

Early Modern Expressions of Nationhood in French and Dutch Translations of Bartolomé de Las Casas' *Brevísima relación*

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Translations of Bartolomé de Las Casas' *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (*Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*) are one of the major texts through which Dutch and French communities differentiated themselves from Spain and articulated a common group identity.¹ This study examines expressions of nation and nationhood in paratextual elements of late sixteenth and seventeenth-century Dutch and French translations of the *Brevísima relación*. This historical focus takes into account two developments in contemporary political theory that point to significant transformations that were taking place during the period in the conceptualization of large-scale communities (empires, kingdoms, duchies). Manuel DeLanda identifies the signing of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 as a historical threshold, for it was during the peace negotiations that the concept of sovereignty advanced by Jean Bodin in 1576 was put into practice through the use of legal definitions to delimit and consolidate territorial states. Other means through which the concept of sovereignty was put into practice include the publication of controversial books that were seen as instrumental for creating a sense of unity among people against a foreign community. Taking into account that the translations of the *Brevísima relación* were deployed to gather support against Spanish dominion in the Low Countries, there is no doubt that the printing and circulation of this book played a role in articulating a sense of unity.

In approaching the *Brevísima relación*, it is important to emphasize that the book was often sold as part of an assemblage in bound editions that also included books that have yet to be taken into account in contemporary studies of the treatise. Thus, the present study concentrates on the paratextual elements of Dutch and French translations of the *Brevísima relación*, with particular attention to the books with which the translations were bound. The rationale for this focus lies in the widely accepted view among book historians that the paratextual elements of books can shape the reading experience, “continuously inform[ing] the process of reading, offering multiple points of entry, interpretation and contestation.”² In his analysis of book compilations and collections in the English Renaissance, Jefferey Todd Knight reminds modern readers accustomed to ready-bound books that “books have not always existed in discreet, self-enclosed units.”³ He notes that books were “fluid and adaptable objects, always prone to intervention and

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¹ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Sevilla: Sebastián Trujillo, 1552).

² Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

³ Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance*

change.”⁴ The Dutch and French translations of Las Casas’ *Brevísima relación* amply illustrate that observation.

This study reveals that Dutch and French translations of Las Casas’ text tell a story about how communities rivaling or threatened by Spain imagined themselves. The role of stories, as DeLanda observes, is not “representing the facts but rigidifying the identities of the conflicting parties, the narratives being part of a process of group boundary construction.”⁵ Through an analysis of the paratextual elements of Dutch and French translations of the *Brevísima relación*, the study shows that the process of group boundary construction that is elaborated in the books corresponds with parallel military and economic processes of nation formation. In other words, expressions of the unity of a community coincide with material expressions (e.g., military and economic efforts) of territorial consolidation.

A Defiant Nation: The *Brevísima* in the Dutch War

In the last quarter of the sixteenth and during the seventeenth century, numerous translations of Las Casas’ *Brevísima relación* were published in Amsterdam, one of Europe’s leading publishing capitals. The act of translating and printing the *Brevísima relación* should be seen in light of the treatise’s status in Spain, where it was subject to the 1556 legislation prohibiting the publication and sale of books that were not approved by the Council of the Indies. The *Brevísima relación*, which was published without royal license in 1552, was additionally subject to the 1556 legislation on account of the controversial subject with which it dealt. In his *Brevísima relación*, the Spanish Dominican friar (famous for his debate with Juan Gines de Sepúlveda in Valladolid) denounces the horrors committed by the Spanish conquerors against Amerindians in America with the hope of swaying Emperor Charles V to reform the laws regulating the Spanish colonizers’ claims over the labour of Amerindian people through an institution known as *encomienda*. The *Brevísima relación* became the weapon of choice among Spain’s rivals, who rushed to translate, publish, and circulate it widely, as part of an effort to disseminate a view of the Spanish as a cruel, hypocritical, avaricious, tyrannical, and intolerant people – what became known as the “Black Legend.”

The process of translation was an important factor in that project. In her discussion of translation, Naoki Sakai aptly points out that “the politico-ethical significance of translation is always complicit with the construction, transformation, or disruption of power relations.”⁶ Indeed, the vilification of the Spanish monarchy that is evident in the translations of the *Brevísima relación* is complicit with an attempt to shift power relations.

