

En inglés las “fake news” no caducan

Resumen:

La insularidad cultural del público lector de habla inglesa es un factor que provoca una reducida presencia de obras traducidas de otros idiomas en el mercado editorial angloparlante. El resultado es que en el mundo angloparlante se escribe más sobre Iberoamérica de lo que se lee a los Iberoamericanos. Los estadounidenses nos conocen a través de especialistas de su misma nacionalidad, sin tener acceso directo a las voces y realidades de la región.

En un mundo globalizado en inglés la proyección del mundo hispano depende en gran medida del trabajo que hagamos por conquistar el mercado editorial de los Estados Unidos. Lograrlo nos ayudaría a desprendernos del peso de la leyenda negra y de los estereotipos que nos hunde en la desconfianza y el desapego por nuestro legado. Hemos renunciado a interpretar nuestra realidad e identidad desde nuestra propia perspectiva y esta mala costumbre nos empequeñece.

Palabras clave:

Traducciones, libros, editores, idioma español, leyenda negra, Estados Unidos

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A little untold history of English-speaking peoples

In the United States, publications of books translated from other languages represent only 3%, in the United Kingdom considerably less. Of the few books chosen by US publishers to be translated into English and published in their country, only a small minority achieve sufficient prominence and publicity to have a chance of attracting the attention of readers. Virtually only well-known authors have any chance of their publications reaching the general public¹.

In the United States, Spanish is by far the language most translated by publishers, doubling the second language French and tripling Chinese, German and Russian². Globally, as might be expected, the language in which most publishers publish is English, followed by German, French, Spanish and Italian, with the rest of the world's languages far behind the top five. English has twice the number of publishers in the next four countries on the list³.

Data can sometimes be confusing, so it is important to choose what to look for. Three per cent is far too low a figure for book translations in the United States compared to continental Europe. In 2017, one in five books in Spain was a translation, although the proportion has since fallen. France, with more publications than Spain, has a lower percentage of translation, but is in a similar range, while Italy is much higher⁴.

On the other hand, more than half the books translated outside the English-speaking world are translated from books written in English. There is therefore a mismatch between books translated from English—the vast majority—and books translated into English, the fewest. The result is that the rate at which non-English-speaking readers read works originally written in English is much higher than the rate at which English-speaking readers read works not written in English.

Of course, the number of English speakers who directly read in another language is very small. In many cases, speaking fluent English affords a cosmopolitan life without the need to spend time and effort learning another language. In Sweden, the Netherlands or Luxembourg, just to mention a few examples, you can work in one of the best companies

¹ Available at: <https://www.altalang.com/beyond-words/why-are-so-few-translated-books-published-in-america/>

² Available at: <https://www.publishersglobal.com/directory/united-states/publishers-in-united-states>

³ Available at: <https://www.publishersglobal.com/directory/list-languages>

⁴ Available at: <https://www.europapress.es/cultura/libros-00132/noticia-traduccion-espana-suponen-21-produccion-editorial-espana-14000-libros-media-ano-20180523185107.html>

in the world and interact with the most elite of society speaking only English, without needing to know a single word of Swedish, Dutch, French, German or Luxembourgish.

English is the dominant language and the global lingua franca. Publishers around the world are keeping an eye on works published in the United States and are certainly willing to publish American and British bestsellers. Best-selling authors in the US, such as John Grisham or Danielle Steel, garner a vast readership everywhere. The phenomenon is similar to that of cinema: in many countries, more North American films are seen than those produced in or around the country.

The cultural insularity of the English-speaking reading public and its publishers is a factor that induces them to concentrate on their own. Even after 9/11, some people may still think that the history of the English-speaking peoples is the history of humanity, and everything else is just an anthropological curiosity. Winston Churchill, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, ended his long study on the history of the English-speaking peoples, which he began writing at the age of 30 and finished at 80, by stating that 'the future is unknowable, but the past should give us hope'⁵..

