

LOUIS BROMFIELD'S *THE STRANGE CASE OF MISS ANNIE SPRAGG* AND *THE RAINS CAME IN FRANCOIST SPAIN*

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American writer Louis Bromfield (1896-1956) won the Pulitzer Prize in 1926 for his novel *Early Autumn*. Born in Mansfield, Ohio, a land that was a rich agricultural community a hundred years before his birth, Bromfield inherited his father's love of farming. Unfortunately, around 1890, Mansfield developed into an industrial and commercial centre, and agriculture and farming became less important. His father Charles, a Democratic politician, was committed to opposing the city's activities and maintained close relations with the remaining farmers in the hope that he would one day return to farming (Anderson 15). Charles instilled in his son a distrust of industry and a society that "deprived men of their manhood and made them bankers, bookkeepers and factory hands" (Anderson 15). Industrialization made some people rich and others poor: in the Flats below Mansfield, slums increased significantly, and farmers could barely survive (Anderson 15). In this context, Bromfield enrolled at Cornell to study agriculture after graduating from high school in 1914. However, he dropped out a year later to help when, for financial reasons, the Bromfield family was forced to sell their house in town and move to a farm. His mother, Annette Bromfield, convinced him that life on the farm would lead him "to hard work and oblivion," so in 1916 he enrolled at Columbia University to study journalism (Anderson 24). Before the end of his studies, however, the United States was at war, and Louis Bromfield decided to enlist in the Army Ambulance Service, organized with the French Army, and travelled to France (Anderson 24).

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In the First World War, Bromfield served as a driver and interpreter with the French army, and he returned to New York to initiate his literary career in 1924 when he published his first novel, *The Green Bay Tree*. His early novels (1924-1930) treat the themes of industrialization and transformation from agriculture to industry. As a defender of the Jeffersonian tradition, Bromfield portrays the consequences of indus-

trialism and materialism on the human being both in his native land and abroad (Anderson). In *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* (1928), Bromfield abandons his early themes, settings, contexts, and characters by introducing a mixture of sensuousness and mysticism that provide intentionally designed intensity and ambiguity (Anderson 56-61). Annie's death, after having been considered a saint because she was marked by stigmata, and her apparently miraculous life give mysticism to the novel. *The Rains Came* (1937) is set in Ranchipur, India, and explores humanity's potential to fight against miseries, poverty, religious prejudices, superstitions, diseases, and natural calamities. This is the first of Bromfield's novels to introduce a large array of characters from both the West and the East who "battle on the sides of both light and darkness" (Anderson 100). However, the role of the church in *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and the events of Annie's life and death may not have been well received by readers in Franco's Spain, nor would elements of Western modernity such as certain love stories and attitudes about religion have been accepted by Franco's

456 censors. Thus, the methodology employed for the study of the reception of these two novels in Franco's Spain is based on context-activated theories, as Janet Staiger presents in her extensive analysis of reception studies, *Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. The context is provided by the political and cultural environment of Francoist Spain, and the censorship apparatus that decided which books could reach readers. Therefore, the aim of this article is to examine the reception of Bromfield's *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and *The Rains Came* in Francoist Spain, focusing primarily on the response of the censors, whose evaluations were crucial in determining whether or not these two novels would be successful in Spain. This discussion involves an examination of the censorship archives located at the Administration General Archives (Archivo General de la Administración) in Alcalá de Henares, particularly the files that reveal whether or not *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and *The Rains Came* were censored by Franco's regime.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In *Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*, Janet Staiger debates several theories of reception, dividing these theories into three major groups: "text-activated, reader-activated, and context-activated" (35). The approaches connected to the text-activated group are various: textual poetics represented by authors such as Humberto Eco and Gerard Genette, and the stylistic and interpretive strategies of Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser's phenomenology (35). These theories claim that the text establishes what the reader should do. Therefore, the reader is formed not only by the text, but also by literary and social conventions, and the meaning is "in" the text waiting to be identified and interpreted by the reader (35). On the other hand, the reader-activated group encompasses transactive reading and subjective criticism, represented by Norman Holland and David Bleich (35). This group of theories holds

that the reader is “constituted by social and literary conventions or psychologies” and that the meaning of the text is not precisely in the text but in the reader’s interpretation. Lastly, the context-activated group includes theories such as phenomenology, sociology, and dialectical and historical materialism of authors such as Hans Robert Jauss, Jacques Leenhardt, and Manfred Naumann, and cultural studies experts such as Tony Bennett (35). These theorists argue that both text and reader should be significant in the process of creating meaning, and that “the historical context is very significant for the interaction, therefore meaning or significance is ‘in’ that contextual intersection” (36).

This article is concerned with the last group, context-activated theories, as the historical context (1942-1976) in which *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and *The Rains Came* reached Spain corresponds to the totalitarian regime of Francisco Franco, which controlled culture through censorship. Thus, according to Staiger, context-activated theories differ from text and reader-activated theories by focusing on the context of the reading experience, so that “historical circumstances become central” (45). Staiger asks a fundamental question: “What contextual factors account for the interpretation?” (45). She suggests that the context that counts for interpretation is the communication act. This involves the hypothesis that the type of text and its source “narrow the range of semantical choices and participate in limiting the plurality of connotations for the text” (45-46). For example, Stanley Fish cites the phrase “private members only,” noting that “it does not have a literal meaning, in the sense of some irreducible content which survives the sea change of situations; but in each of those situations, one meaning (even if it is plural) will seem so obvious that one cannot see how it could be otherwise, and that meaning it could be literal” (632).

