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RUDYARD KIPLING’S *THE JUNGLE BOOK* AND *SOLDIERS THREE* IN FRANCOIST SPAIN AND COMMUNIST ROMANIA

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Abstract

*The famous British writer Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) reached readers throughout Europe with his novels, poems and short stories aimed at children. Kipling lived in India, England, and the United States. There, New Yorker associate editor Charles McGrath noted that Kipling had been variously labelled “a colonialist, a jingoist, a racist, an anti-Semite, a misogynist, and a right-wing imperialist warmonger” (cited in Poetry Foundation, 2022, n. pag.) Despite this labelling, his works were successful mainly in Europe, more specifically in Spain and Romania. Censorship prevailed in these countries for several years when the Francoist (1938-1975) and Communist (1947-1989) regimes were in power. Nevertheless, most of Kipling’s works, especially in Spain, were published in a translated version during and after the Franco era. In Romania during communism, *The Jungle Book* and *Soldiers Three* were published in French and German versions, which were censored in the 1950s. This paper therefore uses reception theories such as the pragmatic text theory introduced by Martyn Thompson (2009) to examine the reception of Rudyard Kipling’s works, such as *The Jungle Book* and *Soldiers Three*, in Spain and Romania focusing on the censorship files of Kipling’s works, which show that his works were viewed positively, especially by the Spanish censors.*

Keywords: reception; Kipling; Francoism; communism; Spain; Romania

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1. Introduction

The British writer Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907, was born in Bombay, India, and most of his works are set in India, including the collection of his stories contained in *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895). These stories had appeared in magazine form since 1892, but when they were published together in 1894 and 1895 were “an overwhelming success” (Phillip, Mallett, 2003, 81). The stories are informed firstly by the events of Kipling’s childhood, such as the time in Southsea (1871-1876) when he and his sister Lisa lived under the care of the Holloway family, who abused him physically and emotionally (Makman, 2004, xv). And secondly, the stories were inspired by the interests and anxieties of late Victorian culture, which were concerned with prevailing attitudes to empire, gender, nature, race and children (Makman, 2004, xv). The tales also created a powerful myth of masculine identity that was the inspiration for Robert Baden-Powell’s world-famous organisation of the Boy Scouts and Edgar Rice Burroughs’ popular *Tarzan* series (Makman, 2004, xv).

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Although the stories were influenced by the culture in which they were published, they remained popular and were translated into many languages, including Spanish and Romanian. In *Soldiers Three* (1888), Kipling changes the theme completely, as these stories are not intended for children but depict the adventures of three soldiers Learoyd, Mulvaney and Ortheris. These stories were also successful and were praised by critics as being “brimful of humanity and a drollery that never degenerates into the burlesque” (cited in Green, 1971, 43). Kipling was thought to be one of the most controversial figures in English literature, for before he was thirty years old, he was considered the successor of Dickens and “the most complete man of genius”, and later he was viewed as “the epitome of vulgarity, brutality and savagery” (cited in Green, 1971, 43). The polemical character of Kipling is precisely one of the reasons that have encouraged interest in studying the reception of his stories during the Francoist and Communist regimes. Another reason is the fact that the reception of Kipling has hardly been researched in these two countries or elsewhere in Europe. In Spain, the scholar Alberto Lázaro Lafuente (2011) from the University of Alcalá briefly mentioned the censorship of Kipling's work *Kim* in his essay “The British Colonial Novel in Spain: Popularity, Immortality and Censorship”. And in Romania, there seem to be no publications on the reception of Kipling's stories. Therefore, this study is the first to look at the censorship of *Soldiers Three* and *The Jungle Books* in Spain and Romania.

Censorship prevailed in these countries for several years when the Francoist (1938-1975) and Communist (1947-1989) regimes were in power. Nevertheless, most of Kipling's works were published, especially in Francoist Spain, in a translated version in 1941, 1964, 1966, 1972 and after the Franco period in the 1980s, 1990s and 2020s (National Library of Spain). In Romania, the library of the National Academy possesses two translations of I. Giurea of the *Jungle Books* into *Cărțile junglei*, published during the communist period in 1942 and 1943. However, no censorship files on these translations could be found to determine whether they had been censored or not. Fortunately, the Romanian archives preserve information on Kipling's stories published in French and German, such as *Trois Toupiers* and *Drei Soldaten* and show that *The Jungle Book* and *Soldiers Three* were censored in the 1940s and 1950s (Censorship File 1950). The *Jungle Books* stories were translated into Romanian mainly after communism.

