

## Translation and the Emancipation of Hispanic America

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**A**lthough it is true that history recalls and recounts events and facts, these accounts are never fully devoid of underlying ideologies and, hence, subjectivities.<sup>1</sup> The Venezuelan historian and writer Arturo Uslar Pietri makes the following observation:

Where can we find the history of Latin America among all those partial and partialized views? This is a task that still needs to be done. The historiography of Latin America is like a set of deforming mirrors. Depending on where you stand, the reflection changes, giving one the impression of looking at a different person each time. (1991:114).<sup>2</sup>

These realizations are of utmost importance when studying the pre-independence period and the first years of the new republics in Hispanic America (1785-1835). On the one hand, historical discourses tend to reflect ideological positions that portray the views of a specific social group, Eurocentric positions for the most part in this particular field. On the other hand, the first documents produced to report the happenings of the time were registered by people who were in most cases simultaneously actors in and reporters of the historical events.

Translators, like other actors in history, do not function in a vacuum; rather they are social beings and as such espouse ideologies and identities that are particular to their social contexts. Román Álvarez and Carmen-África Vidal note:

Translators are constrained in many ways: their own ideology, their feelings of superiority or inferiority towards the language in which they are writing, the text being translated, the prevailing poetical rules at that time, the very language in which the texts they are translating is written, what the dominant institutions

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are our own.

and ideology expect of them, the public for whom the translation is intended. The translation itself will depend upon all of these factors. (1996:6).

Moreover, in translation studies, just as in other fields, the gathering and analysis of historical data correspond to specific research agendas that have ideological and political biases. At the same time, translation can act as a lens providing an alternate perspective on the materials of history, a perspective not unlike those of literary analysis or anthropology that can serve as a corrective to other approaches to history.

This essay looks at the role of translation in the emancipation movement in Hispanic America. Translation is considered here as a form of resistance in the *pragmatic* sense of the term, a subversive *activity* used by a repressed group struggling to resist domination, the *criollos*<sup>3</sup> (those of Spanish descent born in the colonies) resisting the oppression of the Spanish Crown in the case at hand. Such translation activity clearly has important ideological significance and repercussions. In this essay, therefore, resistance is not viewed as an ideological positioning expressed primarily through the choice of formal textual strategies, as conceived by translation scholars such as Luise Von Flotow (1997), Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (1999), Lawrence Venuti (1995, 1998), and Gayatri Spivak (2004).

### **The Written Word in Hispanic America during the Age of Independence**

The emancipation process in Hispanic America began in the last two decades of the eighteenth century and ended between 1810 and 1835 for most countries. It represents the efforts of Hispanic Americans to put an end to three centuries of Spanish rule on the continent. The earliest insurrections occurred among the Indian and slave populations throughout the region--the Catari in Bolivia (1780), the Tupac Amarú in Peru (1780-81), and the comuneros in Colombia (1780), among others. Although these risings were significant, they never had an impact on the continent as a whole. They were forms of resistance involving small numbers of people interested in righting specific wrongs and were local in their purview. In addition, the social groups leading these movements were

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<sup>3</sup> Anderson (2006:47) offers a useful definition of *Creole (Criollo)* as a “person of (at least theoretically) pure European descent but born in the Americas (and, by later extension, anywhere outside Europe).”

usually the least empowered of American society: the Indians, slaves, mestizos, and mulattos.

By contrast, the wars of independence that occurred in the first three decades of the nineteenth century stemmed from both internal and external pressures exerted on the criollo elite of the society. External pressures included the expulsion of the Jesuits from Latin America in 1767; the influence of Enlightenment philosophy; the example of the Revolution of the United States and the subsequent independence of the new republic; the French Revolution; and the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in 1808. Internal pressures included the economic problems typical of the colonial system (such as dependence on imports, absence of industry, and lack of large-scale agriculture) and the heavy burden of taxes levied by the Crown on the inhabitants of the colonies.

From a sociopolitical perspective Javier Ocampo cites the prevalence of nepotism among peninsular officials regarding appointments to administrative positions in the colonies (1999:83) as a significant cause of discontent; such discrimination against Americans was in fact the immediate cause of criollo resistance. In spite of their economic clout, the criollo elite had little hope of participating in the administration of the colonies as a result of new policies laid down by Spain concerning the appointment of peninsular agents.

. . . by the eighteenth century the criollos had become the hacienda owners; they owned slaves and paid Indians, but political power was still out of their reach. . . . The peninsular elite had acquired the right to administer the colony in the name of the king and to accumulate wealth that would enable them to enjoy luxury and ostentation upon their return to the metropolis. (Ocampo 1999:69).

In addition to the economic elite, a kind of intelligentsia had also begun to emerge from the shadows of the inquisitorial controls. This generation of educated criollos--a product of the Spanish Enlightenment--was well versed in the democratic and liberal ideologies of the eighteenth century. In spite of their commercial and intellectual power, however, criollos found it increasingly difficult to overcome the discrimination and abuse perpetrated by the Spanish government. The inferiorization of everything that was American was one of the reasons behind their quest for independence (Sariola 1972;

Lavallé 1993, 2002). The first sign of resistance from criollo Hispanic Americans was in fact their adoption of the Enlightenment ideals of freedom, equity, and democracy.