The private, aristocratic and select nature of the English-speaking club may be one of the historical reasons for the lack of interest in translating what others write. As we have discussed, this attitude is influenced by the dominance of English as a world language over the last century, its political, scientific, academic, cultural, technological, military and media primacy, and also by the fact that language teaching in the English-speaking world is often considered deficient. Consequently, there is little interest in reading works by foreign authors and not enough intellectual curiosity about other cultures⁶.

⁵ CHURCHILL, Winston. *La historia de los pueblos de habla inglesa (A History of the English-Speaking Peoples)*, La Esfera de los libros, 2007, Madrid.

⁶ FUENTES DE LA ROCHE, Cristina. 'Literature in Translation: Why is it so Difficult to Enter the Anglo-American Market?', *Real Instituto Elcano*, 2008, Madrid.

'The number of translations in the UK of books in Spanish (from Spain or Latin America) has increased, according to the Director of New Spanish Books, by 50%, from 63 in 2004 to 93 in 2007; of these, 26 are "classics" and 67 "contemporary works"'. Available

at: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/spanish+language+culture/ari124-2008

The importance of the US publishing market for the Ibero-American world

Publishing a work originally written in Spanish in English-speaking countries is not easy. First you need a good English translation, which can be very expensive, and then you need to be famous or a friend of a celebrity who can introduce you to the difficult American publishing market. The effort may be excessive, but success in the North American market opens doors to other markets around the world. The importance of a good translation is an essential step.

Each year, in the United States some 200,000 books are published in English. Between 1992 and 1994, only 24 new literary works written in Spanish by Ibero-American authors were chosen to compete, translated into English, in the US literary market. Meanwhile, the vast majority of publications in Ibero-America in all scientific, technical and academic disciplines are written in English or, if they are written in Spanish, their references are original works in English⁷.

In 2018, 632 books of fiction and poetry were translated for the first time into English from all other world languages, marking the fifth consecutive year with more than 600 translations. Quite a feat, especially if we consider that at the end of the first decade of the 21st century there were fewer than 400.

However, most translations come from only a few countries. France, Germany and Spain are the main market suppliers. It is also worrying that the proportion of books coming from these three countries alone tends to grow⁸.

The result is that more is written about Ibero-America in the English-speaking world than is read by Ibero-Americans. Consequently, the most educated Americans get to know Ibero-America through specialists of their own nationality, without having direct access to the voices and realities of the region. In many cases, it is difficult for even the most educated sector of the US population to distinguish the diversity of a continent that speaks Spanish or Portuguese, and facts are often interpreted through only a few lenses, sometimes with too many filters.

In the field of literature, this situation is particularly complex because each Hispanic country has its own way of speaking and often very particular ways of understanding its

⁷ WHITE, Steven F. 'Translation and Teaching: the Dangers of Representing Latin America for Students in the United States', *Cadernos de Tradução, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina*, 1997, Florianópolis.

⁸ Available at: <https://qz.com/quartz/1634382/which-countries-do-books-translated-for-the-us-come-from/>

own reality, even though they all think and speak in Spanish. Few good translators in the United States are able to tackle the works of the great Ibero-American authors. Moreover, translating Octavio Paz, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Luis Borges, Camilo José Cela or Gabriel García Márquez each requires a particular adaptation to the Hispanic world. Of course, the way each author expresses himself in Spanish is different, although the context of may be even more so. It would be bold to ask a translator to be able to translate the books written by any of the great Ibero-American writers, so full of particularities and diversity.

For a long time in the United States, when a translated book was published, the name of the translator was not cited; this bad practice is gradually being corrected. The translator of a work, especially literature, is also an interpreter of the unknown world he or she translates into another language. This interpretation may not substantially alter the message or the form; this is no easy task and the translator's work is not always sufficiently appreciated. Their competence is key to sustaining the real tension of the work while also making it intelligible to an audience that speaks a language other than the original. Books and their authors can travel thanks to translators, but the outcome of the journey also depends on the quality of the translation.