To conduct this study, reception theories will be used, in particular the pragmatic text theory introduced by Martyn Thompson (2009), which focuses on the meaning that readers perceive at the time of reading. This paper therefore examines the reception of Rudyard Kipling's stories from the collections *The Jungle Book* and *Soldiers Three* in Spain and Romania. In doing so, the censorship files of the National Archives in Spain and Romania are analyzed to determine whether these works were received positively or negatively by the censors, as their reaction influences the success of these books in both countries, since the censors are the ones who decide whether a book can be published or not.

2. Theoretical Framework and Censorship Systems in Spain and Romania

This research belongs to the field of reception studies and focuses on the interpretation that the Spanish and Romanian censors give to the text in order to approve it or not. The best-known reception theories come from scholars such as Hans Robert Jauss (1982), who focuses on the historical application of reader-response theory, emphasising that readers interpretation of a text's meaning is based on their respective cultural backgrounds and life experiences. Professor Janet Staiger (1992), for example, places Jauss's theory in the category of ‘context-activated theories’, which argue that both the text and the reader should matter in the process of meaning-making and that “the historical context is very significant for the interaction, therefore meaning or significance is ‘in’ that contextual intersection” (Staiger, 1992, 36). The second category mentioned by Janet Staiger are the text-activating theories supported by authors such as Wolfgang Iser, Humberto Eco, Gerard Genette and Stanley Fish. These theories state that the text tells the reader what to do, so that the meaning is “in” the text, waiting to be recognised and interpreted by the reader. Staiger also mentions the category of the reader-activated group advocated by Norman Holland and David Bleich (cited in Staiger, 1992, 35). This group claims that the reader is “constituted by social and literary conventions or

psychologies” (cited in Staiger, 1992, 35) and that the meaning of the text is not exactly in the text, but in the interpretation of the reader.

However, this study applies the pragmatic text theory presented by Martyn Thompson in “Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning” in the journal *History and Theory* (1993, 248-272). Pragmatic text theory focuses on the text as it is read by different readers, so that the meaning of the text is created through the act of reading. Therefore, Thompson suggests that “different readers at the same time, the same reader at different times, and different readers at different times will understand the same text differently” (Thompson, 2009, 251). This shows that meaning will vary depending on who is doing the reading, at what time, where, with what expectations, and for what purpose. Pragmatic textual theory is thus applicable to the study of the reception of Kipling’s work in Francoist Spain and Communist Romania, as the meaning perceived by the Spanish and Romanian censors met or failed to meet their expectations. In this case, then, the readers mentioned by Jauss, Staiger and Thompson are the censors whose interpretation is influenced by the norms of the respective censorship systems, Francoist and Communist. The purpose of the censors was to read the books with the expectation of identifying censurable passages and approving or not the publication of Kipling’s work.

To understand the context of the reception of Kipling’s stories, a brief review of the Spanish censorship system during Francisco Franco’s regime is necessary. Thus, since 1938, censorship functioned through the Censorship Board, which censored all cultural production, i.e. the press, the book and film industries, and all printed material that entered the market. The Censorship Board included “representatives of the Catholic Church, government officials and loyalist scholars” (Lea, 2013) and its activities were governed by two important laws, the 1938 Press Law and the 1966 Press and Printing Law. The 1938 Press Law was intended to control freedom of the press but was applied to all forms of written artistic production. The submission of any work, national or international, had to pass through the Book Censorship Board and go through a preliminary censorship. The censors could approve the book, approve it with certain restrictions (deletions or changes) or simply reject it (Rioja Berrocal, 2010).