Books and written documents during this period were essential in shaping and consolidating the revolutionary mentalities intent on emancipation. Measures taken by the inquisitorial authorities to control the production, marketing, and circulation of books applied to the Spanish metropolis as well as to the colonies. Controls were instituted initially in the main ports. Every ship was inspected by both civil authorities searching for banned merchandise and representatives of the Inquisition looking for any printed material contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church. On land printers and booksellers were under close and constant scrutiny by the authorities. Public and private libraries were subject to the same scrutiny. The Inquisition also established a system for denouncing those who possessed, sold, exchanged, had access to, or shared books and ideas banned by the authorities.

Control by the Inquisition was only partly successful. Applying these measures along the coastal areas of South America was almost impossible. In Venezuela, for instance, proximity to the English and French islands of the Caribbean facilitated the smuggling of various goods to South America and made possible the influx of people of many different origins and with many different views. By the end of the seventeenth century, the production of books and other printed materials completely overwhelmed the capacity of the authorities to exercise control; the ever growing number of written documents, moreover, made the task of expurgation impossible (Pardo Tomás 1991:344).

The relative failure of these controls partly explains the presence of banned books in the libraries of educated criollos, including writings by John Adams, Jean le Rond d'Alembert, Francis Bacon, Buffon, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, the Marquis de Condorcet, René Descartes, Denis Diderot, Benito Jerónimo Feijóo, Claude Adrien Helvetius, Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, Montesquieu, Thomas Paine, Guillaume Thomas Raynal, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emmanuel Sieyés, Adam Smith, Voltaire, and other thinkers associated with the political, literary, and scientific ferment of the century. Although such books did not circulate

freely across Hispanic America, the ideas they conveyed were frequently discussed in *tertulias* (the social, artistic, literary, and political gatherings of educated criollos), cafés, and, later, public places, before trickling down to the lower classes. An article published in 1806 in the *Diario de México*, the first daily newspaper that was entirely Mexican, notes:

Although the less educated people do not read the journals and other public papers (they are blissfully unaware of their existence), the useful information contained in these documents is spread unknowingly by the enlightened. (Rodríguez 1998:61)

Nonetheless, the Inquisition made the dissemination of knowledge and the free flow of ideas difficult. Indeed, ideas reached Latin America at a slower pace than the rest of the Western world because of both the geographical distance and controls imposed on printed material. These impediments notwithstanding, the written word gave form and permanence to the liberal ideas of the century, transcending the immediacy and evanescence of the spoken word. By its mere physical existence, the written text exemplifies permanency and authority, conveys a stronger sense of historical veracity, and allows for broad circulation and dissemination.

As long as the philosophical and political ideas of the eighteenth century remained the privileged prerogative of the elite, any significant change in the administration of the colonies remained a remote possibility. The leading figures of the independence movement understood that in order to make contemporary revolutionary ideas accessible to a larger group of people, they needed to move from the orality of the *tertulias* to writing.

According to Benedict Anderson (2006:65), liberalism and Enlightenment were instrumental in the increasing resistance of Americans against the metropole. Nevertheless, these intellectual movements did not play a role as determinant in the emancipation process and the creation of an “imagined community” as the one played by the constant travels of criollo functionaries and the work of provincial printmen in the colony. By creating a readership that could relate to the same political and social reality,

early regional periodicals performed this essential function. If initially some periodicals were compilations of commercial news and announcements of social events, most were born under the incipient republics, and as they developed, they mainly devoted themselves to the political and ideological education of their readership. They published political news about the chaos of the metropole after Napoleon's invasion, official resolutions adopted by the newly established local governments and legislative assemblies, reports of local conflicts and wars, and ideological perspectives and positions from abroad. As the political ideas that shaped the emancipation era were produced in languages other than Spanish (principally English and French), if the criollos wanted to create a community that related to such ideas, including Enlightenment and republican ideals, they had to make those ideals available in Spanish through translation. In his insightful essay Anderson does not refer to the role played by translation in the use of print to spread ideas and create community. The present study is intended precisely to rectify this omission.

### **Translation as Resistance and Activism**

In the early eighteenth century, Spanish authorities tolerated a certain amount of freedom of the press, allowing the most influential members of criollo society access to the printing press. The result was the creation of the first periodicals called *gacetas* (gazettes), as we have seen, notably the *Gaceta de México*, which was published in 1722, 1728-1739, and 1784-1809, and the *Gaceta de Lima*, which appeared between 1745 and 1800. By the turn of the nineteenth century, many other periodicals were in circulation throughout the rest of the continent. These periodicals were readily available because of their novelty and the absence of any coherent legislation regulating their circulation. This situation made it possible to publish works by leading authors of the time, including French and English philosophers. As Jaime Rodríguez (1998:58) points out, some texts of these authors appeared in the *gacetas* as complete translations and others as summaries.

Thanks to political and diplomatic exchanges and the proximity of French and English territories in the Caribbean, some wealthy Spanish Americans became familiar with the liberal ideas of the century, but the lack of written documents in Spanish gave such ideas little weight and authority. The emerging liberal and democratic philosophy

developed orally as part of folklore, reaching even the lowest levels of society. In his biography of José María Vargas, Laureano Villanueva relates how new philosophical ideas spread in Venezuela: “[Vargas] devoted his spare time to reading and commenting on the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau . . .”, and “late at night, he worked on the translation of the *Contrat social*, reading it to his friends later in secret meetings” (1986:3).