The first translation of Las Casas’ text into Dutch was published in 1578, and then into French a year later, subsequently followed by regular re-editions throughout the period of conflict between Spain and the Low Countries (the Dutch Revolt, 1568-1648). A look at the translations of the title into various languages conveys an idea of the multiple significations that publishers and booksellers exploited in the marketing of Las Casas’ text. For example, in the

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, Kindle Edition ed. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), 1109-10.

⁶ Naoki Sakai, "Translation," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Maryanne Cline Horowitz (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), 2364.

1578 Dutch translation the title reads, *Seer cort verhaal van de destructie van d'Indien*, which loosely translates into English as the *Very Short Narration of the Destruction of the Indies*.⁷ That Dutch translation of the title contrasts with Jacques Miggrode's 1579 French translation. Miggrode, who was known for his anti-Catholic stance, translates the title thus: *Tyrannies et cruautez des Espagnols, perpetrees e's Indes Occidentales, qu'on dit le Nouveau Monde*. His translation leaves no doubt about its propagandistic ends. In the sixteenth century, the word *relación* referred to official accounts requested and presented before the royal court.⁸ Whereas *Brevísima relación* can be translated as a brief official account, in Miggrode's translation, there is reference to the tyrannies and cruelties of the Spanish in the West Indies. Early modern significations of tyranny associate the word with infringement of natural law, tyranny being considered as grave a crime as human sacrifice and bestiality. The translated title therefore raises questions about whether Spain possessed the legal and moral authority to claim a monopoly over non-Christian territories. It also puts into question Spain's Christianizing mission. Further, the subtitle, which reads "*Pour servir d'exemple & aduertissement aux XVII Provinces du Pais Bas. Heureux celuy qui deuiet sage En voyant d'autruy le dommage*" ("Happy are those who become wise/By seeing in others their demise"), is indicative of the audience to whom it is addressed and the message that it sought to deliver. Directed at the seventeen Dutch provinces, it warns the territories under Hapsburg rule to learn from the sufferings of others: if they continue to side with the Spanish Crown, they too can expect to become subject to the unjust and lawless rule that the Spanish impose on Amerindians in the New World.

A similar contrast can be drawn between the straightforward title of the 1578 Dutch translation and a 1596 Dutch translation of the *Brevísima relación*, titled *Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye in West-Indien (The Mirror of Spanish Tyranny, in the West Indies)*.⁹ In this later translation, reprinted at a time when the Spanish army had lost its foothold in the Low Countries, the association of Spain's actions with tyranny continues to be drawn, raising questions about the legitimacy of the Spanish monarchy's political claims. And, as was the case with Miggrode's translation, the translation of the title invites readers to draw lessons from the example of Spain's treatment of other peoples subject to its rule. This is suggested by the ironic use of the word *spieghel* (mirror). In contrast to the mirror of princes genre of books, which model and project to the prince the virtues he should display in his future role as monarch, the mirror in the *Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye* reflects the vices of the Spanish monarchy in America that the readers should deplore and resist.

The vices with which Spain is linked in the earlier title translation re-emerge in the reprints of the *Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye* in 1607 and 1620.¹⁰ As was the case in the late 1590s, the power relations between the Spanish monarchy and the Low Countries had shifted in favour of the latter. This power shift is expressed in the narratives about Spain elaborated in these newer versions. It should be noted that the reprint of the *Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye* in 1607 coincided with the year in which the Dutch rebels and the Spanish initiated truce talks to bring an

⁷ Bartolomé de las Casas, *Seer cort verhaal van de destructie van d'Indien* (S.l., 1578).

⁸ For a classic study on the genre of "relación" in early modern Spanish historiography and literature, see Walter Mignolo, "Cartas, crónicas y relaciones del descubrimiento y la conquista," in *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*, vol. 1, ed. Luis Iñigo Madrigal (Madrid: Cátedra, 1982), 57-116.

⁹ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye, in West Indien* (Amsterdam: Nicolaes Biestkens de Longhe, 1596).