In 1966, the Minister of Tourism and Information Manuel Fraga Iribarne replaced the 1938 Press Law with the Press and Printing Law, which reflected the reformist attitude of the government in the 1960s. This law eliminated pre-censorship, which had been compulsory until 1966, and introduced voluntary submission (Herrero-Olaizola, 9, 2007). An important aspect of this law was that it allowed publishers to negotiate directly with the censorship authorities. This sped up book production, because before 1966 there were no deadlines for censorship authorities to respond to publishers, resulting in costly delays in production and publication. Thus, under the 1966 law, publishers were not forced to seek explicit permission to print their material. They could voluntarily submit either the texts or the galley proofs of the book for final review by government officials, after which a trial could take place (Herrero-Olaizola, 2007, 9). Most publishers preferred voluntary submission, as this was the surest way to obtain the censors’ approval.

The criteria used by the censors to decide what to censor were arbitrary in that the categories of prohibited content were too broad: sexual immorality by Catholic standards, political opinions that did not conform to official views, improper use of language, also known as “linguistic purity”, and religious topics that were not strictly Catholic (Darby, 2017, 25). This arbitrariness provided more flexibility in deciding which aspects to censor and which not. The historian Manuel Abellán divided these criteria into fixed and variable ones, which were reduced to four categories: sexual morality, or the prohibition of speaking out on issues that offended decency and good manners, including abortion, homosexuality and divorce; political opinions that aimed at supporting the regime’s ideological apparatus and the laws enacted to implement that ideology; the use of language that was “considered indecent, provocative and inappropriate 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, 1980, 88-89).

As for the censorship system in communist Romania, it should be mentioned that it was regulated by the institution General Directorate of Press and Printing (GDPP), founded in May 1949. This institution functioned alongside the Council of Ministers until 1975, when the Committee for Press and Printing (CPP) took over the General Directorate for Press and Printing. The General Directorate carried out its activities through seven departments, including the administration of the press and periodical publications and the administration of book approval (Corobca, 2014, 89). In these departments, the readers, as the censors were called, checked all national and international books, newspapers and mail to prevent the intrusion of subversive material.

A January 1964 report shows that they disapproved of aspects directed against Romanian history and the Romanian people, the Communist Party and political relations with friendly countries (File 11/1964, 4-6). They seemed to pay special attention to issues related to the party and defended Marxist-Leninist ideology on the grounds that the multiple tasks they had to carry out with great responsibility could only be accomplished through Marxist-Leninist education (File 11/1964, 4). Books that passed through the Censorship Department were either approved or sent to the Secret and Documentary Book Collection, called *Fondul Special* (the Special Collection), established in 1951. The Special Collection is significant because many of the books that were to be destroyed were eventually saved. The General Directorate of Press and Printing set up a special book collection for the documentary and secret books that were considered dangerous. The books in the special collection were therefore banned and made available to the public in 1990-91, after the fall of the communist regime. Even today, one can see the letters D for documentary and S for secret on the registration cards of these books.

The criteria by which the censors allocated books to either the documentary or the secret collection are listed in a note from 1950-1955 on the instructions for book selection, published in the volume *Fond Secret. Fond "S" Special* by Costea, Király and Radosav. According to these instructions, books were divided into three libraries: forbidden, documentary and open. Books published before 1914 were included in the open library. Books with anti-Marxist, chauvinist and anti-Semitic content were kept in the documentary library. The forbidden library guarded, among other books, fascist and anti-communist books, translations of Anglo-American literature from 1920 to 1945 and works written by or about the royal family (Costea, Király and Radosav, 1995, 260-261). It should be mentioned that in the early years of the General Directorate, the censors used two methods of text censorship. One group of censors made an initial revision of the material and granted permission to print, 'bun de tipar', which means "material that can be printed". Another group of censors reread the material and gave the stamp, 'bun de difuzat', meaning "material that can be disseminated". All books had to be stamped with both stamps in order to reach the readers. After explaining the practice of the Spanish and Romanian censors, the next section presents the reception of *The Jungle Book* and *Soldiers Three* by the Spanish censors. This section analyses all the censorship files containing information on these two works, including those relating to the films based on these stories. The censorship files on the books and the films provide information on whether or not Kipling's work was successful in Spain, and therefore these files are presented in the same section.

