

Lost in Translation: The Evolution of Spanish Translations and the Black Legend in England from 1578 to 1740

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Abstract

This paper traces the evolution of the Black Legend using Spanish accounts of the colonization of the Americas published in English from 1578 to 1740. The Black Legend, largely spread by English, Dutch, and German Protestants, was an anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish narrative demonizing the Spanish colonization of the Americas. Relying in particular on the English appropriation of Spanish Friar Bartolomé de las Casas's *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, originally published in Spanish in 1552, the thesis argues that English editions of the text reflect England's political and religious turmoil in the 16th and 18th centuries. Previous work on the Black Legend centered on how the authors of New World accounts intended to have their work received in Europe. By studying printed paratexts, including dedicatory letters to patrons, letters to the readers, and the translations themselves, I show how English publishers and translators, and the statesmen who sponsored these publications sought to use Bartolomé de Las Casas's accounts as political. The conquest of the New World brought enormous wealth and power to Spain. At the same time, throughout this period, England suffered religious and political conflicts that boiled over into civil war in the mid-17th century. Many in England feared being overrun by a Catholic Empire or overthrown by Catholics from within. Facing various religious and political crises at home English leaders and booksellers used translations of Las Casas's work to advance their own hopes of British imperial expansion in the New World and to encourage the English to unite in the face of the Spanish threats, such as the Netherlands Civil War and Spanish Armada.¹

Printing in Early Modern England

Language is a powerful tool. The intention behind words matters. One can have the same words in a sentence and still entirely change the meaning solely with your inflection. What happens when those same words are written down? Suddenly, each person read the inflection differently based on their own intentions. New ideas and thoughts take shape beyond a work's intended purpose. This becomes even more prevalent when the work is written in another

¹ I would like to give a big thank you to all the people who helped me through this thesis. From the friends who listen to my ideas, Dr. Park giving encouragement and support every week, and our Honors Thesis class (aka Support Group). A special thanks to Dr. Yale, for reading countless drafts of my work and pushing me to write better. To my parents for encouraging me with love, a place to relax, and food on the weekends. Finally, to myself, for sticking things out and finishing this paper.

language. Often words and ideas don't directly translate to another language. Communication suddenly becomes muddled and complicated. Ideas become lost in translation.

By 1650 the population of England had more than doubled since 1540 leading to serious concerns of overcrowding and agricultural production. Colonial goods such as tobacco and sugar accounted for a major portion of the English economy. The previous fifty years had been filled with the expansion of England's colonial territory in the Americas. As such the people of England were fascinated by those outside of Europe. This was evident in the popularity of travel books. As more and more explorers from the New World came back to England, they brought with them goods and people from their travels. Soon scholars began to publish scientific and religious justifications for the subjugation of people of color in the New World. Writers claimed that black was the color of evil and denoted the absence of beauty. Another claim was biblical, stating that the people from Africa were descendants of Ham, a son who had witnessed his father's nakedness and been cursed for his devilish nature. Through these print sources publishers, writers, and statesmen sought to form the opinions the citizens of England had about the New World and England's role within it.²

In early modern England, printing served to convey information to the general population of Britain. The book market of England provided a closed circulation system for book printers. Although printed books from the Continent made their way into England through both illegal and legal methods; the predominant books available to English readers were printed in London. The years of 1557 to 1695 were years of economic and political instability with the Elizabethan Succession, Spanish Armada, Execution of Charles I, Commonwealth, and Exclusion Crisis. It is due to these uncertainties that authors and publishers turned to print as a way to inform the

² Susan Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 15, 20, 21, 23, 22.

masses of their own agendas. Although books were available for a variety of readers, authors would cater to a specific audience that was a known sympathizer. Through these audiences, religious texts sought to inform both Protestants and Catholics of changing conflicts and understandings. During Elizabeth's reign there was a higher prevalence of Catholic texts than Protestants. This was an effort to provide pastoral care to patrons. By the mid-1580s there was an abrupt switch amongst Protestants from broad-side ballads to books characteristic of the internalization of Protestant values. It was this switch to the more 'formal' book that allowed Protestant printers to utilize print to expand domestic interest in English affairs and interests overseas, particularly in the Americas and Indies. These printers, such as Samuel Purchas, Richard Hakluyt, and Richard Eden, co-opted Spanish sources to serve their own narrative of English colonization and acquisition in the New World. Individual translators without the same level of notoriety also published translated foreign works to great success. The most common books across the travel genre were centered on Francis Drake's voyages, anti-Spanish polemic, and the narrative of the "Great Englishman". It was through travel adventure books that English citizens became informed of the situation in the New World, either real or imagined.³

Throughout this paper, the term "Indian" will be used to refer to the indigenous people of Latin America, South America, and the Caribbean. This language has been specifically used to reflect the language of the primary sources being analyzed. It will only be used within the context of the primary sources.

A variety of work has been done in the last century to follow the Black Legends expansion in England. This work has largely explored the intended effect the original Spanish authors wanted for their writings. One such work by George Murry analyzed the work of José de Acosta to establish how conversion practices were used in the New World. Prior to Acosta's

³ Gameson, Morgan, Thomson, Hellinga, Trapp, Barnard, McKitterick, et al, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume IV 1557-1695* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1, 10, 2, 31, 45, 33, 259, 260, 262, 263.

work according to Murry, it was thought that Catholic greed and barbarity had ruined Christianity in the New World. Acosta's work instead promoted the forced and surface-level conversions that the Natives were undergoing under Spanish authority. Murry argues that this allowed Protestants in England to paint Catholicism as a more primitive version of Protestantism, while still maintaining a valid religion. He does highlight, however, that it is unlikely this was Acosta's true intention in his writings. When Acosta's works were translated into English, Protestants in England jumped to argue that conversions had worked because Catholicism and Indian 'paganism' were so closely linked. Murry claims that this was to focus their antipopyery claims of miracles not being a necessity and to show transubstantiation⁴ as akin to cannibalism. Acosta noted the similarities between Native religions and Catholicism such as confession, hierarchical priesthood, celibate monastic life, and a type of communion. These similarities prompted the logical progression that Catholicism is simply a more superstitious and paganistic form of Protestantism according to Murry. This is especially important because the Church of England did not support the evidence of miracles; something the Catholic Church in Rome did. By casting miracles as simply superstitions and unimportant Protestants were able to confirm among themselves that they were the true Church. This is not to say that Acosta completely denounces the conversion of Natives. In fact, he advocates for the continued conversion. He states that it requires patience, virtuous clergy, the repetition of Christian doctrine, and the right type of Indian. The English saw this as something they could do correctly where the Spanish went wrong. While Murray's argument provides important advancements to the understanding of

