

Western Indians and Eastern Spaniards in the territory of *La Florida*  
early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: a story of speakers, interpreters and translators

*Juan Miguel Zarandona*  
Universidad de Valladolid  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.12795/futhark.2009.i04.10>

**Abstract:** In 1998, George Kennedy published a monograph that paved the way for the study of Rhetoric from a comparative approach rather than focusing on Western practices. Consequently, “Chapter 5” is devoted to ‘North American Indian Rhetoric’ and begins to deal with what the author claims to be the earliest picture of Indian oratory in this geographical area: *Historia de la Florida* of the Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616), published in Lisbon in 1605. There is a 20<sup>th</sup> century English translation by Varner & Varner: *The Florida of the Inca* (1951). From the point of view of Rhetoric, the interest lies in the fact that there are various speeches attributed to Indians, which were originally filtered through interpreters, and which were later nostalgically recalled, and artistically composed by Garcilaso. Taking all these facts into account, this article aims to study those speeches from an interdisciplinary point of view, adding findings of Translation Studies to those of Rhetoric. The history of *The Florida* as a text is the history of the making of a hybrid, cross-cultural, multilingual and multimedia process by means of many rewritings. And interpreters and translators were the main protagonists of those endeavours. The relevant questions are quite evident, among others: What is left of the original speeches in the English translation? What may translators have been adding throughout the centuries? What is the changing view of the American Indians involved, from ‘noble savage’ to what?

**Resumen:** En 1998, George Kennedy publicó un manual que abrió la puerta al estudio de la Retórica desde una perspectiva comparada en vez de seguir centrándose sólo en los moldes largamente establecidos por la tradición occidental. Por ello, su Capítulo 5º se ocupa de las prácticas retóricas de los indios de Norteamérica y comienza analizando lo que el autor considera el ejemplo más antiguo recogido de dichas prácticas en esta zona geográfica: La *Historia de la Florida* del Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616), publicado en Lisboa en 1605. De dicha *Historia* existe una traducción del siglo veinte al inglés a cargo de Varner y Varner: *The Florida of the Inca* (1951). Desde el punto de vista de la Retórica, el interés yace en el hecho de que este volumen incluye una serie de discursos atribuidos a los indios, que, evidentemente, nos han llegado filtrados a través de intérpretes y fueron más tarde reescritos de forma artística por el propio Garcilaso. Teniendo todos estos factores en cuenta, este artículo busca estudiar dichos discursos desde un punto de vista interdisciplinario, y añadir algunas de las ideas fundamentales de los Estudios de Traducción a las de la Retórica. La historia textual de *La Florida* es la historia de un proceso híbrido, multimedia e intercultural gracias a un buen número de reescrituras. Y los intérpretes y los traductores fueron los protagonistas principales de estos esfuerzos de transformación. Las preguntas clave resultan muy evidentes: ¿Qué queda de los discursos originales en la traducción inglesa ya mencionada? ¿Qué pueden haber añadido los traductores a lo largo de los siglos? ¿Qué visión se deduce los indios americanos, desde la teoría del ‘buen salvaje’ a todas las demás?, etc.

**Key words:** Inca Garcilaso, *The Florida*, The Americas, Spain, Translation, Interpreting, Rhetoric, speech, writing.

**Palabras clave:** Inca Garcilaso, *La Florida*, las Américas, España, Traducción, Interpretación, Retórica, discurso oral, escritura.

### Introduction: a challenge accepted

Ten years ago, George A. Kennedy published a breakthrough monograph entitled: *Comparative Rhetoric. An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction* (1998). The first part of this title refers to a new sub-discipline - *Comparative Rhetoric* - which Kennedy defines as: "The cross-cultural study of rhetorical traditions as they exist or have existed in different societies around the world"<sup>1</sup>. Four main objectives are proposed for this new field of study<sup>2</sup>: a) Using comparative methods to identify what is universal and what is distinctive about any one rhetorical tradition in comparison to others; b) Trying to formulate –drawing on the first theory – a general theory of Rhetoric that will apply to all societies; c) Developing and testing structures and terminology that can be used to describe rhetorical practices cross-culturally; and d) Applying what has been learned from comparative study to contemporary cross-cultural communication. In other words, all the needs of a new sub-discipline are contemplated: a theoretical branch, a descriptive-empirical branch, an applied branch, and specific research methods and terminology, etc.

Kennedy also offers a general comparative overview of the history and diversity of world Rhetoric distributed between two main parts: 'societies without writing' and 'ancient literate societies'. The first includes: 'social animals', 'early humans', 'Aboriginal Australians', 'North American Indians' and 'African and South Pacific peoples'. The second deals with: 'the Near East: Mesopotamia and Egypt', 'China', 'India' and 'Greece and Rome', i.e. the Western tradition<sup>3</sup>. The most relevant claim made by means of this complete collection of case studies can be worded as follows: The Western

---

<sup>1</sup> George A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric. An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, vii-viii.

concept of Rhetoric, whether as the technique of a public speaker or orator, or as the art of persuasion or persuasive speaking and, subsequently, writing, is a *universal phenomenon*. Individuals everywhere seek to persuade others to take or refrain from taking some action, or to hold or discard some belief. It is the appellative function of language. The application of these ideas to all human/non-human communities and the study of what is common and what is peculiar to all of them constitutes a fascinating research subject. This is a *challenge* that is still quite preliminary and requires further studies by other scholars and scientists<sup>4</sup>. This article accepts this challenge.