Revolutionary songs also played an important role in the years before independence, making it possible to include less favored social groups in the emancipation process. Music provided a means for the lower classes to articulate their discontent with the colonial administration. In fact, revolutionary songs such as “La Carmagnole” and “La Marseillaise” were frequently sung in the Spanish colonies. Unlike “La Marseillaise”, which was never translated into Spanish, a comparative analysis of the Spanish and French versions of “La Carmagnole” clearly shows how a translator can be resistant (Bastin 2004, Bastin and Díaz 2004). As Armas Ayala affirms, Americans displayed prolific ingenuity and wit in musical creations intended to criticize and ridicule the colonial authorities. Music was for the common people what books were for the “cultivated”. Nonetheless, the “non-cultivated” also had indirect access to books; ideas overheard in public places and in the privacy of the masters’ homes were potentially as influential as the actual reading of an entire book (Ayala 1970:134). Smuggled books, travel abroad by wealthy criollos, and contact with travelers, former slaves from the Antilles, and others helped attune Hispanic Americans to the new ideas and issues of the time. By the end of the eighteenth century, they had attained enough intellectual and administrative maturity to yearn for independence and, as Anderson (2006) puts it, an imagined and sovereign, though limited, community had taken shape.

## **Case Studies**

Case studies of resistant and activist translations from the period in question underline the decisive role translation played in the independence and creation of the first republics in Hispanic America. The following cases are a small sample of the many that need to be investigated, for there are numerous documents and translators to be identified and considered as historical objects of study with respect to the topic at hand.

Here we look at Spanish translations of the following texts: La Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of The Citizen) of 1789 in 17 articles, translated into Spanish by Antonio Nariño in 1794; La Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen of 1793 in 35 articles, translated into Spanish by Juan Picornell in 1797; the Spanish translation of the *Lettre aux Espagnols américains* written by the Peruvian Jesuit Juan Pablo Viscardo and translated from French by Francisco de Miranda; Manuel García de Sena's book titled *La independencia de la Costa Firme justificada por Thomas Paine treinta años ha* (The Independence of the Costa Firme Justified by Thomas Paine Thirty Years Ago; 1811), which includes Spanish translations of excerpts from various works by Paine, as well as translations of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States; and García de Sena's Spanish translation of John M'Culloch's book, *A Concise History of the United States, from the Discovery of America till 1807 (1807)*, published in 1812 as *Historia concisa de los Estados Unidos: Desde el descubrimiento de la América hasta el año de 1807*.

Published between 1789 and 1812, these translations are central elements of the ideological bedrock of emancipation in Hispanic America. They fostered ideas and textual models for those who led the revolutionary movement in the Spanish territories in Hispanic America. What is important in these translations is not their literary or aesthetic value but rather their teleological force and the way translators and readers utilized them to serve their own agendas in that specific historical context. Exploring these aspects of the translations is the primary focus of the discussion here. Our discursive approach seeks not "to determine whether a translation transforms and thus--as conventional wisdom would often have it--betrays an original text, but rather the question becomes one of defining how such a transformation is carried out and the conditions which make it possible" (St-Pierre 1993:82).

Translation helped to introduce into Spanish-speaking American countries a version of ideas that had already served to transform other societies in the Western world. Concerning the interculturality of translations and translators, Anthony Pym asks whether the history of translation should focus on translations or translators (1998:182-183). He argues that independently of their linguistic competence,

translators can be considered members of an interculture. They occupy a space created by the intersection of the two cultures they mediate between. In the case of the translations considered in this essay, the men who translated these texts were certainly bilingual but to say that their role as translators makes them members of an interculture, in Pym's terms, would be an overstatement. With regard to the translations considered here, the act of translation and the translated texts per se as forms of resistance played a more important role than translators as agents. Indeed, more than the translators themselves who in these cases translated principally on occasion, the very essence of their subversive activity and the existence of the translated texts were instrumental in reforming and reconstituting the receiving culture.

### **The 1789 Version of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen***

On 26 August 1789 the General Assembly of the French Revolution promulgated the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of The Citizen, a document of 17 articles. After the publication of the Declaration, the Tribunal of the Inquisition of Cartagena banned it from circulation in the Spanish territories in an edict of 13 December 1789. By 1790, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, this edict enabled Spanish authorities to tighten their controls over printed material and ideas originating in France. This did not, however, prevent the Colombian Antonio Nariño (1765-1823) from translating and publishing the first Spanish version of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*.

Nariño had held important official positions in the Virreinato (the Viceroyalty) of Nueva Granada: treasurer, accountant, mayor of Bogotá, and lieutenant in the king's army. In criollo society he was recognized as a compulsive book collector and seller. Published in Bogotá in 1794, Nariño's translation into Spanish was a two-page, word-for-word document. His decision to translate and publish this document was prompted primarily by his liberal ideas and his Masonic affiliation, and secondarily by his business acumen. He was convinced that his text would capture the interest of a select readership. Although the document is his only translation, he is one of the few individuals in history to bear with equal honor the titles of general, president, and

translator.<sup>4</sup> In translating the text Nariño overtly subverted the prohibition against circulating the Declaration. According to Javier Ocampo López, the translator and editor printed one hundred copies of the document; only two or three copies had been sold when a purchaser and friend warned Nariño of the implications of his act (1999:171). The translator then decided to burn the remaining copies, but he was nonetheless prosecuted by the colonial authorities and given a penalty that was intended to serve as a deterrent in a society that was becoming more and more disgruntled with peninsular authorities: imprisonment in exile. Nariño somehow managed to escape and, as did many others before and after him, began a campaign in Europe to gain support for the cause of independence. He later returned to Colombia and joined the revolutionary movement.