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Staiger states that the immediate context of the communication act is related to the “text’s aesthetic or textual history” as proposed by Hans Robert Jauss (46). Jauss introduces the concept of the “horizon of expectations,” meaning that sequential critical evaluations and interpretations of a given literary work “become the horizon or background that establish assumptions about the text meaning, which influence current interpretations” (Staiger 46). Tony Bennett, citing Pierre Macherey, points out that “a work becomes ‘incrusted’ with its previous reception: ‘everything which has been written about it, everything which has been collected on it becomes attached to it—like shells on a rock by the seashore forming a whole incrustation’” (qtd. in Staiger 46). The aesthetic horizons should be accompanied by social, political, and economic contexts, as in the sociology of reading proposed by Jacques Leenhardt (Staiger 46).

In one of his studies, Leenhardt takes the variable of nationality as a comparative measure (Staiger 46): a Polish novel and a French novel were read by five hundred French and Polish people from different social backgrounds. Leenhardt concluded that French readers who read the Polish novel looked for coherency, trying to put together parts of the novel into a “thematic logic” (Staiger 46), while Polish readers focused on “ethical verities.” Both French and Polish readers preferred those scenes “that fit into their interpretive procedures” (Staiger 46). Leenhardt concluded that

cultural factors, nationality, educational systems, judgement, and political views could explain the variations between these two groups of readers (Staiger 46).

Thus, the reception of a specific text is a process influenced by many aspects. Manfred Naumann enumerates some of these characteristics, such as “memberships in classes, strata or groups, material conditions, livelihood environment, education, age and gender” (qtd. in Staiger 47). Staiger also adds race, ideologies, nationalities, age, and political beliefs, among others (47). During the Francoist period in Spain, the contextual factors that account for the interpretation of *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and *The Rains Came* arose from the totalitarian political regime and the norms of the Catholic Church, which were concerned mainly with issues of morality. The censors’ evaluations of these novels determined whether Spanish readers would have access to them in their entirety, or whether they would have access to modified versions from which certain sentences, paragraphs, or even pages were deleted. Thus, the censors were the ones who decided when and what

458 content from each novel was allowed to be read.

THE CENSORSHIP APPARATUS

Spain, under Franco, sought its identity in the cultural field. As Eduardo Ruiz Bautista points out in *Tiempo de censura. La represión editorial durante el franquismo*, Spain, unlike Germany, could not consider itself a superior race endowed with all the physical and mental virtues imaginable; therefore, it was forced to find its identity and purity in the cultural sphere, in a set of immutable symbols that allowed it to perceive, interpret, and manipulate reality in a unique and non-transferrable way (60). This created the right environment to promote the doctrine of national Catholicism, which had to be followed when authorizing a literary work. Culture was thus divided into two categories: the first was called “high culture” and the second was called “popular culture” (Ruiz Bautista 61). On the one hand, “high culture” was represented by “good culture,” which was considered classical culture and was to be absorbed by the younger generations who were to defend the cause of a national Catholic identity. On the other hand, “high culture” also included “bad culture,” which was considered decadent and “adhered to denaturing foreign models” (Ruiz Bautista 61). “Popular culture” always lacked autonomy and was distinguished by its constant effort to come to terms with imposed norms, even if on various occasions this culture forgot its illegitimate character and aspired to freedom. Popular culture was to undergo a process of adaptation in order to achieve a national morality that would integrate it with authentic culture. This division of culture into high and popular also implied a division of censors. The educated censors reviewed the material that corresponded to high culture, and those with little experience in writing and literature reviewed works that belonged to popular culture (Ruiz Bautista 61). The censorship structure was in place between 1938 and 1978, and this period can be

divided into two sections: the first, from 1938 to 1966, was characterized by excessive control, and the second, from 1966 to 1978, was apparently more tolerant.

Thus, from the beginning of the regime, the activity of the censors was regulated by the Law of Press (*La Ley de Prensa*) of 1938. This law, signed in Burgos by the Minister of the Interior, Ramón Serrano Suñer, was intended to control all types of publications, such as books and newspapers. Its main feature was the introduction of prior censorship. Therefore, publishers had to submit two copies of the material to the censorship office in order to obtain authorization:

Queda prohibida la venta y circulación, en territorio nacional, de libros, folletos y demás impresos, producidos en el Extranjero, cualquiera que sea el idioma en que estén escritos, sin la previa autorización de este Ministerio. Los editores, libreros o concesionarios que pretendan poner en venta o circulación tales obras, deberán remitir dos ejemplares a la previa censura. Esta disposición alcanza a las que actualmente se venden o circulan en territorio nacional después del diecisiete de julio de mil novecientos treinta y seis. Se concede un plazo de treinta días, a partir de la publicación de esta Orden, para el cumplimiento de dicha obligación. (Boletín Oficial del Estado 7036)¹

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After reading the material, the censor prepared a report to indicate whether the work had literary and artistic value, whether it had documentary value, whether it contained a political reference, and whether there were deletions (File 1641/1943). These comments were included in the reports of the first years of the regime (1939-1945). Later, these concerns were summarized in three questions: “¿Ataca al dogma o a la moral? ¿A las instituciones del régimen? ¿Tiene valor literario o documental?” (File 5554/44).² The censors could also indicate in the report their evaluation of the work under review, their opinion of the work, and whether they considered it worthy of approval. However, the final decision was made by a superior, such as “the editorial director or the provincial representative” (Ruiz Bautista 86). Manuel Abellán outlines the result of the censorship process as follows:

1. Autorización pura y simple.
2. Autorización condicionada: supresiones, tachaduras, modificaciones.
3. Denegación: denuncia/sin denuncia, inclusión en la lista negra de autores. (138)³

A debatable issue regarding the outcome of the censorship process are the criteria according to which a particular novel was or was not admitted. Abellán explains that there was no body of objective criteria and no specific rules for their application (87). Consequently, the censors' accounts have inconsistencies and contradictions that can be explained by their uncertainty in their daily confrontation with repressive texts. Political, moral, and even literary errors that could be detected in a text were not easily identified in a set of rules (Abellán 87). The inconsistencies and contradictions also resulted from the precarious situation of the censorship officials. They were not paid according to their professionalism, diligence, depth, or insight, but according to the number of books they could revise. Thus a book of about two hundred pages was worth one hundred pesetas, while those in the regional languages or in French and Italian were worth two hundred pesetas. For books in English and those which

presented certain difficulties because of the subject or theme, fifty pesetas more were paid for the same number of pages than for the previous ones. Books in German, Slavic, or Oriental languages were worth three hundred pesetas per hundred pages (Ruiz Bautista 85). This means that the censors revised the books according to their material interests in order to find reprehensible evidence that would justify their work (Ruiz Bautista 85).