### North American Indians and Rhetoric

Consequently, this article will focus on North American Indians and discuss one example, mentioned by Kennedy, in greater detail: *La Florida* of the Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega. This article will also take advantage of the proposals made by the discipline of Translation Studies. However, among the many examples and testimonies discussed by Kennedy related to the rhetorical art of North American Indians<sup>5</sup>, there is one that is clearly emphasised: the so-called *Logan's Speech*. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) included, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), a defence of the Indians who are described as intellectual equals to Europeans: especially for their eloquence in council or their art of persuasion and personal influence – some of them are orators comparable to Demosthenes and Cicero – and for their bravery in war. The leading example is the aforementioned *Logan's Speech* – made by a Mingo Indian chief – who spoke to Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia in 1774.

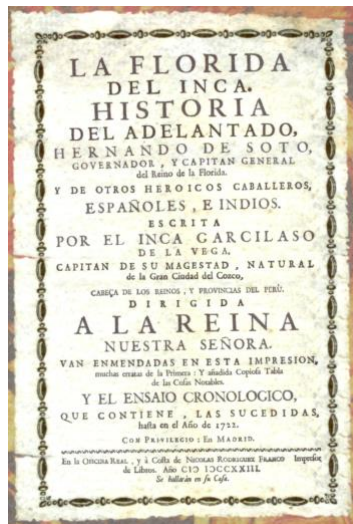
---

<sup>4</sup> Kennedy, 1-7.

<sup>5</sup> Kennedy, 83-111.

It is indeed the most famous of all speeches attributed to an Indian in the colonial period, but it is also a very doubtful one as an example of Indian Rhetoric: it is known that it was edited by Jefferson; only a written text is available, a letter from Logan to Lord Dunmore, which means that there is no proof of its ever having been delivered orally; it is available in English, so it has to be a translation or a pseudo-translation; and there is phraseology reminiscent of the English Bible. Indeed, it really seems to be the typical White people construction or view of the Indian as a *noble savage* current in the Enlightenment in Europe. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is quite problematic to accept it as an authentic example of Indian Rhetoric.

### *La Florida* of the Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega



*La Florida* of the Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega, written in Spanish between 1567 and 1599 and published in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1605, has been claimed to be “the earliest picture of Indian oratory in what is now the United States of America”<sup>6</sup>. What cannot be doubted is the fact that it is a key text – a chronicle – to understand the early history of this country as it narrates and records the fortunes and misfortunes of the expedition of Hernando de Soto (1500-1542), a legendary Spanish conqueror from the region of

<sup>6</sup> Kennedy, 84.

Extremadura, central Spain, who travelled through a vast area of the South, East and South-East of the USA from 1538-39 to 1542-43. It cannot be doubted either that it was a very painful work to write – as emphasised by Varner & Varner:

At just what date the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega first became obsessed with the idea of recording the events of Hernando de Soto's conquest of that vast area of the North American continent which the Spaniards referred to as Florida is not certain, but from his own words we can ascertain that he was playing with the thought as early as 1567 and had completed a fourth of *The Florida* by 1587. Two years later he wrote the King that he was in the process of compiling a final draft of this story, and in 1591 he recorded within the pages of his manuscript that he was bringing the work to a close. The acquisition of new information necessitated revisions, and *The Florida* was not actually completed until 1599. Then five more years elapsed before this book received the approvals necessary for publication, and it was 1605 before it actually appeared in print<sup>7</sup>.

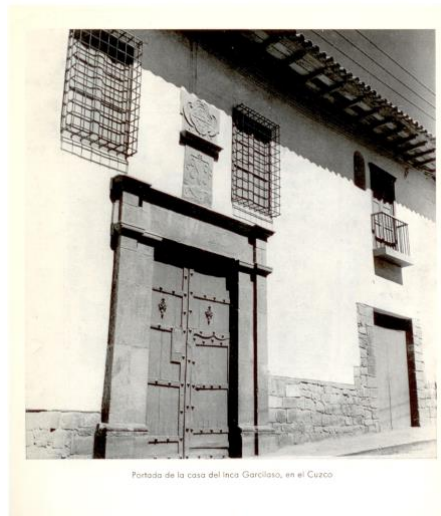
The work also displays a number of speeches attributed to Indians and many examples that could be regarded as instances of the noble savage subject matter. The Spanish seemed to have truly admired the courage, love of honour and eloquence of the Indians. Unfortunately, for a text with such characteristics, *The Florida* has enjoyed a very poor reception in English translation. Theodore Irving – Washington Irving's nephew – translated and

---

<sup>7</sup> John Grier Varner & Jeanette Johnson Varner (eds) (trans), *The Florida of the Inca* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1951), v.

published some parts of it in 1833. In 1881, a man named Bernard Shipp produced an abbreviated translation from a former French translation. And finally, American readers could appreciate it thanks to the full direct translation from Spanish by Verner and Verner in 1951. This article will return to this last translation later.

### The Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega



Who was this Inca Garcilaso de la Vega? He was born in Cuzco (Peru), the former capital of the Inca Empire, in 1539. He was the son of Spanish captain Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega and Isabel Chimu Ocllo, an Indian princess. In other words, he was the illegitimate offspring of a noble Spanish conqueror and a noble Indian woman, i.e. a mixed-race individual or *mestizo*. A new hybrid race and reality was born in those years in Latin

America: The Inca belonged to that first generation of *mestizos* whose destiny was to be something new under the sun. He was baptised Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, as his father did not allow the newly born child to have his family name.

In 1560, when he was twenty years old, his life changed dramatically: he travelled to Spain and settled in a place named

Montilla (Córdoba Province) in the region of Andalusia, where his father had some relatives. He never returned to America or Peru.