Pym considers translators as “active effective causes, with their own identity and agenda” (1998:160). In the case of Nariño, it is more relevant to concentrate on the act of translation itself and the content of the translated text as forms of resistance and activism. This translation provided Spanish-speaking American society with a written document legitimating their desire for independence.

The ideas enunciated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man were to become guiding principles for founding the new states. The importance of Nariño’s act is commensurate with the tensions it created in colonial society. First, it consolidated the revolutionary spirit that became manifest in conspiracy, secret criticism, satire, and pamphleteering. Second, the translator provided Spanish-speaking Americans with a document that was in itself the embodiment of principles for a new kind of polity and political organization, as well as the materialization of rights that until then existed only as hearsay oral accounts of events occurring in distant lands. In response the Spanish authorities started an arbitrary “witch-hunt” against conspirators, bolstering the resolve of criollo society to fight for their independence. This period witnessed the division of the society into traditionalists on the one hand and advocates of enlightenment ideas on the other (Ocampo 1999:177).

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<sup>4</sup> In 1811 Nariño was appointed president of Cundinamarca, a province of Nueva Granada, Colombia, where the capital Bogotá is located. He was general in the revolutionary army during the period 1813-14.

The translated Declaration took on a new dimension following the independence of various Latin American countries. Nariño's text, the Spanish translation of the Constitution of the United States, and, of course, Picornell's version of the second Declaration (see below) were used as guiding documents for drafting the first republican constitutions across Hispanic America. The translation of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789 is therefore considered as the first clear act of overt ideological and political resistance by the dominant Hispanic American elite against the Spanish authorities in the New World. It gave Spanish Americans a "road map", a model of the type of political entity to strive for. Several translations akin to that of Nariño were published in the following years. The goal of all these translations was to provide a philosophical and political foundation for legitimizing independence, as well as a corpus of legal texts for creating the new republics. Picornell's translation of the second Declaration of the Rights of Man (1793) lent impetus to this endeavor in Venezuela in 1797.

### **The 1793 Version of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen***

In the heat of the Reign of Terror (1793-94), a second Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was drafted to be appended to the 1791 French constitution. Although its 35 articles emphasized the welfare of society over individual rights, it recognized freedom as a natural right. It was also drafted in more violent language completely attuned with the bloody atmosphere of the times. Article 35, for example, recognizes the legitimacy of insurrection to overcome the oppression of any government.

The translation into Spanish of the 1793 version of the Declaration of the Rights of Man was carried out in Venezuela in 1797. It had come by way of Madrid two years earlier. On 3 February 1795 (the Day of Saint Blas), an insurrection in Spain known as the San Blas conspiracy, designed and led by Juan Picornell (1759-1825), was to take place in Madrid to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republican government. An eminent pedagogue and, like Nariño, a Mason, Picornell had been influenced by the French Revolution. Translation was an activity common to the architects of the

conspiracy, including José Lax, Bernardo Garasa, and Juan Pons Izquierdo.<sup>5</sup> The vital force of this revolutionary enterprise was the translation of documents issuing from the political turmoil in neighboring France. The Venezuelan historian Casto Fulgencio López writes that “the conspirators gathered in José Lax’s house to translate books and speeches from the neighboring republic” (1997:32). Picornell was aware of the power of translation and its capacity to introduce subversion into the receiving culture. His friendship with the Abbot Marchena, the translator of Rousseau’s writings into Spanish (Schevill 1936), is evidence that his involvement in translation was no accident. Picornell’s translation work was clearly a purposeful activity. For him texts had a definite role to play in social change. Picornell’s dream was to bring about a Spanish version of the French Revolution and he saw translation as a means of enlightenment to inspire Spaniards about the greatness of democracy as understood by the French revolutionaries.

After the failure of their coup, Picornell and his accomplices were imprisoned and sentenced to death. Their sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment in the colonies. From his cell in La Guaira, Venezuela, Picornell was able to stoke the desire for emancipation in important members of Hispanic American society. Among those who joined him in his revolutionary efforts in America were Pedro Gual and José María España. These two are associated with the Gual y España conspiracy of July 1797, the most significant and most carefully orchestrated plot conceived by the criollos to overthrow the Spanish government in America prior to the wars of independence.

During the few months Picornell was imprisoned in La Guaira, he indoctrinated a group of influential criollos who facilitated his escape from prison the same day the Gual y España revolt was to take place. As with the earlier plot in Madrid, this conspiracy also failed. Picornell had to escape to Guadeloupe, where he pursued his revolutionary activities. On this Caribbean island he published the texts prepared in La Guaira: *Derechos del hombre y del ciudadano, con varias máximas republicanas y un discurso preliminar, dirigido a los americanos*; the book was published with a fictitious imprint, “Madrid Imprenta de la Verdad, año de 1797”. The work includes the Declaration of the

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<sup>5</sup> José Lax was a teacher of the humanities and an official translator; Bernardo Garasa was a lawyer and literary translator; Juan Ponz Izquierdo was a teacher of French and the humanities and sometimes referred to as co-translator of the Declaration (Grases 1997:32).

Rights of Man, some republican maxims, a speech, and two revolutionary songs. The conspirators printed two thousand copies and distributed them all over America. As historians have recognized, Picornell and his collaborators adapted most of the documents used in the Saint Blas conspiracy in Madrid for their Hispanic American readership.

