



Diálogos

ISSN 2177-2940



Forbidden (Homo)sexual Images in Translated Short Fiction in Estado Novo Portugal and State-Socialist Hungary between 1949 and 1974.¹

<https://doi.org/10.4025/dialogos.v26i1.61771>

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Forbidden (Homo)sexual Images in Translated Short Fiction in Estado Novo Portugal and State-Socialist Hungary between 1949 and 1974.

Abstract: The article aims to compare literary translation production with respect to Anglophone homosexual-themed short stories in Portugal and Hungary, when both countries lived simultaneously under opposing dictatorial regimes. It also investigates the strategies adopted (or not) by the Portuguese and Hungarian publishers to evade censorship regarding same-sex representations in short fiction in English. The study complements the previous research findings on homosexual-themed long fiction (GOMBÁR 2017; GOMBÁR 2018).

Key words: Short stories; Portuguese Estado Novo; communism; Hungary; literary translation; censorship.

Imágenes (homo)sexuales prohibidas en ficción corta traducidas en Portugal durante el Estado Novo y en la República Popular de Hungría entre 1949 y 1974.

Resumen: El artículo tiene como objetivo comparar la producción de traducción literaria con respecto a los cuentos de temática homosexual anglófona en Portugal y Hungría, cuando ambos países vivían simultáneamente bajo regímenes dictatoriales opuestos. También investiga las estrategias adoptadas (o no) por las editoriales portuguesas y húngaras para evadir la censura con respecto a las representaciones del mismo sexo en la ficción breve en inglés. El estudio complementa los hallazgos de investigaciones anteriores sobre ficción larga de temática homosexual (GOMBÁR 2017; GOMBÁR 2018).

Palabras clave: Cuentos; Estado Novo portugués; comunismo; Hungría; traducción literaria; censura.

Imagens (hommo)sexuais proibidas em ficção curta traduzida em Portugal durante o Estado Novo e na República Popular da Hungria entre 1949 e 1974.

Resumo: O artigo tem como objetivo comparar a produção de traduções literárias de contos de temática homossexual anglófona em Portugal e na Hungria, quando ambos os países viviam simultaneamente sob regimes ditatoriais opostos. Investiga também as estratégias adotadas (ou não) pelas editoras portuguesas e húngaras para driblar a censura em relação às representações homossexuais em contos de ficção em inglês. O estudo complementa os achados de pesquisas anteriores sobre ficção longa com temática homossexual (GOMBÁR 2017; GOMBÁR 2018).

Palavras-chave: Contos; Estado Novo português; comunismo; Hungria; tradução literária; censura.

Recebido em: 14/12/2021

Aprovado em: 03/03/2022

¹ This work has been funded by national funds through the Portuguese funding agency FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. within the framework of the projects UIDB/00114/2020 and UIDP/00114/2020. I would like to thank Patrícia Anne Odber de Baubeta for her intelligent insights and suggestions as well as for her careful revision of the present article before submission.

[...] E embora te não conhecesse, nascido pelo ano em que morrias,
 Sei que me amaste também, que me conheceste, e estou contente.
 Sei que me conheceste, que me contemplaste e me explicaste,
 Sei que é isso que eu sou, quer em Brooklyn Ferry dez anos antes de eu nascer,
 Quer pela rua do Ouro acima pensando em tudo que não é a rua do Ouro,
 E conforme tu sentiste tudo, sinto tudo, e cá estamos de mãos dadas,
 De mãos dadas, Walt, de mãos dadas, dançando o universo na alma.²

Álvaro de Campos (Fernando Pessoa): “Saudação a Walt Whitman”

Hungary and Portugal are two relatively nations of the European continent. Despite their arbitrary similarities in size, population, major religion and agriculture-based economy, they are two geographically and culturally distant countries. However, the fact that both of them were governed by politically divergent political regimes for an extended period during the twentieth century provides fertile grounds for comparison in several social aspects, among which could be included that of attitude towards sexual minorities and same-sex relations.