Abellán, however, succeeded in classifying some fixed and variable criteria of evaluation, which were reduced to four categories: sexual morality, or the prohibition of subjects that offend decency and good manners, including abortion, homosexuality, and divorce; political opinions aimed at upholding the ideological apparatus of the regime and the laws enacted to implement that ideology; the use of language “considered indecent, provocative, and unsuitable to the good morals that guide the behaviour of people who define themselves as decent”; and finally, religion as an “institution and hierarchy that protects all divine and human values” (Abellán 88-89). Censors focused first on political matters, then on religion, and finally on sexual morality and language use (Abellán 90). These criteria continued to apply after 1966, when another press law was enacted.

In 1966, Minister of Tourism and Information Manuel Fraga Iribarne replaced the Law of Press of 1938 with the Law of Press and Printing (*La ley de prensa e imprenta*), which revamped the censorship system, which on the surface seemed more open, but underneath was just as efficient and drastic as that of the Law of Press. The main norm was that prior censorship was no longer required. This concept was replaced by another, *consulta voluntaria*, or voluntary consultation, which did not force publishers to submit their material for consultation, but encouraged them to do so. Daniel Linder states that “all publishers, whether or not they submitted their material for voluntary consultation, were obliged to deposit all material with the censor before distribution” (159). This law proved as effective as the first, as those books deposited before their distribution could also be sequestered by the censor, even though they had not been initially presented for voluntary consultation. Sometimes, the outcome of the censorship process was *silencio administrativo*, or administrative silence, “an ambiguous bureaucratic state in which the censors neither authorized nor refused to authorize the publication of a book, and publishers could proceed at their own risk” (Linder 160). Those works that “met with administrative silence could also be sequestered at the prior deposit stage” (qtd. in Abellán 138-39). Apart from administrative silence, the censors could authorize the book, authorize it with suppressions, deletions, or modifications, authorize its seizure, or impose an administrative sanction. They could also not recommend the book once it was presented for voluntary consultation, or they could forbid it when the deposit was made (Abellán 139).

In this context, American literature reached Spain through the western genre, which Carmen Camus and Cristina Gómez Castro define as a story that takes place in the legendary American West (234). John R. Milton divided western literature into two categories: the western literary novel and the western popular novel (qtd.

in Camus and Gómez Castro 235). The first group includes narratives that evolved from travel stories and expeditions whose themes explore universal problems and in which the plot is developed on the border. The second group includes stories in which the border symbolizes the confrontation between civilization, represented by a hero, embodied in most cases by the cowboy, and savage primitivism, represented by the Indians or the outlaws (235). The basic elements of the narratives in the latter category are the hero, violence, love, and the landscape. Camus and Gómez Castro state that western popular novels seem to be deliberately set in the West to exploit romantic and adventurous situations, which provide raw material for the mass market. Thus, Spanish readers were supplied with translations of western popular novels by Zane Grey, Max Brand, Evans Evans, or Frederick Glidden (Camus and Gómez Castro 235).

Translations occupied a privileged position in the Spanish literary polysystem. Itamar Even-Zohar identifies three situations in which translated literature can become the centre of the polysystem: when literature is young and developing; when literature is weak or on the margins of a large group of interrelated literary works; and when there are crises or literary vacuums in literature (47). Thus, translation in Spain in the 1940s found itself in the third situation described by Even-Zohar, as many Spanish intellectuals were forced to flee to other countries, and those who stayed behind were condemned to “internal exile,” so that countless works by foreign authors, English or American, were published by Spanish publishers (Camus and Gómez Castro 251). The great success of translations, especially of popular literature, set standards for the market and forced publishers to ask Spanish translators not only to translate, but also to write novels that emulated those they translated (Camus and Gómez Castro 252). Although translations of popular novels achieved great success in the late 1940s, 1950s, and part of the 1960s, it should be noted that translations were open to foreign influence. Thus, the censorship apparatus had to ensure that imports and national productions did not violate the imposed ideological parameters. Often, suppressions and changes were made, so that in this way a “domestic innovation” emerged that accepted new models but was adapted to the sociopolitical circumstances of the time. The main problems addressed in the translations were often erotic in nature or concerned sexual morality (Camus and Gómez Castro 253). In the case of *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and *The Rains Came*, one could assume that they were not well received from the beginning, considering the sexual innuendos in the latter and the religious references in the former.