Picornell's contribution to this set of translations was confirmed in José María España's confession to his prosecutors on 3 May 1799:

"When Picornell arrived in Curaçao from Guadeloupe in November 1797, he took with him a printing press with the purpose--in his own words--of printing the papers of the revolution. He also had some copies of the book titled 'The Rights of Man and the Citizen' and . . . two songs titled 'American Carmagnole' and 'American Song'". (qtd. in López 1997:235-40)

Irrespective of the identity of the translator, this text in itself constitutes the blueprint for the republics that were to be established in the new century. Its importance for the first constitutional documents of Venezuela has been rightly demonstrated by Pedro Grases (1981b, 1997). According to C. López, Picornell's "political and philosophical doctrine not only signaled the beginning of the independence movement, it ensured the continuity of the movement and its survival until the birth of the [Venezuelan] Republic; it served as the legal foundation for the [Venezuelan] Declaration of Independence and the first Venezuelan constitutions" (1997:60).<sup>6</sup>

### **The Translation of Viscardo's "Lettre aux Espagnols américains"**

By a royal edict of Charles III of Spain, all members of the Order of Jesus were forced to leave the Spanish territories in America in 1767. Among the five thousand Jesuits who left was the Peruvian Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán (1748-98). At the age of 21, Viscardo arrived in Modena, Italy. Managing to keep informed of relevant events in America, he traveled in Europe and attempted to secure England's support for Indian and slave uprisings. These efforts failed because England was negotiating peace with Spain. Disappointed with English indifference, Viscardo ultimately died in London in

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<sup>6</sup> Including the federal constitution in 1811, the constitution of the province of Barcelona in 1812, and the constitution of the province of Angostura in 1819.

1798, leaving his papers to Rufus King, U.S. minister to the English court (Vargas Ugarte 1964:70).

Viscardo wrote extensively from his exile in Europe, denouncing the abuses of the Spanish Crown in America and telling the world about the greatness and richness of his continent (Bastin and Castrillón 2004). In Florence between 1778 and 1791, he wrote a letter in French of some 30 pages with the goal of having it ready for publication on 12 October 1792, the date marking three hundred years of Spanish presence in the Americas.<sup>7</sup> Historians, such as Mariano Picón-Salas, consider Viscardo's "Lettre aux Espagnols américains" (literally, "A Letter to the American Spaniards") to be "the first and most widely distributed pamphlet championing the cause of revolution for independence" in Hispanic America and historically "the first declaration of independence" (1994:226). The letter is composed of three parts: the first is an accusation, similar to, though much longer than that in the Declaration of Independence of the United States; the second part is a philosophical justification of independence based on a text by Montesquieu; and the third part is an exhortation to Hispanic Americans to fight for their independence (Bastin and Castrillón 2004).

The Spanish translation of Viscardo's letter is the work of the Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda (1750-1816), one of the most important figures in the emancipation of Hispanic America and generally acknowledged as "El Precursor." Miranda had traveled extensively in the United States and Europe, had firsthand experience of the new republic after the independence of the United States, and had participated actively as a general in the French army during the French Revolution. Through his friend Rufus King, Miranda inherited Viscardo's writings and in 1799 published the original French text of Viscardo's letter in London, giving a fictitious place of publication, namely Philadelphia. As editor he added a preface and some footnotes to Viscardo's text, materials that were also included in Miranda's Spanish translation of the letter published by Miranda himself in London in 1801. This text became the Bible of revolutionaries in Hispanic America as a result of Miranda's efforts to make it known

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<sup>7</sup> Viscardo probably chose to write in French because it was the language of diplomacy and culture in Europe at the time and very widely known by educated people in the Americas as well, as he himself exemplifies.

everywhere in Europe and the Americas, first in French and Spanish and later in English as well.<sup>8</sup> The significance of this translation is recognized principally because of the striking intertextuality between Miranda's text and "La carta de Jamaica", written by Simón Bolívar in 1815 and one of his most important political texts. Luis Navarrete goes so far as to suggest that Viscardo's letter may have served as a model for the one written by Bolívar (1994:125).

An analysis of the translation shows that the translator succeeded in making it as accessible as possible to the Spanish-speaking readers. The teleological nature of the text justified its "domestication".<sup>9</sup> The Americans were addressed and depicted in the text, and they needed to identify with it. To achieve this goal it was essential to bring Viscardo's letter to them in their own language. Some manipulations of the text are worth considering because they make the translator's agenda explicit. As mentioned above, Miranda added an editor's note and several footnotes to both the original French publication and the Spanish translation. The editor's note is a short presentation of the author and the manuscript. The purpose of the note, however, is far from innocent and impartial. Miranda's subjectivity and political intentions are quite manifest.

Ce legs précieux d'un Américain-Espagnol à ses compatriotes, sur le sujet, le plus grand et le plus important qui puisse s'offrir à leur considération, est imprimé conforme au manuscrit de la main de l'Auteur même; et on pourra s'apercevoir au style, que c'est un étranger qui, s'exprime dans la langue Française sans aucune sorte de prétention. C'est D. Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzman, natif d'Arequipa dans le Pérou, ex-Jésuite, mort à Londres, au mois de Février 1798, qui en est l'Auteur. On fera connaître dans la suite le reste de cet intéressant manuscrit sur l'Amérique Méridionale. (Viscardo 1799, editor's note)

Este precioso legado d'un Americano Español a sus compatriotas, sobre el objeto más grande y más importante que se puede ofrecer a su consideración, esta impreso conforme al manuscrito de la mano del autor mismo; y se podra conocer por el estilo del original que es un extranjero que se explica en la lengua francesa sin ninguna especie de pretensión. El autor es Don Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzman,

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<sup>8</sup> On the English version of the letter, see below. See also the facsimile of the second English edition (1810) with an introduction by D.A. Brading in Viscardo 2002.

