

Translators, chocolate and war

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One of the leitmotifs in the history of translation is the role translators play in creating international understanding. While not diminishing those translations and translators where that has actually happened, it is worth remembering that translation is a double-edged sword, just as dangerous when sharp as when blunt. I propose to glance at the activities of certain translators who worked with official permission if not encouragement from Spanish into English in the mid-seventeenth century, and who aimed at other things.

In English government circles Spanish, Italian and French official documents were translated as a matter of course, usually by anonymous translators, and then often printed as broadsheets for sale to the public, there being no Official Secrets Act. There was a fair market for international treaties which were quite often negotiated and published in Latin. The news did not have to be hot. The Articles of Peace, Intercourse and Commerce signed by Charles I of England and Philip IV of Spain on 5 November 1630 were printed in both English and Spanish immediately on signing, and reissued on the restoration of Charles II in 1660. Spain's dealings with other countries were also of interest to the British public. An English version of the documents exchanged by France and Spain in preparation for the Peace of Münster appeared in 1646, to be followed in 1648 by an English version of the treaty between Spain and the Netherlands. And 1659 saw *The True and Exact Particulars of the Articles of Peace and Mariage (sic) agreed between his most Catholick Majesty of Spain and Most Christian King of France*. Translation of explorers and colonisers journals also has a long history in Britain, the most important works of this type being Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (1613). Apart from that, campaign journals from French, Spanish and Italian, and books on diplomacy and war were translated, usually anonymously, for the instruction of the military, and published with the blessing of the authorities. In those days independent printers often filled the role of information and comment newspapers have taken today.

The importance of the translators' preface is shown by a translator known as I.B. In 1645 he translated a Royal Privilege granted English merchants resident in Spain by Philip IV. His extensive preface lays out the points as far as relations with Spain with the Civil War in England. He begins by pointing out the importance to world trade of the precious metals mined in the Spanish dominions, and of the particular importance to England of the Spanish export market. He then recalls the long friendship between England and Spain marked by military and marriage alliances. He regrets that it was broken by the Reformation and the Spanish attempt to invade England in 1588. But he emphasises that in spite of everything, England ran rely on a huge fund of Spanish goodwill. He then summarizes the major privileges, granted English merchants such as freedom to practise the Anglican religion, immunity from having their good requisitioned by Spanish officials for military use,

immunity from having their fish inspected by Spanish officials, ability to set prices for their own goods without reference to Spanish authorities, confidentiality for their accounts, and the right to have disputes within the English community settled according to English law.

But ever since Henry VIII's cavalier treatment of Catherine of Aragon and establishment of the Church of England, relation between England and Spain had been uncertain. Not only was there political rivalry, but also the right conditions for a holy war. Balancing the drawn sword, however, was Spain's commercial interest: without English ships and money, overseas trade would have been impossible for Spain, a point I.B. does not bring out. English ships often carried slaves to Central America, for instance. But I.B.'s preface does cast some light on a translation published some two years before. On 8 October 1642 two English ships under the command of Captain Bennet Stratford entered the port of Santo Domingo. The English crews were invited on board a Spanish treasure ship, the *Santa Clara*, for a party. The party in full swing, the English sailors took over the ship, imprisoned the crew, and left port. They set their prisoners ashore before leaving the West Indies, and headed straight for Southampton where they disposed of ship and cargo under the prize regulations of the Royal Navy; and therefore one can presume that the authorities at least connived at Stratford's exploit. On New Year's Eve, the Spanish ambassador, Don Alonso de Cardenas, demanded restitution from King Charles I on the grounds that Stratford was an officer of the Royal Navy, and backed up his request by veiled threats to supply the Irish rebels, who were then as now a major English preoccupation. He finally hinted that the matter of English mercantile privileges in Spain could be put in question. The Kings reply, as one might expect, denied that Stratford was in Royal Service, and promised to impound the *Santa Clara* and her cargo, and to punish Stratford and his men in accordance with international law.

