth's *The Anatomy Lesson*; D. H. Lawrence's *Mr. Noon*; Vladimir Nabokov's *Transparent Things*). Many were first translations, such as the five volumes of Lawrence Durrell's *The Avignon Quintet*. The Spanish translation of James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*, also a first translation, was published in the same year as *Hijo nativo*.

Círculo de Lectores was a home book club owned by Bertelsman which had its own distribution system in Spain comprised of a network of sales agent who delivered the catalogue and books to members door to door (Jimeno Revilla, 2022, p. 1). The double availability of this book broadened the range of potential readers to include both members of the club (who could buy the exclusively available Círculo edition) and customers in bookshops (who could buy the Versal edition unrestrictedly). In the late 1980s, the club had diversified beyond bestsellers to include "a combination of commercially successful titles alongside the publication of prestigious works and authors" as well as "carefully designed editions, not only in terms of contents (prologues and critical studies by experts) but also format (high-quality materials, illustrated editions) (Jimeno Revilla, 2022, pp. 1–2). Around this time, the club's cultural dissemination project reached a peak of 1.5 million members (Jimeno Revilla, 2022, p. 2). Círculo de Lectores credits Versal on the copyright page as the rights holder and themselves as the licensee.

We have described these two publishers and their collections in an attempt to discover why the editors chose to re-release the translation of *Native Son* and why they chose 1987 as the year to do it. The restored version in English appeared in 1991 and made theirs obsolete very soon after publishing it, so there does not seem to have been any or much communication

10 All page numbers for the revised Lecuona translation are from the Ediciones Versal (1987) edition only.

with Wright's literary heirs who might have forewarned them. The picture that emerges is that of a high-volume literary collection (Versal's Biblioteca del Corondel) and of a home book club during a commercially and culturally successful period (Círculo de Lectores) seeking out new material that could be turned around quickly, and a revised translation could certainly be produced faster than a new translation. Though Pedro Lecuona is credited on the copyright page of both, there is no mention that the text is a revision nor of the reviser's name. Neither edition credits Editorial Sudamericana, but both credit "Ellen Wright, 1968." Richard Wright's wife and literary heir may have sold the translation rights to Versal, thinking they were going to prepare a new translation. The title change may imply that this is either a first or new translation, because the previous translation's title, *Sangre negra*, is difficult for readers, critics and even scholars to associate with Wright's title, *Native Son*, even though the words in the first Spanish title have the virtue of telegraphing that the book is about race and violence very effectively. Perissinotto for example, did not discuss this translation, despite having conducted research in the AGA (2016). There is no record of this translation in the National Library of the Republic of Argentina nor in the National Library of Mexico, and there is no evidence on Iberlibros nor todocolección.net that this book ever circulated in Argentina, Mexico or other Latin American countries; all booksellers offering *Hijo nativo* (1987) are located in Spain only. This may be an indicator that Ediciones Versal had exclusive rights to publish in Spain only or that this was done to prevent any conflict with Editorial Sudamericana, which still operates today as a Penguin Random House company.

However, Lecuona's (revised) translation was the only one circulating until 2022, when an unexpurgated text was made from the restored manuscript (see section 2 above) of this significant example of African American literature.

3.4. An Uncensored Retranslation: *Hijo de esta tierra* (2022), by Eduardo Hojman

In April 2022, *Hijo de esta tierra*, a translation by Eduardo Hojman, was published by Alianza Editorial (Madrid) within its collection Alianza Literaturas (Alianza Lit.). This translation marks the first unexpurgated, uncensored version to be published in Spanish; the edition also contains the first Spanish translation of Wright's epilogue "How Bigger Was Born." We will examine relevant details about how Alianza Editorial chose this moment to publish the translation and how the translated text restores the previously self-censored segments.¹¹

Marta Barrio García-Agulló (New Haven, Connecticut, 1986) described how in the aftermath of the video recorded murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer and the subsequent riots around the Third Precinct headquarters coupled with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, Alianza wanted to publish a "contemporary classic" of African American literature. Richard Wright's *Native Son* was just such a novel, as it is often required reading in US colleges and universities. She appreciated the work for its "political incorrectness" and the determinism of Bigger Thomas as a protagonist; she compares the work with other "contemporary classics" by Victor Hugo and Emile Zola.

With a new translation, Alianza wanted to "dress it up again" and "give it a makeover"; they also sought to reflect the translation's newness by slightly changing the title. Eduardo Hojman, "a fantastic translator who I have worked with for many years," was chosen for the task, in part because "he needs no

11 The main sources of information are the translator Eduard Hojman and the Alianza editor Marta Barrio, with whom I conducted unrecorded telephone interviews on February 1 and 2, 2023, respectively. Supplementary sources include information available online about Alianza, Alianza Literaturas, Eduardo Hojman and Marta Barrio.

orders nor suggestions” to get the job done. Although their collaboration on this translation was rather routine, it was a “thrilling project that we thoroughly enjoyed,” particularly the choice of the cover image featuring an actor from the theatrical version of *Native Son*. According to Barrio, the sexually explicit scenes in the restored novel are not something that a contemporary reader or editor would have any trouble with, given the explicit content in many novels and translations published today. The novel was well received by the press, although none of the reviews ever mentioned the quality of the translation, and its sales figures were good, although she stressed that the main objective of Alianza Editorial is to offer quality, not necessarily bestsellers. Indeed, the book reviews in national newspapers (by José María Guelbenzu in *El País*; by Federico Aguilar in *El Imparcial*; by Sergi Sánchez in *El Periódico de España*; by José Antonio Gurpegui in *El Español*, among others) pinpoint the importance of Wright’s contribution but are neglectful of this retranslation’s fascinating history and the quality of the Spanish translation.