⁴ The act in Catholic services in which the Wine and Bread are blessed to become the Blood and Body of Jesus Christ for the Holy Sacrament of communion.

the Black Legend in Spain, further language analysis is needed to establish how the Black Legend was being reinforced in England.⁵

Another key point of research has been the writings of the New World by both Priests and Conquistadors aimed to show their own experiences amongst the indigenous people. In 1993 K.I Koppedrayer wrote about the biographies published by two Jesuit priests in New France centering around a native convert, Kateri Tekakwitha. Kateri Tekakwitha lived on a Jesuit mission in present-day Kanawake, Quebec, after fleeing from her Mohawk community. He gives a summary of what these biographies contain about her life and her death to examine what her story shares about priests and their encounters with indigenous peoples of the New World. According to the priests, she was a devout Christian and died due to her penance for Christ. She was the first Iroquois Virgin⁶ and these books pride her virtue and dedication to Christianity by revering her supposed miracles. Koppedrayer argues that these books do not function as a truly authentic biography of Kateri, (as they were both written after she died), but rather to serve as a justification for the Jesuit mission in New France. Her story aimed to show the ability to lessen the boundary between the Natives and European nations. In a way, they served as a biography for the mission of the Jesuits- allowing the authors to express the difficulties that they themselves had been through in the New World. Koppedrayer argues that Kateri's story provides importance to cultural interactions between Natives and Europeans.⁷

The writings about the indigenous people of the New World by priests and conquistadors not only furthered their own religious and political goals but also expressed their own personal thoughts about their time in the New World. In England, these accounts sought to establish an

⁵ Geroge Murry, "'Tears of the Indians' or Superficial Conversion?: José de Acosta, the Black Legend, and Spanish Evangelization in the New World," *The Catholic Historical Review* 99, no. 1 (2013): 30, 31, 50, 26.

⁶ Iroquois refers to a group of tribes in today's Northeast North America and Upstate New York. Combined with the word 'virgin' it denotes the vows Katari, an Iroquois person, took to become a wife of Christ.

⁷ K. I. Koppedrayer, *The Making of the First Iroquois Virgin: Early Jesuit Biographies of the Blessed Kateri Tekakwith* (Duke University Press, 1993), 278, 288, 282, 292, 296.

understanding of the New World through these priests' and other explorers' experiences. Instead of accurately informing the English about the Americas, the writers expressed their own feelings and thoughts about interactions with indigenous peoples. It was through accounts of Spanish cruelties that English leaders and printers appropriated the words of Spanish priests and conquistadors to advance their own political and religious agenda.

Translations in Political Context

With the death of King Henry VIII in 1547 England was placed in the hands of his young, sickly son Edward. Protestants were ecstatic that his advisors were firmly on their side. Their enthusiasm soon vanished when in 1553 Edward died and Mary Tudor became Queen of England. Mary Tudor's mother was the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon whom Henry had divorced against the wishes of the Catholic Church. The new Queen, Mary, was no different from her mother. As the wife of King Phillip of Spain and a devout Catholic herself, Mary returned England to a Catholic country. Her policies killed many Protestants before her death in 1558. Prior to Mary's death, Elizabeth had been ineligible for the throne, but the Tudor dynasty was continued when Mary gave her endorsement of the new Queen in her last moments. Elizabeth once again brought Protestantism to England.

The *Conquest of the West Indies* served as a model for an English expansion into the New World, contrary to other works. Printed in 1578 in London, it was one of the first Spanish sources about the New World to be translated into English and printed in England. It is based on the adventures of Hernán Cortés⁸ as heard by Francisco López de Gómara. Hernán Cortés was a Hidalgo⁹ from Medellín in Castile. He joined the expedition to Mexico to earn money and

⁸ Sometimes referred to as Hernando or Fernando in documents.

⁹ A noble who is not wealthy.

elevate his family's position. After Cortés returned to Spain, he was given the title of Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca, and his children married into the higher class.¹⁰ López de Gómara was a Spanish historian who originally worked as a secretary for Cortés in the mid-1500s. After Cortés' death, he published an account of the New World, despite having never been. The translator of the text was Thomas Nicholas. Included in the paratext is a note of dedication for Sir Francis Walsingham, a knight in service to the Queen. From 1573 until his death in 1590, he served on her council and her spymaster. The contents include the story of how Nicholas received the story as well as vouching for its truthfulness. It also appeals to Walsingham's intentions and ambitions to further English footholds in the Caribbean. The note does not indicate that Walsingham himself supported the work. Nicholas asks for Walsingham to "behold this work, and that shall for me an encouragement to take in handle the translation of the East India". It is possible that Nicholas is asking to become a patronage client of Walsingham's. The note to the reader asks the reader to understand that Cortés was not the first to discover the New World, but that he was the only Spaniard who wanted to spread the mercy of Jesus Christ. Nicholas wants to impart Cortés' actions of promoting Christianity to the indigenous as a model system of exploration. Two poems are included after the letter to the reader, both giving praise to the actions of the translator and Cortés. The first is a poem by Stephan Gosson giving thanks to Nicholas for his diligence in translating the work and stating, "And when the Spaniarde vaunteth o• his golde, Their owne renowne in him they may beholde". Nicholas is seen as providing a valuable service in ensuring that the stories of the New World do not die and creating a model in which to follow.¹¹

Throughout *Conquest of the West Indies*, Nicholas aims to create Cortés as the model conqueror of the New World. Part of the way he does this is through his portrayal of Cortes as a man and messenger of God. During Cortés voyage over the sea a dove, the symbol of the Holy

¹⁰ J.H. Elliot, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (Penguin Group, 1963), 65.

¹¹ Francisco López de Gómara, *Conquest of the West Indies* (Henry Bynneman, 1578), Paratexts.