After years of trying unsuccessfully to become a glorious soldier, as his father and many of his ancestors had been, he left the army, and started a literary career, which proved a great success. Before he died in 1616, he had become the first great American-born *mestizo* man of letters and the founding father of Latin American literature. The following are his main works<sup>8</sup>:

- 1590. *Diálogos de Amor*: a translation from Italian to Spanish of *Dialoghi Di Amore* (completed in 1502, published in 1535) by Jehudah Abarbanel, better known as León Hebreo (ca 1460-1521), a Portuguese-Jewish humanist, who emigrated to Italy.
- 1596. *Relación de la descendencia de Garci Pérez de Vargas*: an account of his Spanish family lineage.
- 1605. *The Florida*: a chronicle of the exploration of North America.
- 1609. *Comentarios Reales*: a history and general compilation of the culture of the Inca nation.
- 1617. *Historia General del Perú*: second part of the *Comentarios Reales*. Published posthumously.

## A hybrid personality and literary legacy

---

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed account, see: Enrique Pupo-Walker, *Historia, creación y profecía en los textos del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega* (Madrid: Ediciones José Porrúa Turanzas, 1982), 5-83.



The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega changed his name in 1563 from his former Gómez Suárez de Figueroa to this combination of his father's name and the title of his mother's royal family, the Inca. With the new name, he wanted to symbolise his complex double personality and show that he was very proud of his two origins and cultures.

On the one hand, as a European Spaniard he translated *Diálogos de Amor*, and opened the gates of European Humanism and the New Learning of the Renaissance to *mestizos* like him. He also studied and recorded in writing the noble history of his Spanish family in his *Relación de la descendencia de Garci Pérez de Vargas*. On the other hand, as an American Indian he did what only a half-Indian writer could produce and make available for his contemporaries and for future generations: The *Comentarios Reales* and the *Historia General del Perú*. Both are a unique history of the Incas, their culture, folklore, glories, customs and land, etc.<sup>9</sup>

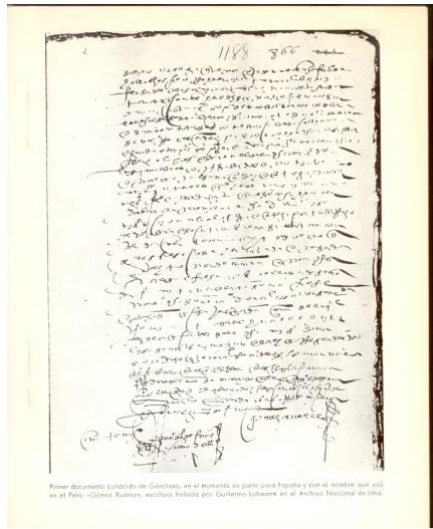
### **The genesis and development of *The Florida*: speakers, interpreters and translators**

As stated before, the Inca Garcilaso narrates the pioneer expedition of the Spanish conqueror and explorer Hernando de Soto (1500-1542) and his brave men through a vast region of

---

<sup>9</sup> See: Aurelio Miró Quesada y Sosa, *El Inca Garcilaso* (Madrid: Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, 1948), 107-120; Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce (ed), *El Inca Garcilaso en sus "Comentarios". Antología vivida* (Madrid: Gredos, 1970), 9-33, 255-256; Aurelio Miró Quesada y Sosa, *El Inca Garcilaso y otros estudios garcilasistas* (Madrid, Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1971), 145-163, 323-353; Sylvia L. Hilton (ed), *La Florida del Inca* (Madrid: Historia 16, 1986), 7-62; and Carmelo Sáenz de Santamaría, *Garcilaso de la Vega El Inca* (Madrid: Historia 16 - Quórum, 1987), 7-9, 87-94.

present-day South-Eastern United States of America, an area also called The Florida at the time. This band of adventurers left Spain in 1538, and departed from the present-day Florida State a year later, in 1539. After an epic wandering across a never-ending, never-visited territory by a White man, which lasted three years, De Soto died and was buried next to the Mississippi river in 1542. The last survivors arrived in Mexico City a year later, in 1543. The expedition seemed to have been a total failure to their contemporaries. Today we know better. In 1992, an excellent monograph-account of Florida's early history of conquistadors was published, dealing not only with Hernando de Soto, but also with the legendary names of Juan Ponce de León, Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, Pánfilo de Narváez, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and many others. The chapters, devoted to the Indian inhabitants of the region and their culture, social and political organisation, material life, etc., are particularly useful to assess those people properly<sup>10</sup>.



Editorial Maphre, 1992), 101-128.

Futhark 4 (2009)  
ISSN 1886-9300

In Madrid in 1562, i.e. many years after the official end of the expeditionary travel in 1543, the Inca Garcilaso met and befriended a man named Gonzalo Silvestre, who happened to be one of the few survivors of Hernando de Soto's expedition. They also became neighbours in their province of Córdoba. Both men could not avoid talking about their past lives in the New

XVI. *Descubrimiento y conquista* (Madrid:

Zarandona, *Western Indians*, 339-370

World, and Gonzalo Silvestre proved to be a first-class eyewitness for the Inca of what had happened in The Florida. There were some previous chronicles and other texts dealing with the unfortunate expedition, but nothing that could parallel a direct protagonist<sup>11</sup>.

As mentioned before, there are testimonies that Garcilaso started writing his *The Florida* from 1567, and that he did not complete it until the end of 1599. It was still to take the Inca five years to publish it in 1605 in Lisbon. A first French translation was published in 1670, followed by other early translations in 1709, 1711, 1715, 1731 and 1735. There was also a German translation in 1753. However, as stated before, the first complete translation into English – the main language of today's inhabitants of The Florida – was only to come into existence as late as 1951.