<sup>9</sup> On the distinction between domesticating and foreignizing translations, see Venuti 1995, 1998.

nativo de Arequipa en el Perú, ex-Jesuita muerto en Londres en el mes de Febrero de 1798. En lo sucesivo se hará conocer el resto de sus interesantes manuscritos sobre la América Meridional. (Viscardo 1801, editor's note)

This precious legacy of a Spanish American to his countrymen, on the greatest and the most important subject that could be put to their consideration, is printed according to the manuscript written by the author himself; and it is possible to see from the style that he is a foreigner who has expressed himself in the French language without any pretension. The author is Don Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán, native of Arequipa, Peru, a former Jesuit who died in London in February 1798. In the following pages, we will introduce the rest of this interesting manuscript about South America.

The choice of words in the first sentence shows that in Miranda's view translators are not merely instruments of communication. First, there is the value judgment conveyed by the use of the adjective *precioso* (precious) to describe the text, and the use of the word *legado* (legacy) makes the text the property of all Spanish-speaking Americans. Of greater interest from an ideological and sociolinguistic point of view is the use of the adjective of nationality in Viscardo's title of the original French text, "Lettre aux Espagnols américains" (later translated by William Burke into English as "A Letter to the Spanish Americans", in Burke 1808/1976). Although Miranda titled the Spanish translation "Carta dirigida a los Españoles Americanos", (literally, "Letter Addressed to the American Spaniards"), in his editor's note he refers to Viscardo as "un Americano Español" ("a Spanish American"), defining a distinct and separate identity for his compatriots and shifting their affiliation. This exemplifies the resistance of the criollos to their inferiorization (Lavallé 1993, 2002). The language used here is a manifestation of resistance, the kind of resistance translators can exert by manipulating the linguistic code to reflect their own agendas. This translation strategy clearly illustrates the nascent desire of revolutionary criollos to be recognized not as Spanish people born in America but as Americans first with only secondary or contingent affiliations to Spain. Note that Miranda's term is anticipated even more strongly in Picornell's title: "Discurso dirigido a los Americanos", where he omits the Spanish connection altogether.

Miranda used the translation of Viscardo's letter not only to introduce readers to the original author and his text but also and perhaps primarily to nurture his own project of independence, a goal he thought he had attained in view of the reception of his translation in the Spanish colonies. Several historians have corroborated the dissemination and influence of the text in Europe and in the colonies in the first decade of the eighteenth century (cf. Batllori 1953:153-57; Navarrete 1994:127). Picón-Salas argues that in fact Viscardo's text was successfully disseminated as a significant weapon of propaganda (1994:226).

The period was notable for conspiracies and espionage affecting all the economic and military powers of the time. Miranda was involved in planning an armed invasion of Venezuela in 1806. He obtained the economic support of the English but he was not allowed to procure arms or men in Europe (Parra-Pérez 1992:100). In New York he bought weapons and recruited a group of men who were for the most part of good social standing but ruined and in search of glory and fortune. In preparation for the invasion, Miranda wrote a proclamation in New York in which he appropriated Viscardo's arguments to justify his military actions. In this document he also included the complete text of Viscardo's letter and instructed the religious and the civil authorities of Venezuela to make the public aware of it by posting it on doors and by reading it once or twice daily at mass and other public gatherings (Batllori 1953:150-51). Miranda's military expedition to Venezuela was a complete failure. Although he succeeded in disembarking his troops on Venezuelan soil at Vela de Coro on 3 August 1806 and in seizing control of some territory, he lacked the military might required to guarantee the security of the very people he had come to liberate. Moreover, although widely read, his translation did not convince a significant number of his compatriots to join the rising, and he was forced to flee Venezuela. Departing from the same location where he had just landed, Miranda left Venezuela on 7 August 1806.

Back in Europe, Miranda promoted an English version of the letter. In 1808 one of his supporters, the journalist William Burke, published a book titled *Additional Reasons for our Emancipating Spanish America*, to which Burke appended his own English translation of Viscardo's letter. Aware of the interest of the *Edinburgh Review* in

American matters, Miranda seized this opportunity to make Viscardo's thought more available to English-language readers. With the help of James Mill, in 1809 Miranda published a 34-page essay in the *Edinburgh Review* based on Viscardo's letter, justifying once again the independence of Hispanic America. The first two pages of this article are dedicated to Viscardo's letter and the other 32 pages are devoted to the emancipation of Hispanic America (Batllori 1953:154).

Viscardo's letter struck a deep chord with Spanish-speaking Americans during the critical years of the struggle for independence. Early evidence can be found in the Venezuelan declaration of independence (1811), the content of which was much influenced by Viscardo's ideas. In the same year the *Gaceta de Caracas* reproduced the full text of the declaration. By then William Burke had taken up residence in Caracas and was using this paper to make constant references to the Jesuit's legacy (Batllori 1953:157). The letter was also reprinted frequently in English, Spanish, and French in the first years of the twentieth century, as historians interested in the ideological foundations of the independence movement recognized Viscardo's letter as one of the most influential documents of the time.