AMERICAN AND SPANISH CRITICAL RECEPTION

American critics reviewed and analyzed Bromfield's fiction and nonfiction from a variety of perspectives. Works such as Morrison Brown's *Louis Bromfield and His Books: An Evaluation* (1957), Denis Poupard et al.'s *Twentieth-Century Literary*

Criticism (1983), and David Anderson's *Louis Bromfield* (1964) provide critical evaluations of Bromfield's work and some biographical data to contextualize the environment that influenced Bromfield's writing. However, one of the most informative books about Bromfield's life was written by his youngest daughter, Ellen Bromfield Geld, who describes the Bromfield family's experiences in the village of Senlis in France and then, years later, in Ohio, where Louis Bromfield, the Boss, realized his lifelong dream of running a farm he called Malabar Farm. In Senlis, Bromfield rented an old presbytere that had once belonged to Capuchin monks. This place had a large garden, a thirteenth-century chapel which was transformed into a sort of greenhouse, near the Nonnette River. His daughters, Ellen (born 1932) and her sister Hope (born 1929), were born in France (Anderson 60). At the Presbytere, the Bromfield family lived happily surrounded by "a great variety of guests" such as Gertrude Stein, Leslie Howard, and the Maharajah of Baroda, who were invited to lunch every Sunday and to discuss music, history, and politics (Geld 22-23).

- 462** A representative aspect of this book is the insightful description of key people in Bromfield's life who accompanied him in Senlis and in Ohio, where he returned in 1939 to build and commission the Malabar Farm. Thus, Geld introduces her mother Mary Appleton Wood, who initially played the role of the perfect hostess at the presbytere and at Malabar Farm, happily attending all the writers, actors, and celebrities who visited the farm. In her youth, Mary was cheerful and outspoken, but her struggle with heart disease caused by rheumatic fever in her childhood made her weak and reserved. Geld explains that this illness limited her mother's activities, and she became "a pathetic, ghostly figure, lost in a world full of vigorous, ambitious, busy people who never understood what it was to be helpless" (229). She died peacefully in her sleep at Malabar Farm (Geld 230). When she was alive, there was a special atmosphere of peace in her room, and when she died and all her belongings were taken away, that atmosphere disappeared along with "that strange, quite pleasantness that existed beyond the room in every part of the house [...] as if a woman with great dignity and warmth and knowledge had gone from the house" (Geld 231).

One of the most important influences on Bromfield's career was George Hawkins, who met Bromfield when they were working for Samuel Goldwyn. At their first meeting, George was "a swarthy, moustached figure nattily dressed in a plaid sports coat, silk scarf, and golfer's hat" and holding a portable typewriter (Geld 13). This curious man became Bromfield's best friend and advisor, who judged all his writings and became his harshest critic. If he did not like a work, Hawkins would "thrust the manuscript under the Boss's nose and roared with the indignation of an enraged bull 'You don't mean to seat there and tell me to type this crap. I never read such uninhibited corn in my life!'" (Geld 201). When Hawkins died, Bromfield was deeply affected, and his life was never to be the same.

Another figure who accompanied Louis Bromfield and his family was the hardworking governess Jeanne White, known as Nanny. Nanny was more than a governess: she was another member of the family, loved and cherished. Even as she

grew old, her energy increased, and her tasks multiplied. She “planted the first vegetable garden and brought corn and sweet peas steaming hot and dripping with butter to the table. The first flowers and bushes that surrounded the ugly mail-order house took root under her expert gardener’s hands” (Geld 224). George Hawkins’s death was an irreplaceable loss to Nanny, and for only five years could she bear the presence of Mrs. Rimmer, who took Hawkins’s place, and so she left Malabar Farm under the incredulous eyes of Louis Bromfield (Geld 228).

Malabar Farm was Bromfield’s great project, which he had been planning since his stay in Senlis. In 1939, he bought three farms in Richland County, Ohio, and named them Malabar Farm (Anderson 20). There he built the Big House, whose rooms were always occupied by guests. He named the farm Malabar after the Malabar Coast of India because that place brought back fond memories to him, and the income from the Indian books enabled him to buy that land (Geld 88). For the first year, the work on the farm was hard and rudimentary. They used a John Deere tractor and a pair of Percheron mares, and although they worked fast and hard, spring came, and they were “caught between the rains running helter-skelter” doing the best they could (Geld 97). Despite these difficulties, Malabar became a prosperous farm, not only because of the hard work of the whole family, but mainly because of Bromfield’s knowledge of farming and agriculture, which he presented in works such as *Pleasant Valley* (1945), *Malabar Farm* (1948), and *Out of the Earth* (1950).

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Bromfield’s daughter Ellen inherited her father’s passion for farming. Ellen and her husband Carson Geld travelled to Brazil, where they purchased a farm and put into practice the knowledge she had learned from her father. After the death of his wife Mary and his best friend George Hawkins, Louis Bromfield was alone and unable to maintain the farm due to financial and health problems. He visited Ellen several times in Brazil, and their relationship grew closer, but he never informed her of the seriousness of his illness: bone marrow cancer. To pay his hospital bills, he was forced to sell the Malabar Forest. He died in 1956 at Columbus Hospital. After his death, the family decided to sell the farm to Friends of the Land, a group of businessmen and conservationists who, along with the Nobel Foundation of Tulsa, converted it into the Louis Bromfield Ecological Center (Geld Bromfield 258). Other works dealing with Bromfield as a novelist and farmer include Charles E. Little’s *Louis Bromfield at Malabar: Writings on Farming and Country Life* (1988) and Ivan Scott’s *Louis Bromfield, Novelist and Agrarian Reformer: The Forgotten Author* (1998).⁴

During the Francoist period, Bromfield was introduced to Spanish readers by the press. One of the first mentions of Bromfield was in 1928, when the newspaper *ABC Madrid* commented on his opinion of how Americans perceived love. According to this article, Bromfield stated that in America, love was a kind of friendship that women granted to the men they married in order to pay for the women’s social activities (Zarraga 7). He added that Americans had no knowledge of love from a spiritual perspective as the French, Italians, and Spanish had. Zarraga explained that in Bromfield’s view, American women were becoming more independent and did

not see the romantic part of a relationship, meaning that if they did not marry to be financially supported by their husbands, they saw no reason to marry at all (7). The article concluded that people should learn to love because a happy family was based on true love (Zarraga 7).