¹⁰ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Spieghel der Spaenscher Tyrannye in West-Indien* (Amsterdam: Cornelis Claesz, 1607). Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Den Spiegel der Spaensche Tyranny geschiet in West-Indien* (Amsterdam: J.E. Cloppenburg, 1620).

end to the war. A ceasefire was negotiated in 1609 and one of the terms of the treaty demanded that the Dutch give up their trade in Spanish America. This demand calls attention to the detrimental economic impact of Dutch trade on Spain's economy and on its monopoly over Spanish American resources. Although the twelve-year truce paused Dutch plans to found the West Indian Trading Company, the Dutch formed alliances with Spain's rivals by founding embassies in England and France. Furthermore, when the truce ended in 1621, they established the West Indian Trading Company (WIC), which led to increased trade in the West Indies. In this context, the publication of the *Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye* in 1620 may have played the role of a publicity campaign supporting renewal of both economic and military conflict. The publication and circulation of the *Spieghel der Spaensche Tyrannye* thus converged with Prince Maurits' strategy of drawing the attention of the Spanish away from the Low Countries and on to the Spanish Caribbean.¹¹

The Dutch and Miggrode translations of Las Casas' treatise illustrate the role that translations of his text had in processes of group boundary construction. Building on Las Casas' denunciatory text, Dutch and French anti-Catholic translations construe the Spanish as destructive, lawless, immoral, and barbaric people in an effort to solidify an oppositional group identity whose shared suffering with Amerindians might have generated empathy from European neighbors. Furthermore, identification with Spain's Amerindian victims may have served to buttress Dutch military resistance on moral grounds. In his study of France's ambivalent attitude toward the Spanish, Jonathan Hart observes that vilifications of Spain were one facet of that relation. Other facets include admiration and the wish to imitate Spain's successes.¹² A closer look at the books that are bound with the translations of the *Brevísima relación* requires that Hart's observations be revised slightly. As will be shown in the remainder of this study, other dimensions of group boundary construction included delight in the demise of others and the sense of mastery over others.

French Expressions of Nationhood

In the period from 1648 to 1698, the *Brevísima relación* was published intermittently (only ten extant editions are recorded for this period). Yet while the publication of the *Brevísima relación* ceased to be of utility in the campaign for independence from Spanish rule in the Low Countries, the text nonetheless became useful for Spain's other rivals. Recounting the full publishing history of the *Brevísima relación* and the role of its publication in the propagation of the Black Legend is outside the scope of the present study; however, it is important to acknowledge that the translation and dissemination of the *Brevísima relación* at different points in the seventeenth century by various social actors, including German Protestants, as well as English and French reformists, sought to turn the tide against Catholic Spain.¹³

An examination of the books that were bound with French translations of the *Brevísima relación* yields a more complex picture of expressions of nationhood. These books include the

¹¹ H. Den Heijer, *De Geschiedenis van de WIC* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1994), 23-31.

¹² Jonathan Locke Hart, *Representing the New World: The English and French Uses of the Example of Spain*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

¹³ For a study on the publication of Las Casas' *Brevísima* and the Black Legend, see Ricardo García Cárcel, *La leyenda negra: Historia y opinión*, 3 ed. (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998). Also see, Rómulo D. Carbia, *Historia de la leyenda negra hispano-americana* (Buenos Aires,: Ediciones Orientación española, 1943).

Relation curieuse des voyages du Sieur de Montauban, Capitaine des filibustiers en Guinée and *L'Art de voyager utilement*.¹⁴ Jean Louis de Lorme, a Huguenot bookseller, printed and produced both books in Amsterdam in 1698 for distribution in France. Historians of the book have pointed out that bookbinding was an additional process that book collectors often incurred at their own expense and that, with the exception of the Bible, books that were sold as an assemblage, like those under consideration here, were generally cheap books marketed to a general public. An aim to increase profits may account for Lorme's strategic publication of these two sets. The *Relation curieuse* is the tale of a French pirate, while *L'Art de voyager* is a travel manual. Although in both cases the *Brevísima relación* bears the same translated title, *Relation des voyages et des découvertes que les Espagnols ont fait dans les Indes Occidentales* (Relation of the Voyages and Discoveries that the Spanish Made in West Indies), only one of them names the translator, whose name is J.B. Morvan de Bellegarde, a former Jesuit.