Oppressive political systems seldom tolerate deviation from social norms. They more often than not identify it as a social malfunction and as a potential threat to the stability of their own regime. Therefore, repressive and punitive measures are normally introduced to control non-conformist life-styles and sub-cultures. For example, homosexual individuals were systematically persecuted and murdered in Nazi Germany, as they supposedly did not fulfil the genetic and gender expectations of the Third Reich. The exact number of homosexual prisoners that perished in concentration camps is still unknown, as is the number of gay individuals that died in the Soviet Gulag camps, who were equally victimised in the USSR for their sexual orientation. In fact, during the Stalinist years homosexuality was considered a political crime against the Soviet state. (For more information on state persecution of homosexuality under totalitarian regimes, see PLANT, 1986; GÜNTER; SHOPPMANN, 2017; BENADUSI, 2012; HEALEY, 2014; HEALEY, 2018).

Although both *Estado Novo* Portugal and state-socialist Hungary seem to have been far more tolerant towards their homosexual citizens than Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia, there are certain differences between the Portuguese and the Hungarian regimes that separate the two at least in their legal frameworks. Homosexuality was unprecedentedly decriminalised in Communist Hungary as early as 1961, while in Portugal, it was not until 1982, that is, 8 years after the end of the right-wing dictatorial regime, that same-sex activity was finally legalised. In short, according to

2 “Salutation to Walt Whitman”: “And even though I never met you, I was born the year you died, / I know you loved me too, that you knew me, and I am happy. / I know you knew me, that you contemplated me and explained me, / I know this is what I am, whether on Brooklyn Ferry ten years before I was born, / Or walking up the Rua de Ouro thinking about everything that is not the Rua de Ouro, / And just as you felt everything, I feel everything, and here we are holding hands, / Holding hands, Walt, holding hands, with the universe dancing in our soul.”

the laws in force, artistic representations of homosexuality were authorised in Kádár-regime Hungary from 1961, while in Salazar-Caetano regime Portugal, they were to be forbidden.

A particular interest of this study is, therefore, to understand how these two opposing dictatorial regimes relate to homosexuality and homosexual portrayals in literature. What kind of censoring mechanism would be generated by the homosexual-themed representations? Are they necessarily different? Which homoerotic or homosexual depictions are acceptable and why? Were there any literary works translated and published clandestinely for a gay or lesbian readership in the two countries?

The present article will seek answers to these questions by comparing translation production with respect to homosexual-themed literature in Salazar's right-wing dictatorship and in Communist-regime Hungary. The scope of the research is confined to English-language short fiction translated and published in book form between 1949 and 1974. The initial year of the time span under study marks the Soviet puppet government's eventual takeover of the Hungarian cultural life, i.e. in 1949, while the closing year denotes the end of the *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal in 1974. The period, thus, makes it possible to analyse the published translations when both countries were simultaneously under dictatorial rule.

The current study provides additional findings to the on-going investigation on translated homosexual-themed literature censored in *Estado Novo* Portugal and State-Socialist Hungary, and whose results in respect of long fiction and poetry have already been published elsewhere (GOMBÁR 2017; GOMBÁR, 2018). The reason why translated short stories were given distinctive attention in this research article was largely influenced by Odber de Baubeta's hypothesis that short story and poetry anthologies as well as foreign literature might have been used as a vehicle for avoiding censorship. She notes that several Portuguese authors, Alves Redol, Urbano Tavares Rodrigues and Miguel Torga among others, managed to contribute to anthologies, despite the fact that their works were banned or they themselves were politically harassed under the *Estado Novo* regime. Odber de Baubeta, for instance, also calls attention to the Portuguese editor's brave (albeit officially undetected) choice to include Kate Chopin's contentious short story "Madame Célestin's Divorce" in his anthology of *Os Melhores Contos Americanos* (2009, p. 51-53).

Research on the History of Homosexuality in *Estado Novo* Portugal and State-Socialist Hungary

Although research conducted on the history of homosexuality in Hungary and Portugal is definitely on the rise, further lesbian and gay historical studies are needed to build up a more complex and detailed picture of the past in the two countries. The scarcity of such studies—

particularly in contrast with the high number of pertinent scholarly works published in countries with longer democratic traditions—evidently indicates the persistently low visibility and underrepresentation of LGBTQI issues in the academic world in both countries.

