A COMPANION TO SPANISH WOMEN'S STUDIES

Edited by

Xon de Ros
Geraldine Hazbun

TAMESIS

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First published 2011 by Tamesis, Woodbridge

ISBN 978 1 85566 224 7

Tamesis is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA
website: www.boydellandbrewer.com

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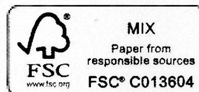

Printed in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

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11

Conversations from a Distance: Spanish and French Eighteenth-Century Women Writers

MÓNICA BOLUFER

The year 1797 saw the publication in Spanish of *Conversaciones de Emilia*, a translation of Louise d'Épinay's *Conversations d'Émilie* which had appeared in Leipzig in 1774 and in Paris in 1775 (see Épinay 1797 and 1996). The Spanish translator, Ana Muñoz, is an unknown woman for whom we have no biographical data and no references concerning other literary works. Her presence in the text is discreet: although her name appears on the cover together with that of the author, she did not write a foreword of her own, as was customary at the time, nor did she make additions to the work in the form of interpolated passages or explanatory notes. Despite this, her decision to provide the publisher with a translated work rather than an original text and to choose a pedagogical treatise by a famous French woman writer is significant with regard to the strategies developed by Spanish women writers in the eighteenth century. Their choices may be seen as a kind of conversation between translator and author, in this case only implicit but adopting more explicit forms in other cases of foreign women writers translated by women of letters in Spain.

In the course of the eighteenth century an increasing number of women decided to express their thoughts in writing, at a time when printed matter was circulating more widely and having an ever greater influence on public opinion (see Serrano y Sanz [1901] 1975, Bolufer 1998, ch. 7, Palacios 2002, López-Cordón 2005, García Garrosa 2007). In view of the modest parameters of the Spanish publishing market and the shortcomings in women's education, it is not surprising that the number of those who did so was much smaller than in England or France, as also was the total number of writers and works published. However, of the approximately 2,900 authors of both sexes about 200 were women.[1] This was a significantly greater number than in

[1] Francisco Aguilar Piñal offers a complete catalogue of manuscript and printed works written in Spain in the eighteenth century (1981–2000).

previous centuries, though the fact that many of those women were the authors of only one or very few works shows their difficulties in establishing a literary career.

What was a 'woman writer' in that period? She could not, of course, be identified as a professional, nor could the male writer, at a time when it was almost impossible to make a living from writing in Spain (Álvarez Barrientos 2006). In any case, the condition of woman writer did imply, as for her male counterpart, a certain desire that her works should reach a wider audience, either in semi-public form, such as the circulation of manuscripts in select circles or performance in private theatres, or through the printed word. Who were they? First of all there were women belonging to religious orders, who had made up the majority of women writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and still represented over a third of the total in the eighteenth. They were followed by noblewomen, often members of the court aristocracy, who used to combine their own writing with patronage of artists and writers or running salons (*tertulias*). But there was also an increasing number of women from the middle class, belonging to the commercial bourgeoisie or the world of families in the liberal and bureaucratic professions.

With few exceptions, Spanish women writers in the eighteenth century cultivated all the genres, themes, and literary forms characteristic of the age, ranging from essays on pedagogical or moral themes to plays, poetry (in all forms), and, more rarely, novels. A new feature in that century is the fact that many of those women translated foreign works, an increasingly frequent activity and one that found growing favour among the public. The second half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth were a boom time for translations, encouraged by the multiplication of cultural relations with other countries, growing interest in what was happening abroad, greater access to the learning of foreign languages, the increase in the instruments available (such as grammars and dictionaries) and the general development of publishing and reading (Donaire and Lafarga 1991, Lafarga 1999). Over 2,100 publications of translated works appeared between 1750 and 1808, mostly taken from French (55%), followed at a considerable distance by Italian (18.9%) and Latin (16.4%), with a much smaller presence of other languages, such as English (3.74%), Portuguese (2.49%), or Greek (1.54%). French also played an important part as an intermediary language for texts written in other languages, which were generally translated from versions in French.

In the eighteenth century, translation had a special significance as a cultural and publishing practice. It was used by the Spanish enlightened elites to express and strengthen their links with the European culture of the Enlightenment, mainly (but not solely) French, as part of an international community which shared similar moral and social values and aesthetic and literary tastes. For the publishers, translating was a way of responding to the

demand of an expanding market, particularly in the case of much sought-after new genres, such as the periodical press or the sentimental novel. For the translators it was a source of income, it enabled them to present themselves as being abreast of new intellectual trends and it gave them a way of expressing their ideas by their choice of text and the alterations they made to it.

Among those who devoted themselves to this activity there was a considerable number of women, a new phenomenon satirically portrayed by José Vargas Ponce in his *Proclama de un solterón: a las que aspiran a su mano* (A Bachelor's Declaration to Ladies Who Seek His Hand) (1827): 'Otrosí, traductoras abrenuncio / Harto habla una mujer sin diccionario' (Furthermore, I renounce women translators, / A woman talks quite enough without a dictionary).[2] With their versions women translators helped to connect Spanish culture to the trends of thought and aesthetic sensibilities of European literature. Jansenist religiosity (Letourneux, translated by the Countess of Montijo), pedagogical and moral concerns (Rollin, by Catalina Caso; Vicessimus Knox, by Josefa Amar), philosophical reflection (Zanotti and Condillac, by Josefa de Alvarado, Marchioness of Espeja), neoclassical drama (Racine and Voltaire, in translations by Margarita Hickey), the philosophical novel (Mme de Graffigny, by María Romero; Samuel Johnson, by Inés Joyes), the didactic or sentimental novel (Saint-Lambert, by María Antonia del Río; Elizabeth Sommerville, by Juana Bergnés; Michel-Ange Marin, by Cayetana Aguirre), agronomy (Griselini, in a translation by Josefa Amar), literary history (from the Italian of Lampillas, also by Josefa Amar), and travel writings (Sir George Staunton on China, by María Josefa Luzuriaga); and in the early nineteenth century Francisca Larrea translated Maistre, Byron, and Schlegel.

Most of these women translated French texts, as was customary at the time, or else French translations of works originally written in other languages, such as Italian or, less often, English. For some, such as Josefa Amar and Margarita Hickey, translation was a prelude and accompaniment to their own writing; for others, such as Catalina Caso and the Countess of Lalaing, it was their only literary activity of which we have any evidence. Translating enabled them to apply their knowledge of foreign languages, which became a customary component in the education of young women of good family in the eighteenth century. Above all, however, it allowed them to make themselves heard in public from a somewhat sheltered position, in keeping with the attitude of modesty expected of their gender. Translation was like a veil which, depending on the circumstances, let them show themselves openly or

[2] On women translators, see López-Cordón 1996 and Bolufer 1998: 331–9. So far I have found 27.

else conceal themselves bashfully behind the author's name. It offered the possibility of making oneself known via an intermediary, but also of raising oneself almost to the level of an author by one's treatment of the original text.

In fact, authorship and translation are not radically different forms of intellectual activity. In the light of modern literary theory, translation contains creative dimensions of adaptation and appropriation (Krontiris 1992). The margin was even broader in the eighteenth century, for in the absence of a modern concept of intellectual property translations could be distinctly different from the original text; remaining true to the spirit and style in terms of form, because of the prevailing ideal of free rather than servile translation, but not betraying the Spanish language with barbarisms and forced constructions. Yet also at a deeper level, because the very selection of the work to be translated (involving considerations of opportuneness and marketability, but also of literary taste and affinity for the content), forewords of justification, erudite or explanatory notes about terms and usage foreign to Spanish readers or, more radically, alteration (and often censorship) of the text to adapt it 'to the customs of the country' could end up by transforming the work itself into something different from the original and the task of translation into a largely creative process (Urzainqui 1991).

Depending on the translators' intentions, training, or opportunities, their interventions ranged from a few brief lines of introduction to a much more intense transformation of the work and even some additions of their own. For example, when the Countess of Montijo published her translation of *Instruction pour le sacrament du mariage*, she did not add a preface of her own but a foreword by her spiritual director, who emphasized the translator's affinity for the text selected (Letourneux 1774, foreword by Bishop José Climent). On the other hand, some took advantage of the foreword to set out their ideas about the process of translation, such as Margarita Hickey (1789), or incorporated erudite notes, such as Josefa Amar (Lampillas 1789), or even went so far as to add a text of their own, independent of the original work, such as the 'Apología de las mujeres' (An Apology for Women) included with her translation of *Rasselas* by Inés Joyes (1798; see Bolufer 2008 and 2010).

It is noteworthy that among women translators there was a special predilection for translating works by other women, particularly French women writing on pedagogical or moral themes, such as Mme de Lambert, Mme d'Épinay, Mme Le Prince de Beaumont, Mme de Graffigny, or Mme de Genlis. For Spanish women writers trying to make their way in the literary world, choosing a work by another woman represented a double strategy of affirmation. With regard to the public, it enabled them to justify their incursion into the printed word, on the supposition that they were primarily addressing readers of their own sex (even if that was not always the case).

For themselves, following in the footsteps of another woman who was more or less established could strengthen their own feeling of entitlement to take up the pen, and provide them with a kind of complicity, in the recognition in someone else's written reflections based on experiences which to some extent they had in common.

Even more predictable is the fact that the writers they translated were nearly always French. French was by far the best-known language among enlightened Spanish elites, and, regardless of whether they already had works translated into Spanish, French women of letters had a certain renown with the Spanish public. In his *Defensa de las mujeres* (Defence of Women) of 1726, a celebrated assertion of the intellectual equality of the sexes, the enlightened Benito Jerónimo Feijóo showed his admiration of the extensive presence of women in French intellectual life: 'Las Francesas sabias son muchísimas: porque tienen más oportunidad en Francia, y creo que también más libertad, para estudiar las mujeres' (There are very many learned French women: because French women have more opportunity and, I think, more freedom to study in France) (Feijoo [1726] 2004: Discourse XVI, p. 62). Praise of writers such as the Hellenist Mme Dacier, the novelists Mme de Lafayette and Mlle de Scudéry, and the moralists Mme de Lambert and Mme de Sévigné appears in periodicals and catalogues of famous women published in Spain (*Memorial literario* [The Literary Magazine], June 1785; Thomas 1773; Bolufer 2000). And a traveller such as the Duke of Almodóvar, in his *Década epistolar sobre el estado de las letras en Francia* (Ten Letters on the State of Literature in France) (1781), devotes the whole of his last letter to women writers, from scientists such as Mme du Châtelet to contemporary novelists: Mmes de Genlis, Élie de Beaumont, Puisieux, Riccoboni, Le Prince de Beaumont, and Beauharnais (Almodóvar 1781: Letter X). All these references familiarized Spanish readers with women writers in the neighbouring country and may have predisposed them to take an interest in translations of their work.

For her part, the famous Spanish author and translator Josefa Amar (1749–1833?) shows an extensive knowledge of pedagogical literature and special appreciation of the work of women writers: 'En Francia es largo el catálogo de literatas insignes' (The list of famous women of letters in France is long) (Amar [1790] 1994: 70), she says in her most important work, *Discurso sobre la educación física y moral de las mujeres* (Discourse on the Physical and Moral Education of Women) (1790), and both in that work and in her *Discurso en defensa del talento de las mujeres* (Discourse in Defence of the Intelligence of Women) (1786) she mentions Mmes de Sévigné, Lafayette, Dacier, Le Prince de Beaumont, and Genlis. She especially admires Marie-Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles, Marchioness of Lambert (1647–1733), whom she quotes, for example, to evoke the pleasure of reading and study as ways of achieving a certain independence of mind and finding happiness for oneself without making it depend on others: '¡Qué fortuna es saber vivir consigo mismo,

apartarse de sí con violencia, y volver con gusto a encontrarse! Entonces no se apetece el bullicio de las otras gentes' (How fortunate is the ability to live with oneself, withdraw violently from oneself, and take pleasure in finding oneself again! Then the bustle of others becomes unappealing). These words are taken from the *Avis d'une mère à sa fille* (A Mother's Advice to her Daughter), a debt which Josefa Amar does not hesitate to acknowledge: 'Así habla la célebre marquesa de Lambert, que conocía bien a fondo el corazón humano' (These are the words of the celebrated Marchioness of Lambert, who had a profound knowledge of the human heart) (Amar [1790] 1994: 195). Indeed, despite the profound differences between a Parisian aristocrat and *salonnière* and a middle-class Spanish woman with a less brilliant life, Mme de Lambert and Josefa Amar share many concerns. These include their intense moralism, their clear awareness of the inequalities that pervaded women's lives, their deep conviction of women's (and their own) intellectual ability and their fondness for private pleasures (study, reading, reflection) as guarantees of moral and emotional independence. Thus, in the pages of the *Discurso sobre la educación* of 1790, a kind of dialogue of complicity is created between the French writer who had died over half a century before and the Spanish author, who took the prestige of the other woman as a basis for developing her own ideas and presenting herself publicly as a respectable and respected writer.

Although Mme de Lambert was read by Josefa Amar in the original French, her *Obras* (Works), a selection of her moral and philosophical essays, had already appeared in Spanish in 1781, translated by Cayetana de la Cerda y Vera, Countess of Lalaing (?–1798). This choice seems far from accidental (Lambert 1781). She was a lady whose prestige among the aristocracy of the court is known to us, but we have no information about her education and intellectual activity. Nevertheless, her only known works, this translation and an unpublished one which we shall discuss later, enable us to form an approximate idea of her as a cultured woman with an excellent knowledge of French, possessing exquisite literary and philosophical tastes and a clear idea of her right of access to the public world of letters. The *Obras* are preceded by a foreword in which the Countess expresses her affinity for Mme de Lambert, a representative of the fusion of stoicism and epicure-anism in the aristocratic moral tradition of the *Grand Siècle* (Marchal 1991).

By their nature, Mme de Lambert's works must have found their audience among a minority in the aristocracy or people of refined tastes, to which both her translator and her admirer Josefa Amar belonged in their different ways. A wider public was reached by three other standard authors in the moral and educational sphere: Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont (1711–80), Louise Tardieu d'Esclavelles, Countess of Épinay (1726–83), and Stéph-anie Ducrest, Countess of Genlis (1746–1830). These three women had a common concern for education, inseparable, as was usual in that century, from an intense moral interest and a special but not exclusive attention

directed towards readers of their own gender. All three enjoyed great celebrity, both in their own country and elsewhere, as is shown by the spread of their works, re-published and translated into various languages during the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Bolufer 2002).

As we have seen, Mme d'Épinay's most famous work, *Conversations d'Émilie*, intended to serve for the instruction of her niece, was translated into Spanish. It is a work in which she took the liberty of replying to Rousseau, showing her disagreement with the educational model that he expounded in *Émile* (1762). In contrast to Rousseau's Sophie, an image of femininity limited in terms of intellectual and moral capabilities, Mme d'Épinay's Émilie is a girl who asks questions, argues, reasons, and learns to think for herself; one assumes her to be endowed with a full intellectual potential and no forbidden areas are designated in her education, nor are explicit limits indicated.

The *Conversations* were highly praised and repeatedly reprinted in their own country and translated into various languages. They were published in Spanish in 1797, translated from the fifth French edition. We know nothing about the motives of the translator, Ana Muñoz, for choosing this work, or her possible affinity for it. We know only that the Spanish press hailed it as a work 'para utilidad principalmente de las madres de familia' (of use mainly for mothers with children), commented that it had been widely read in Europe and undermined its profoundly secular content by presenting it as a book about 'cristiana y política' (a polite Christian) education in the *Gaceta de Madrid* (Madrid Gazette), no. 91, 14 October 1797, p. 960). Its first two *Conversations* were also published in 1797 in a Madrid periodical, without identifying the author (*Miscelánea instructiva y curiosa* [Instructive and Curious Miscellany], vol. 3, nos 8 and 9, pp. 250–4, 356–94).

From the vast output of Mme Le Prince de Beaumont (70 volumes), ten books were published in Spanish between 1770 and the early years of the nineteenth century.[3] They included her famous *Magasins* (*des enfants*, *des adolescentes*) – dialogues between a woman teacher and her pupils in which discussions and tales alternate with lessons about morality and instruction in various disciplines – and also her moral tales and several novels: *La Nouvelle Clarice* (written in response to Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*), *Mémoires de Mme la baronne de Batteville* and *Lettres de Mme du Montier*.[4] Only the last of these books was translated by a woman, Antonia del Río y Arnedo (1775–1815), also the author of a version of *Sarah Th.,* by the French writer Jean-François de Saint-Lambert (Río y Arnedo 1795). In the

[3] On her work, see Stewart 1993, Havelange and Le Men 1988; on its dissemination in Spain, Bolufer 2002.

[4] For the Spanish translations of these works see Le Prince de Beaumont 1778, 1787, 1797, 1795, and 1796–98, respectively. See also Le Prince 1779–80, 1782, 1807.

preface to her translation of the *Lettres* (*Cartas*), Río y Arnedo renounces the possibility of including a foreword of her own, shielding herself behind the author's prestige:

> sería en mí una temeridad imperdonable querer añadir un ápice a las sabias y oportunas reflexiones de aquella mujer insigne. Hable, pues, por sí y por mí la misma Madama de Beaumont, supuesto que nada se puede decir más fino ni más convincente que el discurso preliminar que ella pone a su obra.
> (Le Prince de Beaumont 1796–98, translator's preface)

> (it would be an act of unpardonable temerity on my part to seek to add anything to this illustrious woman's wise and timely reflections. Let Mme de Beaumont speak both for herself and for me, therefore, since nothing could be said more finely nor more convincingly than the preliminary discourse that she includes in her book)

The translator was a cultivated woman from a distinguished family, and she achieved considerable success with these two books when she was only 21, as shown by their republication in 1805, and in 1798, 1800, and 1801, respectively. As her literary options were restricted by the rules of decorum that weighed on women writers, she chose, like many others, to make herself known by translations, but she introduced alterations to the original texts, adapting them to the restrictions of Spanish censorship. Moreover, despite her protestations of humility, she used the preface as a forum in which to express herself. There she presented herself as a woman of unimpeachable moral principles who desired to contribute to the reform of customs, and a writer conscious of the weakness of her talent: an image adapted to the modesty expected of women of letters, but revealing a literary ambition which she maintained throughout her life. After marrying in 1798, she accompanied her husband, a lawyer, on his posting to Charcas (New Spain), where she continued reading, accumulating a substantial library, and sending the occasional short translation to the newspapers (Rípodas 1993). Thus her literary activity testifies to her passion for reading and writing, but also to the limits within which eighteenth-century women had to develop their intellectual vocation.

The novel translated by María Antonia del Río relates the misadventures of Mlle de Montier, a virtuous but impoverished young woman whose husband, a rakish nobleman, is unfaithful to her. Yet she forgives him and never wavers in her virtue, not even after her husband's death, when she renounces the possibility of marrying the man she loved and consecrates her life to God. The story is a good example of the complexity of the work of Mme Le Prince de Beaumont, who presents female sexual virtue as a categorical demand of the order governing the family and society, but at the same time she shows her acute awareness of the moral inequality in marriage

and the unhappiness that it brought to women, obliged to display a heroism not required of men (Stewart 1993: 24–49). Perhaps the translator identified with the very unidealized view of marriage and the bitterness conveyed by this apparently conventional novel, like other works by Mme Le Prince de Beaumont, all of which were well received in Spain, as acknowledged by the periodical press (*Gaceta de Madrid*, no. 106, 15 December 1795, p. 1281). *Cartas de Mme de Montier* and *La nueva Clarisa* (translated in 1797) had numerous subscribers, nearly a third of them women (27.8% and 28% respectively), which indicates their popularity with an extensive readership made up of both sexes.

Very different was the fate that befell another of her books, *Les Américaines*, a dialogue which seeks to prove the truth of the Catholic religion by applying the Cartesian method of methodical doubt, clearly showing Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's rationalist mind and her endeavour to defend the faith from the advances of secularity and scepticism in the eighteenth century. Having translated Mme de Lambert in 1781, in 1790 Cayetana de la Cerda, Countess of Lalaing, asked the Council of Castile for permission to print her translation, *Las americanas* (permission had been refused to an earlier translator, José Morcillo, in 1782), thus setting in motion a process which was to last 14 years.[5] Her request was rejected on 17 March 1791, on the basis that, by setting out the arguments of atheists and Protestants against Catholicism too explicitly, the book might lead readers to waver in their faith, and that writing on religious controversies was reserved for the clergy.

The fact that it was a book written by a woman, translated by another woman, and presented in the form of a dialogue between female characters was not unrelated to this adverse judgement, in which reference was made to St Paul's famous epistle to Timothy which orders women to be silent and submit to men in religious matters (1 Tim. 2.11–15). Moreover, the censors considered the book even more dangerous because they thought it was implicitly addressed to an uneducated (female) readership, for whom discussion about truths of faith would do more harm than good: 'Las que sean capaces de percibir las razones que prueban la verdad de la revelación serán tan raras, como las aves del todo blancas' (Those women who are able to perceive the reasons that prove the truth of revelation will be as rare as birds that are completely white).

This decision did not satisfy the translator, who, by virtue of her upbringing, rank, and character, was not cowed by a refusal. Her response (16 October 1791) expressed her disagreement with the report in a firm, defiant tone, defended the merit of Mme Le Prince de Beaumont and the

5 Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Consejos*, legajo 5556, expediente 35.

appreciation of her by influential people in Spain, and requested that the case be passed on to no less a person than the Inquisitor General. She defended the text's orthodoxy with legal and theological arguments and, offended by the censor's doubts, most particularly praised the talent and erudition of her sex and made it clear that the book was addressed to a select readership which included cultured women like herself, capable of understanding and appreciating it, and not at all to a popular, ignorant audience: 'no ha de andar en manos de las calceteras y lavanderas' (there is no reason for it to fall into the hands of hosiers and washerwomen). Her declaration shows her as a cultured woman with a knowledge of Latin, possessed of a religious attitude close to Enlightened Christianity and with a clear feeling of belonging to a minority distinguished no less by intelligence than by rank.

Predictably, the censor stood firm and sternly rejected the Countess's arguments, including her defence of the intellectual ability of her sex, as exaggerated and of little relevance to the case. Despite further protests from the translator, the case was finally dismissed on 22 March 1804. This did not prevent other works by Mme Le Prince de Beaumont from continuing to be translated and read in Spain, as we have seen. The key to her success here, as in other countries, lay to a large extent in her ability to expound moral principles in an entertaining way, drawing on her broad educational experience, and to adapt her writings to the various aspirations and to the intellectual level of her readership. Such was her celebrity that after her death a Spanish cleric published a discourse in her praise in which he defended the orthodoxy of her writings and her life and pointed out that Mme Le Prince de Beaumont had travelled to Spain and stayed with the Duke and Duchess of Híjar, who vainly attempted to engage her as a tutor for their daughters (Obregón 1784). It is clear, therefore, that in Spain she had a large and faithful readership and powerful patrons who were not happy about the ban on translating *Les Américaines* (in 1782 and 1791) and took action to clear her name of any suspicion.

Similar success in Spain was achieved by Mme de Genlis, known outside France primarily for her moral and educational writings, although she cultivated many genres, including also poetry, fiction, literary criticism and political pamphlets.[6] From her abundant *oeuvre* (over 140 books) about twenty titles were translated into Spanish, including the pedagogical novel *Adèle et Théodore* (*Adela y Teodoro*, 1785), *Les Veillées du château* (*Las veladas de la quinta*, 1788) and *Les Annales de la vertu* (*Los anales de la virtud*, 1792), followed by seventeen more in the nineteenth century (Bolufer 2002). Like Mme d'Épinay, Mme de Genlis shared the new pedagogical ideals of her century, but, also like her, disagreed with the essayists of the time, espe-

[6] On Mme de Genlis, see Laborde 1966, Clancy 1982, Plagnol-Diéval 2000, Orr 2005.

cially Rousseau, concerning their model of education for women. Though her programme for women's education was limited in content and oriented towards training them for a different, subordinate role with regard to the male, the ambitious, wide-ranging reading plan that she designed for Adèle, her ideal pupil, reveals her confidence in women's intellectual ability and her determination to open the doors of knowledge, without violating social conventions.

Mme de Genlis's writings were very successful in Spain with readers of both sexes and of various positions in society. Women readers gave her their support, as is revealed by the fact that *Las veladas de la quinta* was dedicated by the translator to the members of the Ladies' Committee of the Madrid Economic Society, who responded by raising a collective subscription. The Spanish press commended her books, read in their French versions by adherents of the Enlightenment such as Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, María Rosario Romero (Mme de Graffigny's translator), and Josefa Amar, who praised her in her *Discurso sobre la educación* (Amar [1790] 1994: 266). Moreover, María Jacoba Castilla Xarava, the translator of Mme de Genlis's *Adélaïde*, dedicated her version to women and stressed its moral utility 'en un tiempo en que la virtud y el decoro están ausentes de nuestras concurrencias' (at a time when virtue and decorum are absent from our midst) (Genlis 1801, translator's preface).

As subscription lists and readers' praises reveal, these authors and their works were not identified as being addressed exclusively to a female audience, though they were seen as being especially suitable for women. A Spanish periodical attributed the responsibility for the increase in reading among women to foreign books, including those of Mme Le Prince de Beaumont (*Correo de los Ciegos* [Courier of the Blind], no. 224, 14 January 1789, p. 1412). Their great popularity also appeared, in fictional form, in another periodical, which recommended the works of Mme Le Prince de Beaumont and Mme de Genlis to women because they were useful, 'comunes y baratas en las Librerías de esta Corte' (common and cheap in the Bookshops of this City) (*Diario de Madrid* [Madrid Daily], 28 October 1797, p. 1269). An alleged reader responded that those books were already being read by women of all social levels:

> Ha extrañado mi Amiga que la tenga Vmd. por tan ignorante que no sepa todo lo que contiene su apreciable carta, y *especialmente los tratados de la Condesa de Genlis, y la Beaumont, cuando la cocinera de su casa los tiene leídos en sus ratos desocupados. [...] una Señora ilustrada [...] no mendiga traducciones y sabe el mérito de esas obras por sus originales.*
> (*Diario de Madrid,* 10 November 1797, p. 1339; my italics)

> (My Friend was surprised that you should hold her to be so ignorant as not to know all that your estimable letter contains, and *especially the essays of the Countess of Genlis and Mme Beaumont, when the cook in her house*

> *has read them in her moments of leisure. [...] an Enlightened Lady [...] does not beg for translations and knows the merit of those works from their originals.*)

The obvious exaggeration and humorous tone of the letter leads us to interpret it not as a real contribution from a reader but as one of the fictitious contributions customary in the press of the period. However, the comment suggests that these books circulated among a varied readership or, as the censor of *Las americanas* warned, among all those people (of both sexes) who had 'gusto por los libros y dinero para comprarlos' (a taste for books and money to buy them): cultured men and women who read them in the original language, but also more modest or less educated readers who knew them from translations. The fame they attained in Spain must have helped to normalize the image of the woman writer and associate it with certain literary genres – essay, dialogue, short story and novel – and themes – moral and educational – which were considered suitable for female readers; it is not surprising, therefore, that women featured prominently among those who translated them.

One last example of the implicit dialogue established between French women authors and their Spanish women translators is provided by María Rosario Romero in the preface to her translation of Françoise de Graffigny's *Lettres péruviennes* (1747) in 1792. The novel describes the journey to Europe of Zilia, an Incan princess captured by the Spaniards and, later, by the French, a literary device which allowed the author to offer a critical view of her own society, particularly of morality, social relations, and the status of women, and at the same time to reflect on the position of the woman writer and her opportunities for expression and self-representation (Theresa Ann Smith 2003 and 2006: 178–96).

All these aspects must have carried weight in the choice made by the translator, whose affinity for the chosen text is evident. However, María Rosario Romero went beyond mere translation. In her own footnotes, she extended the author's criticisms of France to Spanish society, and she patriotically corrected Mme de Graffigny by softening or omitting many of the reproaches she made about the Spanish colonization of the American continent; moreover, she altered the sense of the original story by adding a final letter about Zilia's conversion to Christianity, showing her own preference for Enlightened forms of religiousness and her indifference to merely external devotion. She also included in her preface a short autobiographical narrative of her progress as a reader, from her early love for 'las novelas de María de Zayas, y otros escritos de ese jaez' (María de Zayas's novellas, and other writings of that ilk), to her later development under male guidance (that of her brother) of a taste for morally instructive and literary reading. The distinction between 'improper' fiction (represented by the narratives of María de Zayas) and 'proper' novels (those of Mme de

Genlis) was evidently used here to authorize the translator as a respectable woman writer according to the new eighteenth-century standards of female propriety.

Making translations, very often of the work of women writers whose fame in their own country was already established, was thus one of the favourite options for Spanish women writers in the eighteenth century, though certainly not the only one. Converting the writing of other women, often their contemporaries, into their own language enabled them, to some extent, to engage in 'conversations' of agreement or disagreement, implicit or expressed in their rewriting of the original works. Gender complicity was not the only kind of rapport established by women translators, who produced versions of works by male authors, also selected, in many cases, on the basis of some affinity: of literary tastes, religious orientation, intellectual preferences, or ideological attachment.[7] Yet, undoubtedly, women writers and translators were united by their common experiences as women who, despite their different status and points of view, shared, in many cases, certain ideas (such as a sceptical view of marriage and a conviction of women's intellectual ability and entitlement), as women of letters who aspired to make a place for themselves in the literary world. By using, in many cases, French female authors of proven prestige as a basis for their activity, Spanish women writers were able to establish themselves in a position which in the eighteenth century, even more in Spain than in France, was still ambiguous and insecure, thus strengthening their aspiration to a new public legitimacy for women's intellectual and literary activity.

Further reading

Bolufer, Mónica, 2009. 'Between Tradition and Modernity: Women of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Spain', in *Eve's Enlightenmen: Women's Experience in Spain and Spanish America, 1726–1839*, ed. Catherine Jaffe and Elizabeth F. Lewis (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP), pp. 17–32

García Garrosa, María Jesús, 2007. 'La creación literaria femenina en la España del siglo XVIII: un estado de la cuestión', in *Cambio social y ficción literaria en la España de Moratín*, ed. Teresa Nava Rodríguez (Madrid: Universidad Complutense), pp. 203–18

López-Cordón, María Victoria, 2005. 'La fortuna de escribir: escritoras de los siglos XVII y XVIII', in *Historia de las mujeres en España y América Latina*, ed. Isabel Morant, 4 vols (Madrid: Cátedra), II, pp. 193–234

[7] For example, those between Le Tourneux and the Countess of Montijo, and Samuel Johnson and Inés Joyes (see Bolufer 2008, ch. 4).

Smith, Theresa Ann, 2003. 'Writing out of the Margins: Women, Translation, and the Spanish Enlightenment', *Journal of Women's History*, 15.1: 116–43
—, 2006. *The Emerging Female Citizen: Gender and Enlightenment in Spain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), ch. 4, 'Negotiating a Female Public: Writers and Reformers', pp. 111–47, and ch. 6, 'Between Reason and Passion: Citizenship in Translation', pp. 178–96

* This essay is part of the research project HAR2008–04113 (MICINN) and the COST Action IS0901.