Attempting to encompass Latin American literature as a single entity that can be addressed by the work of a single translator would be to ignore an important fact: Latin America is a world made up of many singularities. The task would be impossible if we were also talking about poetry. Only a good translation makes it possible to discover others directly in one's own language and with one's own parameters.

Moreover, political, linguistic and economic boundaries structure the English-speaking market when it comes to the choice of works and languages to be translated. These restrictions and limits are interconnected and related. Therefore, the penetration of Spanish and its literature in the American bibliographic market is a task that requires a comprehensive strategy of rapprochement and development.

In a globalised world in English, the projection and penetration of the culture, language, idiosyncrasies and diversity of what is thought, felt and believed in Spanish and Portuguese depends largely on our work to conquer the US publishing market. This task undoubtedly requires a strategy. One way to start is to have good translators and interpreters of our literature who can convey all its richness in English.

Almost everything that comes from us to the Americans and English-speakers in general goes through a few intermediaries. English-speaking translators, interpreters, analysts and experts have undoubtedly achieved remarkable qualifications for some things, but it is very difficult for them to achieve all the nuances. Research on Ibero-American affairs, in most cases in the non-Spanish speaking world, does not rely on primary sources written in Spanish or in Portuguese. English is all-dominating and those who think in English translate and interpret us, often based on stereotypes, superficiality and arrogance. There are of course notable exceptions.

In the Middle Ages, the school of translators in Toledo made it possible to recover the lost classical Greco-Latin culture from Arabic and at the same time introduced knowledge of astronomy, medicine and mathematics in Arabic that came from the East. The subsequent development of many European universities was possible by restoring to Latin what was lost in that language, but remained virtuously located in Arabic and Hebrew. In these times of English dominance, the market may need a helping hand to guide its natural development.

A new school for translators would allow Americans, including those of Latin origin, to discover the value of Hispanic culture and also to foster a more complete approach to the diversity of our reality, which would favour a more balanced and fruitful relationship for all parties. Moreover, the positive effects in the United States would undoubtedly be projected to the rest of the world. We need only recall the history of the boom in Ibero-American literature in the 1960s and 1970s;

a boom in Ibero-American literature that was seen by many as a commercial success, triggered by the predatory attraction of the United States to its southern backyard. From this point of view, the success of the Hispanic American novel in the United States was largely a consequence of a cannibalistic appetite for the exotic, the magical and the incomprehensible mystery of a South that was geographically close, but culturally ignored, distant, alien and of no apparent interest beyond the folkloric.

Many identified the boom in Hispanic American literature as a phenomenon triggered by the English translation of García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Consequently, the novel's sales success set off a rush to translate other works by writers from the region. Translation itself made up the so-called *boom*.

It truly is extravagant, but few understood that the Hispanic American literary boom and the translation into English, and from English into many other languages, of novelists from the region was a sign of the maturity of Hispanic culture in America. Americans can be convinced of the cultural maturity of the Hispanic world with a little push from a select team of translators and a prepared staging.

The effort would be profitable not only have in terms of culture and better perception, judgement, evolution and decision of the different US actors with respect to the Spains of both hemispheres. In parallel, without fuss, we would step by step gain the respect and affection for what we have built up in value. Consequently, the relationship between Spanish and English, between Hispanics or Latinos and non-Hispanics in the United States, would be normalised, facilitating a progressive overcoming of prejudice, mistrust and disinterest. In a few years' time, it would be possible for many Anglo-Saxons to stop looking at the Hispanics without seeing them. It is not darkness that kills us, but arrogant indifference.