Spirit, came into their ship after weeks of stormy weather and brought them the comfort of God. The story of the dove references the biblical narration of Noah's Ark and God's flooding of the world. Just as Noah searched for land and God's blessing so too did Cortés. The spread of Christianity was a key part of the conquest of the New World. The language in the text portrays Cortés as a bringer of hope, peace, and Christianity to the New World. Nicholas also describes Cortés as a capable Captain for the conquest of Mexico. He is described as smart and able to outmaneuver traps that were set for him by both Indians and other Spanish captains. These stories serve as evidence for Cortés' credibility as a captain. In order to prove that England should emulate the mission of Cortés, Nicholas portrayed the expedition not as a brutal conquest, but as a journey for God. This is especially evident in the depictions of battles between Cortés and the indigenous people. Nicholas states that the Indians attacked the Europeans through sneak attacks during the night and provoked most of the fights. A good man fights only when provoked and in this explanation of events Cortés only responds to attacks, he doesn't start them. This tale could provide a justification for English expansion in the New World, showing English leaders the best way to explore.¹²

The reality of these stories has been widely debated; the truth does not matter, however, for the purposes of English statesmen, printers, and authors. Works of Spanish authors served as a convenient authority for the English as a critic of Spanish actions. These stories served to provide justifications for English actions in both the New World and Europe. Nicholas's translation runs contrary to the remaining texts examined in this paper. Instead of portraying a brutal conquest fueled by greed, it paints a messenger of God who should be viewed as the ideal conqueror.

¹² López de Gómara, *Conquest of the West Indies*, 4, 22, 43.

Bartolomé de las Casas wrote extensively about the brutalities committed by the Spanish in the New World; however, his words were appropriated by English statesmen, authors, and printers to serve their own political purposes. Las Casas was a Dominican friar who long advocated for the protection and fair treatment of the indigenous people of the Americas to the Spanish Monarchy. In 1542 Las Casas wrote his *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* which detailed the first decades of colonization in the New World at the hands of the Spanish. In 1583 the first edition of Las Casas's work, *Brief Accounts of the Acts and Gestes of the Spanish in the New World*, was published in London. It was printed by Thomas Dawson for William Brome. In the note to the reader, the translator states that he is dedicating the text to the Low Countries to serve as a precedent and warning about the tyranny of the Spanish. Within the note, he details the various biblical stories based on the idea “that in as much as God is iust [just], he will graunt [grant] victorie to the right, and will ouerthrowe the wicked”. Using the words of Las Casas the translator aims to show how the actions of the Spanish in the Netherlands were just like the Spanish actions in the New World and would be punished by God. It also served to emphasize the need for England to potentially intercede on behalf of the helpless people, both in the Netherlands and the Americas. According to the translator Las Casas wrote more bitterly about his own Nation than any English man could ever write about the Spanish. In Las Casas's original prologue, the Spanish soldiers claim they are in the name of God; they do not; however, follow His ministry. Las Casas further explains that this book is not meant to serve as an accusation but rather to stop the horrors against the lowly and mild Indians who offended none. His work aimed to provoke the Spanish monarchy into better controlling the New World and protecting the indigenous peoples. Las Casas aimed to promote the conversion of the indigenous stating that “they [the Indians] would have been the happiest people in the world if only they knew God”. At this time England was attempting to distance itself from Catholicism and

establish Protestantism as the more advanced religion. Utilizing Las Casas's own words about the anti-Christianity of the Spanish in the New World provided the perfect fodder for the English's own argument. It served as a call to the English monarchy to expand interests in the New World in an effort to protect the indigenous peoples from the brutality of the Spanish. Especially since Las Casas was ardently pleading to Spain's own King Phillip for the protection of the Indians under the authority of the Royal Crown.¹³

Throughout Las Casas's writing the language used to refer to the Indians versus the Spaniards remains consistent. Rather than being “savage” the Indians are referred to as gentle, tender, or lambs. Meek, mild, and weak people are inherently seen as in need of protection. Las Casas took advantage of this comparison to advance the position of his argument. The context of “lamb” provokes sympathy through its biblical uses. Jesus Christ is often referred to as a shepherd who takes care of a flock of sheep and lambs- the human race. Casas thus adds to the narrative of the Spaniards being against God's work. In contrast, the Spanish are named as wolves, lions, and tigers. Clearly Las Casas wants the reader to associate brutality with the soldiers. One must wonder how English Protestants would have seen themselves in this analogy. Are they the sheepdog, warding off the dangerous beasts, or are they Jesus Christ himself, watching over the sheep? In fact, it may be both. The English people saw themselves as the sheepdog needed to protect the innocent people of the New World from the cruelty of the Spanish. English leaders saw themselves as Jesus Christ overruling the destruction of the Spanish who dared to go against God's wishes. This book takes a steep turn from the previous work by López de Gómara. In five short years, the cruelties committed by the Spanish became a central pressure for the English to expand in the Americas.¹⁴

¹³ Las Casas, *A Brief Account*, Letter to the Reader, A1.

¹⁴ Las Casas, *A Brief Account*, A, A1.

The cruelties of the Spanish are extensively outlined by Las Casas within his work. The translator places a particular emphasis on the fact that these retellings or barbarous events are eyewitness accounts retold by Las Casas. According to Las Casas, the destruction of the Indies became more severe after the death of Queen Isabel. Spanish soldiers cut the heads off Indians, putting them on spikes, and burned them. Spanish soldiers hunted and took babies from their mother's breast and chopped it up to feed their dogs. Las Casas detailed a code that was created amongst Spanish soldiers, stating that for each Spaniard killed one hundred Indians would be slain. These stories are disturbing to read, and act as a warning or horror to observe. They showcased what could become of the Netherlands if they failed in their Civil War and to illustrate that the English needed to take action in the New World.¹⁵

Las Casas was increasingly concerned about the salvation of the Indians. He claimed that the Indians were forced to convert to Christianity and were not taught the sacraments and rites properly. Rather than turning to God out of a desire to be saved, the indigenous peoples turned to Christianity or faced being killed. To Las Casas, this was horrifying because it meant the Indians associated God with the barbarity and cruelty imposed on them by the Spanish. To Las Casas, these Spaniards who claimed to be massacring innocents in the name of God were actually unholy Christians. The Indians thought the Christian God was the worst God and the King of Castile was horrible simply due to the treatment they had received from their messengers. Las Casas's intent with his narrative was to advocate for better treatment and protection of the indigenous people through the King of Spain's orders. He hoped that with the illumination of the cruelties being committed by Spanish soldiers on behalf of the crown action would be taken. However, when English Protestants read his account, they took his words as justification for an anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic agenda.

¹⁵ Las Casas, *A Brief Account*, D2, B3, A3 4, F4 2, A4.