### **The Writings of Thomas Paine and John M'Culloch**

In 1803, after fighting in the Valles de Aragua in Venezuela under the command of the Marqués del Toro (Simón Bolívar's father-in-law), Manuel García de Sena (1780-1816) took up residence in Philadelphia with his brother Domingo. In 1810 he began translating excerpts of several works by Thomas Paine into Spanish, publishing them in 1811 in Philadelphia under a single title, *La independencia de la Costa Firme justificada por Thomas Paine treinta años há: Extracto de sus obras, traducido del inglés al español* (The Independence of the Costa Firme as Justified by Thomas Paine Thirty Years Ago: Excerpts from his works translated from English into Spanish by D. Manuel García de Sena).<sup>10</sup> In this book García de Sena included Spanish translations of excerpts from the most influential works of Thomas Paine, as well as translations of the Constitution of the United States, the United States Declaration of Independence, and the constitutions of

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<sup>10</sup> The term "Costa Firme", literally the 'firm coast', refers to the northern part of South America, mainly Venezuela. Our work is based on the 1949 edition of the volume.

various former colonies. He subsequently translated John M'Culloch's *A Concise History of the United States, from the Discovery of America till 1807* (1807) into Spanish as *Historia concisa de los Estados Unidos: Desde el descubrimiento de la América hasta el año de 1807*, in which he also incorporated a revised version of his first translation of the U.S. Declaration of Independence (Grases 1981a:400), publishing the volume in Philadelphia in 1812.

García de Sena used his translations as political tools to champion the cause of emancipation. His choice of Paine's texts is quite significant. He excerpted the most general texts and the ones most applicable to Hispanic America. In the texts selected he omitted all references to contemporary conditions in North America, considering them of little interest to his compatriots (Grases 1981a:404). To his translations he added personal comments such as ". . . para la mejor comprensión de los lectores americanos" ("to enable [Hispanic] American readers to better understand"; Grases 1981a:405). He also addressed a delicate aspect of Anglo-American culture: the role of the church, specifically the prohibition against priests holding public office. García de Sena not only translated this prohibition, he explained its reasons. This aspect of the separation of church and state in the U.S. was particularly important to confront in adapting European or North American models to Hispanic America, where most political leaders feared opposing the church and excluding it from the new duties of the state. The following excerpt of a letter written by García de Sena to his brother Ramón in December 1810 attests to the importance of the issue: "Convinced after reading [the translation] that it does not contain a single word contradicting our religion, I hope it can circulate freely among my countrymen" (qtd. in Grases 1981a:406).

To further his strategy García de Sena added paratexts of his own to the translation of Paine's texts, including a dedication and some footnotes. He dedicates his work to the "americanos españoles" ("Spanish Americans"), choosing the same expression Miranda used in the foreword to Viscardo's letter. This illustrates the high degree of intertextuality found in revolutionary texts of the period. García de Sena also adds a footnote to his translation of the U.S. Declaration of Independence at the point where the original text enumerates the atrocities of the English king:

A todo esto [las atrocidades del Rey de Inglaterra] puede añadir en favor de los americanos del Sud, y con relación a los últimos gobiernos de España en Europa: Ellos nos quieren gobernar sin más derecho que el que tenemos nosotros para gobernarlos a ellos. (1949:156)

To all this [the atrocities of the King of England] it is possible to add the following in favor of the South Americans in relation to the most recent Spanish regimes in Europe: they want to govern us without having any more right to that than the right we have to govern them.

In his translation of M'Culloch's book, García de Sena also adds a dedication to "los americanos españoles" ("the Spanish Americans"), exhorting them to continue the struggle. The goal of this long dedication is twofold. First, the translator recognizes with full "professional humility" his linguistic shortcomings.

Pero me ha animado al fin la consideración de que ni lo fastidioso del estilo ni los muchos defectos que se encuentran en la traducción, serán capaces de desfigurar los hechos que me propongo transmitir al español para aquellos a quienes no sea posible obtenerlos de otro modo. (qtd. in Grases 1981a:398)

But I decided to translate [the book] as I felt that neither the stylistic deficiencies nor the numerous defects in the translation would distort the facts that I intend to transpose into Spanish for those who would otherwise have no access to them.

García de Sena thus anticipates Grases's modern critical assessment that the Spanish text of the translation is by no means a model of stylistic perfection (1981a:398). The translator clearly indicates he has focused much more on the content of his translation than on its wording. This illustrates that the contents of the translations rather than discursive or textual strategies are here the primary site of resistance, contrary to arguments about resistance in (literary) texts proposed by Venuti, for example (1995, 1998).

Second, García de Sena urges his compatriots to remain united in order to take their rightful place in the community of nations. He concludes his dedication with the following exhortation.

Que el Nuevo Mundo todo le dé al Viejo una lección de virtud! Cuánta felicidad cuando de las tierras frías del Labrador al rincón más apartado de la Tierra del Fuego, solo se asistirá a congresos de los que se pueda decir con dignidad: "Ojalá este gran monumento elevado a la Libertad sirva de lección a los tiranos y de ejemplo a los oprimidos!" (qtd. in Grases 1981a:404)

Let the whole New World teach a lesson of virtue to the Old World! Rejoice then when from the cold lands of Labrador to the most distant tip of Tierra del Fuego, there will be congresses everywhere. Then we may say with dignity, "May this great monument erected to liberty serve as a lesson to tyrants and an example to the oppressed"!

De Sena's political agenda, as his dedication shows, is clearly not that of a timid, invisible, and transparent translator.