Earlier, in the discussion of the publication of *Brevísima relación* in the Low Countries, it was proposed that expressions of nationhood therein elaborated coincided with contemporaneous economic and military developments. A similar observation can be made regarding the French translations of the Las Casas' treatise. Lorme's publication of the two sets of the *Brevísima relación* were printed shortly after the end of the Nine Years War (1688-97). For France, the end of the war meant the acquisition of Haiti from Spain. However, this power shift was well underway throughout the war, beginning with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and during the war, when Spain's military and economic vulnerability became obvious to the members of the Grand Alliance.¹⁵ The binding of Las Casas' denunciatory text with the adventures of a French pirate who mocked Spain's naval power further publicized the view that the Spanish monarchy was no longer able to defend its territorial and material interests in Europe and in the Atlantic coastal areas of America.¹⁶ As will be shown below, expressions of the unity of the French government and its people thrived on the ruin of the Spanish monarchy.

Although the translation of the title of the *Brevísima relación* in both French versions is relatively straightforward, the images that accompany the books resemble the work of the Belgian Protestant exile and famous copper plate engraver, Théodor De Bry. The images are similar to De Bry's 1598 Latin edition of the *Brevísima relación*, with its copper plate engravings that offer grisly representations of the abuses of Amerindian people at the hands of Spanish colonizers.¹⁷ These references undoubtedly called attention to Spanish persecution of Amerindian and Dutch people, adding a moral dimension to the view of an economically and militarily weakened Spain. In addition to the depictions of Spanish torturers that populate this plate, in the *Relation curieuse*, which was bound with the *Brevísima relación*, Captain

¹⁴ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Relation des voyages et des de'couvertes que les Espagnols ont fait dans les Indes Occidentales; Ecrute par dom B. de Las-Casas, Eveque de Chiapa. Avec la Relation curieuse des voyages du Sieur de Montauban, Capitaine des filibustiers en Guinée l'an 1695* (Amsterdam: Chez J. Louis de Lorme, 1698). Bartolomé de las Casas, *Relation des voyages et des découvertes que les Espagnols ont fait dans les Indes occidentales; L'art de voyager utilement: Suivant la copie de Paris*, trans. J. B. Morvan de Bellegarde (Amsterdam: Chez Jean Louis de Lorme de l'imprimerie de Daniel Boulesteye de la Contie, 1698). Lorme was born ca. 1665. He worked with David Mortier, a Dutch bookseller in London. See, Huguenot Society of London, "Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London," (London, 1952).

¹⁵ Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806*, Oxford History of Early Modern Europe (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 741-42.

¹⁶ This had already been proved in the French Siege of Barcelona, in 1697. The war ended with the Treaty of Rijswijk.

¹⁷ For more on this topic, see Tom Conley, "De Bry's Las Casas," in *Amerindian Images and the Legacy of Columbus*, ed. Rene Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

Montauban, a French buccaneer with extensive pirating experience in Spanish territories, produces an account of his mockery of Spanish control in New Spain, Cartagena, Florida, the Canary Islands, and Cape Verde.¹⁸ While most of the account focuses on his last adventure, which takes place off the coast of West Africa, the Captain is not shy about boasting that in his earlier years “j’ai pénétré jusques dans les colonies les plus reculées de nos Ennemis, pour les détruire, & ruiner leur comerce” (“I penetrated into the most remote Colonies of the Enemies, to destroy ‘em, and to ruin their Commerce”). Henry Kamen observes that “During the second half of the seventeenth century, in which Spain’s inability to defend its Empire became obvious, the European powers struggled with each other for control of the Caribbean islands as bases for economic expansion.”¹⁹ Indeed, Montauban’s action-packed account confirms that chaos reigned in the Atlantic Ocean as Dutch, English, and French pirates moved freely to and fro among formerly Spanish territories.