The notion of Spain preventing the acceptance of Christianity for indigenous peoples provided ammunition for the English argument of Protestantism as the superior religion. If Catholics could disregard the teachings of God, then they were no better than heretics. It provided further incentive for English expeditions into the New World to spread both the English Empire and the Protestant faith. Las Casas ends his account by stating he feared for the Spanish nation and the desolating they would receive for their mistreatment and killing of the Indians. English leaders appropriated Las Casas's work because his argument provided a narrative that was useful for their own purposes. The use of this translation to advance an anti-Spanish position suggests that the English decided against writing their own narratives about Spanish atrocities in the New World and instead appropriated Spanish sources.¹⁶

The Spanish Armada served to emphasize the Spanish threat to England. By 1588 King Phillip of Spain and Portugal was an old man. He had amassed an empire the sun never sets on, spanning the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. But he still had his eye on England. He had already tried the peaceful options to place a Catholic heir on the throne. With marriage to Mary Tudor, and attempted marriages with Elizabeth I and Mary of Scots, his options had run out when Mary of Scot's son was raised Protestant in Scotland. The last remaining claim he had was in his blood, as a descendant from one of Edward II's seven sons. His claim was only made stronger through Mary of Scot's endorsement and the declaration of Elizabeth's illegitimacy by both the Pope at her birth and her father on his deathbed. The Spanish Armada was a war of religion, politics, nationality, and economics all tied together. Previously the New World had been divided between the Spanish and Portuguese by the Pope, with one laying claim on the West and the other on the East. As more countries, like England, wanted in on the action the protection of rights to found territory became more complicated. Phillip sought to prevent an

¹⁶ Las Casas, *A Brief Account*, G, C2, O 2, P

alliance between England and France, who he believed could challenge his presence in the Netherlands. In the end, both Spain and England won and lost. Although Spain had suffered tremendous losses, they had not lost any trading ground. England had not gained any advantages over Spanish trading. The war had proved, however, she would not be Catholicized against her will. It was the idea of an emerging Spanish threat that provided the foundation for the next wave of texts on Spanish brutalities in the New World to emerge.¹⁷

English Protestants utilized José de Acosta's writing, *The Natural History of the Indies*, to emphasize the inherent Christianity of the Indians. Acosta was a Jesuit priest and botanist who traveled to the New World in 1570 as a part of a religious mission. It was during this time that Acosta detailed his observations of the nature, history, and people of the "Indies".¹⁸ His work was vastly translated into English and greatly differed from Las Casas. Instead of focusing on the mistreatment of the indigenous people he instead used an ethnographic approach. *The Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies*, published in England in 1604, outlined the natural beauties in the Americas. The book opens with a letter of dedication to Sir Robert Cecil, the patron of the translator E.G., Edward Grimeston, thanking him for his support and encouragement. Robert Cecil 1st Earl of Salisbury was the chief minister of Elizabeth's court from 1598-1603 and worked in the English government until his death in 1612. Cecil was a chief member of the privy council during 1604. He aided in the conclusion of the Long Spanish Armada which brought many trade benefits to England. The negotiations also ended Spain's longtime monopoly over access to the Americas and the Caribbean.¹⁹ It was for these qualities that Grimeston dedicated his work to Cecil. Grimeston included a letter to the reader explaining he wrote this book to fill a gap that existed in the current literature on the New World and

¹⁷ Lewis, *The Spanish Armada*, 13 19, 21, 15, 16, 21, 211-212.

¹⁸ Acosta was sent to Lima, Peru.

¹⁹ Pauline Croft, "Cecil, Robert, first earl of Salisbury (1563–1612), politician and courtier," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

emphasize God as the creator of the natural world. To Grimeston the fact that the indigenous people lived amongst the natural world made it necessary to train them in “the high vocation of the Gospel”.

In his writing, Acosta particularly emphasized the inherent Christianity of the Indians. They were ready to toss off the cruelties they had known before and embrace the Christian God. This concept ties into the idea of the time that there was a true law in nature that was established through God and the biblical laws that were fundamental to life. Acosta routinely references this to give reasoning as to why the indigenous were so quick to turn to Christianity. He spoke of the weariness of the Indians over the cruelties of Satan. They grew sick of their barbarities, human sacrifices, blood, and the need for captives. In a desire to be relieved of such a burden to idols, they turned to Christianity. Acosta wanted the people of Europe to see the Indians as “savage” but inherently good and faithful Christians. He repeatedly reported their desire to better themselves and change the nature of their worship. The translator chose to include this in the English version. The Protestants and Catholics both wanted to convert the Natives by teaching them about the Gospel. However, they contained differing ideologies. Through the writings of Acosta, the English Protestants determined that the indigenous could be successfully converted. When combined with the previous writings by Las Casas which had shown the cruelty of the Spanish, this led to the conclusion that Protestantism was the better religion to teach them. At least to the English Protestants.²⁰

In 1607 England established their first settlement in Virginia based on the cash crop economy. After decades of pirating and piracy on behalf of the crown most settlements were private enterprises, similar to the Dutch West India Company in the Netherlands. By 1619

²⁰ José de Acosta, *The Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies* (Printed by Val: Sims for Edward Blount and William Aspley, 1604), Dedication, 389.

enslaved peoples were being utilized on plantations in Virginia for labor. The rest of the English colonies emulated the success story of Virginia.²¹

Acosta Natural and Moral Historie of the Indies gave the first comprehensive look at the world that was unfolding in the Western Hemisphere, at least according to Europeans. Acosta firmly believed that the Indians were naturally moral creatures who had created their own societies to the best of their abilities. According to Acosta, yes, they had barbaric customs with no sense, but they had good intentions and governed themselves according to laws and customs. For this he felt that Europeans owed them some credit. The reader is supposed to feel in awe with how well these more “primitive” people were able to police themselves. After all, to Acosta Europeans had moral flaws that the Indians seemed not to possess. He was quick to add a caveat that these laws and customs could not contradict the laws of Christ which are fundamental to life itself. Conversion to Christianity was the utmost priority for Acosta, no matter how impressed he was with the indigenous peoples. He wanted to remind the folks back in Europe that Christ must be central to all life, both in the proper society of Europe, and in the “savagery” of the New World.²²

Acosta's work on the New World differed largely from Las Casas. His work did not mention any brutalities committed by the Spanish toward the indigenous peoples. Acosta aimed to spread the history of the New World before the Europeans, not the events that occurred after. It was through Acosta's accounts of the Indian's quick conversions to Catholicism, that English Protestants were quick to use it for their own purposes. Utilizing Acosta's observations of pre-colonization religious practices of indigenous peoples, English Protestants claimed that the conversion to Catholicism was entirely predicated on a similar primitive nature. Although Acosta's work was not extensively published in England, (unlike Las Casa's work) the co-option

²¹ Amussen, *Slavery in the Caribbean*, 23, 24, 26.