Both the selection of texts and the censorship exerted by García de Sena (on everything contrary to his Catholic beliefs, as well as aspects of the original texts that were not directly applicable to the situation in Hispanic America) confirm the hypothesis that politically committed translators use their translation work to serve their goals of resistance activism and to promote their own political agendas. The translations by García de Sena were neither requested nor sponsored: they were self-initiated undertakings. García de Sena's objectives were neither philanthropic nor economic, they were clearly political: to demonstrate the legitimacy of independence for Hispanic America and the potential benefits of independence for his compatriots, using the sociopolitical and economic situation of the United States as a model. Such efforts by the translator were not in vain when one considers the historical significance of his translation of the Constitution of the United States, in particular, included in his volume of translations from Thomas Paine. Grases has documented the circulation of this translation throughout Latin America and its traces in the first Venezuelan constitutions.

Five thousand copies of García de Sena's translation of Paine's work were printed, most of which were shipped to Venezuela, with the remainder going to Veracruz, Cartagena, Havana, and Puerto Rico, where they became required reading (Grases 1981a:410-20). In fact, on Venezuela's independence day, 5 July 1811, it was García de Sena's translation of the Constitution of the United States that was read before the newly created Venezuelan congress (Grases and Harkness 1953:56).

## **Conclusion**

The interest of translation scholars in postcolonialism outside Europe and North America is gaining momentum as demonstrated by the activities of translators and translation scholars in the developing world. This growing interest bodes well for the Spanish-speaking America, but it has not been significant enough to impel descriptive studies of translation history in this part of the globe beyond the mere archaeological stages of its development, even though, admittedly, archeological data on facts and events do help define the agendas of translators and researchers.

The examples discussed above demonstrate once again that translation is not an impartial and objective activity. The translators discussed--Nariño, Picornell, Miranda, and García de Sena--were textual and cultural mediators committed to their personal goals and those of the communities dedicated to the liberation of Spain's American colonies. The original texts were only "pretexts" for the greater enterprise of communicating and massively disseminating ideas to which they were profoundly committed. In the translators' agendas, therefore, translation was a means, not an end.

These specific cases related to Hispanic America clearly illustrate how vital the study of translation history is to explain the sociopolitical facts of communities and nations. Latin American translators made a significant contribution to its history. The political imprint they left on their translations can be paralleled with influences exerted in other times and other places. The translations of Shakespeare by Michel Tremblay and Michel Garneau, deemed to give Quebec a sense of renewed identity at the time of the "Révolution Tranquille", come to mind (Brisset 1990). A parallel can also be drawn

with the Irish translators such as Augusta Gregory or Mary Hutton who helped effect the independence of Ireland (Tymoczko 1999). Such renditions are quintessentially subjective, political, resistant, activist. Tremblay and his fellow Canadian translators and the Irish translators became historical actors, not unlike García de Sena and the others discussed here.

The Brazilian concept of *anthropophagia* (anthropophagy; Andrade 1928) is also relevant to the cases discussed here.<sup>11</sup> Although developed during the modern period, such a concept seems to have motivated translators such as García de Sena, as well as their Hispanic followers including Andrés Bello, José Martí, and Jorge Luis Borges, whose translation work is characterized by appropriating strategies as well (Bastin, Campo, and Echeverri, 2004). In this regard Diego Saglia notes,

“The concept and practice of appropriation may thus reconfigure the status of translation as the production of texts that are not simply consumed by the target language and culture but which, in turn, become creative and productive, stimulating reflections, theorizations and representations within the target cultural context” (2002:96).

The history of translation in Hispanic America is for the most part unknown to the rest of the world and, even more discouraging, to Hispanic Americans themselves. Many Latin American translation scholars and professionals are more at ease talking about Perrot d’Ablancourt, Walter Benjamin, or John Denham than about Francisco de Miranda, Manuel García de Sena, or Andrés Bello. The cause is, of course, a somewhat xenophile attitude on the part of many Latin American scholars, rooted in a long tradition of a Eurocentric orientation in Latin American culture as a whole. Moreover, the Eurocentric manner in which translation studies as a field has developed compels Latin American scholars to study European or North American issues, as well as to adopt foreign models to explain local matters, because this is the only means of participating in translation studies discourses. The time has come to study translation using local models (whether inspired by literary criticism, sociology, or philosophy) as the most appropriate way to interpret local realities. This may be the way for Hispanic American

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<sup>11</sup> On anthropophagy and translation see also Vieira (1994, 1999).

scholars to develop their own form of resistance within the field of translation studies, and it may be a model for other local groups of scholars to utilize as well.

Our research has focused primarily on the importance that translation played in the independence period when the rising Hispanic American elite used it to subvert Spanish domination, highlighting a genuine Latin American way of translating. At the same time translation also served the goals of the criollo elite to establish and consolidate their domination and control over the less empowered social classes and ethnic minorities in Spanish-speaking America. Translation certainly fueled the impetus for emancipation, but it also gave the controlling minority the means to perpetuate the social inequalities that continue to be characteristic of Hispanic America. Such an ironic outcome of translation leading to both emancipation and oppression, to both resistance against and collusion with established structures of power, remains to be studied. It is in many ways representative of the heterogeneous position of translators as historical and social agents.

Last but not least, the cases discussed above are only a few among many more to be uncovered and studied in order to characterize the profound influence that translation exerted on the history and fate of Hispanic America. Although limited, these case studies demonstrate one significant feature in translation history, namely that a sociological rather than an anthropological approach is needed to understand how translation has influenced the course of history. It has been clearly shown that content rather than textual strategy is the focus of resistance and activism in translation in the case studies considered here and, moreover, that the message of the translated text and its reception rather than the identity of the translator are the main issues to be considered even when translators are visible agents of history.

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