In the 1930s, newspapers such as *La vanguardia* contained numerous brief references to Bromfield, who was considered a famous writer who worked with film producers such as Paramount Pictures, Warner Bros., and Twentieth-Century Fox. These companies filmed some of his works such as *Twenty-Four Hours*, produced by Paramount Pictures in 1931; *A Modern Hero*, issued by Warner Bros. in 1934; and *The Rains Came*, produced by Twentieth-Century Fox in 1939 (*La vanguardia* 18). In the 1940s, journalists promoted the film *The Rains Came* more than the novel. *The Rains Came* was described as a spectacular production that “portrays the great scourges of India—earthquakes and floods—and the intrigues and discrepancies between the Eastern and Western mentalities in a marvellous, realistic, and exciting way” (*La vanguardia* 2). The director, Clarence Brown, and the cast, including Tyrone Power, Myrna Loy, George Brent, Brenda Joyce, and Maria Ouspenskaya, created a film of “perfect greatness” (*La vanguardia* 2).

In the 1950s, the press brought Bromfield’s Pulitzer Prize, which he had won in 1927 for the novel *Early Autumn*, to the attention of Spanish readers, and promoted some of his best-known novels, such as *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* (1928), *A Modern Hero* (1932), *Night in Bombay* (1940), *The World We Live In: Stories* (1944), and *Colorado* (1947) (*La vanguardia* 8). The 1960s and 1970s saw a few short articles that were mainly about the novel *The Rains Came*. For instance, the article “*Vinieron las lluvias*,” published in *La vanguardia*, regarded this “extraordinary novel,” written with “a rare narrative skill that was perhaps Bromfield’s most important literary quality,” as a representation of “the exoticism of a country like India, where all the profiles seem more pronounced and the colours more intense. A country where, as Bromfield himself says, ‘cruelty is more cruel and beauty more beautiful’” (*La vanguardia* 45). The Spanish press did not fail to mention Bromfield’s death in 1956 and published several biographical articles acknowledging his talent as a novelist and as a farmer (ABC 12). Thus, Bromfield was no stranger to Spanish readers, as the press had informed them about him and his works since 1928, eleven years before Francisco Franco came to power in 1939. This may have influenced the censors’ decisions about *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and *The Rains Came*.

THE CENSORS’ RECEPTION OF *THE STRANGE CASE OF MISS ANNIE SPRAGG*

The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg, published in 1928 by Frederick A. Stokes, abandons the Midwestern background of Bromfield’s early novels and introduces a new theme based on mysticism. The novel is set in the Italian town of Brinoe, an

ideal place for “British and American expatriates, most of them genteelly poor and all of them living lives of quiet desperation” (Anderson 56). It opens with the death of a poor American woman, Annie Spragg, who according to the nun Annunziata was marked by stigmata. Sister Annunziata was preparing Annie for burial when the room was suddenly inundated with wild birds flying around incessantly. The sister is surprised by a personal vision, and the poorest of the town and the church believe that Annie is a saint. In his search for a natural explanation, Mr. Winnery, a middle-aged English gentleman who intends to complete his masterpiece *Miracles and Other Natural Phenomena*, discovers “a mysterious sequence of relationships that range from pre-Christian deities to a primitive frontier religious sect in the nineteenth-century American Midwest” (Anderson 57). Sects such as the Spraggites, known as free lovers, were common on the American frontier. Annie’s father, Cyrus Spragg, travels along the frontier “preaching damnation and seducing women” until he and his disciples build a New Jerusalem, “a temple dedicated to God and to Spragg’s special devotions with the temple virgins” (Anderson 58).

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The novel first reached Spain in 1943, according to Censorship File 8103. The publisher La Nave submitted Angel Perezagua’s translation *El extraño caso de miss Annie Spragg*, for preliminary censorship in December 1943, with the intention of publishing 5000 copies. The censor’s report states that the novel attacks dogma and morality and that it has little literary and documentary value (File 8103/43), and insists that the novel cannot be published because “its content is anti-Catholic and anti-religious” (File 8103/43). In the section *Observaciones* (observations), the censor characterized the novel as follows:

Es la novela de un autor yanqui muy conocido e imitador de Anatole France. Describe la vida de una colonia norteamericana en una pequeña ciudad italiana con sus sectarismos enfermos y raros. La protagonista de la novela es una solterona que muere en unas condiciones extrañas, y sobre cuyo cuerpo unos ignorantes imaginan descubrir los estigmas del salvador. Se ironiza mucho sobre los dogmas de la iglesia católica y sobre los santos. (File 8103/43)⁵

The novel was rejected on December 31, 1943. The censor was familiar with Bromfield, emphasizing that he was “well known,” but despite the author’s fame, this novel was not approved. The report does not include any references to lines, paragraphs, or pages considered anti-Catholic and anti-religious.

Four years later, in 1947, another publishing house, Aguilar, requested permission to publish a translated version, *El secreto de la señorita Spragg*. The censor’s report does not include any reference to the content of the novel, and the resolution was again negative, as it was rejected on January 13, 1947. In 1948, Aguilar presented the novel again for prior censorship, and this time the outcome was “authorized as ‘tolerated’ modifying the previous resolution” (File 5715/47). The representative of the book inspection stated that, considering the previous translation, *El extraño caso de miss Annie Spragg*, to be published by La Nave, which testified that the novel was an “object of expurgation,” the censor board decided to authorize Aguilar to publish

it, as long as article 2 of the Order issued in June 1945, concerning the advertising of books labelled as “tolerated,” was respected (File 5715/47). Article 2 indicated that “tolerated works may be advertised only through their inclusion in catalogues, and it is therefore forbidden to display them in bookstore windows, showcases, and other places where books are exhibited and advertised” (Boletín Oficial del Estado de 29-6-1945).