The West diminished by English and the biggest fake news in world history

Absolute domination of the English language and the filters established by its analysts is related to a natural inclination to place a diminished West at the centre, which perceives and thinks everything from the Anglo-Saxon point of view and keeps everything that is alien to it, or that it has decided to consider marginal, out of the spotlight. The centre of the world lies beneath feet that speak, feel and think in English but are confident that they know enough about the complex reality of an entire continent south of the Rio Grande just because some of them speak Spanish and are able to translate and interpret us according to their own parameters. Inevitably, their perception is often based on distorted foundations due to their point of view and their cultural approach to a different reality marked by diversity. The media aggravate the situation. Chesterton said that the 'great weakness of journalism as a picture of our modern existence, that it must be a picture made up entirely of exceptions'⁹.

It is sensible to recognise that few things are more difficult to get to know than a foreign country. While always hard, the degree of difficulty increases with cultural and

⁹ CHESTERTON, Gilbert Keith. *The Ball and the Cross*. Valdemar, 2005, Madrid.

technological distance. The accumulation of data is never a substitute for direct impressions, experiencing a way of life. A village is also a system of secrets that cannot simply be discovered from the outside. Secrecy and mystery suddenly become the key that unlocks understanding, making it possible to relate to an accurate interpretation of perceptions and their meanings. A nation is a system of secrets¹⁰.

To this difficulty we can add the strength of stereotypes and the insufficient penetration of a more balanced interpretation of the identity and history of Hispanic peoples. Spanish historiography is depleted and diminished by the perverse effects of the 'Black Legend' and also by our inability or disinterest in dismantling it. As late as 1921, in his work *España invertebrada*, Ortega said that 'to speak of the history of Spain is to speak of the unknown'¹¹. More than sixty years later, Julián Marías, his outstanding disciple, reminds us that since the eighteenth century Spaniards in both hemispheres have assumed their enemies' account of their history, their character, their condition and their destiny¹².

Initially it was the Italians, the Dutch and the English who circulated the biggest fake news in history, the 'Black Legend'. The French and Germans would join later. Finally, the Americans and Soviet communists would complete the dark picture projected on us by those who despise us without knowing us, not infrequently hating what we are. Catalan historian Doris Moreno, professor of Modern History at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, has no doubts about it, but she is not the only one. 'Without a doubt, the black legend is the first fake news in history'¹³.

Elvira Roca Barea with her book *Imperiofobia y leyenda negra; Roma, Rusia, Estados Unidos y el Imperio español*¹⁴ (*Empirephobia and Black Legend: Rome, Russia, United States and the Spanish Empire*), has achieved best seller status possibly unexpected

¹⁰ MARIAS, Julián. *España inteligible: Razón histórica de las Españas (Intelligible Spain: Historical Reason for the Spains)*, Lavel, 1985, Madrid.

¹¹ ORTEGA Y GASSET, José. *Invertebrate Spain*. Available at: <http://juango.es/files/Ortega-Y-Gasset---Espana-Invertebrada.pdf>

¹² MARIAS, Julián *España Inteligible. Razón histórica de las Españas (Intelligible Spain: Historical Reason for the Spains)*. Alianza Editorial, 1985, Madrid,

¹³ Available at: https://cronicaglobal.elespanol.com/letra-global/la-charla/doris-moreno_260961_102.html

¹⁴ ROCA BAREA, M. Elvira. *Imperiofobia y leyenda negra; Roma, Rusia, Estados Unidos y el Imperio español (Empirephobia and Black Legend: Rome, Russia, United States and the Spanish Empire)*. Editorial Siruela, 2016, Madrid.

Elvira Roca Barea has been distinguished with the Gold Medal of Andalusia, has received the Booksellers' Guild Award, the Good Letters Award, Religion in Freedom and also the 'Capitán Etayo' Award. She has been awarded the Medal of Honour of the Academy of Fine Arts, was awarded the Villacisneros Foundation Prize, which recognises the exceptional merits of those who defend the History of Spain and the values that emanate from the dignity of the person, and also the 'Forgotten Heroes' Award, granted by the Blas de Lezo Foundation.

even by the most optimistic of specialists. Of course, success is always accompanied by criticism, especially when it calls into question a severely puritanical political correctness; a political correctness obsessed with guilt. In the Spanish-speaking world, the scapegoat on which we cast all our personal sins, paradoxically, is called Spain. Quixote and Sancho are despicable because with supreme majesty they show us an inseparable relationship between the immanent and the transcendent, serenely, humbly and meekly representing the incomplete and conflicting reality of the human, and, no doubt, reality is politically incorrect and repugnant in postmodern times where post-truth is an ideology and transhumanism a source of hope.