In Portugal, São José Almeida's comprehensive monograph on homosexuality during the *Estado Novo* is one of the most indispensable works in the field (2010) along with Raquel Afonso's book-length study (2019). Like Almeida's, Afonso's work also relates historical facts along with interviews with gay and lesbian individuals who lived in Salazar-Caetano regime Portugal, but the latter primarily aims to complement Almeida's work by providing a more cultural anthropological view. Other relevant studies on the subject include António Fernando Cascais's article on the legal history of homosexuality (2016), Ana Clotilde Correia's Masters thesis on police repression of homosexuals during the *Estado Novo* (2016) and Susana Pereira Bastos's book chapter on the same topic (1997). However, apart from Paulo Drumond Braga's very thin and preliminary volume on lesbian history in Portugal (2010), it is quite difficult to find any comprehensive research conducted on homosexual history, which implies an evident unconcern or maybe a bias against the subject on the part of the Portuguese academic establishment. This might seem contradictory and perplexing to some degree, since unlike Hungary, Portugal is one of the most pioneering countries of LGBTQI rights expansion in the world. Same-sex marriage was recognised in 2010, and same-sex adoption has been allowed in Portugal since 2016.

Although Hungary also has comprehensive equal treatment legislation in force, LGBTQI people still face discrimination in many areas of life. In 2012, for example, Viktor Orbán's ultraconservative government adopted a controversial new constitution, referred to as the Fundamental Law that restricted marriage to heterosexual couples and the definition of family to legally married couples. Hungary also seriously infringed the core values of the EU, when in 2021 it introduced a manifestly anti-LGBTQI law prohibiting any display of sexual and gender differences to minors in educational settings, books, films or advertisements. Nevertheless, in spite of the hostile political situation, significant research works have been carried out on homosexual history in Hungary so far. A Hungarian research project on the social history of homosexuality coordinated by sociologist Judit Takács was launched in 2013, and in 2009, a documentary film on lesbian life in Kádár-regime Hungary, *Eltitkolt évek* [Secret Years] came out, while the male version, a fund-raised documentary film *Meleg férfiak, hideg diktatúrák* [Hot Men, Cold Dictatorship] premiered in 2015, both directed by Mária Takács. The full-length interviews of the documentaries were also subsequently published in two separate volumes (BORGOS 2011; HANZLI; BANACH NAGY; HALMAI. 2015).

Censorship Practices in *Estado Novo* Portugal and Communist Hungary

As regards censorship, the *modus operandi* diverged to a significant extent in the two countries. In contrast to Hungary, books were not subject to prior censorship in Portugal, but post-publication censorship, which meant that contentious books were normally prohibited and confiscated after being published. Confiscation of books after being published, however, could easily mean bankruptcy to the privately run publishing houses. This was an effective deterrent and a premeditated mechanism of repression on the part of the Portuguese authorities. On the other hand, post-publication censorship was far less systematic and thus gave more freedom to publishing houses to publish problematic works that would otherwise avoid the censors' attention (SERUYA, 2010, p. 110-111). Furthermore, unlike Hungary, where censors were normally members of the intelligentsia, the vast majority of the Portuguese censors were military officers, who often passed decisions without being completely aware of the books' real contents (GOMES, 2006; SPIRK, 2014).

Homosexuality was a rigid taboo along with prostitution, crimes of passion, suicide, abortion, and infant mortality, and a mere reference to any of these topics – if noticed – was to be blue-penciled or suppressed (BARRETO; MÓNICA, 1999, p. 275). Books were likewise censored, if they criticised the Catholic Church, the Prime Minister and other official entities of Portugal, or the country's foreign or colonial politics (SERUYA; MONIZ, 2008, p. 11-18).

In Hungary, after the Communist takeover in 1948, the book publishing as well as selling industry was soon nationalised and came under full political control. From 1948 publishers and printing houses were obliged to submit all manuscripts to a so-called book publishing office, before publishing. No books were authorised to be published without the office's consent. After the Revolution of 1956, the practice of external censorship ostensibly disappeared from the book censoring system, and was sinisterly replaced by self-censorship exercised by writers, artists, and other intellectuals, and finally by the publishers themselves, whose livelihood and existence would largely depend on their tacit compliance with the party state.