In 1955, the publisher German Plaza requested permission to publish and distribute 10,000 copies of Angel Perezagua’s *El extraño caso de miss Annie Spragg*, but again, publication was not approved, as noted in Censorship File 6218/55. The file contains no report to justify the negative reaction. Four years later, in 1959, Aguilar submitted for preliminary censorship a collection of Bromfield’s novels, *Obras completas tomo IV*, containing translated versions of the novels *Twenty-Four Hours* (1930), *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg*, and *Awake and Rehearse* (1929). The censors noted that *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* “tells the story of a woman who dies stigmatized and reveals people’s reactions about whether she is a saint or a false witch. It contains attacks on the church on pages 647, 648, and 649, which must be suppressed” (File 2703/59).

These suppressions were not eventually made. Juan García Puente’s translation, submitted by Aguilar for revision, contained these deletions, but it seems that the censors decided instead to delete the entire chapter “Father d’Astier Story.” The chapter includes a scene in which Father d’Astier discusses the death of Anna Spragg with his son Fulco, who is also a priest. Father d’Astier is disappointed in his son’s lack of courage and intelligence, and he discusses the role of the church and its followers. Some of the suppressed sections of this chapter, as reproduced in the translated copy, also called the *galerada*, are quoted below:

Todo lo que enseñaba la Iglesia era leyenda y superstición. Para creer era preciso ser tan simple como el hombre más ignorante. Para creer era necesario ser estúpido y estar lleno de pavor. ¿No había traído él almas al seno de la Iglesia? Era por eso por el que él trabajaba, y por nada más. ¿No conocía él estas cosas? ¿No había vivido con la Iglesia durante cerca de medio siglo? Y lo había hecho no porque creyese, sino porque era una profesión, una carrera [...] (647)

La iglesia no era rica y poderosa porque fuese instrumento de dios, sino porque los hombres de la Iglesia la habían hecho así. El solo hecho porque los hombres optasen por entrar al servicio de la Iglesia no los convertían en hombres diferentes a los demás. Hacía creer a la gente en cosas que ningún hombre podía demostrar. La Iglesia había mezclado y comprometido y corrompido las enseñanzas de Jesús. Había sepultado su doctrina bajo una montaña de jerga hipócrita y superstición ... (648)

Dejó el libro y volviendo el rostro hacia Fulco inquirió: ¿Dónde está hoy la humildad de la Iglesia? ¿Dónde está la caridad divina? ¿Quién busca pura y sinceramente honrar a Dios? [...] (649)⁶

In the second passage quoted above, Juan García Puente did not translate the sen-

tence “They were politicians” (Bromfield 135), suggesting that the translator might have practiced self-censorship, as this sentence has political implications that the censor would not tolerate. It is possible that he did not imagine that the whole chapter would be suppressed. This translation was the last version of *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* to be revised by the censor. It was finally authorized on October 5, 1964, without the chapter “Father d’Astier Story.”

THE CENSORS’ RECEPTION OF *THE RAINS CAME*

The Rains Came, published in 1937 by Harper and Brothers, is set in Ranchipur, India, which is governed by the benevolent, human, and cultured Maharajah and Maharanee (Anderson 99). Their objective is to free Ranchipur from poverty, religious superstition, prejudice, and disease. In their struggle to secure freedom, dignity, and happiness, the Maharajah and Maharanee provide opportunity, means, and encouragement for those Westerners who want to work for the establishment of human dignity (Anderson 100). In this context, Bromfield brings together a wide variety of characters from the West and East, whom David Anderson divides into three groups. The first one includes “the builders who have faith both in themselves and in the worthiness of their goals” (101). Some of these characters are the medical soldier Major Safti, who rejects superstitions and fights for a society in which the individual is supreme; the Smileys, an American family whose integrity and faith lead them to help all those who are in need; or the Englishwoman Miss MacDaid, a nurse who has spent her life in the East and who despises the weakness resulting from “the religious and superstitious background of the Indians” (101-03).

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The second group includes “the exploiters who are the source of both physical and spiritual destruction” (Anderson 101). Some of these characters are the Simon family, who work as missionaries, but who are more concerned with the exploiter class of the British than with “the service of God and with the needs of people” (102). They seem to represent the sickness of the West, which is a lack of faith in God and men and a concern with “the externals of appearance that dominate both theological and social relations” (103). Lord Esketh, who pursues wealth and power through any means, finds in Ranchipur the meaninglessness of money and “the ultimate indignity of a degrading lonely death” (105).

The last group is represented by “the defeated” characters “who have seen or have allowed the ultimate triumph of the exploiters” (101). Some of these are Edwina Esketh, the wife of Lord Esketh, and Maria Lishinskaia, a Russian refugee, who both seek eternity through physical appearance and sexual acts. However, the appearance and the pleasure of the sexual act are ephemeral symptoms of the sick West, which mask a lack of integrity and faith and lead both Edwina and Maria to death (106).

The first time *The Rains Came* passed through the hands of the censors was in 1942. The novel submitted for prior censorship was Georgio Monicelli’s Italian

translation *La Grande Pioggia*, and the Spanish publisher Ediciones de Zodiaco requested permission to translate it. The censors' reaction was rather positive, as they approved the translation in 1943, but with deletions on several pages. The novel was to be translated by Juan G. de Luaces and L. Vegas López as *Vinieron las lluvias*. The censor's report was brief, suggesting that the novel was loaded with immoral innuendo: "Vistas las tachaduras marcadas, se halla efectivamente en alguna de las mismas, marcadas en azul, un carácter inmoral, por lo tanto, deben suprimirse" (File 2-842/42).⁷ The censors' superiors agreed to authorize the translation into Spanish if the aforementioned deletions were made:

Esta delegación nacional, a propuesta de la sección de censura, ha resuelto autorizar la traducción de la citada obra con las tachaduras señaladas en las paginas 201, 215, 222, 229, 278, 367, 635, y 713 y con la condición de una vez traducida enviar galeradas a efectos de corrección de estilo. Lo que le comunico para su conocimiento y efectos. Por Dios, España, y su revolución nacionalsindicalista. (File 2-842/42)⁸

- 468** A review of these deletions shows that the material was considered immoral because, first, it could violate religion; and, second, sexual morality was not presented according to the norms of the Catholic Church. The deletions that relate to religion are presented below:

that religions were compounded largely of superstitions, born of a common human impulse out of the fear of the mankind and out of its helplessness, and it was John Lawrence who had chosen the great Akbar, a Muslim, as the model for the boy to follow [...] (Bromfield 132)

Christianity became for a time an evil compound of the teachings of Christ [...] It entered every house and the life of every man save those shut away in monasteries or living like animals in caves. (Bromfield 226-227)

Some of the extracts that did not follow the sexual morality imposed by the Catholic Church are quoted here:

his wife was downstairs behaving like a bitch in heat. (Bromfield 123)

When everything else failed there was always lust and sensuality. (Bromfield 136)

The only excitement they had won from the experience lay in those few precious moments of almost animal excitement, filled with anticipation. The rest was flat and dull and routine. He could not even find satisfaction in the knowledge that he had fed a little of his hatred for Heston by taking Heston's wife. There was no satisfaction in it unless Heston discovered it, and he was certain that Edwina would see to it that he never did. Pushing the idea still farther, he felt doubtful suddenly whether Heston would care, because the quick cold viciousness of her embrace and the ease and shamelessness of her whole behaviour argued a hundred such casual affairs, "love" snatched here and there in haste in corners, on yachts and beaches, in motors. (Bromfield 140)

He had had European women, not only whores, but women of position. It has always

been easier enough, too easy for his fastidious taste. And never once had he slept with a European woman free from misgiving... Because, in spite of all her fine speeches, he had been aware of what it was she wanted. He had known that he could have had her there on the sofa with her husband dying in the next room, and for a moment he had been tempted because it would have been easy. (Bromfield 388)

These quotations show that the moral code of the Catholic Church was not being followed. The code was a version of male patriarchy carried over into the institution of marriage and family. Any type of sexual relations that did not conform to the male patriarchal model, meaning “premarital sex, sex for pleasure, extramarital sex, [or] sex with same-sex partners,” were officially forbidden (Linder 157).

In 1960, the publisher Aguilar requested permission to publish several of Bromfield’s novels in a collection to be titled *Obras completas tomo II*. These included *The Rains Came*, translated by Juan García Puente as *Vinieron las lluvias*; *Night in Bombay*, translated by Santiago Valdanzo as *Noche en Bombay*; *Mrs. Parkington*, translated by Antonio Valencia; and *The Wilde Country*, translated by Maria Virginia Martínez Abaria as *La selva*. The collection was approved in February 1960 but was not published until 1964. Surprisingly, the censors did not mention in their report that this edition had been approved in its entirety and without deletions; all suppressed excerpts from the 1942 version were accepted and published. For example, the first passage referring to religion was translated as:

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las religiones se componen fundamentalmente de superstición, nacida de un común impulso humano que tiene su base en el miedo de la humanidad y en su desamparo, y fue John Lawrence quien eligió al gran Akbar, un musulmán como modelo a imitar [...] (Bromfield 164)

In 1962, the novel was revised again at the request of the publisher Vergara. It was authorized, but this time with the deletions present in the 1942 edition. The censorship file states that “we proceed to maintain the authorization granted in 1942 for the work *Vinieron las lluvias*. It could be authorized” (File 1521/62). In 1965 and 1976, the publishers Círculo de Lectores and Vergara were granted permission to republish the novel. The censorship files of these editions, published during the Francoist regime, were brief, containing no information about suppressions or other remarks that the censor could have made.

That this work was never outright banned was probably because of the film *The Rains Came*, based on the novel, released in 1939 by the Twentieth-Century Fox Film Corporation. The laws that controlled the film industry during Franco’s time were different from the laws that controlled the book industry, and although a discussion of these laws is outside the scope of this article, it may be worth noting that the trailer of the film reached Spain in 1944 and was labelled as “tolerated” (*tolerado*) for children under 16. In 1953, a dubbed version was submitted to the censors by the studio Distribuidora Hispano Foxfilm in Madrid. The censors watched twelve rolls of the film and decided to authorize them, but with suppressions and modifications of several scenes. File 4697 states that in the first roll the sentence “sang in Vienna” (*cantaba*

en Viena) should be replaced by “sang in Europe” (*cantaba en Europa*). It is difficult to determine whether this replacement had any political or cultural connotation: Spain is also part of Europe, while Vienna is a specific location in Europe outside of Spain. She/he sang in Vienna, but why not in Spain? Why should Vienna be mentioned but not Spain? In roll four, the censors requested that the scene of the young woman who was wearing some shorts and who was leaving the room be conflated with the scene of Ransome, one of the main characters, chasing his male servant. The reasoning for this decision is debatable. The censors may have wanted the audience to believe that the young woman wearing the shorts was Ransome’s male servant, in order to disguise the fact that women wearing shorts would expose their legs. Such a style of dress was not tolerated by the Catholic Church. In roll eight, Ransome’s scene of lovemaking with the young woman was suppressed. No explanations were provided to justify this deletion, though the censors might have considered the scene immoral, as the characters were not married, and Catholic norms decreed that such relations were acceptable only within marriage. It should be noted that by the time the film was released in 1953, the censors were already familiar with Bromfield’s novel, which had also been authorized with deletions in 1943. Therefore, the film was not in great risk of a complete ban.