The Spanish Ambassador's text was translated early in 1643 as *A Speech or Complaint lately Made by the Spanish Embassadour* and put on public sale with King Charles's reply. Although the translator was careful not to comment overtly on the text, the relatively measured reply by the King conveys just enough injured innocence to make the Spanish complaint seem more offensive than it really is. The translator was a noted Italian teacher resident in Oxford, Giovanni Torriano, who seems to have supplemented his income considerably by translating French, Italian and Spanish official documents.

Behind this exploit lay British jealousy of the riches of the Spanish Empire. Mining, particularly of precious metals, was a hot topic and many translators tried their hand as continental handbooks on metallurgy. One of the most significant of these was *The Art of Metals*, translated in 1674 by Edward Montagu from *La arte de los metales* by Alvar Alfonso Barba Alonso, a priest who lived in Peru. The book is concerned solely with precious metals, but covers everything from mining to the final making in the goldsmiths workshop. But is the interest just scientific? The translator, Edward Montagu (1625-72), First Earl of Sandwich, was an admiral who had fought on Cromwell's side in the Civil War. He had then fought at sea in the war against Spain in 1656, and been responsible for escorting Spanish treasure ships to English ports, for which he had received a vote of

thanks from Parliament. He then changed sides in 1659 and took an active part in the Restoration of the King.

In an England that was rapidly expanding the pharmacopoeia, hypochondria was an ally to greed in maintaining fascination with things Spanish: the New World offered a new repertoire of medicines. Chocolate, coffee and tobacco begin appearing in English pharmacopoeias at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Tobacco is a good medicine for rheumatic pains, a cure for intestinal worms and a decongestant. But the great apothecary, Nicholas Culpeper, remarks that one drop of the distilled oil of tobacco will kill a cat. A couple of Latin treatises on the ceremonial use of tobacco among the Indians were translated in the 1650s. Coffee is mentioned too - but is not discussed in any significant way until later in the seventeenth century. But chocolate was heavily publicized. The most important books about it was *A Curious Treatise of the Nature and Quality of Chocolate* (1640) from the Spanish of Antonio Colmenero de Ledesma by James Wadsworth (1604-56?), also known as: Don Diego de Vadesforte, an English Catholic brought up in Spain, who lived off the fees he got for betraying all and sundry to any suitable authority. Among his other exploits Wadsworth seems to have become a Jesuit and then converted to Puritanism. As such he produced a stream of anti-Spanish propaganda from about 1629 onwards.

Chocolate was not a social drink, but a medicine admired by the most learned Doctors in Europe. It was prepared by infusion techniques known to all apothecaries Wadsworth's preface claims that it fattens people, it makes drinkers amiable and vehemently incites to Venus, it causeth conception in women, it hastens and facilitates delivery, and it cures indigestion, congestion of the lungs, cleans the teeth and is good for every part of the body. Because Puritan writers on medicine saw an intimate relationship between medicine and religion, they saw European colonisation of the New World as prompted by Divine Providence for the good of all concerned. Wadsworth's Colmenero excited enough interest to be reedited in 1651 and again by one John Chamberlayne in 1682 in a volume containing Sylvestre Dufours description of the medical virtues of tea and coffee, Chamberlayne has a very blunt reference to the Divine Will:

They therefore do seem to clash with Reason, who in contempt of the sacred rules of Divine Providence, do hold that very country ought to be content with the sole use of its own Drugs, without seeking after those things where with Strangers and Foreigners might furnish us.