What cannot be denied, however, is the fact that *The Florida* represents a unique instance – or story – of inter-textualities, rewritings, and inter- and intra-linguistic translation and interpreting. To support this claim, it is now important to recall the claim that these chronicles were the earliest picture of Indian oratory in what is now the United States of America. It is true that *The Florida* includes some speeches supposedly uttered by the Indians themselves. If we set the actual pronunciation of their oral text as our starting point, and we put an end to this unstoppable process of change in the 1951 English translation, we have to consider – at least – the following central steps:

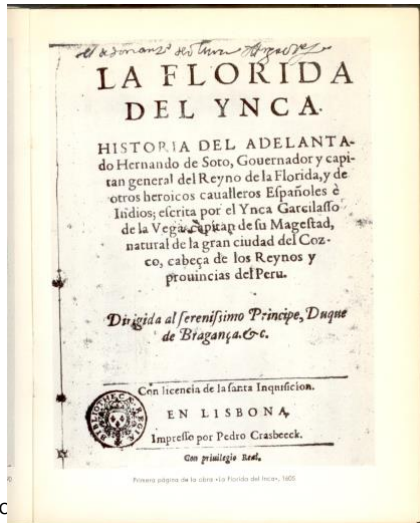
- Indian speeches in their native languages.

---

<sup>11</sup> Garcilaso also benefited from two manuscripts written by two soldiers who participated in the De Soto expedition: Alonso de Carmona and his *Peregrinaciones*, and Juan Coles and his *Relación*. See: Hilton, 24.

- Those speeches were interpreted for the Spanish soldiers (interpretation).
- Years later, Gonzalo Silvestre produced an oral recounting or retelling of those acts of interpretation for his friend Garcilaso de la Vega (intra-lingual oral translation).
- The Inca wrote his chronicle taking advantage of Silvestre's retelling and from other sources, written and oral, as well as his own imagination and memories of his native Peru and Indian relatives and friends. Now we have an artistically composed text<sup>12</sup>.
- This text began to be translated into different languages: French, German, English (inter-lingual written translation).
- Finally, in 1951, it was finally and fully imported into English, including the speeches of the Indians.

It is not easy to find a more hybrid, cross-cultural, multilingual and multimedia process of text transformation. However, the same doubt associated with *Logan's Speech* can be raised here: what is left of the original speeches after so many transformations? In addition, many experts believe that the Inca Garcilaso was not a reliable historian<sup>13</sup>. Although



<sup>12</sup> In order to learn more about the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, see the work of the Inca Salinas, *La traducción como instrumento y estética en la literatura hispanoamericana del siglo XVI* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2003), 449-540.

<sup>13</sup> Hilton, 7-62.

he always claimed that he had only transcribed what he had been told, it is impossible to deny that:

- He idealised the enterprise totally. He could only see total heroism both in Spaniards and Indians.
- It is too literary. It is not an ordinary chronicle, but was clearly modelled on contemporary Spanish fictional genres such as 'novelas de caballería', 'novelas bizantinas' or 'novelas italianas'.
- It is too imaginative and passionate, and displays too many fictional passages.
- The Inca is too involved and prone to vindicate his Indian roots by means of De Soto's expedition.
- The speeches imitate too closely those of the Greek-Roman classics and Renaissance men of letters. The Indians speak as if they were classical heroes.
- He wants to write a kind of historical discourse that presents positive models for life, models deserving of being imitated. This was his concept of History.
- He assumes the role of a propagandist of the Spanish Catholic Church and Empire, and of those powers that wanted to promote the colonisation of The Florida.

However, it is also impossible to deny that there might be some truth in those speeches.

### **The translators' preface by Varner & Varner**

John and Jeanette Varner, the translators responsible for the American 1951 rendition of the chronicle into English, provided an excellent port of entry to their work in the form of a *Preface* and a detailed *Introduction*, which include many intriguing ideas. There

is no better way to know a translator's frame of mind, ideas, practices and intentions than by analysing his or her own words in the translated text. Consequently, the following quotations will allow us to understand the Varners and their work, which must be our priority now:

It has seemed wise therefore to prepare a translation of this ever beguiling and significant old chronicle which will enable English readers to see the whole of Garcilaso's picture<sup>14</sup>.

Varner & Varner clearly seem to be aware of the key relevance and historical significance of this chronicle for the American nation and the urgent need to have a full, high-quality rendition thereof in English. The reasons for undertaking this task are very sound. We are entering the area of influence of the so-called 'Gideon Toury's preliminary norms'.

The text is complete and without alterations other than those required by the process of translation<sup>15</sup>.

The need – and justification – for a full rendering is re-emphasised here. They also prove to be no naïve translators, but professional ones who are well aware of the fact that the process of translation involves many changes if the product is to enjoy a level of high quality.

Our sole purpose has been to present clearly and accurately the meaning and feeling the Inca was trying to convey<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> Verner & Verner, vi.

<sup>15</sup> Verner & Verner, vi.

<sup>16</sup> Verner & Verner, vi.

They seem to claim that meaning comes first, and form second. It is very important when dealing with an old text to realise what demands more modernisation to become acceptable to contemporary readers.

In the main we adhere fairly closely to the syntax of the original, but when such procedure resulted in clumsiness, grotesquerie or obscurity, we sought a form which would be agreeable and at the same time uninjurious to sense and tone<sup>17</sup> (1951, vi).

We can interpret from this quote that no inter-lingual mixing is allowed or that we witness domesticating methods in action or, in other words, that full acceptability for target readers will be promoted. Form is also of the utmost importance.

In the process of translation, words of course present significant problems; for, dependent as they are in their meaning upon time, geographical location, and event context, they must be carefully chosen<sup>18</sup> (1951, vi).

The terminological competence, the time and place circumstances, the need for documentation, the pragmatics of language, and many other modern concepts associated with Translation Studies can easily be identified in this paragraph.

We attempted, therefore, to find those words which would preserve as much as possible of the music and thought of the Inca's Spanish while conveying his message without offense to a modern audience<sup>19</sup> (1951, vi).