It is not easy for a little-known writer to achieve the publication of 25 editions of one of her books, making it the best-selling essay of recent times in Spain. Getting Spaniards to buy more than 100,000 copies of a book is like conquering Flanders, and for many of them to have read it is like getting an entire Spanish battalion to the misty Flemish lands. A revealing fact is that Mario Vargas Llosa dedicated a laudatory article to the author in the newspaper *El País*¹⁵. Undoubtedly, the ultimate proof of success is that, three years after the publication of *Imperiofobia y leyenda negra*, José Luis Villacañas responded by publishing a counter-book, entitled *Imperiofilia y el populismo nacionalcatólico* (*Empirephilia and National Catholic Populism*), to discredit Elvira Barea. Only what is understood as relevant deserves to be criticised and, without going into other considerations, Mr Villacañas understood this, so much so that he wrote a book to dismantle another.

Along the same lines as Roca Barea, with his book *Madre Patria: Desmontando la leyenda negra desde Bartolomé de las Casas hasta el separatismo catalán* (*Motherland: Dismantling the black legend from Bartolomé de las Casas to Catalan separatism*), Argentinean professor Marcelo Gullo Omodeo has achieved great success. Interestingly, the foreword was written by Alfonso Guerra. In June 2021, Mr Gullo's book was among the best sellers in Spain. The importance that Marcelo Gullo attaches to the historical misrepresentation of the black legend is such as to condition and endanger our future. "We are on the way to a Balkanisation of Spain and Latin America. Stopping this process depends on whether we can dismantle the black legend... I know that to defend Spain is

¹⁵ Available at: https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/09/14/opinion/1536926149_207429.html

to defend Latin America. To go against the black legend is to go against the territorial fragmentation that will lead us to even deeper underdevelopment”¹⁶.

No one in their right mind would think of giving much credence to the gossip, hoaxes, gross misrepresentations, propaganda, insults and grievances that the enemies of a nation write or recount in order to discredit it. However, for us, external hostile fabrications are more reliable than the most erudite studies of our world, written by Spanish speakers.

A Spaniard seems naturally inclined to give credit to a North American historian, with a PhD from Harvard, when writing a history of Mexico. The most sensible thing to do would be to question this Mexican history precisely because it was written by an American, educated at a university in his country and with access mainly to American sources or those written in English. It is not sensible to grant authority to a North American, just because he has a PhD from Harvard, on the history of Mexico or the Philippines or Cuba or Puerto Rico, and we could go on. Especially considering that more than half of Mexico's territory was seized by the United States after the war that ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which allowed the expropriation of Texas, California, Arizona, Arkansas, New Mexico, Nevada and part of Oregon. We do not seem to have much of a case for simply giving in to the perception of a New England historian.

Do we know if it is known?

Thinking of our beloved Peru, I remember it was Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, a Creole from Lima and an officer in the navy of His Catholic Majesty Charles III, who, leaving the Mexican port of San Blas, explored the entire northwest coast of America along the Pacific Ocean as far as Alaska. The entire coast of the United States and part of British Columbia were mapped on his voyage. He was later sent to southern Canada to establish the boundaries agreed with the United Kingdom in the Nootka Conventions.