Spain herself, her history and her politics, were of absorbing interest. Wadsworth turned historian and in 1652 translated *The Civil Wars of Spain by Prudencio de Sandoval, Historiographer to Philip III*. It was reprinted in 1655 and 1662. Among the Interregnum translations by James Howell, who was to become Historian to Charles II after the Restoration, are several books of direct reference to Spanish political interests as they impinged on England: *An exact History of the Late Revolutions in Naples* (1650) (from an Italian original) and in 1651 from the Spanish of Augustin de Hierro, *The Process and*

Pleadings in the Court of Spain upon the Death of Anthony Ascham. This second was a tract for the times. The previous year Anthony Ascham had been appointed Parliamentary Ambassador to Spain. The day after his arrival in Madrid he was murdered by six English Royalists, who promptly took sanctuary in a church, and were maintained there by sympathisers. Spain acceded to English demands that the murderers be tried by arresting them, condemning them to death, and returning them to sanctuary. The story is left to speak for itself, and the interested reader in England drew his own conclusions about Spanish attitudes to Protestant England, and her respect for law.

The story of Ascham was exploited to confirm the English conviction that Spain had international ambitions with England as a special target. Therefore the worst possible motives were read into Tommaso Campanella's treatise on statecraft: *De monarchia hispanica*, translated in 1654 under the title, *A Discourse touching the Spanish Monarchy* by Edmund Chilmead. Chilmead (1610-54) had been appointed clerk at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1625, chaplain in 1632 and ejected as a Royalist in 1648. He then, like so many who (as things now stand) have hardly any trade of life to take to lived by a constant stream of miscellaneous publications, including translation. Chilmead's preface to Campanella gives the reader three necessary bits of information. The first is an introduction to Campanella, a Roman Catholic, nay a Friar, who attracted the attention of the Inquisition in spite of his loyalty to his church. There follows a graphic description of Campanella in prison after several sessions of torture. Chilmead implies that there is some resemblance between his own dispossession by a harsh religious authority and Campanella's imprisonment and torture for being on the wrong side in the 1598 revolt of Naples against the Spaniards. Though Chilmead worked from the third edition of the Latin, he tries to date the original edition from internal evidence. He conjectures 1599 or 1600. This is a good setting for the next bit of information, the use the reader is to make of the book. There follows a careful summary of Campanella's ideas on statecraft, topped off by an unambiguous reference to Spanish international ambitions, and their lack of finesse in carrying out Campanella's ideas. The Interregnum reader could draw his own conclusions about the timeliness of a book written during the aftermath of Spanish attempts to invade Britain.

The third "necessary" information is on the translation itself. Campanella's utopian view of the mutually beneficial relationship between state and individual was not unlike the Puritan ideal which Chilmead too seems to have shared. He respects Campanella's political acumen, sympathises with his sufferings, and disapproves heartily of his religion:

We have dealt so fairely and Ingenuously with our Author, as that we have perfectly and entirely preserved his own Sense unto Him. Neither have we stopped his foul mouth where he hath used ill Language toward any of the Protestant Princes, or cast dirt into the faces of the first Reformers, Luther, Calvin &c. For to what end should we falsifie out Original, by making our Author more Civil than he had a Mind to be.

He finishes with a self-satisfied plea for toleration.

In the millennial climate of the 1650s, the removal of the disabilities against the Jews, outlawed in 1290 at the order of Edward I, was to be one of the preparations for the Second Coming. It would also have the advantage of being a gesture towards a notorious minority persecuted by the Spaniards. In brief this is the argument put forward in Moses Wall's preface to *The Hope of Israel* (1651) from the Latin *Spes Israelis*, itself from the Spanish by the Dutch rabbi, Menasseh ben Israel, who spent two years in England lobbying Parliament. But where ben Israel was seeking toleration, Wall was after more:

Doe not think that I ayme by this Translation to propagate or commend Iudaisme, but to give some discovery of what apprehensions and workings there are at these days in the hearts of the Jews and to remove our sinfull hatred from off that people, whose are the promises, and who are beloved for their Fathers sakes; and who of Jews, we shall heare to be, ere long, reall Christians.

Produced by this and similar publications Cromwell called a conference on the Jewish question in 1655; but it proved easier to love the Jews in their absence, and the legal disabilities against them were not lifted, even if a *de facto* toleration resulted.