---

<sup>17</sup> Verner & Verner, vi.

<sup>18</sup> Verner & Verner, vi.

<sup>19</sup> Verner & Verner, vi.

This paragraph can be regarded as another instance of the domestication of a foreign text for a target culture, the usually dominant practice in the history of translation.

Aware that the products of Garcilaso's mind cast in the Golden mould of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spain, we sought to acquaint ourselves adequately with the man and his environment and to interpret his story as we feel it should be interpreted – in the light of the age which produced it<sup>20</sup> (1951, vi).

Context and time are two great challenges when translating a history and culture-loaded text, but the role played by the author, the writer, the translator, and the man or woman behind it is central and unavoidable. This is indeed a modern concept.

### **Authors, texts, translations and ... translators**

In the late years of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Georges Bastin and Monique C. Cormier defended that thinking on translation has experienced some sound processes or key changes<sup>21</sup>. From focusing on 'objectivité' to doing it on 'subjectivité'; from 'invisibilité' to 'visibilité'. From priority interest in the 'texte' ('transfert', 'sens', 'equivalence linguistique'), then the 'destinataire' ('communication', 'equivalence de communication', 'function'), and finally the 'traducteur' ('creation', 'liberté', 'altérité'). 'Subjectivity', 'visibility', 'translator', 'creation', 'freedom', 'otherness',

---

<sup>20</sup> Verner & Verner, vi.

<sup>21</sup> Georges L. Bastin et M. Cormier, *Profession traducteur* (Montréal : Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2007), 45-49.



etc. are a good collection of words that can be used to understand the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega as a writer, translator, rethoric and human being. They can also be very helpful when dealing with his translations.

In addition, if the translator (rewriter, version-maker, adaptor, etc.) is far more important than has been regarded before, in order to know more about the Inca and to organise the findings, we propose taking advantage of the so-called classical rhetorical corpus<sup>22</sup> and apply it to Garcilaso, the man, and to his intellectual career. In other words, we encourage and entertain the idea that Garcilaso's life and work can also be interpreted as an elaborate rhetorical act – a discourse of himself and his uniqueness:

- INVENTIO – CAUSA (invention – cause). He symbolised a new kind of human being. He was always very proud of his hybrid origin and was able to realise its uniqueness and value. He has to lead the way for future American *mestizos*, for example, on how to become a great man of letters. This was the subject matter or cause of his life.
- DISPOSITIO (arrangement). The *exordio* (introduction) to his literary career was the translation of *Diálogos de Amor*. The *narratio* (narration), *The Florida*. The *argumentatio* (proof), the *Comentarios Reales*, and his *peroratio* (epilogue), his *Historia General del Perú*.
- ELOCUTION (style). He managed to become a brilliant humanist writer.
- MEMORIA (memory). He struggled to write all the experiences of his youth and those of the Incas and American Indians in general.

---

<sup>22</sup> David Pujante (2003), *Manual de Retórica* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 2003), 71-320.

- **ACTIO** (delivery). He had the opportunity to persuade others, as he could publish all his works, and some of them have been translated into different languages, which has greatly increased his potential readership.

### The English *Florida* and its speeches

Among its many merits, *La Florida* has always been praised for the famous speeches attributed to the Indians. Hilton also lists the most important ones in her introduction and edition of the work: Book II, Part I, Chapters XVI, XXI, XXV and XXVI; Book V, Part I, Chapters I and II; Book V, Part II, Chapters X and XI.

But, although Hilton's edition is a useful and very sophisticated textual treatment of an old work, indeed it is not the real text produced by the Inca Garcilaso. It is a modernised version for contemporary readers. The American translators did something similar. They stated their sources clearly: "The first edition of *The Florida* was published by Pedro Crasbeeck at Lisbon ... A reprint of this edition with emendations was made at Madrid in 1723 under the editorship of Andrés González Barcia Carballino y Zúñiga ... Other reissues have appeared, but the best known of the Spanish editions is that of 1723"<sup>23</sup>. Consequently, this rendition is both a translation and a modernised version of a classical text.

In other words, an original 16<sup>th</sup> century passage, like the following praising the rhetorical expertise of the Indians: "El Governador, oida la respuesta del Indio, fe admirò de vèr, que con tanta lobervia, y altivèz de animo acertafe vn Barbaro à decir cofas femejantes. Por lo qual de alli adelante procuro con mas infancia

---

<sup>23</sup> Varner & Varner, v.

atraerle à su amistad, embiandole muchos recaudos de palabras amorosas, y comedidas”<sup>24</sup>, was translated by Varner and Varner in 1951, and modernised<sup>25</sup> by Hilton in 1986, as shown by the following two paragraphs:

El gobernador, oída la respuesta del indio, se admiró de ver que con tanta soberbia y altivez de ánimo acertase un bárbaro a decir cosas semejantes. Por lo cual, de allí adelante, procuró con más instancia atraerle a su amistad, enviándole muchos recaudos de palabras amorosas y comedidas<sup>26</sup>.

On hearing the Indian’s reply, the Governor was astonished that a barbarian should manage to say such things with so much arrogance and loftiness of spirit. In consequence he persisted even more in his efforts to win the friendship of this man, sending him from then on many affectionately and courteously worded communications<sup>27</sup>.

---

<sup>24</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *La Florida del Inca. Historia del adelantado Hernando de Soto, gobernador, y capitán general del Reino de la Florida. Y de otros heroicos caballeros, españoles, e indios*, (Mairena del Aljarafe, Sevilla, Extramuros Edición – Facsímiles, [Facsimile of the 1723 Madrid reprint by Nicolás Rodríguez Franco, Impresor, with modifications of the Inca], 2007), 48.