While the tales of a boasting pirate call attention to the waning power of Spain and the rise of new actors on the world stage, relations between the recently defined European nation-states are envisioned in competitive terms. The importance of the role of travel in this competition can be inferred from the travel manual that is bound with Las Casas’ text. In *L’Art de voyager*, the author incites readers to view people from other nations from a competitive perspective. Commenting on how early modern England’s imperial ambitions shaped its perception of other societies, the historian Anna Suranyi observes that in their travel writings the English “viewed other countries according to whether they were imperial powers to be emulated, or possessed servile peoples to be vanquished.”²⁰ A similar attitude is present in *L’Art de voyager*,²¹ which envisions travel to neighboring European countries as an opportunity to scrutinize their customs and draw conclusions about their morality. In *L’Art de voyager* the author views Spain as a nation of servile and conquerable people.

Differentiations should be made between conceptualizations of travel as conceived in *L’Art de voyager* and in the tradition of the Grand Tour. The crowning piece of a young man’s liberal education, the Grand Tour was understood as having the potential to refine a man’s manner and artistic sensibilities. James Buzard aptly refers to the Grand Tour as “an ideological exercise,” insofar as the purpose of travel was to “round out the education of young men of the ruling classes by exposing them to the treasured artefacts and ennobling society of the continent,” an experience that would in turn prepare them to “assume the leadership positions preordained for them at home.”²² This understanding of travel is operative in *L’Art de voyager*, where the

¹⁸ *Relation des voyages et des de'couvertes que les Espagnols ont fait dans les Indes Occidentales; Ecrite par dom B. de Las-Casas, Eveque de Chiapa. Avec la Relation curieuse des voyages du Sieur de Montauban, Capitaine des filibustiers en Guinée l'an 1695*: 365. Henry Kamen explains that buccaneer is synonymous with pirate. “From the island bases, unlicensed traders operated throughout the area. Some of them were clearly 'pirates', preying not only on Spanish vessels but on shipping of all nations. They came to be known as 'buccaneers' (*boucaniers* in French) from their outdoors life-style, grilling meat from wild cattle over a *boucan* or grill placed over an open fire.” Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain became a World Empire, 1492-1763* (NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 427.

¹⁹ Kamen, *Empire*, 427.

²⁰ Anna Suranyi, *The Genius of the English Nation: Travel Writing and National Identity in Early Modern England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 17-18.

²¹ According to the OCLC WorldCat, this work was “Often bound together with Las Casas’ *Relation des voyages*.” Cataloguists attribute its authorship to J.B. Chèvremont.

²² James Buzard, “The Grand Tour and After (1660-1840),” in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38. For a discussion of women travelers in the eighteenth century in the context of the Grand Tour, see Rosemary Sweet,

anonymous author speaks of travel as an activity through which men assume their role among the nation's ruling class by seeking to "get an insight into State-Policy" of the countries to which they travel.²³ The author explains, for example, that travelers should gather information about other cultures and derive observations that may be of use for the nation's government.

Unlike the pubescent young men whose parents financed their Grand Tour through Rome, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and Amsterdam, the traveler addressed in *L'Art de voyager* is neither an adolescent nor an older man, but rather a man between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five. Attention to this age specification, explains the author, is important because if the traveler is too young he is easily impressionable and risks adopting a relativist perspective toward his faith. If he is too old, his mind is too narrow, and he will be unable to learn. The ideal traveler envisioned by the author of *L'Art de voyager* should have obtained a good education prior to travel. He should also know the policies of the countries he visits. Citing a biblical passage in Ecclesiastes that says, "to become wise a man must go into strange countries," the author explains that the traveler should go abroad to achieve wisdom.²⁴ The wisdom that the traveler gains through the study of other societies, says the author, lies in his ability to draw conclusions about their morality through the scrutiny of their "maxims, manners, and customs." In contrast to the notion of travel that informed the Grand Tour, which was primarily of an educational and status-seeking nature, in *L'Art de voyager* knowledge about other societies is valued from a utilitarian perspective.