²² José de Acosta, *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (Harlyut Society, 1880), 390, 392.

of his writings offered the English Protestants the opportunity to further their claims of Protestantism as the superior religion. These claims were especially important due to the crowning of King James, (a Catholic King), in an effort to show that England would not revert back to Catholicism.

Although separated by roughly 2,000 miles of sea, the politics of England affected the Caribbean and divided colonists. Barbados and other colonies were eventually placed until London's direct control in 1652, but islanders still maintained a certain degree of autonomy. In 1653 Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector of England following the Civil War. He authorized further expansion into the Caribbean, aiming to establish a foothold in the Spanish colony of Hispaniola. After the English suffered major losses and failed to take the island, soldiers instead turned to Jamaica in 1654. Jamaica was first established as a military fortress and faced years of guerilla warfare from both Spanish forces and previously enslaved peoples. European powers viewed resources as finite materials that were tied up within the land and the only way to gain more resources was to have a bigger cut of the land pie. Due to this school of thought protection of trade and trading rights became the largest concern. European crowns declared war and contracted pirates; all to protect their ships from rivals. To ensure the continued production of the cash crops that did so well in Europe, (like sugar and tobacco), the English trafficked growing numbers of enslaved Africans to the New World, beginning in the 1660s.²³

Las Casas's *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* was widely circulated outside of Spain by those religiously or politically opposed to Spain under a variety of titles. Between the mid-1500s and 1700s, ten copies were printed in London alone.²⁴ In 1656 *Tears of the Indians* was printed for Nathaniel Brooks. Brooks sold a variety of branded content in his shop.

²³ Amussen, *Slavery in the Caribbean*, 34, 31, 32, 33, 40, 38, 39, 41, 38, 39

²⁴ Refer to the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) online under Bartolomé de Las Casas.

It was popular during this time to use a text from a prominent author to ensure a stream of income. On the title page of *Short Account* a line from Deuteronomy 29:15 reads “Therefore thine eyes shall have no compassion; but life for life, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot”. The inclusion of this verse indicates the desire to see the actions that one took against another be inflicted on them in turn. In this case, the actions committed against the indigenous by the Spanish should be in turn committed against the Spanish, presumably by the English as an avenging force. The translator included two letters: one of dedication and one to the reader. The dedication is addressed to Oliver Lord Protector of the Commonwealth. It urges him to behave like David against Goliath. Due to the content of the letter to the reader, we can assume the translator means against the Spanish. The letter to the reader is addressed “All True English Men” and calls them to fight, not amongst their countrymen, but rather against the constant enemy of the Spanish who wish to enslave England and murder as if they were the devil themselves. This address of “All True English Men” is new compared to earlier editions. Now more than ever England and its people are divided. The translator wanted to appeal to all true English men about their honor to protect innocent people from suffering. He issues a call to them,

“That you are not uow to fight against your Country-men, but against your Old and Constant E|nemies, the *SPANI|ARDS*, a Proud, De|ceitful, Cruel, and Treache|rous Nation, whose chieffest Aim hath been the Conquest of this Land, and to enslave the People of this Nation”

There is the claim that the Spanish are “old and constant enemies” of the English. By bringing to light a far more important and dangerous enemy than one's own neighbors, the translator hopes to provoke a staying in English infighting. The translator also aims to place a threat upon English

soil, by stating the Spanish wish to conquer England and enslave those who live there. This threat would have seemed far more possible given the book the letter is contained within.²⁵

Directly after these letters, there are four etched illustrations next to the opening page. Figure 1 shows Spanish soldiers burning Indians alive, hanging them, forcing them into slave labor, removing their body parts, and killing an Indian Queen. This is the first edition to contain pictures of the atrocities in the Americas. Later additions, such as those created by Theodor de Bry, emphasize the pictorial tradition by continuing to utilize brutal images detailed in Las Casas's work by using larger and more detailed images of the Spanish actions.

These images are meant to create a sense of horror and disgust in English readers. The placement is especially telling, as it both reminds readers of the call to action in the note “All True English Men” and precludes what they are going to read about in the text. Although the images are not especially artistically gifted, they add a visual component to give more English readers an idea of what Spanish actions looked like. Each image in Figure 1 contains a clearly defined Spaniard(s) with a host of suffering Indians. The intent behind the images is to clearly cast a hero and a villain in the eyes of the English.

²⁵ Batholomew de Las Casas, *Tears of the Indians* (Printed by J.C. for Nath. Brook, 1656), Title Page, Dedication, 1. 2024 Issue (vol 11.)