In a word which disapproved of regicide, England needed to be tolerated. The Interregnum Parliament keenly felt the need to convince friends and enemies overseas of the legality of the Puritan regime. If translators were successful propagandists at home, they would presumably be as successful abroad in presenting England's case. Hence in 1651 at the command of Parliament a certain W. G. translated John Cowell's *Institutiones juris anglicanae as Institutes of the Laws of England*, and the next year the journalist, Marchamont Nedham (1620-78), was paid twenty shillings for his *Of the Dominion and Ownership of the Sea*, a translation of John Selden's *Mare Clausum* on the traditional rights England exercised over her coastal waters. At first an enthusiastic Parliamentarian, Nedham changed sides in 1647, and after lying low for a couple of years, repented in time to be invited to translate one of his anti-Spanish diatribes into Latin for international consumption.

The trend towards using travel literature was a weapon for both political and religious policy had begun during the late sixteenth century as relations were worsening between Spain and England. In 1583 a traveller known only as M.M.S. had written *The Spanish Colonie: or Brief Chronical of the Acts and Gestes of the Spaniards in the West Indies*. Purchas had not been at all kind to Spain in *Purchas, his Pilgrimage*. Some of the more horrifying parts had been taken from *La istoria de las Indias* by the Franciscan, Francisco Lopez de Gómara, secretary to Cortes. *The English-American* (1648) by Thomas Gage, an English Dominican friar, who had celebrated his conversion to Anglicanism in 1642 by a sermon in St. Pauls, London, entitled *The Tyranny of Satan*, is a compilation of some original material, of matter from Purchas, and of translated material from Lopez de

Gómara. From his experience as a Catholic missionary in Mexico, Gage urges that the Spanish dominions with their long coastlines and weak defences are there for the taking. In fact he claims it is the duty of the English to act: as the Puritans had brought the purifying wrath of God to Protestant England, how much more reason was there to do Gods work in a Romish America with its notoriously corrupt clergy. When Lord Fairfax, Parliament's Captain-General, acted on his advice, the attack on the West Indies failed miserably and Gage, fortunately for himself, died on active service in Jamaica in 1656.

Expeditions to the West Indies were also wars of liberation on behalf of the Indians, who were commonly thought to be descended from the lost tribes of Israel; and it was good to think that the Spaniards were adding further anti-Semitism to their other crimes. A typical production was *The Tears of the Indians* (1656) from Bartolomé de las Casas *Brevisima relación de la destruyción de las Indias*. Las Casas (1474 - 1564) was a Dominican missionary, who became Bishop of Chiapa. He was famous for his efforts to protect the Indians against exploitation. The first translation of him was by Purchas in 1625, *A Briefe Narration of the Destruction of the Indians by the Spaniards*. The 1656 version was far more graphic. The translator was John Phillips (1631-1706), Milton's nephew and private secretary, and his publisher was Nathaniel Brooks, a notoriously evangelical Puritan. This book amply exemplifies Phillips' reputation for wit, acidity and vulgarity. A work sharing Gage's social purposes, its dedication to Cromwell urges swift action against the Spaniards, whose cruelty and Catholicism made them unfit to govern. Phillips makes much of the duty of the European to bring civilisation, the Christian Religion and the love of God to the benighted heathen. This the Spaniards were not doing. Phillips underlines the ghastly effects of the commercial exploitation of the West Indies on the Indians, points out all the normal Protestant clichés of the contractions between Catholicism and Christianity, and leaves the lack of love of God to speak for itself. And to keep the readers zeal hot, the text includes some of the famous de Bry engravings of Spanish atrocities. Phillips drew the only logical conclusion: that it was up to Cromwell to do God's work and take the Spanish Empire from them.