Quadra met with British naval officer George Vancouver, commanding the ship HMS *Discovery*. Without reaching a final agreement, the two commanders took the amicable

¹⁶ Interview granted by Marcelo Gullo Omodeo to *Libertad Digital*. Available at: <https://www.libertaddigital.com/cultura/libros/2021-05-28/marcelo-gullo-madre-patria-leyenda-negra-defender-espana-6784158/>

decision to name the main island Quadra and Vancouver Island¹⁷. The name of the Spanish navy commander from Lina was eventually forgotten, but not entirely. In the city of Vancouver there is still a district, where the University of British Columbia is located, which bears Quadra's name, and on the North American coast a bay also bears his name. Still further north, in the state of Alaska, we find the towns of Valdez and Cordova¹⁸ founded by Spanish sailors who also set off from the Mexican port of San Blas.

This is just one example that can help us to illustrate how little we know of the great deeds the world has seen performed by the sons of El Cid. Meanwhile, Mexican President Manuel Andrés López Obrador has not missed an opportunity to reiterate that His Holiness the Pope and the King of Spain should to apologise for the liberation of the indigenous peoples, led by Hernán Cortés, from Mexica tyranny. The president, however, forgets to demand explanations from the United States of America for the occupation of 60% of the territory of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. In 1791, when the first census of the United States of America was organised, New York and Washington together had half the population of Mexico City.

Looking at trade, the first global currency was the Spanish doubloon of eight escudos, minted in Mexico and Lima. In 1803 this currency, the Spanish dollar, was the first official currency of the United States of America, legal tender until 1857, and the only one accepted in the distant Asian markets of China, Japan and Indochina.

Regarding the complexes related to our seemingly secular backwardness in the academic and cultural world, a little memory is enough. In the United States, they do not agree on which is their first university. Harvard claims to be 'the oldest institution of higher education in the United States', founded in 1636. The University of Pennsylvania is awarded the title of the first university in the United States, founded in 1740, and the first to have a medical school in 1765.

Accepting that Harvard was a university in 1636—a controversial issue for North Americans themselves—we could say that in Hispanic America there were at least 15 universities in operation that year. The first, Santo Domingo, was founded a century before Harvard began to teach anything. If Pennsylvania was the first, then we would have to point out that there were 24 universities in Hispanic America teaching before that.

¹⁷ DE LA BODEGA Y QUADRA, Juan Francisco. *El descubrimiento del fin del mundo (1775-1792)* (*The Discovery of the End of the World (1775-1792)*), Alianza Editorial, 1990, Madrid.

¹⁸ The spelling is that used by Americans to refer to these two cities.

Nobody doubts that the oldest university on the American continent, with continuous operation from its foundation to the present day, is the Royal and Pontifical University of San Marcos, in Lima, where, incidentally, Spanish sailor Bodega y Quadra mentioned above studied.

Another interesting issue is the relationship with pre-Columbian cultures. The University of San Marcos began operating in 1551 and less than 30 years later, before the first British settlers arrived in Virginia, the chair of the General Indian Language was established. The first professor of the Quechua language was the canon of the cathedral of Lima, Juan de Balboa. Quechua is currently spoken by between eight and ten million people in Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador and Colombia. Incidentally, to complete the picture a little, at the medical school at the Royal and Pontifical University of Lima began operating in 1620, almost a century and a half before the first medical school in the United States.

Fray Andrés de Olmos, a Franciscan missionary and philologist, born in Burgos, arrived in New Spain in 1528, shortly after the victory of Hernán Cortés and his Indian allies against the Mexica empire. He wrote the first grammar of Nahuatl, the language of the Mexicas, in 1547. He continued with the grammars of Huastec and Totonac, becoming the first grammarian of three languages of the New World and possibly of the Old¹⁹.

Domingo de Santo Tomás, priest, missionary, Dominican, linguist and bishop of Charcas, who arrived in Peru in 1540 shortly after the conquest, published in 1560 the first grammar and vocabulary of the Quechua language²⁰. In the meantime, English would not have its own grammar until 1586, which William Bullokar would publish under the amusing title *Pamphlet of Grammar*. At that time, the Spanish had published—several decades earlier—at least four grammars of native American languages.