3. *The Jungle Book and Soldiers Three in Spain*

The First Jungle Book and *The Second Jungle Book* are the famous stories for children set in the Indian jungle, telling the story of Mowgli who was abandoned by his parents and brought up by the wolves in the jungle where he lived with all the animals. Kipling published the first *Jungle Book* in 1894 and *The Second Jungle Book* in 1895, both with Macmillan. The Spanish censors reviewed and approved *The Jungle Books* on several occasions, in 1941, 1944, 1951, 1952, 1964, 1966 and 1977. The first report by the censors in 1941 was illegible because the files were in poor condition and almost destroyed by fungus, although the 1944 file referred to the 1941 report which said that the book had been approved. In 1944, the censors had no difficulty in authorising the publisher Gustavo Gili to publish a Spanish version, although in 1948 they rejected Gustavo Gili's request to publish the stories in Catalan. Nevertheless, in 1951, the publisher Editorial Selecta Barcelona was allowed to

publish both the first and *The Second Jungle Books* in Catalan, in the translation by Mariano Manent Cisa (File 1951).

In general, *The Jungle Books* were received positively by the censors, as they were approved each time a publisher requested permission. Nevertheless, the censors did not include a detailed report in the censorship files, as their opinion and evaluation of these books is quite sparse. Only a 1944 report states, “I do not think there is any objection to the approval, despite the confusion that this account of the life of the animals of the forest and of man might cause among a certain audience” (File 1944). In another 1964 report, the censor referred to *The Second Jungle Book*: “Rudyard Kipling’s *Second Jungle Book* is one of a series of books written by the English classicist in defense and praise of British colonial policy. Kipling is considered the storyteller from the days of the British Empire and has gone down in history as a classic of English literature. This book is about England’s actions in the Far East. Publication may be authorized” (File 1964). Apart from these two, there is no further observation or analysis by the censors, as they simply approved each of the above editions without writing a detailed report. After Francoism, publishers did not show much interest in *The Jungle Books*, as they were published in a translated version only four times: in 1987 and 2003 by the publishing house Akal in Madrid, in 2014 by Libros del Zorro Rojo in Barcelona and in 2019 by Teide in Barcelona.

The stories became even more famous when they hit the big screen on different occasions. The first American film based on the stories was an animated musical comedy produced by Walt Disney Production in 1967. This was the last film produced by Walt Disney, as he died during the production. The cast included well-known actors as well as musicians such as Phil Harris, Sebastian Cabot, George Sanders and Bruce Reitherman as Mowgli (*El libro de la selva*, 1967). The second film was released in 1994, directed by Stephen Sommers and produced by Edward Feldman and Raju Patel. The film stars Jason Scott Lee, Cary Elwes, Lena Headey, Sam Neill and John Cleese (*El libro de la selva. La Aventura continua*, 1994). A newer version was released in 2016. This was an adventure drama directed by Jon Favreau and produced by Walt Disney Pictures (*El libro de la selva*, 2016). The film stars Bill Murray, Ben Kingsley, Idris Elba and Scarlett Johansson in voice acting and motion capture. In Spain, the English film *Jungle Book*, produced in 1942 by the Korda brothers, Alexander and Zoltan, was reviewed by the censors in 1965 and released by producer Roda. At first, the censors did not allow Roda to release the film because reels 5 and 7, in which Mowgli talks to the sea and cobra snakes, were soundless so that the audience could not hear the conversation:

“The Committee on Film Censorship at its meeting on the 23rd reviewed the Spanish dubbed version of the English film *The Jungle Book* and decided not to make any comments until the distributor submits the sequences of reel 5 and reel 7 in which Mowgli talks to the cobra snake and the water snake. I share this with you. For your knowledge and timely intervention. God bless you. Many years. Madrid, 24 February 1965” (File 1965).

The distributor, Roda, suggested that the censors approve the cutting of the scenes where Mowgli talks to the snakes, as they could not afford to do another dubbing. In the end, the film seems to have been approved, as it was released in 1965 and 1966.