There were also several strict taboos in Socialist Hungary, whose violation was expressly prohibited until the end of the regime, e.g. criticizing the Soviet Union and its relations and the one-party system (cf. GOMBÁR, 2011; GOMBÁR, forthcoming). Representation of homosexual lifestyle and relations, if it did not entail graphic descriptions of sexual activity, was, in fact, tolerated by the Communist regime (BART, 2000, p. 38). In Portugal, nonetheless, according to the laws in force, it was to be prohibited.

Methodology

The methodology used in this comprehensive study was greatly inspired by the data collection method Zoltán Csehy adopted in his research on Hungarian homoerotic and queer poetry (2014). His work can be considered as a milestone in Hungarian literary criticism and also as a new perception of classic and contemporary literature. Although Csehy's monograph focuses exclusively on poetry, his homotopical approach can be easily extended to other literary genres, in this case, translated fiction.

As far as translated texts are concerned, a great number of reference works and annotated bibliographies were consulted in search of homosexual-themed literary works such as Drake's *Gay Canon* (1998), Bradley's *A Complete Cumulative Checklist of Lesbian Variant and Homosexual Fiction* (2012, first ed. 1960), Slide: *Lost Gay Novels* (2013), Gunn's bibliographies on gay male detective novels and films (2013), gay novels of Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth (2014), and gay American novels (2016), Hurley's *A Guide to Gay and Lesbian Writing in Australia* (1996), Knobel's *The Male Homosexual, Gay and Queer Novel in Australia* as well as a library catalogue on queer Canadian literature (RAYTER and et al. 2008).

With reference to homosexual-themed short stories, gay and lesbian short story anthologies were also surveyed, including *The Penguin Book of Gay Short Stories* (1995), *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Fiction* (1994), *In Another Part of the Forest: An Anthology of Gay Short Fiction* (1994), *Different: An Anthology of Homosexual Short Stories* (1974), *The Faber Book of Gay Short Fiction* (1992), *The Mammoth Book of Gay Short Stories* (1997), *Women on Women: Anthology of Lesbian Short Fiction* (1990), *The Vintage Book of International Lesbian Fiction* (1999) as well as the website LGF Lost Gay Fiction dedicated to queer short fiction (2019).

Every single work on the compiled list was then checked against the Portuguese and Hungarian National Library records and other bibliographical entries of literary translations published between 1949 and 1974 in Hungary and Portugal in order to detect which source texts including explicit references to homosexual content were or were not translated in the given period. Other bibliographical catalogues used included *British Books in Hungary 1945-1978*, *American Books in Hungary 1945-1987* (BÁNHEGYI, 1979, 1988) and *Külföldi szerzők művei Magyarországon, 1945-1970, 1971-1975* [Foreign Authors in Hungary, 1945-1970, 1971-1975]. In Portugal, due to the lack of all-embracing bibliographical databases and indices, besides PORBASE, the Portuguese Union Catalogue online (PORTUGAL, 2022) and the National Bibliography (BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL, 1935-1977), the research database of the Lisbon-based project, Intercultural Literature in Portugal, 1930-2000 (CECC; CEAUL/ULICES, 2020) was systematically searched for further matches. The latter database proved to be particularly useful for detecting homosexual-themed short stories, since it contains detailed information on translation

anthologies and their contents.

Findings

The most relevant conclusions of previous research with regard to long fiction include the assertion that homosexual-themed literature was censored in both countries. The number English-language novels with non-heteronormative references translated and published in *Estado Novo* Portugal (28) and State-Socialist Hungary (20) is very modest compared to the vast English-language corpus (c. 900). The numbers also reveal that there was no difference between the two countries publishing and censoring policies in respect of imported literature with homosexual content, in spite of the fact that homosexuality was legally recognised in Hungary, while in Portugal, it was punishable with prison time and hard labour (for additional information on the legal history of homosexuality in the two countries, see TAKÁCS, 2017; BASTOS, 1997; CASCAIS, 2016).