<sup>25</sup> See: Hilton, 53, especially this paragraph: “La presente edición de *La Florida del Inca* está basada en la edición príncipe de 1605, si bien se han introducido algunas variantes. La puntuación se ha modernizado, al igual que la ortografía... Ahora bien, los cambios más importantes, por afectar al contenido y significado del texto, son aquéllos que hayan surgido del cotejo de la edición de 1605 con una *Fe de erratas* que hemos descubierto en uno de los ejemplares conservados en la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, y que ha pasado inadvertida por los estudiosos de la obra hasta hoy.”

<sup>26</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *La Florida*, ed. Sylvia L. Hilton (Madrid: Historia 16, 1986), 160.

<sup>27</sup> Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *The Florida of The Inca*, ed. & trans. John Grier Varner & Jeanette Johnson Varner (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1951), 119.

And it is not only their performance, delivery, or *actio* that provokes much admiration. Their ideas are also the object of great wonder:

Habiendo respondido los cuatro indios capitanes lo que en el capítulo pasado se ha dicho, el gobernador, no sin admiración de haber oído sus razones, volvió los ojos a los otros tres que estaban callando<sup>28</sup>.

The four Indian captains having responded with what we have told in the preceding chapter, the Governor, not without admiration for their reasoning, now cast his glance toward the other three prisoners who had remained silent<sup>29</sup>.

The two 20<sup>th</sup> century texts are not only close renditions as testified by the two former examples, but are also very careful to place the emphasis of the rhetorical competence on part of the Indians as a strategy to vindicate the Indian race and culture – something that was of the utmost importance to the Inca.

The art of persuasion is also used by Garcilaso to make his readers aware of the fact of the divided opinion among the Indians. Readers are subtly faced with that typical phenomenon among colonised or invaded peoples: some individuals adapt quickly and find the new culture more alluring, while others reject it and feel that their world is falling apart. The social division is clear and, consequently, rhetoric art finds many opportunities to prosper:

Bien parece que sois mozos y que os falta juicio y experiencia para decir lo que acerca de estos españoles decís. Loáislos

---

<sup>28</sup> Garcilaso, 1986, 188.

<sup>29</sup> Garcilaso, 1951, 153.

mucho de hombres virtuosos que a nadie hacen mal ni daño y que son muy valientes e hijos del Sol, y que merecen cualquier servicio que se les haga. La prisión en que os habéis metido y el ánimo vil y cobarde que en ella habéis cobrado en el breve tiempo que ha que os rendisteis a servir y ser esclavos os hace hablar como a mujeres, loando lo que debíades vituperar y aborrecer. ¿No miráis que estos cristianos no pueden ser mejores que los pasados, que tantas crueldades hicieron en esta tierra, pues son de una misma nación y ley? ¿No advertís en sus traiciones y alevosías? Si vosotros fuérades hombres de buen juicio, viérades que su misma vida y obras muestran ser hijos de diablo y no del Sol y la Luna, nuestros dioses, pues andan de tierra en tierra, matando, robando y saqueando cuanto hallan, tomando mujeres e hijas ajenas, sin traer las suyas. Y para poblar y hacer asiento no se contentan de tierra alguna de cuantas ven y huellan, porque tienen por deleite andar vagabundos, manteniéndose del trabajo y sudor ajenos<sup>30</sup>.

For you to say what you have said about these Spaniard would make it appear that you are mere boys lacking in judgment and experience. You praise them extensively as virtuous people who have done no harm or damage to anyone, and you proclaim them to be very valiant men who are sons of the Sun and as such merit whatever service may be rendered them. The bondage in which you have placed yourselves and the vile and cowardly spirit that you have assumed in the brief time since giving yourselves up to serve as slaves of Spaniards make you talk like women, praising as you do people whom you ought to vituperate and abhor. Do you not see that since these Christians are of the same government and race as those who perpetrated so many cruelties among us in the past, they can be no better? You take no note of their treason and perfidies. If you were men of good judgment you would perceive that their lives and deeds reveal them to be sons of the devil rather than sons of our gods, the

---

<sup>30</sup> Garcilaso, 1986, 172.

Sun and the Moon, for they go from land to land killing, robbing and sacking whatever they find, and possessing themselves of the wives and daughters of others without bringing any of their own. They are not content to colonize and establish a site on some of the land that they see and tread upon because they take great pleasure in being vagabonds and maintaining themselves by the labor and sweat of others<sup>31</sup>.

The speeches also provide different opportunities to discover that communication between the two races was made possible by means of interpreters, i.e. a unique historical testimony to the art and profession of interpreting:

De allí adelante, por las muchas persuasiones de Juan Ortiz y de los cuatro indios intérpretes que con él estaban, y por las promesas y juramentos que les hacían asegurándoles las vidas, empezaron a salir los más flacos, a darse de un o en uno y de dos en dos, tan remisamente que, cuando amaneció, no había cincuenta indios rendidos<sup>32</sup>.

From that time on, however, because of the many persuasions of Juan Ortiz and the four Indian interpreters with him who promised and assured them of their lives, the weakest began to come out and surrender one at a time and in pairs, but with such reluctance that by dawn not more than fifty had done so<sup>33</sup>.

Solo siete indios quedaron en la laguna, tan pertinaces y obstinados que ni los ruegos de las lenguas intérpretes, ni las promesas del gobernador, ni el ejemplo de los que se habían rendido fueron parte para que ellos hiciesen lo mismo, antes

---

<sup>31</sup> Garcilaso, 1951, 134.

<sup>32</sup> Garcilaso, 1986, 185.

<sup>33</sup> Garcilaso, 1951, 149.

parecía que mostraban haber cobrado el ánimo que los demás habían perdido y querían morir y no ser vencidos<sup>34</sup>.