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The initial negative reception of *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg*, which was banned three times (1943, 1947, and 1955), can be justified by the government’s decision to suppress translations as much as possible and to give priority to the distribution of Spanish books. In the 1940s, translations occupied a privileged position in the Spanish market. The editor Gustavo Gili Roig mentioned that of 1242 literary works published in 1942, 527 were translations (36). In order to change this situation, various laws were enacted to promote the dissemination of Spanish books at home and abroad (Camus and Gómez Castro 241). As a result, translations were restricted to a certain extent, as they were considered potential threats to national values (qtd. in Camus and Gómez Castro 243). Although translations were strictly controlled, they were still published, as *The Rains Came* was approved from the beginning in 1943.

The authorization of *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* in the late 1950s may have been influenced by General Franco’s relationship with the United States. Franco became “the good and servile ally of the United States and the defender of the Catholic Church” (Ruiz Bautista 78), as the military agreements signed with Washington and the Concordat signed with the Holy See in 1953 demonstrate. Furthermore, in 1955, Louis Bromfield visited Spain as a representative of the farmers’ association. The newspaper *ABC* considered Bromfield a famous novelist, emphasizing that he was the author of the well-known novel *The Rains Came*. *ABC* did not give many details about Bromfield’s visit, only mentioning that he had visited Seville during “the culture and art competition of the Youth Front” (28). This brief remark and the references mentioned above demonstrate that Bromfield was well received by Spanish cultural representatives, which may have influenced the censors’ decision to admit

both *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and *The Rains Came* in the 1950s and 1960s.

CONCLUSIONS

The reception of *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* and *The Rains Came* was significantly influenced by the censorship apparatus. Both novels were submitted for prior censorship and voluntary consultation, with *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* more affected by the censors' decisions. It was rejected on three occasions, and when it was finally accepted, a whole chapter was deleted. At the beginning of the 1940s, the censorship board was more rigorous with imported books; however, even when the novels were authorized, Spanish readers were not given access to the whole content, at least during the Francoist period. *The Rains Came*, both the novel and the film, were issued with considerable deletions and suppressions of scenes considered immoral according to Catholic norms. Before the complete Spanish translation was published by Aguilar in 1964, the novel was released with deletions on pages 201, 215, 222, 229, 278, 367, 635, and 713. Two or more paragraphs were deleted on each page, seriously altering the original meaning of the novel by making it into a "domestic innovation" adapted to the sociopolitical circumstances imposed by the regime.

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It cannot be denied that the arbitrariness of the censors' decisions may have played a role in the rejection or acceptance of both novels. In 1943, *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* was banned and *The Rains Came* was not, raising the questions of why they were not both accepted, or rejected, at the time. Abellán points out that censors' decisions were often arbitrary, as they did not follow a corpus of objective criteria, and seemed to have been motivated largely by a desire to reduce the flow of translations that occupied a privileged position in the Spanish market in the 1940s and thus to promote national literature. However, after the Second World War, the book industry suffered shortages, and publishers again appealed to translations to cover the needs of the market. In the specific case of *The Rains Came*, the censors followed the normative, which granted them the right to delete any anti-Catholic content, such as countless references to the sexual act and certain points of view about religion. Given the content of both novels, the censors' responses were to be expected.

NOTES

1. Without the prior permission of the Ministry, the selling and circulation of books, pamphlets, and other printed material produced abroad are prohibited in national territory, regardless of the language they are written. Publishers, booksellers, or merchants who wish to sell such works must submit two copies for prior censorship. This norm covers those that are currently sold or in circulation on the national territory after July 17, 1936. A period of thirty days from the publication of this Order is granted for the fulfilment of this obligation. (Boletín Oficial de Estado 7036; my translation.)

2. Does it attack dogma or morality? The institutions of the regime? Does it have literary or documentary value? (My translation.)
 3. "1. Authorization. 2. Conditioned authorization: suppressions, deletions, modifications. 3. Non-authorization: with or without complaint, included in the blacklist of authors" (Abellán 138).
 4. I thank the anonymous reviewers of this article for bringing these works to my attention.
 5. It is the novel of a well-known Yankee author who imitates Anatole France. It describes the life of an American colony in a small Italian town with its sick and rare sectarisms. The protagonist of the novel is a spinster who dies in strange conditions, and some ignorant people imagine discovering on her body the stigmas of the Saviour. The dogmas of the Catholic Church and the saints are ironized (File 8103; my translation).
 6. "All that the church taught was a legend and a superstition. To believe, one had to be as simple as the most ignorant man. To believe, one must be stupid and afraid. Had he not brought souls to the Church? Had he not brought money to the Church? It was for that he worked and that alone. Did he know these things? Had he not lived with the church for near half a century? Not because he believed, but because it was a profession, a career" (Bromfield 134).
- 472** "The Church was nor rich and powerful because it was the instrument of God, but because the men in the Church made it so. They were politicians. Because men chose to enter the church it did not make them different from other men. They made people believe in things which no men can prove. The Church has muddled and compromised and corrupted the teachings of Jesus. It had buried his teachings beneath a mountain of cant and theology and superstition" (Bromfield 135).
- "He put down the book and turned his white face toward Fulco. 'Where is humility in the world today? Where is divine charity? Who is it that purely and sincerely seeks God's honour?'" (Bromfield 136-37).
7. Having noticed the marked deletions, some of them, marked in blue, are of an immoral character and must therefore be deleted. (My translation.)
 8. This national delegation, considering the proposal from the censorship section, has decided to authorize the translation of this work with the deletions indicated in pages 201, 215, 222, 229, 278, 367, 635, and 713, and on the condition that once translated, a copy should be sent for style correction purposes. I communicate this for your knowledge and effects. For God's sake, Spain, and its national-unionist revolution. (My translation.)

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