Nahuatl is currently spoken by some two and a half million people. It is the language of the Mexica or Aztecs who dominated a large part of Mexico, making their language a *lingua franca* in the region before the arrival of the Spanish. The preponderance of Nahuatl prompted the Franciscans to propose it to Philip II as the official language of the

¹⁹ Available at: http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0071-16752010000100022

²⁰ Domingo de Santo Tomás published in Valladolid the first two works in Quechua, *Gramática o arte de la lengua general de los indios de los reinos del Perú*, and *Lexicón o vocabulario de la lengua general del Perú*. He would later return to Peru where he would be appointed bishop of Charcas in Upper Peru, now in Bolivia.

Viceroyalty of New Spain. His Catholic Majesty, Philip II, by Royal Decree of 1570 established Nahuatl as the official language for the viceroyalty, with the purpose of favouring evangelisation²¹.

After 300 years of viceroyalty, in 1820, approximately 65-70% of the population spoke an indigenous language, Nahuatl being the best known. Now, after 200 years of independence, only 6.5% of the population speaks a pre-Columbian language²².

Meanwhile, in the United States, the most widely-spoken indigenous language is Navajo, with over 150,000 people. Navajo was used by the US armed forces during World War II to transmit encrypted oral messages, at which time there was no Navajo dictionary with another language. The Navajo code was declassified in 1968 and has been the only military radio telephone code that could never be cracked²³.

It is no coincidence that the Navajo Nation is concentrated in New Mexico, Arizona and Utah, territories controlled by the Viceroyalty of New Spain until Mexican independence and incorporated into the Union in the 20th century.

After all that has been said, it would be prudent to analyse who are the protagonists of the biggest fake news in history to find out what connects its protagonists. The English, Dutch and Germans, who initially built and later nurtured the black legend, were Protestant enemies of the Catholic Church. Freemasonry, communism and the unbridled capitalism of prosperity gospel, North American and evangelical, are coincidentally also declared enemies of the Catholic Church.

Vittorio Messori's book, *Leyendas negras de la Iglesia (Black Legends of the Church)*, features a preface written by Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, then Archbishop of Bologna, which begins: 'When a boy, educated as a Christian by the family and the parish community,

²¹ ALONSO ARAGUÁS, Iciar. 'Intérpretes de Indias. La mediación lingüística y cultural en los viajes de exploración y conquista: Antillas, Caribe y Golfo de México (1492-1540)' ('Interpreters of the Indies. Linguistic and cultural mediation in voyages of exploration and conquest: Antilles, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico (1492-1540)'), University of Salamanca, Faculty of Translation and Documentation, Department of Translation and Interpreting, doctoral thesis, 2005, Salamanca. Available at:

https://gredos.usal.es/bitstream/handle/10366/116145/DTI_Alonsolciar_InterpretesIndias.pdf;jsessionid=75A6A3CC7582F391610C82D3CC2EEC5B?sequence=2

In July 1570, Philip II issued the Royal Decree declaring Nahuatl as the official language for the Christianisation of the Indians of New Spain. Available at:

<https://www.angelfire.com/ca5/mas/gobi/LENG/l05.html>

https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/hieronymus/pdf/03/03_061.pdf

²² Available at: https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/29/planeta_futuro/1553860893_490810.html

²³ Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/06/us/chester-nez-dies-at-93-his-native-tongue-helped-to-win-a-war-of-words.html?_r=1

starts to feel ashamed of the history of his Church on the basis of the apodictic assertions of some teacher or some text, he is objectively in grave danger of losing his faith. This is a regrettable but indisputable observation'²⁴.

The Cardinal's initial reflection applied to the Church can easily be applied to the Hispanic world. The suggested correlation is confirmed by reading Messori's book. It should come as no surprise, but the truth is that it may seem curious to many that to read the black legends of the Catholic Church is to discover that they are fundamentally the black legends of Spain.