Soldiers Three is a collection of stories published in 1888 by A.H. Wheeler, containing some passages from the lives and adventures of Privates Terence Mulvaney, Stanley Ortheris and John Learoyd. The collection was approved by the Spanish censors in 1948 and 1952. However, when the publisher Tesoro asked for permission to publish the translation ‘Gunga Din Tres soldados’ in 1956, the censors felt that it was an attack on morals and two stories ‘El fantasma’ “The Ghost” and ‘Jack el negro’ “Black Jack” had to be suppressed: “Barracks anecdotes among English soldiers in India. The anecdotes entitled “The Ghost”, page 145, and “Jack the Black” are immoral, and as the other anecdotes are full of oaths, rude and irreligious expressions, we believe the book should not be admitted, especially as it is a popular edition” (File 1956). The censorship file contains a galley proof of the book with the two stories and another galley proof of the book without the two stories, so it appears that the book was approved after the two stories were deleted. Some lines that the censors considered particularly immoral were underlined in the story “Black Jack”:

“‘Is he not misconductin’ himself wid Slimmy’s wife?” sez another.

“‘She’s common to the Rig’mint,” sez I. “Fwhat has made ye this partic’lar on a suddint?” (Kipling, 1896, 94)

The film *Soldiers Three* was also released in cinemas. It was shot in 1951 and produced by Metro Goldwin Mayer. The film reached Spain in 1954 when the producer Mercurio Films applied for permission to import the film. The censors approved it on the condition that the scene in reel 6 where Sergeant Ackroyd is alone in a room with a woman be deleted. Once this deletion was made, the film would be approved (File 1954). The suppression of the scene in the film and the two stories “Black Jack” and “The Ghost” was justified on the grounds that these did not meet the moral standards of the Catholic Church. The Catholic code was a version of male patriarchy applied to the institution of marriage and the family, and any kind of sexual relationship that did not conform to the male patriarchal model, i.e. “premarital sex, sex for pleasure, extramarital sex, sex with same-sex partners” were officially forbidden (Linder, 2004, 155).

On the other hand, it may be surprising that these books were published so late, in the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s, considering that they were originally published in 1888, 1894 and 1895. One explanation for this could be the fact that in September 1937, when Franco came to power, the military junta ordered that lists of books should be issued from all public libraries. Once these lists were compiled, they were delivered to the Commission of Culture and Education. The historian Luis Pegenaute mentions that the books included in these lists were classified according to the following criteria: (1) pornographic works with no literary value; (2) publications that served revolutionary propaganda or the dissemination of subversive ideas and had no substantial ideological content; and (3) books of literary or scientific value whose ideological content could prove harmful to uninformed or insufficiently prepared readers (Pegenaute, 1999, 87). According to the 1937 junta decree, books belonging to the first two groups had to be destroyed, while those in the third group had to be kept in a library to which no one had access except persons who received special permission from the commission. It is likely that Kipling’s books were placed in one of these three categories and either banned or destroyed. Once presented the censorship files issued in Spain, the next section will continue with details about the censorship of *The Jungle Book* and *Soldiers Three* in Romania.

4. The Jungle Book and Soldiers Three in Romania

During the Communist period, Kipling’s work was not as well received as during the Francoist period in Spain. The 1949 censorship file contains a list of translations of Kipling’s works into French. These books were considered subversive and were to be kept in a depository where they would later be either destroyed or sent to the Secret or Documentary Collection. The censorship file of 1949 presents under the title ‘Cărți Nedifuzabile’ “Forbidden Books” a long list of authors whose works were banned. Among these authors was included also Rudyard Kipling. The works that were forbidden are listed below:

1. ‘Sous les Déodars’/ “Under the Deodars” (1925)
2. ‘Trois Troupiers’ / “Soldiers Three” (1926)
3. ‘Monseigneur l’Elephant’/ “My Lord the Elephant” (1927)
4. ‘Au hasard de la vie’/ “His Chance in Life” (1928)
5. ‘Nouveaux contes des collines’/ “Plain Tales from the Hills” (1930)
6. ‘Simple contes des colines’/ “Plain Tales from the Hills” (?)
7. ‘La lumière qui s’éteint’/ “The Light that Failed” (?) (File 1949)

Another page of the same 1949 censorship file includes a list of authors whose works are censored, and Kipling is one of them. The file states that all his works must be banned. There is no other information on these files apart from the name of the author and the titles. Furthermore, another file from 1950 contains more lists of books and authors who have been prohibited. Here some of Kipling’s works are translated into French and German, such as *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *The Jungle Book*, translated twice, and *Soldiers Three*. Unfortunately, the year of publication of these

works is not mentioned and there is no reference to the translators or to the publishing houses. After the communist era, countless translations of the first and second *Jungle Book* and *Plain Tales from the Hills* were published, as well as the original version of works such as *Kim*, *Just So Stories*, *Soldiers Three* and *Captains Courageous*.