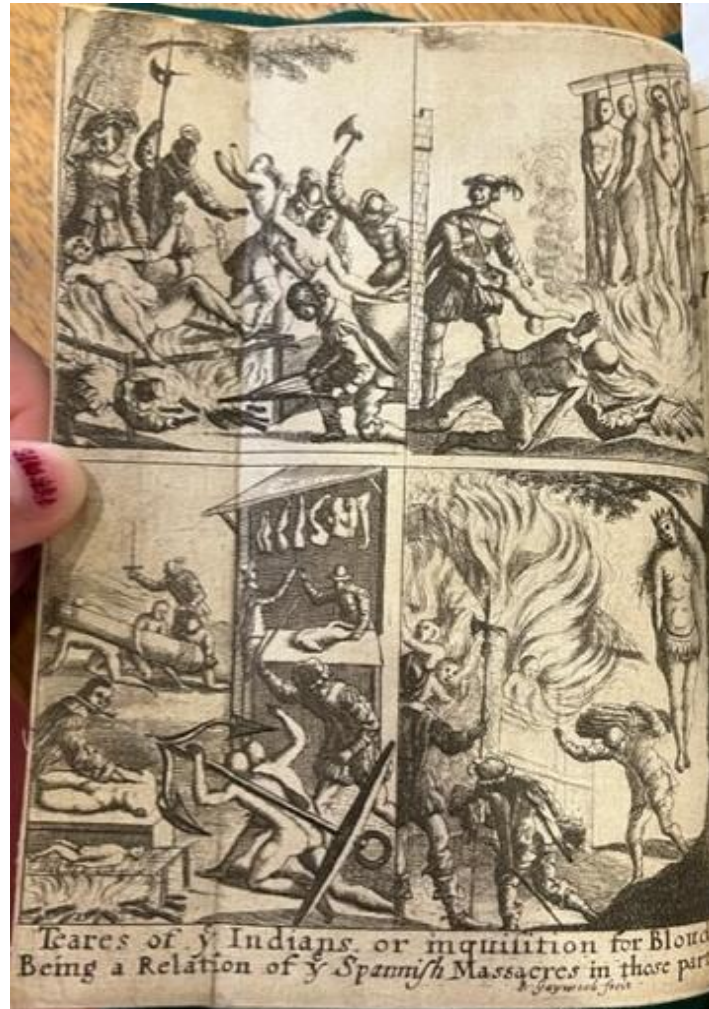


Figure 1: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, “Teares of y Indians or inquisition for Bloud Being a Relation of y Spanish Massacres in those parts; Signed R. Gaywood.”

Within the text itself, Las Casas explains the atrocities that he and other witnesses saw firsthand in the New World regarding Spanish cruelties toward the indigenous peoples. He uses language to create different connotations with words. Referring to the Spanish as “Tigers, Wolves, and Lions” while the Indians are “Lambs”. This is both a reference to the violence toward the indigenous as well as biblical texts. The Bible often uses lamb to refer to innocent, pure, and holy Christian people; primarily through Children being a flock and Jesus being a shepherd. Tigers, wolves, and lions are all predators who would attack lambs. This indicates the violence against the Indians by the Spanish in their mutilations, killings, and more. Las Casas

wants the reader to identify the people of the New World as children who need guidance while viewing the Spanish as a brutal predator who would destroy God's pure creatures. This language has been carried over from its first edition published in England. According to Las Casas, more than twelve million Indians were killed, but the figure could easily be over fifty million. He claims these killings were only committed out of the Spanish desire for gold and riches and the Indians never gave them a reason to use violence. To put this in perspective the population of London was about 50,000. If Spanish soldiers could easily slaughter between twelve and fifty million people how would the English people survive against their might?

The translator places particular importance on the hatred of Catholicism by the Indians. Such a story comes from a witness statement Las Casas took from a fellow friar regarding the execution of an Indian. Prior to his execution, the Spanish asked if he wished to be baptized into the Kingdom of Heaven. He responded in turn that if the Spanish were to be there with him, he had no desire to join them. To a Christian world, the thought that someone would invite eternal damnation due to the Spanish crimes committed is abhorrent. This horror was not due to the Indian's thoughts, but rather because the Spanish destroyed the conversion potential of the indigenous peoples. Finally, Las Casas leaves the fact that any and all true Christians should be moved by these creatures' suffering and their lack of salvation through God. Although the book was originally published in Spain before being spread to England, all Protestants would be able to sympathize with Las Casas goals and create their own.²⁶

Through the end of the seventeenth century England had expanded its economy into manufacturing and colonial trade with the Americas and Indies. At the same time, Spain was becoming a declining power in the Atlantic. Trade was increasingly important in English politics thanks to its increasing financial dependency on trade in the Americas. When King James II took

²⁶ Las Casas, *Tears of the Indians*, 3, 5, 6, 23, 130.

the throne in 1685 after the death of his brother Charles he was welcomed to the throne by the people of England. James II took the throne as a Catholic monarch successfully but not without controversy. Upon his accession, he gave a speech to Parliament in which he pledged to protect the religion and Laws of England. There was hope England would maintain its political stability, and they could have if James II had not violated the Civil and Ecclesiastic constitution of England. In three short years, James would find himself fleeing across the Channel to France. He began his rule by surrounding himself with advisors who were close to France and French Catholicism. These thinkers were convinced of the divine right of kings in which subjects had no right to question their ruler. To say that this school of thought was not welcomed in England would be an understatement. Beginning in 1685 James embarked on a journey of modernization with the goal of elevating Catholic practicing subjects to the same position as their Protestant counterparts. Instead of the English Catholics appreciating the work he attempted they instead sided with the Pope and Spanish Ambassador who disliked the French Jesuits James had in his court. James modernized the English Army, expanding its size and housing them within inns at the expense of the owners leading to resentment. By 1687 the English people were convinced James' actions were illegal and the law of the land was created by parliament and not the King's word. In 1688 the English elites offered the throne to William and Mary of Orange, James' eldest daughter and her husband. Although there was a religious element to the revolution the English people chose to frame it not over fear of a Catholic Restoration, but over English liberty against the Jesuit and French Catholics who defended the absolute power of Kings. At the end of James II's three-year reign England had firmly established the King was bound by the laws of Parliament.²⁷

²⁷ Stephen Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2009), 50-51, 210, 82, 83, 94, 95, 92, 96, 102, 120, 126, 133, 120, 140, 153, 182, 195

Following the Glorious Revolution, a new edition of Las Casas' work was published in 1689 in London under the title *Popery Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colours*. The title itself serves to emphasize the content. Popery refers to Roman Catholicism and the practices, doctrines, and ideologies associated with it. Simply through the title the reader is supposed to gather that Catholicism is evil and behaving in an unchristian way. The preface informs the reader that Bartolomé de Las Casas was indeed an eyewitness to these horrible crimes. The translator chooses to inform the reader that English is the sixth language²⁸ the book has been translated into. This clearly demonstrated the Christian outrage at the Spanish for the disdain the Indians now held for the religion. It also served to show how the English Protestants were the only true group able to do anything against the actions of the Spanish. Through the language, the reader is again asked to view the indigenous peoples as in need of protection. Las Casas refers to them as innocently simple, submissive, and effeminate people who were "very apt [happy] to receive [receive] the instill'd Principles of the Catholick Religion". This paints the indigenous people as without agency or actions of their own. For the translator's purpose, however, it served to demonstrate the failure of Spanish conversion due to their brutality. One law in particular came to be known amongst Spanish soldiers that for every Spaniard slain one hundred Indians should die to atone. A horror element exists as a way to demonstrate the horrors the Spanish could bring the England. One priest witnessed a Spanish hunting with his Beagles and feeding his dogs cut off parts of a child that he stole from the breast of its mother. Whether or not this actually occurred is irrelevant to the overall narrative English Protestants are telling the readers. The goal is not accuracy but outrage, horror, embarrassment, and a desire for an English expansion in the New World. Stories told in Las Casas editions are consistent throughout the English versions. As time goes by, they become more vivid and horrifying.