Conclusions

At first glance, one might think that the black legend is more a defensive propaganda mechanism than an effort to destroy the prestige of the first global empire in history, aimed more at hiding what was extraordinary about what the Spanish did than at highlighting the excesses they may have committed. It is therefore easy to dismantle by simply highlighting what those who came before us have done.

However, the weight of the black legend plunges us into mistrust and detachment from our heritage. Among the possible reasons for this strange behaviour towards our own identity may be our insufficient self-esteem. We have given up on interpreting our reality and identity from our own perspective and this bad habit belittles us. The result is that Spaniards in both hemispheres have apostatised from ourselves.

The memory of what unites us as Hispanics has been lost. Therefore, it is very difficult for us to consider its value. The rifts that have opened up between us are the result of an imposition; of a centuries-long psychological war that has been won by those who do not appreciate us. The falsehood that to a large extent covers the perception of our identity, outside and unfortunately at home, is imposed and consolidated. The past two centuries of internal wars have to do, not least, with the complexes that the resentment of others has sown to dissolve us.

Along the way we have lost our inner freedom, the identity of our conscience and our affection for our history. Hispanic culture is one of the most sublime fruits of European

²⁴ MESSORI, Vittorio. *Leyendas negras de la Iglesia (Black Legends of the Church)*, Planeta, 2004, Barcelona.

civilisation. It allowed the creation of a unique space where the Old and the New World were part of the same feeling, thinking and believing. Where everyone looked at the others from a sky of freedom and equality, of course insufficiently complete in time, but recognised as disguised in the ups and downs of everyday life just by looking at the Plus Ultra that never ends and which we already felt part of. Being Spanish is one of the few great things you can be in the world and we have failed to recognise it. Even so, we still have our common language, Spanish, and caring for it and cherishing it can be a way of preserving the heritage of the small remnant that patiently awaits the moment to start living together again in a consciously integrated Ibero-American space.

In English, 'fake news' does not expire, but it is transformed according to the pace set by what remains for it, its interests. "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow."²⁵ Once you have discovered the game, you just have to wait for time to open the window of opportunity for the Spanish language in the United States²⁶.

'Today, the Hispanic community is the main engine of population growth in the United States. In 2018 alone, the increase in the Hispanic population accounted for more than half of the country's total population growth. According to projections by the US Census Bureau, the number of Hispanics will exceed 111 million by 2060. That will mean that 27.5% of the population, almost one in three Americans, will be of Hispanic origin.'²⁷

*La sangre de mi espíritu es mi lengua,
y mi patria es allí donde resuena
soberano su verbo, que no amengua
su voz por mucho que ambos mundos llene.*

*Ya Séneca la preludió aún no nacida
y en su austero latín ella se encierra;
Alfonso a Europa dio con ella vida.
Colón con ella redobló la Tierra.*

²⁵ Quote from Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

²⁶ Available at: https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/anuario/anuario_20/informes_ic/p04.htm

More than 62 million Americans, 18.7% of the country's total population, are of Hispanic origin. Seventy-one per cent of Hispanics use Spanish in the home environment. Spanish is by far the most widely studied foreign language at all levels of education in the United States. The 2020 presidential election was the first in which Hispanics were the largest ethnic minority. In the last five decades, the Hispanic population has increased almost sevenfold and its relative weight has quadrupled. In higher education, the number of students enrolled in Spanish courses exceeds the total number of students enrolled in courses in other languages.

²⁷ Available at: https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/anuario/anuario_20/informes_ic/p04.htm

*Y esta mi lengua flota como el arca
de cien pueblos contrarios y distantes,
que las flores en ella hallaron brote,*

*de Juárez y Rizal, pues ella abarca
legión de razas, lengua en que a Cervantes
Dios le dio el Evangelio del Quijote.*

Poem 'The Blood of My Spirit' by Miguel de Unamuno.

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