Only seven Indians now remained in the water. They were so obstinate that the pleas of the interpreters, the promises of the Governor, and even the example of those who had yielded, were insufficient to persuade them to do the same. On the contrary they appeared to have absorbed the spirit that the others had lost and to prefer death to being conquered<sup>35</sup>.

Another interesting claim associated with the speeches is related to translation methods. Garcilaso seems to be aware of the fact that his materials have suffered too many rewritings and textual transformations, so he insists on 'faithfulness', in reproducing the actual words uttered by the Indians; whether we believe this or not is another matter:

Todas fueron palabras del indio, que no le añadimos alguna más de pasarlas de su lengua a la española o castellana<sup>36</sup>.

All of these are the actual words of the Indian himself, and I have added nothing to them other than to translate them into Spanish or Castilian<sup>37</sup>.

### **The historical context of the 1951 American translation of *The Florida***

Apart from the ideas included in the *Preface*, or their sensible application in different paragraphs, it is evident that, in 1951, there was a shameful need to translate *La Florida* into English in

---

<sup>34</sup> Garcilaso, 1986, 185.

<sup>35</sup> Garcilaso, 1951, 150.

<sup>36</sup> Garcilaso, 1986, 453.

<sup>37</sup> Garcilaso, 1951, 479.

the United States of America. It was a fact that the very translators are very willing to acknowledge:

Almost three hundred and fifty years have gone by since *The Florida* first reached the book marts of Portugal and Spain, and though translations of it have appeared in several languages, no complete rendition in English from the original Spanish has heretofore been made available to the public. Theodore Irving, at the suggestion of his celebrated uncle, Washington Irving, did a translation from an early Spanish edition, but, before publishing his results in 1833, he interpolated material from other sources and omitted some of *The Florida*. Again, Barnard Shipp published an English version in 1881, but unfortunately he avoided the original Spanish and worked from the abbreviated French version of Pierre Richelet. It has seemed wise therefore to prepare a translation of this ever beguiling and significant old chronicle which will enable English readers to see the whole of Garcilaso's picture<sup>38</sup>.

However, from the point of view of the rationale of this article, there is far more than an unfortunate neglect behind the absence of a full, complete translation of this chronicle by the Inca for so many years – indeed centuries. Our claim is that the difficult issue of the Hispanic roots of the American nation played a key part in this state-of-the-matter and determined its outcome.

From the early 1950s, many books began to be published, both in English and Spanish, vindicating the so-called Spanish roots of the present-day territory of the United States of America. In this respect, it must never be forgotten that the English translation of *La Florida* dates back to 1951. Furthermore, this current of research boomed years later on the occasion of the Fifth

---

<sup>38</sup> Varner & Varner, v-vi.



Centenary of the Discovery of America in 1992. Any list of leading examples should include, at least, the following references and titles:

- *Participación de España en la génesis histórica de los EEUU* <sup>39</sup>
- *Conquistadores españoles en EEUU* <sup>40</sup>
- *The Spanish Heritage in the United States* <sup>41</sup>
- *Presencia española en los Estados Unidos* <sup>42</sup>
- *Culturas hispanas de los Estados Unidos de América* <sup>43</sup>
- *La Florida, siglo XVI. Descubrimiento y conquista* <sup>44</sup>
- *Las raíces hispanas de los Estados Unidos* <sup>45</sup>

There is probably no vindication without past neglect, wrongs or injustices. And this is what seems to have happened as far as the official narrative of the history of the United States of America is involved and its undeniable Hispanic past or roots. It is very useful to remember that the first permanent English settlement in North America, by Captain John Smith and his men, the

---

<sup>39</sup> Octavio Gil Munilla, *Participación de España en la génesis histórica de los EEUU* (Madrid: Publicaciones Españolas, 1952).

<sup>40</sup> Francisco Morales Padrón, *Conquistadores españoles en EEUU* (Madrid: Publicaciones Españolas, 1959).

<sup>41</sup> Dario Fernández-Flórez, *The Spanish Heritage in the United States* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica - Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1971).

<sup>42</sup> Carlos Fernández-Shaw, *Presencia española en los Estados Unidos*, segunda edición corregida y aumentada (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica - Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, 1987).

<sup>43</sup> María Jesús Buxó Rey & Tomás Calvo Buezas (eds), *Culturas hispanas de los Estados Unidos de América* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1990).

<sup>44</sup> María Antonia Sáinz, *La Florida, siglo XVI. Descubrimiento y conquista* (Madrid: Editorial Maphre, 1992).

<sup>45</sup> David Arias, *Las raíces hispanas de los Estados Unidos* (Madrid: Editorial Mapfre, 1992).

Jamestown settlement, named after King James I of England, took place as late as 14 May 1607. This marks the origin of the colony of Virginia. And it is also important to remember that the so-called Pilgrims, and the Mayflower ship, reached the coasts of the future colony of Plymouth, origin of Massachusetts, on 11 November 1620, and that those two events have always been regarded as the double genesis of the American nation. Against this powerful official discourse, however, many destabilising facts can be produced, as definite and self-explanatory as the following, among many others<sup>46</sup>:

- The first European to set foot in present-day United States of America was Ponce de León, who explored Florida in 1512, and holds the title of ‘discoverer of the Florida’.
- The first European permanent settlement in the Americas was San Miguel de Guadalupe, in 1526, led by Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, in the territory of the two Carolinas.
- The first white man born in present-day USA was probably the son of one of the women in the expedition of Vázquez de Coronado, which took place between 1540 and 1542.
- The first European who travelled from East to West of the United States of America was Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, from 1528 and 1536. He was also the first historian of the country thanks to his *Naufragios* (1542), which is also the first description of the territory of the country.
- The oldest city of the nation is San Agustín (Saint Augustine), Florida, founded by Pedro Menéndez de

---

<sup>46</sup> Gil, 1-46; Fernández-Shaw, 674-677; Arias, 17-20.