Eduardo Hojman (Buenos Aires, 1964) also stresses that his relationship with Alianza Editorial goes back many years, although he has also translated for other publishers such as Ediciones B, Emecé, Malpaso, Navona, Planeta, RBA, Roca, Salamandra, Taurus, all located in Barcelona, and Debate, located in Madrid. Hojman described Alianza Editorial as a brave publisher, especially since in 2020 they commissioned him to translate Woody Allen’s *Apropos of Nothing* [*A propósito de nada*] at a time when Hachette in the United States had refused to publish it. He described *Native Son* as a “novel of ideas,” though he is critical of the novel’s third part, Fate, which rather ploddingly describes the trial and Bigger Thomas’s uncharacteristic conversations with his lawyer, Boris Max.

Despite speaking with a distinctive Argentinian accent, Eduardo Hojman uses standard European Spanish lexis in his translations

of “one-room apartment” (“diminuto apartamento,” p. 14), “garbage can” (“contenedor de basura,” p. 18) and “tramp” (“vago,” p. 20). The use of standard Spanish by Argentinian translators for the publishing market in Spain is common. Translation Studies researcher Alejandrina Falcón has studied a generation of editors, writers and translators who emigrated to Spain after the military overthrow in Argentina in 1976. She describes how translators who used Latin Americanisms or Argentinisms needed to have their works revised, whereas those who could use peninsular Spanish in their translations were paid more because revision was not needed (Falcón, 2018, p. 199). Throughout the publishing boom in the 1980s and beyond, a generation of editors and translators and a tradition developed, though Falcón is critical of the European variety being used so widely as the standard, or as the basis for a “neutral Spanish,” to the detriment of standard Argentinian Spanish (Falcón, 2018, pp. 107–127).

Because Hojman uses the source text restored in 1991, he reveals Bigger’s thoughts of Mary’s breasts while he caressed Bessie: “Le puso las manos en los pechos igual que como lo había hecho con Mary la noche anterior y mientras la besaba pensaba en ello” (Wright, 2022, p. 169). In the example below, we can see how the “galloping-frantic-horse-racing-down-a-steep-hill-with-the-wind-against-him” text which had been self-censored by Pedro Lecuona in 1941 has been restored. A back-translation is not needed to be able to compare with Wright’s 1940 source text, for the closeness to the source text is patent (see Example 3).

Bessie había puesto las manos en el pecho de él, extendiendo los dedos en señal de protesta, empujando para sacárselo de encima. La oyó emitir un débil gemido que parecía no tener fin, incluso cuando ella inhalaba o exhalaba; un gemido que también le parecía lejano y al que tampoco le prestó atención. Tenía que hacerlo en ese mismo momento. Sí. Bessie. Su deseo estaba desnudo y caliente en

Example 4. Translation by Hojman of the Movie Masturbation Scene (See Also Section 3).

424

<i>Native Son (1940)</i>	<i>Hijo de esta tierra (Trans. Hojman, 2022)</i>
Bigger saw Jack lean forward and stretch out his legs, rapidly	Bigger vio que Jack se inclinaba hacia delante y estiraba las piernas rígidas.
"You gone?"	—¿Ya estás?
"Yee-eeah. ..."	—Sí ...sí.
"You pull off fast..."	—Te corres rápido...
Again they were silent. Then Bigger leaned forward, breathing hard.	Volvieron a callarse. Luego Bigger se inclinó hacia delante, jadeando.
"I'm gone...God...damn..."	—Me corro... Dios... Joder...
They sat still for five minutes, slumped down in their seats. They finally straightened.	Se quedaron quietos unos cinco minutos, repantigados en sus asientos. Por fin, se enderezaron.
"I don't know where to put my feet now," Bigger said, laughing. "let's take another seat."	—No sé dónde poner los pies ahora -dijo Bigger riendo-. Sentémonos en otro sitio.
"O.K."	—Vale.
They moved to other seats. (Wright, 1991b, p. 473)	Se pasaron a otras butacas. (Wright, 2022, p. 46)

sus manos y sus dedos la tocaban. Sí. Bessie. Ahora. Tenía que hacerlo ahora. «No, Bigger, no.» Lo lamentaba, pero tenía que hacerlo. No podía evitarlo. Evitarlo. Lo siento. Evitarlo. Lo siento. Evitarlo. Lo siento. Evitarlo, ya. Ella debería. ¡Mira! Ella debería debería debería mirar. Mirar cómo estaba él. Él. Él estaba. Se sentía mal por cómo se sentiría ella, pero ya no podía evitarlo. Se sentía. Bessie. Ahora. Todo. Oyó sus fuertes jadeos y su propia respiración que entraba y salía con fuerza. «Bigger.» Ahora. Todo. Todo. Ahora. Todo. «Bigger...» (Wright, 2022, p. 289)

We can also see that the movie house masturbation scene has also been restored. In section 2, we saw the first half of this raw passage.