After their efforts to stamp out the English Reformation the Jesuits, the archetypal Spanish Catholic priests, stalk through British mythology with ever-increasing malevolence. Englishmen published a suspiciously large number of documents purporting to have been written by Jesuit novices disenchanted by their Orders appetite for political destabilisation. To mark the centenary of the Papal Bull of Approval of the Jesuits, W.F.X.B, Minister of Christ's Gospel, published in 1641 *Camiltons Discoverie of the Devilish Designs of the Society of Jesuites*. To gain the maximum mileage, it is dedicated to Parliament. It is a version of the Latin broadside, *De studiis Jesuitarum abstrusis*, by Joannes Camiltonus, who is supposed to have escaped from a Jesuit house of studies in Germany. It details the supposed role in the planning and execution of the failed Spanish invasion of England in 1588.

Not surprisingly all this sabre-rattling by translators and others led to war. And when in 1655 Philip IV declared war on England and impounded English property in Spain, his proclamation was immediately turned into English. The version fitted the national mood,

and Cromwell branded Spain the natural enemy. But the last word in the Interregnum belongs to Chilmead. His Campanella was reissued in 1659 with a new forematter and title-page: *Advice to the Spanish Monarchy, translated into English by Ed. Chilmead and published for awakening the English to prevent the approaching ruin of their Nation*. The book is printed from the same type as the 1654 edition, and may be re-issue of unsold copies.

The moving spirit was William Prynne, the pamphleteer, who supplied a preface underlining all the lessons of the book. His praise of Campanella as a Second Machiavelli has an edge to it: Machiavelli was deeply feared in Britain as one of those unscrupulous Mediterranean princes who could not be trusted to leave somebody else's country alone. So Prynne represents Campanella as addressing his book to the King of Spain to instruct him on how to make himself sole *Temporal* and the Pope sole *Spiritual Monarch* of the World in general, with special attention to England, Scotland, Ireland and Holland. The whole diatribe is reinforced by apposite quotes on the horrible effects of divisions in God's kingdom, both spiritual and temporal. Prynne goes to the *Ascetica* of St. Basil the Great for the spiritual parallel: Basil was very much perplexed in his mind at the manifold Schismes and vehement dissensions then in the Church of Christ. He then comes to the confused constitutional state of England through the text, in those days there was no King in Israel (Judges 17.6), a reference to the internecine wars of succession and their social consequences recorded in the Old Testament Book of Judges. By a literal interpretation of this text he puts the similar political confusion in England issue down to the lack of a King, a situation Campanella takes as the worst fate that could befall a country. Though the actual culprit who got rid of the monarchy, was Oliver Cromwell, Prynne traces the original idea back to Cromwell's assiduous reading of Campanella. Though not a jot of proof is given for this assertion, it was a safe thing to say in an England openly discussing the return of the Stuarts.

What I have sketched here is the role of the translator as pamphleteer. Manipulation of translators for official ends goes back at least to the Roman Empire. The Thomasson Tracts in the British Library are a marvellous index to the social and religious prejudices of the mid-seventeenth century, and a large number of them are translations. Translators were prolific, and they kept a huge number of London printers in business. Though much of this output was anonymous, it held the same role in manipulating public opinion as the modern newspaper. Cromwell's distaste for press censorship encouraged unbridled use of printing as a propaganda device, even if those who overstepped the mark by tracts in favour of Charles I were often punished. Because England aspired to be a theocracy under Cromwell, the boundary between secular and religious was infinitely permeable, and religious difference strongly colours any relationships with Catholic Spain: the fact that the Jesuits were a Spanish order was a godsend to any religious propagandist. Our translators pride themselves on the accuracy of their texts, and so they should. But they were well aware of the human tendency to read the very worst into information from suspicious sources, particularly if it is accurate. And by interpreting their texts through prefaces exploiting legend, history, prejudice and the Bible, a good many of our translators fanned the English unease with a powerful and Catholic Spain into actual mal ice. It would be difficult not to

blame Puritan translators for a good part of the tension between Spain and England in the mid-seventeenth century.

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