²⁸ Previously translated into Latin, High Dutch, Low Dutch, French, and originally written in Spanish.
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“In this Kingdom or (I'm certain) in some Province of New *Spain*, A *Spaniard* Hunting and intent on his game, phancyed that his Beagles wanted food; and to supply their hunger snatcht a young little Babe from the Mothers breast, cutting off his Arms and Legs, cast a part of them to every Dog, which they having devour'd, he threw the remainder of the Body to them. Thus it is plainly manifest how they value these poor Creatures, created after the image of God, to cast them to their Canibal-Curs. But that which follows is (if possible) a sin of a deeper dye.”

This is compared to the 1583 edition, *A Short Account*, in which it states:

“In this realme, or in one of the prouinces of newe Spaine, a certayne Spaniard went one day with his dogs on hunting of veuison, or els conies, and not finding game, hee minded his dogs that they should be hungrie, and tooke a little sweet Babie which hee bereaued the mother of, and cutting off from him the armes, and the legges, chopped them in small gobbettes, giuing to euery dog his liuery or part there of, by & by after these morsels thus dispatched, hee cast also the rest of the body or the carkase to all the kenell together.”

In the first text, the words follow a much more graphic depiction of the Spaniard hunting. The 1689 edition also adds, “(I’m certain)” to the text, insisting on the truth of this anecdote, despite the lack of specific details about the event. The ending also adds a more explicit moral judgment onto the Spanish soldiers for their treatment of “these poor Creatures”. Both of these stories come from the same original text; however, based on what the translator aimed to convey, the words change and create new images. In the final pages of the account, the translator tells of any edits that he made, largely just omitting further tragedies that only serve to further the same point. The translator re-empathized the point of the Spanish only going to the Americas for riches and to terrorize the Indians rather than converting, going against what Spain claims the true purpose was. This edition furthers what the previous versions do but goes a step further in placing the Spanish threat on English soil.²⁹

England from 1688 to 1783 was just as politically and religiously turbulent as the past two centuries. Clashes between various religious groups continued as Protestants diversified into

²⁹ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Popery Truly Display'd in Its Bloody Colours* (Printed for R. Hewson, 1689), Title Page, 2, 7, 42, 78-80.

Presbyterians, Unitarians, Quakers, and Baptists. Adding to preexisting tensions between Protestants and Catholics on how to structure religion in politics but also within the Church. Parliament had passed a law after the Glorious Revolution that prohibited Catholics from taking the throne, but tolerance had increased within the government. Anti-Catholic sentiments were now dependent on the local environment and political developments. After Williams's death, the role of the Monarch continued to be more defined with Anne and George I bringing more and more under the authority of Parliament.³⁰

Roughly ten years later in 1699 a new edition of Las Casas' work was published in London under the title *An Account of the First Voyages and Discoveries Made by the Spaniards in America*. Although the title leaves the impression that the book does not display the same anti-Spanish and anti-Spanish fervor as previous editions, it becomes clear in the preface what the translator thinks of both the Spanish and Las Casas. The translator begins in earnest stating that he can only hope that he did justice to this brutal history. He states that the Europeans would have been worshipped like Gods in the Americas if not for the Spanish actions. He claims that Las Casas should have been a Protestant for all that he was educated. The translator aims to portray Catholicism as a primitive version of Protestantism and a religion that an intellectual person would see as false worship. A number of etched images are present in the foldouts of the book. Figure 2 shows various small images of Spaniards displaying various cruelties toward the Indians with the corresponding page numbers in which Las Casas details them. The intention is to have the reader match up where these actions occurred in the New World and also to give context as to how often these atrocities occurred.³¹

³⁰ Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1783* (Palgrave, 2001), 128, 131, 233, 139, 239.

³¹ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *An Account of the First Voyages and Discoveries Made by the Spaniards in America* (Printed by J. Darby for D. Brown, J. Harris, and Andr. Bell, 1699), Preface, Foldout between 8-9.



Figure 2: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *An Account of the First Voyages and Discoveries Made by the Spaniards in America*, "The Cruelties used by the Spanish on the Indians."

One in particular, on the right page second down in the first column, shows dogs eating live Indians as they struggle to get away. The numbers reveal that this instance is described on

pages nine, thirty-nine, fifty-four, and ninety-nine. Figure 3 shows six larger images of cruelties, again with the corresponding page numbers as described in the book.³²



Figure 3: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *An Account of the First Voyages and Discoveries Made by the Spaniards in America, "The Spanish Cruelties on the Indians &c."*

The top image, on the left page, shows the attempted conversion of an Indian being burned at the stake which the reader can read about on page twenty-two. The increase in images shows a continuance in horror to grasp the English people's attention and the visualization of the Spanish brutalities in the New World. When compared to Figure 1 from *Short Account* it is clear that Figures 2 and 3 provide much clearer details of the brutalities. They also provide a clear

³² Las Casas, *Voyages in America*, Foldout between 20-21.

indication that both priests and soldiers participated in these brutalities, continuing the anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish agenda of previous works through images. Readers are able to visualize in much more graphic detail the nature of the Spanish atrocities.

Textual evidence from the book displays many of the same notions, (such as subservient Indians and vicious Spaniards) that are prevalent in the previous editions. This edition, pushes further and talks of the Indians specifically trying to assimilate but being unable due to the Spanish. One Indian King wanted to swear fealty to the King of Spain but his land was not of use. Thus, the soldiers shamed him, violated his wife, and left his Kingdom forsworn. Indigenous people of this story wanted to ally themselves with the Spanish monarchy but due to a lack of “gain” from their resources soldiers instead humiliated them. The religious training of the Indians was lacking; as it was given by the soldiers who forced them to convert through a lack of sacraments or devotional materials. The emphasis on the indigenous people as willing to convert to Christianity but lacking the proper training through Catholicism left a door open for English explorers to bring Protestantism to the New World and the pure and innocent Indians. Furthermore, the Indians were willing to attack the Europeans when provoked by cruelties. Due to their weakness and patience, however, they were unable to fight against the superior armies. This language frames the Indians as in need of rescuing from the more powerful Spaniards as well as assuming that they were inherently good-natured toward the arriving Europeans. We know that this is not necessarily true, but the story of England being a potential hero is what the aim of this narrative is. As a final emphasis on the need of England to intervene, there is a note about the sinking of a ship with Spaniards on board as a method of God punishing them for their crimes against the Indians. If God himself is upset over the actions of his followers, then other Christians have no choice but to step in and show the true meaning of Christianity to the populations being wronged. In the end, Las Casas issues a claim to Charles V, the Holy Roman