Moreover, as might be expected, none of the novels can be interpreted as open homosexual manifestos. Given the limited historical time period under consideration, all works analysed were products of the pre-Stonewall era and therefore, most of them were still closeted literary texts such as Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (published in Portugal in 1958), Herman Melville: *Moby Dick* (published in Portugal in 1961 and in Hungary in 1963), or Virginia Woolf: *Orlando* (published in Portugal in 1962 and in Hungary in 1966).

The comparison of the two corpora also shows the under-representation of lesbian-themed novels in the two countries. The portrayals of lesbian characters or life-style—almost without exception—are of minor importance and only used to give local colour to the storyline in the translations. Contrary to the more positive than neutral representations in Hungary such as Jane Bowles: *Two Serious Ladies* (published in Hungary in 1969), in Portugal, most of the fictional characters are negative and repugnant figures such as the predatory Mable Warren in Graham Greene's *Stamboul Train* (published in Portugal in 1955). The ghost-like status of lesbians in *Estado Novo* Portugal as Klobucka terms it (following CASTLE, 1993) is also well reflected in the literary translation production of the era (cf. KLOBUCKA, 2009). Moreover, it clearly indicates the marginalised position of women and the social invisibility of lesbians within both the dominant culture and homosexual subcultures (cf. TAKÁCS 2015; ALMEIDA, 2010, p. 104-105). (For more information on the major findings of the comparative analysis, see GOMBÁR, 2017; GOMBÁR, 2018).

Homosexual-Themed Short Stories Translated from English

As far as the present study is concerned, the same tendency can be observed in reference to homosexual-themed short stories. It should be added though that the corpus of gay and lesbian short stories investigated here is far smaller than the corpus of the novels translated from English (cf. GOMBÁR, 2018). Intriguingly, the vast majority of the stories were published in both countries: Sherwood Anderson's *Hands*, Ernest Hemingway's "A Simple Enquiry", "The Sea Change", "A Mother of a Queen", and D. H. Lawrence's "The Prussian Officer". Dorothy Parker's "Glory in the Daytime" and Graham Greene's "May We Borrow Your Husband?" were published only in Portugal and Capote's "Diamond Guitar" was published only in Hungary in the period under study (see Table 1).

Published only in Hungary	Published in both countries	Published only in Portugal
Truman Capote: "Diamond Guitar" (1966)	Sherwood Anderson: "Hands" (1951 in Portugal; 1962 in Hungary)	Graham Greene: "May We Borrow Your Husband?" (1968)
	Ernest Hemingway: "A Simple Enquiry" (1966 in Portugal; 1960 in Hungary)	
	Ernest Hemingway: "The Sea Change" (in Portugal 1966; 1970 in Hungary)	
	Ernest Hemingway: "The Mother of a Queen" (1966 in Portugal; 1970 in Hungary)	
	D. H. Lawrence: "Prussian Officer" (1967 in Portugal; 1965 in Hungary)	

Table 1. English-language short stories with homosexual content translated and published in Portugal and Hungary between 1949 and 1974

With the exception of Anderson's sympathetic description of the almost unearthly good, but possibly paedophile Wing Biddlebaum, a former schoolteacher forced to live in hiding, all short

stories depict homosexual characters in a very negative light: The sadistic captain in “Prussian Officer;” the despotic major in “A Simple Enquiry;” the immoral and despicable Paco in “The Mother of a Queen,” whose dead mother’s remains were dumped into the common bone heap, as he failed to pay the necessary fee; prisoner Tico Feo in Capote’s short story, who betrays his best friend and lover and flees alone; or the unpleasant gay couple who try everything to seduce the male part of the honeymoon couple. With regard to the only lesbian character in the corpora, the narrator’s lesbian “perverted” girlfriend is also depicted as an unfaithful and manipulative woman in Hemingway’s “Sea Change,” greatly reflecting the generally homophobic attitude of the era towards same-sex behaviour. Everything seems to point to the fact that none of the short stories were destined for homosexual readers.