The author's description of the process through which the male elite traveler acquires information about people from other nations suggests that his observation of them involves a specifically situated subject position and agenda. The subject position of the traveler is that of a hunter, whose quest for knowledge about other peoples is driven by a desire to use that knowledge to conquer them. For example, in one instance the author likens the role of the traveler seeking information from his informants to the role of the cunning hunter and his prey. The cunning hunter, he explains, feigns not having seen his game, "merely to surprise it the more easily."²⁵ He then explains that the intelligent traveler who seeks to know the religion, morality, and policy of foreign countries, first needs to "watch himself and study others," knowing how to "transform himself into the shape of others, and so to conceal his own." When seeking knowledge from the inhabitants of another country, the traveler, like the hunter, "must make as if he did not hear some things, and as if he understood much less, and discover'd nothing at all." The consequences of this, he continues, are that because the traveler will be regarded as less intelligent, he will be less suspected. He adds that the person with whom he converses will either speak in "more open and intelligible terms" or "will immediately give another turn to the Subject in hand by different Expressions" that may "give some light into what he would conceal or disguise."²⁶

Cities and the Grand Tour (West Nyack, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 25.

²³ Citations are derived from the English translation. Bartolomé de las Casas, *An Account of the First Voyages and Discoveries Made by the Spaniards in America: Containing the Most Exact Relation Hitherto Publish'd, of their Unparallel'd Cruelties on the Indians, in the Destruction of Above Forty Millions of People. With the Propositions Offer'd to the King of Spain, to Prevent the Further Ruin of the West-Indies. To Which is Added, The Art of Travelling, Shewing How a Man May Dispose his Travels to the Best Advantage* (London: Printed by John Darby for Daniel Brown at the Black Swan and Bible without Temple-Bar, John Harris at the Harrow in Little Britain, and Andrew Bell at the Cross-keys and Bible in Cornhil, 1699), 25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

Having gathered information, the task of the traveler is to apply clear judgment to his observations in order to speak accurately of what he has observed.²⁷ Furthering the educational objectives he associates with travel, the author draws on his own experiences to illustrate the kinds of judgment to which he has arrived throughout the course of his travels. Among the many examples, he shares his assessment of the Spanish people, whom he compares with the Dutch. He points out that whereas the Dutch “apply themselves more than any other Nation to dive into the Principles of Universal Policy,” the Spanish neglect and have a contempt for those same policies.²⁸ Presumably, these “Principles of Universal Policy” are abstract policy principles, the normativity of which are camouflaged by a presumption that it is possible to apprehend their inherent verity, in a manner akin to notions of natural law. He then notes that although the Spanish do not actually know the Principles of Universal Policy,” they “appropriate them to themselves without any distinction of Actions, Persons, Interests and Obstacles, which foils ‘em at every turn, and defeats ‘em in all Treaties.” In the context of Spain’s loss of Haiti to France following the conclusion of the Nine-Years War, these assertions illustrate a power shift in Franco-Spanish relations. While the metaphor of the traveler as cunning hunter is meant to enforce the strategy that travelers should adopt when abroad, it remarkably encapsulates the competitive, predatory, and oppositional characteristics that constitute French expressions of (male elite) nationhood relative to Spain.

Conclusion

This study has examined Dutch and French expressions of nationhood in late sixteenth and seventeenth century printings of translations of the *Brevísima relación*. Through an examination of paratextual elements in these versions of Las Casas’ text, the study has drawn a correspondence between the hardening of the identities of the conflicting groups and parallel economic and military actions that were similarly aimed at consolidating territorial boundaries among these groups. In the Low Countries, reprints of the *Brevísima relación* associate Spain with vice and lawlessness, delegitimizing and vilifying it while exploiting torture imagery to garner empathy from neighbouring countries. Complementing this construal of Spain, the paratextual elements of the Dutch translations of the *Brevísima relación* incite rebel fighters to defy Spain (a defiant nation). Readers of the *Brevísima relación* in France were invited to delight in the ruin of Spain through the stories of a pirate who reveled in having contributed to Spain’s economic ruin. In a second French translation of Las Casas’ text, the author of a travel manual encouraged readers to approach other nations through the eyes of a cunning hunter. In light of Spain’s weakened position in 1697, the author of the travel manual encourages readers to assume the perspective of mastery over others in its perspective on Spain and other European countries.

²⁷ Ibid., 13.

²⁸ Ibid., 32.