Emperor and King of Spain, that the actions of the soldiers in the New World are being committed “against his will and the will of God.”³³

In 1740 a new edition of Las Casas’s infamous work was published yet again in London under the title *Old England For Ever*. As we continue through the years the titles of Las Casas's work become more and more nationalistic, anti-Catholic, and bombastic. The preface opens with a claim about the rights to the Americas. The translator insists that Spain does not have a claim to the Americans because of their mistreatment of the people there. Instead, he argues that the English should move in and seize a claim to the Americas. Powers could be made to give up territory if they were thought to have unjustly acquired it. The author states that “Pride, Trechery, and Curelity [Cruelty] have always been characteristics of Spain and the Spanish people”. In their barbarity in the New World toward the Indians, they have shown their true colors. The author does not go into further detail outlining the historical precedent for his observations. The goal of his work is simply a basis for the argument that the English should be the rightful rulers

³³ Las Casas, *Voyages in America*, 10-11, 18, 43, 13, 100, 101.
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of the Americas. In Figure 4, found in a foldout from the title page the reader can observe a Spanish ship attacking an English vessel.³⁴



Figure 4: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Old England For Ever*, “A Spanish Guards Costa boarding Capt. Jenkins’s Ship and Cutting off his Ear.”

The title of the work cites a specific ship Captain Jenkins, who was mutilated by the attacking Spanish. This action by the Spanish led to the “War of Jenkins Ear” which was about the crucial control of the slave trade in the Caribbean and the wealth it brought to the European powers. During the year 1740, the war would have been in full swing. The use of this image aims to establish the Spanish threat to England. Unlike previous images, it shows a direct military

³⁴ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Old England for Ever; or, Spanish Cruelty Display'd; Wherein the Spaniards Right to America Is Impartially Examined and Found Defective; Their Pretentions Founded in Blood, Supported by Cruelty, and Continued by Oppression* (Printed by the booksellers of London and Westminster, 1740), Preface, Foldout before Title Page.

confrontation between the Spanish and English navies. As England was becoming more and more present in the sea these books served to emphasize the continued need for English action against the Spanish militarily.

The claim over the Americas was a long contested one with each country trying to claim ownership over the New Discovery. One of these tactics is evident in this text as it references Christopher Columbus' brother coming to see the English King about financing the journey. He got impatient and took money from King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel instead. The lack of morality displayed by the Spanish is discussed through the murdering, rape, and robbing of the peoples of Hispaniola who had previously provided aid and shelter to the Spaniards. By providing a moral justification for their outrage English folks could provide further justification for an English claim over the Americas using Christianity. Spain was not interested in spreading Christianity the right way through reason, persuasion, and good example but rather through swords and bloodshed.³⁵

In the end, the Spanish Empire was on its way out. Britain was able to further its imperial expansion through a series of wars in which it gained Spanish and French territory from 1739 to 1749. By 1763, England had established itself as the most successful trans-oceanic power in Europe, mainly through trading between England and its colonies. Although these texts show moral outrage against the Spanish actions in the New World, the English fail to acknowledge their hypocrisy. Through England's own colonization of the Americas, they had expanded and profited from the slave trade in the Caribbean. The English also decimated the numbers of the indigenous populations living in the places they settled. Clearly, these texts served not as moral

³⁵ Las Casas, *Old England For Ever*, 16, 37, 54.

outrage for the treatment of the indigenous people by the Spanish, but rather as a way to unite the English despite their own internal political and religious conflicts.³⁶

The Black Legend Continued

Across two centuries Bartolomé de las Casas's work provided justification for the demonization of Spain by England. His work was not intended by him to provide fodder against the Spanish and Catholics. Instead, he advocated for better treatment of the indigenous people of the Americas and the inclusion of them as Spanish citizens. Nevertheless, his critical words opened a hole for English Protestants to pry open. The statesmen and printers who took advantage of Las Casas's critical eye saw an opportunity to unite the English people against a common enemy. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century the English political and religious landscape evolved rapidly. Not only did these changes bring about radical changes to England but they also undermined its stability amongst itself. Statesmen claimed a Spanish threat existed to recreate a sense of unity within England. To achieve this, they sponsored and encouraged the printing of travel books that painted the Spanish and their conquest of the New World as un-Christian.

Through the various English editions of Spanish works the translations and their roles in England evolve. In 1578 the translation and role of the text was to justify English expansion into the New World and promote Cortes as a model for that exploration. Just a few short years later, Las Casas had entered the picture. His accounts serve as the best examples of how the translations and roles of the texts changed over time due to England's political and religious turmoil. Across the five editions of Las Casas's work, the language utilized becomes more graphic when describing the horrors Spanish soldiers inflicted on the indigenous people. A pictorial tradition has also begun to help readers visualize the actions in the New World. English

³⁶ Black, *Eighteenth Century England*, 277, 245, 273, 274.

editions also became more about the morality of the Spanish actions in the Americas, especially when combined with the editions from Acosta. As these works developed in combination with ongoing English-Spanish conflicts, they became a way to spread a nationalist and anti-Catholic myth. Through this myth, the British Empire was able to develop and justify its expansion in the Caribbean.

This is not to say that the Black Legend began in 1578 with the publication of López de Gómara *Conquest of the West India*. Or that it ended in 1740 with the last publication of Las Casas *Brief Account*. Not one moment can be claimed as the inception of the Black Legend. Not one author, printer, or statesman can be charged with creating it either. Over the course of the 16th and 18th centuries, various authors, printers, and statemen intensified the Black Legend with each successive English edition of Las Casas's *Short Account* creating a more nationalistic and anti-Catholic work. This work is not intended to comment on the continuation of the Black Legend in the modern day. To explore that narrative would require further analysis of print sources from more contemporary sources and an entirely new thesis.

In the end, the British statesmen and printers achieved what they appropriated Las Casas's words for. The Spanish Empire was dead, the sun had set on their worldwide empire. It was now the English who dominated the Americas and the seas. They had survived the religious turmoil, the succession crises, and two revolutions. It was now their time in the sun, and their turn to be lost in translation.

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