The negative portrayals of homosexual individuals, nevertheless, do not necessarily mean that they could not arouse the interest of a lesbian or gay reading audience. Early bibliographic lists such as Marion Zimmer Bradley’s Cumulative List and LGBTQI book collections and archives such as the Hungarian Háttér Society’s archives founded and directed by Sándor Nagy—mostly based on his personal book collection—contain a great number of literary works depicting homosexual individuals in almost an offensively negative manner. In the interview collection *Meleg férfiak, hideg diktatúrák* [Hot Men, Cold Dictatorship], one of the interviewees also speaks about the great impact the sensational Hungarian book *Vadnarancsok* [Wild Oranges] published partly on homosexuality in the early 1980s had on his life, despite the book’s tabloid-style and the negative portrayal of homosexuals. The young interviewer obviously does not share the elderly interviewee’s passion about the book (HANZLI; BANACH NAGY; HALMAI, 2015, p. 181). However, the fact that the number of homosexual-themed works was very limited, any encounter with such literature—independently of its positive or negative contents—could be revealing and relieving to the homosexual reader.

As regards the translated texts, preliminary analysis has not shown any drastic textual alterations that would point towards censorship. It should be added though that the vast majority of the texts themselves are very closeted, and contain only mild references to same-sex activity, love, and desire. The title of Hemingway’s “The Mother of a Queen” translated into Hungarian and Portuguese, nonetheless, is very straightforward in both languages. “Maricas” and “homokos” are in fact synonyms referring to homosexual man, which could have been very noticeable to censors. It seems that it was not a cause for concern to the translators.

Unlike long fiction, no evidence has been found to this date that the circulation of any homosexual-themed short stories in English was hindered in Hungary in the period under investigation. With reference to Portugal, the one and only short story subject to censorship was the

French translation of Graham Greene's short story volume *Pouvez-vous nous prêter votre mari* [May We Borrow Your Husband?]. The censors authorised the circulation of the book on the grounds that the author was a writer of great renown. The censorship report concludes that although sexual-related issues are described with great realism, the short stories do not contain obscene or pornographic content, and it should therefore be authorised (CR8363/69). The case definitively proves that not all literary works containing references to homosexual content were prohibited in *Estado Novo* Portugal.

Other censorship reports also seem to confirm this. For instance, according to the report on the Brazilian translation of Maximilian Jacta's book on Oscar Wilde's criminal trial, the subject matter alone would not evoke any objection, but as the introduction contains apologetic propaganda on homosexuality, the work should be prohibited (CR8520/69). It is also important to note that the blurb of the Portuguese translation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* published in 1971 openly refers to Oscar Wilde's imprisonment for homosexuality. It seems that the translators and publishers felt absolutely no need to conceal this piece of information from the authorities.

Conclusion

All in all, it should be said that the complementary study on Anglophone short fiction published in Salazar's Portugal and Hungarian People's Republic did not add significantly new information to the previous findings. The low number of homosexual-themed works published in the period under investigation should be seen as an inevitable result of the prevailing presence of state censorship along with the general public's hostile attitude towards homosexuality of the era. Furthermore, it is quite clear that homosexual portrayal alone—if it did not contain pornographic descriptions—was not censored in Hungary. Indeed, what is a relatively new discovery is that in Portugal, despite the fact that according to censorship laws in force, any forms of homosexual representation should be prohibited, certain homosexual-themed and non-medical but literary works were knowingly tolerated by the authorities.

Nevertheless, the majority of the short stories under scrutiny probably passed the censors' notice in Portugal. Evidently, post-publication censorship is a far less reliable system than pre-publication censorship practised in Hungary, which obviously provided the Portuguese publishing houses with more room to manoeuvre. Publishers and translators would naturally take the risk of publishing contentious books and try their luck with the censors (SERUYA, 2010, p. 138). The Hungarian censoring scheme was a far more sophisticated and secure control system. Therefore, every piece of literature with homosexual contents was published with the full knowledge of the political and cultural establishment.

The unsympathetic and negative descriptions of homosexual characters of the short stories chosen for translation make it very clear that these literary texts were not meant for a homosexual reading audience in either country. The assumption that short story anthologies might have been used as tools to distract the censors' attention from homosexual content has not been proved, either. Nonetheless, further studies are required, particularly on translations from other languages, in order to shed more light on this hidden part of history of Portugal and Hungary.

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