The fragments highlighted above show how the different expressions used to refer to ejaculation (*pull off* and *be gone*) are reinforced and slightly intensified through repetition of the common colloquial Spanish verb “correrse” (“to come”). Hojman’s translation is brave and modern, intensifying also the use of the low-intensity “damn” to a high-intensity Spanish equivalent of “fuck.”

4. Conclusions

We have examined two versions of the source text, *Native Son* (1940, 1991), by Richard Wright,

one self-censored and the other unexpurgated and restored. We have analyzed three target texts in Spanish, one self-censored (*Sangre negra*, trans. Pedro Lecuona, 1941), another revised but not restored (*Hijo nativo*, trans. Pedro Lecuona, 1987) and the latest uncensored, unexpurgated and restored (*Hijo de esta tierra*, trans. Eduardo Hojman, 2022). In these translations, we have located evidence of self-censorship, including omitted fragments and a lengthier, entirely rewritten passage, both triggered by sexual references in an erotic encounter and in a rape scene, respectively. We have also found evidence of conservation of sex-related language and even intensification of sexual references in the latest Spanish translation by Hojman. We have also seen how the external state censorship system in Spain under Franco prevented the Argentinian translation by Lecuona from being imported into Spain on two occasions (1944 and 1953), and these failed attempts provided an opportunity to study the conservative reports made by the censors, focused mostly on the explicit sexual references and the extensive mention of communism in the novel.

Despite the (self-)censorship, which stripped the source text of a scene where the main character and a friend both masturbate in a public movie theater and excised from the first Spanish target text an explicit, though brief,

reference to infidelity as well as a lengthy, though less explicit, scene of rape, the novel's sex-related language is not missing entirely. In fact, there are plenty of other references to observing and touching breasts as well as making love which were not cropped. Insofar as this broad theme in the novel is concerned, the essential meaning of the authentic, crude sexuality of the main character Bigger Thomas was not changed except for the degree of explicitness and the intensity of this facet of his character. Comparing and contrasting these instances of self-censorship with the unexpurgated version of the source text that was published in 1991 and the Spanish translation of this text in 2022, we see that the fullness of Richard Wright's novel has been restored and as a classic Black US author he has been made more contemporary by the restoration and the new translation into Spanish.

In focusing only on the sex-related language in *Native Son*, we have chosen to disregard the novel's political aspects, namely the mention of communism in Book One and Book Three. In future research efforts homing in on Richard Wright and other Black American authors translated into Spanish or other co-national languages in Spain (Catalan, Galician, Basque), it would be worthwhile to focus on the translation of politically sensitive texts containing references to communism such as Chester Himes's *Lonely Crusade* (1947) or Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). Also worthwhile to examine would be the translations of women Black American authors such as Maya Angelou, Zora Neale Hurston, Tony Morrison and Alice Walker. In relation to one of the main focuses of this article, self-censorship, future research could attempt to find more cases, compile these cases and attempt to determine how prevalent self-censorship in comparison to external censorship was during Francoism.

Whether Eduardo Hojman's retranslation should be used from this point onwards, however, will depend on the readers. Hojman's

text is available as a new book in bookstores and online, though the earlier translations are still available in second-hand bookstores and in public libraries. It is hard to measure the impact of a retranslation such as Hojman's in the short term, because new book sales, critical reviews and social media mentions can stoke up a longer-term interest in the writer, an empathy for restoring wrongs in the historical memory, and an increase in second-hand book sales. Wardle has analyzed how retranslations are often available simultaneously with earlier translations, particularly in online outlets (2019, p. 224). Hojman's translation has the quality readers seek and soon will be joined in the second quarter of 2023 by a new translation of Richard Wright's autobiographical *Black Boy* (1945), also by Alianza Editorial (Madrid). A raw sexual reference from this book's first half was similarly self-censored by Wright at the request of the publisher and an additionally self-censored Spanish version was published legally in Madrid in 1950 and a second, condensed, version by *Reader's Digest* was authorized in 1973 after voluntary consultation. I hope that this study provides, on the one hand, the contexts, connections and analytical scrutiny readers need to understand the multi-centered, pluricultural reception of the source texts and target texts in Spanish and, on the other hand, the theoretical reflections and intellectual challenges readers thirst for as they try to grasp the complex, inter-related and overlapping phenomena of pre-publication censorship, post-publication censorship and self-censorship, the latter of which may be triggered by either of the two other types.

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