In Romania, the purge of books began in 1945 and was regulated by Decree No. 364 of 2 May 1945, which required all libraries, publishers, antiquarian bookshops and public institutions that maintained a book collection to draw up lists of these books. Once the lists were issued, the Allied Control Commission supervised the withdrawal and destruction of the books deemed subversive. Between 1945 and 1948, 8779 books were burned (Corobca, 2014, 27). In 1948, a congress of the Communist Party, or the Workers' Party as it was then called, enforced a negative stance against foreign influences and against the “admiring attitude towards the decaying culture of capitalist countries” (Corobca, 2014, 25). This explains the fact that Kipling's 1949 and 1950 translations were on the list of forbidden books.

One may wonder if the National Archives of Romania hold a censorship file discussing Kipling's work in detail. Unfortunately, countless censorship files have been destroyed since 1989 (Stănescu, 2005, n. pag.). Therefore, it is extremely difficult to locate a single censorship report on a particular author, in this case Rudyard Kipling. But even if a censorship report cannot be found, the library of the Romanian Academy holds the registration cards of the books that were registered during the communist period. These cards can reveal whether the books in question were included in the Special or Secret Collection, because they are marked with the letters D for Documentary or S for Secret, which means that they were forbidden to the reading public until 1990.

If these cards do not contain the letters ‘D’ or ‘S’, one may check the first pages of the books, as many of them were signed with these letters. Another clue to find out whether the books in question were censored or not is the information on the back cover. There, the publisher, the number of copies printed and the authorisation of the censorship are indicated, namely the stamp ‘bun de tipar’ “material that can be printed”. This shows that the book was positively evaluated by the censors, thus it was published during the communist period. This is the case with the translation of *The Jungle Books* under the title ‘Cărțile Junglei’ in 1959 by Mihnea Gheorghiu, published by Editura Tineretului. The translation was classified by the censors as ‘bun de tipar’, meaning that it was approved for publication.

5. Conclusions

To conclude, regarding the Spanish censorship of Kipling's works and films based on his works, it can be noted that this reception was positive, as both *The Jungle Books* and *Soldiers Three* were approved. This positive reception is not surprising considering that Kipling was a famous Nobel laureate and a supporter of British imperialism who believed in the moral and cultural superiority of British and European civilisation (Lázaro Lafuente, 2011, 374). After concluding that the *Jungle Books* did not offend Spain or the Catholic Church, the censors found no reason to ban the stories. The only exception was *Soldiers Three*, which was published in 1956 without two stories, “Black Jack” and “The Ghost”, because they did not meet the moral standards of the Catholic Church. Regarding the reception of Kipling's stories in Romania, however, it should be mentioned that it is difficult to trace the path of these stories, as there were no censor's reports indicating whether the stories were banned or not. Nevertheless, the censorship files contain lists of books that were banned, and Kipling's stories were included in these lists. As for the translations published in Spain and Romania after the period of Francoism and Communism, there seem to have been fewer translations in Spain than in Romania. However, readers in Spain already knew Kipling from the Franco period, as his books had been approved on various occasions, while in Romania Kipling was not very well known during the Communist regime and publishers therefore showed more interest in his works. Further research on this topic could include a visit to the archives in Spain to check the censorship reports on other works by Kipling. In Romania, research in the library of the Romanian Academy could help shed light on the translations that were registered during the communist period. The

registration cards of these translations would reveal if these were banned or not, as they bear the letters ‘D’ for documentary and ‘S’ for secret, showing that these translations were not authorised during communism and were only made available to readers after 1989.

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