Aviles in 1565. This city holds the first urban square, road, cathedral, etc., ever in the USA.

- The first theatre performance took place in El Paso in 1598.
- The oldest public building still standing in the USA is the Palacio de los Gobernadores in Santa Fe, New Mexico, built in 1610. This city also has the oldest church still in use: that of the mission of San Miguel (1610).
- The entire East coast of the USA as well as the Pacific – from California to Alaska – were first explored by Spanish travellers.
- In 1783, Florida and all the American territories west of the Mississippi river belonged to the Kingdom of Spain. Great parts of this territory were inherited by the newly independent republic of Mexico in 1824, which retained them until the end of the Mexico-American War, which meant that the former ceded 55% of its land to the latter under the arrangements of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848).

But all these historical facts were hidden from the people of the American nation for many years, a fact that has prompted comments such as the following:

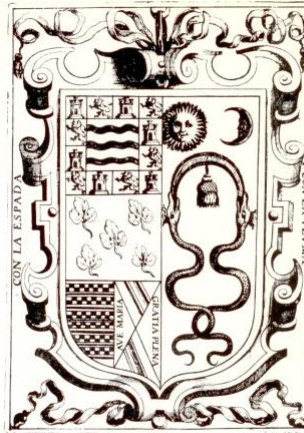
La presencia de España y de los países hispánicos en los territorios que hoy forman parte de Estados Unidos es larga y profunda; su aportación ha dejado grabada en su geografía y en su historia una huella que forma parte de su identidad nacional. Sin embargo, incluso al hablar con personas de cierta erudición, se tiene la impresión de que se sabe muy poco de ello; de que la aportación hispánica al acervo humano y espiritual de este país ha sido algo casual, superficial y fugaz. Se desconoce, en

general, que las tres cuartas partes del territorio nacional estuvieron bajo el dominio de España por más de 200 años, de que su bandera ha sido la que por más tiempo ha ondeado en estas tierras, incluso más que las barras y las estrellas; y que sus fronteras en América, en 1800 por ejemplo, eran al sur la Tierra de Fuego en Argentina y al norte los ríos Mississippi y Missouri. Es una pena que la abundante información histórica existente en los archivos y bibliotecas no se haya transmitido al pueblo a través del sistema escolar o de los medios de difusión y comunicación. Esta omisión inexplicable de acontecimientos, aportaciones y personajes, priva al pueblo de conocer la historia completa... al mismo tiempo que pone en tela de juicio la autenticidad de lo que se enseña<sup>47</sup>.

---

<sup>47</sup> Arias, 17.

In the context of this historical vindication, initiated in the 1950s as mentioned before, the 1951 translation of *The Florida* by the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, by Varner and Varner – a text full of early Hispanic history of the United States of America – gains a relevance that cannot be imagined unless it is studied very thoughtfully. It was then finally possible to translate a chronicle proving the Hispanic origins of the nation. In mid-20<sup>th</sup> century America,



it was impossible to continue to hide the Spanish past of its mainland exploration and cultural background, and there was probably no further need to impose a single British origin on the nation. The former Spanish-Mexican lands were not to return to their former owner. Consequently, this finally translated *Florida* in English can be regarded from a new fascinating viewpoint: that associated with a pioneer and a little subversive endeavour, something impossible for the Inca to even imagine, but these are the results of translation.

However, the translators seem to be well aware of the strategic consequences of their translation and the great impact that the new vision and discourse were set to provoke, as revealed by some paragraphs from their introduction:

To some of these same eyewitnesses is to be traced the bulk of our present day knowledge of a tremendously important phase of early American history<sup>48</sup>.

But of more interest to us than this spinner of tales is the man who took these tales and wove them into the fabric of early American history<sup>49</sup>.

And so it is that this first truly American work, along with the well-known *Comentarios Reales*, has won for Garcilaso the distinction of being the first American to attain pre-eminence in literature<sup>50</sup>.

## Conclusion

All the previous pages can be regarded as an exploration of what happened when Western Indians and Eastern Spaniards met in the vast territory called *La Florida* in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century: a story of speakers, interpreters and translators. It is also a narrative account of how translation can explain and help understand the life and written work of a unique individual (something new under the sun), the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. Translation, and interpreting, determined his days on earth, from the native languages of Peru and the Florida into Spanish, from Italian and Latin into Spanish, from informal oral Spanish to elaborate written Spanish, from the written Spanish of his works to many target written languages: French, German and English, etc.

These pages can also be regarded as a small contribution to the development of the new sub-discipline of Comparative Rhetoric

---

<sup>48</sup> Varner & Varner, xxii.

<sup>49</sup> Varner & Varner, xxiv.

<sup>50</sup> Varner & Varner, xxxiv.

and an appeal for the need to combine it with the principles and methods of Translation Studies, as the most important gate to access other rhetorical traditions. The case study of the speeches of *The Florida* has proven to be a fascinating research field and a good example to promote future studies related to the labour of forgotten translators and interpreters.

Bastin and Cormier claimed the need for this, and proposed more translator-oriented research on translation. These pages have also attempted to study the translation of *The Florida* into English in 1951 from a very humanistic viewpoint, that of the Inca and that of the translators who made his work possible and made it known in another language, English, as well as all the cultural and socio-political implications involved in these text-transformation processes.

#### List of illustrations

1. 1723 edition of *The Florida* (Madrid).
2. Façade of the Inca Garcilaso family house in Cuzco, Peru.
3. First Garcilaso's known document, issued when he moved from America to Spain in 1560.
4. First edition of *The Florida* (Lisbon, 1605).
5. Coat of Arms of the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega.