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Translating to change the nation: The case of José Pedro Varela, a reformer in late 19th century Uruguay

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Abstract: The history of translation in Hispanic America can be segmented into specific historical periods that differ from those found in Europe, namely: encounter and conquest, the colonial period; pre-independence and emancipation; independence and republic; and an ongoing period that started in 1920 (Bastin, 2006). A great deal of work has been done regarding the first three of those periods. Later historical periods, while still receiving some scholarly attention, have not been the focus of as much research (cf. e.g., Montoya, 2014). This paper hopes to provide further insights on translation practices during the Independence and Republic Period by focusing on José Pedro Varela, an educational reformer in 19th century Uruguay. Varela spearheaded the charge for educational reform in his native South American country, and he initiated the reforms that would forever change the DNA of public education in Uruguay. Much has been written about him (e.g. Hentschke, 2016), but relatively little has been said of the fact that a number of his most influential writings were, at least in part, translations. In light of this, the present paper will provide a portrait of Varela, highlighting his status as a popular hero whose role as a translator has faded from the public's view. By pointing out some of his most well-known translations and the role they played in his broader reformist strategies, this paper will also provide some historical perspectives on translation, including how it was conceptualized by some of South America's key intellectuals during the second half of the 19th century.

Keywords: translation, translation history, José Pedro Varela, education, Uruguay, reform

1. Introduction: translation in Spanish American history

The history of translation in Hispanic America can be segmented into specific historical periods, which differ from those found in Europe. There are essentially five, namely: encounter and conquest, the colonial period; pre-independence and emancipation; independence and republic; and an ongoing period that started in 1920 (Bastin, 2006). A great deal of work has been done regarding the first three; later historical periods, while still receiving some scholarly attention, have not been the focus of as much research (cf. e.g., Montoya, 2014).

The first of the two later periods was that of budding independent republics and corresponds with the second half of the 19th century. In order to highlight translation practices during this period, the present paper will focus on the educational reform that took place in 19th century Uruguay. This was a time of nation-building in Latin America generally, which implies some degree of cultural evolution. As part of the cultural changes that were taking place at the time, some intellectuals in the Spanish-speaking Americas focused their efforts on bringing about educational reforms. One such reformer was José Pedro

Varela, who forever transformed education in his native country. To achieve his aims, he deployed several strategies, including, as will be shown, translation.

In addressing the republican period, this paper will follow some general principles derived from Pym's (1998, ix-x) own conclusions on why and how we do translation history: 1. it will attempt to explain why Varela's translations were produced when and where they were produced, including insights into the practice of translation in his place and time; 2. it will paint a portrait of the translator, of Varela himself, instead of focusing on the details of the translated texts; 3. it will consider Uruguay and the social world inhabited by Varela. Following these principles will allow the drawing of some conclusions about how translation was conceptualized by some in South America during the 19th century.

In order to follow such principles, part II of this paper will provide some historical context to Varela's educational reform. Having set the place and time, the paper in part III will focus on the life of Varela, with special attention to his push for educational reform. At that point, part IV of the paper will consider his translations, aiming to highlight the role they played in his broader reformist aims. This will lead to, in part V, some conclusions regarding how translation was conceptualized by 19th century Latin American intellectuals.

2. The context: educational reform in Uruguay during the second half of the 19th century

In order to understand Varela and his translation, something must be known of the times he lived in. His times cannot be fully understood without taking a step back to the half century before he became active as a reformer. Sights must be cast back to at least 1830. The Uruguayan state was established that year¹ under unlikely circumstances, the result of complex local and regional struggles that were relevant internationally, including within a broader context of British imperial interests. The state was frail enough that it was reasonable for some people to doubt the project's long-term sustainability. By 1836 an armed revolt broke out which would eventually lead to the Guerra Grande [Great War]², a civil war that placed the two existing political parties literally on the battlefield against each other from 1839 to 1852. The end of the civil war found the country in economic shambles and the population wary of the continuous violence.

Thus, in the second half of the 19th century Uruguayan leaders saw an opportunity to attempt to make something out of the newfound, fragile peace. Some politicians even tried (unsuccessfully, as it turned out) to get rid of the two political parties, which they blamed for the constant strife. In other words, obtaining security and growth became paramount objectives for those in power. This was a state stunted by violence and instability, up to that point unable to perform many of the functions which states were expected to perform as a matter of course. This desire for a lasting, secure peace would be a key factor in helping make educational reform a reality.

Among the elites, many felt that modernization was of the essence, especially if the impoverished economy was to tap into the emerging global capitalist market (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 17). This was the time when the state began organizing Uruguay's economic life around agriculture and cattle ranching. In this context, some among the urban elites in the capital city of Montevideo saw the countryside, with its *caudillos* [strongmen], as a threat to the emerging economic and political order. For them, if Uruguay was to grow it was imperative that urban leaders dictate the direction of the country. In turn,

¹ Dates for the birth of States are always somewhat arbitrary. For purposes of this paper, this date was chosen because on 18 July 1830 the first constitution was adopted, which organized Uruguay as an independent state.

² All bracketed translations in this paper are my own.

wealthy rural landowners had much to gain in the objective of modernizing the economy. In order for this to happen, urban elites and rural landholders could agree that some formula had to be found to bring the *gauchos* [rural horsemen/cowboys] in line with the modernizing project. In this context, the allure is hard to miss in a reform that promised rural schools charged with educating the children of *gauchos* into productive, modern members of society.³ The lack of education for rural populations was increasingly seen as a problem to be tackled. For example, an 1855 government report on public education disapprovingly pointed out that the “poblaciones atrasadas” [backward settlements] in the countryside lacked any sort of educational system (Bralich, 2011, p. 49).

Another important element in understanding why the educational reform took place when it did was the rise of positivism, which around this time “empezaba a predominar en la élite intelectual urbana” [began to be favoured by urban intellectual elites] (Nahum, 2016, p. 61). Positivism made strides in all the Americas, but it impacted different countries in different ways (Ardao, 1968, p. 72). For example, a French perspective of positivism was dominant in places like Mexico and Brazil, but in Uruguay it would be Herbert Spencer’s views that would be more influential (Ardao, 1968, pp. 72-73). As a philosophy, positivism rejected metaphysical or supernatural knowledge and enthroned scientific knowledge as the only legitimate form of knowledge. Varela became sold on positivist ideas that he was exposed to while on an overseas trip, and he then turned into a key evangelist of the positivist gospel in his homeland (see Ardao, 1968, pp. 86-95). For key reformers like Varela, an overhaul of the national educational system was needed in order to thoroughly disseminate positivist thought.

These conditions made it possible to embark on a profound educational reform. By 1868, there was awareness among national leaders that some kind of action was needed in terms of public education (Bralich, 1989, pp. 25-26). Earlier proposals for educational reforms had failed due to political instability and economic limitations (Bralich, 1989, pp. 42-48). Yet in 1868, Varela and other like-minded individuals took on the cause. There was much work to be done in a country where the inability to read and write was widespread (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 20). As Bralich explains:

En la segunda mitad del siglo XIX Uruguay no contaba con un sistema escolar mínimo: apenas funcionaban pocas escuelas sin coordinación entre sí, sin métodos pedagógicos, sin textos, con maestros sin formación específica y muchas veces cercanos a la ignorancia (1989, p. 68).

[In the second half of the 19th century, Uruguay lacked even a basic school system: very few schools were in operation, which were not coordinated together, lacked textbooks and pedagogical methods, and employed teachers with no training who were themselves often nearly uneducated.]

For the next three-plus decades, education in Uruguay would undergo a thorough transformation. At first, this happened modestly, mainly through the efforts of private citizens. In 1876, Varela was appointed to oversee the country’s public education, which thrust educational reform forward in a significant way. Upon Varela’s death in 1879, his brother Jacobo Varela was appointed as his successor.⁴ When Jacobo Varela took over, “the foundations of a public school system had been laid already and his mission consisted in extending, organizing, and perpetuating it, building upon a growing consensus in society” (Hentschke, 2016, p. 177). Jacobo Varela carried out educational reform from 1879 to 1889, at which time he stepped down. The reform came to

³ This reasoning was bluntly put forward in Varela, 1865.

⁴ For more information on Jacobo Varela’s life, see Montero Bustamante, 1922.

a halt in the mid-1890s, but it was picked up again in the first decade of the 20th century, culminating in the adoption of a fully secular model in 1909 (Hentschke, 2016, pp. 309-310).

While educational reform took place over several decades, the early stages of said reform saw Varela as a key figure who set the blueprint going forward. He died during the first few years of the reform, but his leadership in those initial stages helped him gain the status of a national hero among future generations. His writings became so influential that well over a century later they still provided guidance to Uruguayan educators. What is often overlooked is that a fair amount of his published material was in part translated from other languages. In the following sections, we will examine his life (and translations) more closely.

3. A portrait: the life of José Pedro Varela

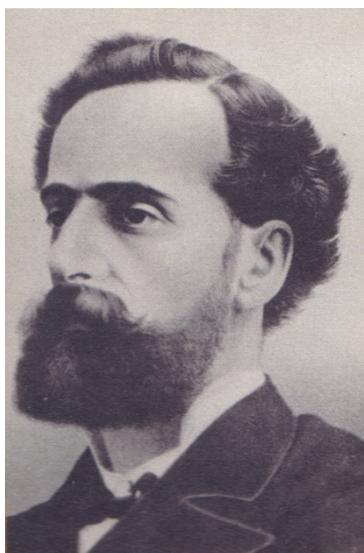


Image 1. Portrait of José Pedro Varela. (Image in the public domain.)

In order to understand Varela in his role as a translator, this section provides a portrait of this 19th century Latin American intellectual. Born March 19, 1845, Varela was similar to other key personalities of his day and age in that he was heir to relative wealth and intellect. In his particular case, his family ties stretched to both sides of the River Plate. His father was a prosperous Argentine businessman who fled to Montevideo, and his mother was the niece of a high-profile Uruguayan revolutionary and priest (Bralich, 2011, p. 46). His family, by blood or by marriage, included journalists, poets, a jurist, a university president, and a President of Uruguay (Hentschke, 2016, p. 127). It was in this family context that Varela most likely discovered his own interest in translation. Tellingly, Varela's father translated a book on pedagogy that was published in instalments by the periodical *El Comercio del Plata* (Montero Bustamante, 1922, p. 15). It is hard to imagine that Varela would have engaged in the many activities he did, including translation, if he had needed to worry about subsisting and had not been raised in a context of educated individuals.

Varela's education did not extend into college, because his father brought him into the family merchant business (Bralich, 2011, p. 46). Even so, Varela's heart did not seem to be in the business as he strongly felt the allure of language, literature, and politics. By age 19 he was a budding literary figure (Bralich, 2011, pp. 46-47). By age 20, he cofounded a journal in which he published poetry, news stories, and opinion pieces on a range of social issues (Bralich, 2011, pp. 46-47). He published in other venues as well. His other published pieces included some that were critical of the Catholic Church and others that

dealt with education, where he argued, for example, that education was a way to do away with *gauchos* (Demarchi & Rodríguez, 2010, pp. 14-16). Additionally, by 1866 he had learned French, English, and some German (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 2). In this type of activities, he was not unlike other young intellectuals around him.

Like other well-to-do people of his day, Varela was sent by his family on a trip to Europe and the United States in 1867. Nominally this was a business trip, but there was an element to it of broadening the young man's cultural horizons (Bralich, 2011, p. 47). He briefly visited Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom (Hentschke, 2016). He also spent some time in France, where he met with the French poet Victor Hugo, who reportedly encouraged Varela to publish his own poetry⁵ (Varela, 1868, pp. v-vi). More importantly, he spent several months in the United States. This leg of the trip is crucial in at least two ways. The first is that Varela was positively impressed by what he saw there in terms of material prosperity, social structures, and political organization. He took note of the role American women played in their society, attended the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson, visited schools, and carefully studied the US educational system (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, pp. 18-27). The second way this leg of the trip matters is that Varela met intellectual (and soon-to-be President of Argentina) Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. While others were no doubt involved, Sarmiento is usually credited with instilling in Varela the desire to pursue educational reform back home (Hentschke, 2016, pp. 130-131).

By the time Varela returned to his native city in 1868, he had all but given up on his literary endeavours and instead had made up his mind “de emprender una tenaz campaña en pro de la escuela pública” [to embark on a tenacious campaign promoting public schooling] (Bralich, 2011, p. 48). As he got off the ship in the port of Montevideo, he brought with him boxes of US pedagogical literature, including several volumes of Henry Barnard's *American Journal of Education* (Bralich, 2011, p. 52). His hauling of a small library across the planet is likely an indication that Varela already had decided on translation as a partial strategy in his “tenacious campaign.” In some ways, translation was an obvious solution to a practical problem. The educators he relied on were published in English, and inasmuch as Varela had seen his father translate pedagogical literature in the past, translation would have seemed like one of several viable strategies to transfer that information into Spanish.

Upon his return Varela quickly set out to write, publishing some opinion pieces about public education (Demarchi & Rodríguez, 1993, pp. 18-19). In September 1868, he was invited to give a lecture on public education in front of a crowd of over 300 people (Bralich, 2011, pp. 51-52). Varela was beginning to deploy translation as needed: his talk on this occasion included several translated quotes, including a key passage from Horace Mann (see Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, pp. 43-59). The lecture led to the creation, in that same event, of an organization whose express purpose was to promote public education: Sociedad de Amigos de la Educación Popular⁶ [Society of Friends of Popular Education]. Varela would be involved with the Society first as its secretary and, soon thereafter, as its president. In these roles, he engaged in a wide range of activities, from the training of teachers to the publication of relevant documents (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 64). During this period, in 1874, he published *La educación del pueblo* [The People's Education], a seminal work which, as will be seen below, was created in part through translation.

⁵ Varela followed Victor Hugo's advice and in 1868 published *Ecos perdidos* in New York. This was his one and only book of poetry.

⁶ This paper should not be read to imply that Varela single-handedly brought about education reform in Uruguay. He was part of a cadre of mostly men who worked in concert to achieve the aim of transforming the Uruguayan public school system (Bralich, 1989, p. 39). This paper, however, focuses on Varela because he is the most emblematic of these reformers and because his use of translation as a reform tool is the most obvious.

In 1875 Uruguay came under the rule of a dictator, who the following year appointed Varela to the position of Director of Public Education⁷ (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 142). This effectively put Varela in charge of Uruguay's public schools. In that position, Varela was able to push many of his proposed reforms. His 1876 book *La legislación escolar* [School Legislation] proposed a law on education that would have modelled Uruguay's nation-wide, public school system very closely after the systems he had observed in the United States (Bralich, 2011, p. 58). Even though the law that was passed fell short of many of Varela proposals, once the bill became law, he worked hard to implement the new legislation (Bralich, 1989, p. 121). He also began overseeing the publication of *La enciclopedia de educación* [The Education Encyclopedia], envisioned as a multi-volume work modelled after Barnard's *American Journal of Education* (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 161). This work too relied on translation. In late 1879 – three years into his appointment – Varela died after a painful illness.

Others would pick up his torch and carry the country's educational reform for decades to come (Bralich, 1989, p. 130). Varela's work to push reforms in public education during his short lifespan began raising him to the status of national hero almost immediately – over 20,000 people followed his coffin down the streets of Montevideo to its final resting place (Bralich, 2011, p. 67). In the century and a half following Varela's death, his stature has continued to grow to arguably mythical proportions (Bralich, 1989, pp. 131-141). What is often overlooked when remembering his life and contributions is that in addition to being a poet, a journalist, a politician, and a reformer, he was also a translator (cf. Villegas, 1989). The following section of this paper will focus on Varela's work precisely as a translator.

4. The texts: Varela's key translations for reforming education

Varela did not make a living as a translator. In fact, there is no evidence that he thought of himself as one. Nonetheless, he translated. In those infrequent but significant moments in which he did engage in translation, there was no profit motive. This, of course, should not be surprising as there was no such thing as a language industry when and where he lived. Following independence and during the 19th century, translation in Uruguay appeared mostly in the form of literary translations usually published in periodicals (Ortiz, 2013, 441). Varela himself engaged in some literary translation (González Núñez, 2018b), but this is an obscure fact that is largely irrelevant to his public dimension as a reformer. The way translation matters in terms of his reform efforts is that he employed translation as a tool in his push for transforming his country's educational system. This section will focus on his key translations in that regard. Three works deserve special attention: *Manual de lecciones sobre objetos* [Handbook on Object Lessons], *La educación del pueblo*, and *La enciclopedia de educación*.

4.1 *Manual de lecciones sobre objetos*

In 1868, the Society of Friends of Popular Education founded a non-profit school named Elbio Fernández as a laboratory in which to test and perfect their educational values and models (Dumar, 2005, p. 97). One of the many activities that took place in the Elbio Fernández school was free teacher-training courses in the evenings (Dumar, 2005, p. 97). These were taught by Varela himself, who

⁷ Varela's decision to accept the appointment to lead Uruguay's schools was controversial from the onset (Hentschke, 2016, p. 148-149). Many felt his working under a dictator was an unacceptable violation of the principles he championed. Others, however, defended his choice as a pragmatic compromise in order to educate the coming generations as valuable members of future democratic societies (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 67).

had the challenge of finding good materials to educate educators. In order to get around the lack of such resources in Spanish, Varela decided to translate pedagogical materials (Dumar, 2005, p. 97), many of which he had probably brought back with him from the United States. Thus, he began using translation as a tool to train those that were already persuaded of the need for change.

One of the innovative ideas that Varela and his fellows in the Society pushed for was giving up the old system of rote memorization in favour of a new system where children learned through experiential activities. This included the use of object lessons as an important classroom activity in which teachers “used the organic and inorganic material things surrounding students to awaken their interest and make them enquire about these objects’ features, structure, and utilization” (Hentschke, 2016, p. 141). In support of such pedagogy, an essential book that was to be used for training purposes was *Primary Object Lessons for Training the Senses and Developing the Faculties of Children* by Norman Allison Calkins. Varela attempted to secure a translation of Calkins’ book that was reportedly being done in Argentina by a retired school inspector (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 272). When it became clear that negotiations with the Argentine translator would not be successful, Varela and his associate Emilio Romero themselves took on the work of translation (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 272). The translated portions of *Primary Object Lessons* began appearing in late 1869 in instalments published by a short-lived periodical called *La Educación Popular* (De Giorgi, 1942, p. 95). The translation was eventually published in book form in 1872 under the name *Manual de lecciones sobre objetos*. The book’s title page clearly identifies Calkin as the author and Varela and Romero as translators.

4.2. La educación del pueblo

Varela became president of the Society back in 1869. In such a position, he was sought out regarding educational matters. In 1874, three men approached the Society because they had built a school in Villa Colón, a town that was being developed just outside Montevideo, and they wanted the Society to manage it (Villegas, 1989, p. 14). The Society’s leadership tasked Varela with writing a report on the curriculum that the new high school was to follow (Villegas, 1989, p. 14). He agreed to take on that task, but he had a different type of book in mind. What he really wanted to do was to take this opportunity to “illuminate decision-makers and the public” regarding educational matters (Hentschke, 2016, pp. 144-145).

As he worked on his book, several factors weighed on his mind. First, he envisioned the “report” as a broader treatise on how public education should be organized (Varela, 1874a, p. 10). Second, he felt pressured to produce the work rather quickly. He lived in politically unstable times, and he wanted the book to be available before an upcoming parliamentary debate on public education (Hentschke, 2016, pp. 144-145). Third, there was, in Varela’s own words, a “falta casi absoluta de libros en castellano, sobre materia tan importante y tan útil para nuestro país” [nearly absolute lack of books in Spanish regarding this highly important and useful matter for our country] (1874a, p. 10).

These factors led Varela to produce a two-volume, 658-page work in the short span of three or four months titled *La educación del pueblo* (Villegas, 1989, p. 14). To achieve this, Varela relied heavily on translation. In his mind, education in Uruguay was to be approached based on relevant, respectable studies (Varela, 1874a, p. 14). Because he was keenly aware of the lack of Spanish-language materials on which to base his own book, he looked to sources in other languages, especially in English. On this point, Varela explains his approach, which includes translation, even if the term itself is not explicitly mentioned:

... *La Educación del Pueblo*, está lejos de ser una improvisación: es el resultado de seis ú ocho años de estudios [...] Y es esto tanto mas cierto, cuanto que ni remotamente aspiro á los honores de la originalidad. [...] Es así que *La Educación del Pueblo*, no es mas que un resumen de los libros que he leído con respecto á educación, escojiendo de entre ellos lo que, con arreglo á mi criterio propio y á mis propias observaciones, he creído mas exacto y mas conveniente. En algunos casos he citado los libros que me han servido de guia: en otros he dejado de hacerlo, porque he introducido modificaciones en la forma, ó he aceptado solo en parte las opiniones de los autores. (1874a, p. 14)

[... *The People's Education* is far from improvised – it is the result of six or eight years of study [...] And this is so much so that I am not remotely interested in the honours of originality. [...] Thus, *The People's Education* is nothing more than a summary of the books I have read regarding education, where I have selected from among them, according to my own criteria and observations, the things I believe to be most correct and helpful. In some cases, I have cited the books on which I have relied; in other cases, I have not done so, because I have introduced changes to their form or because I have only partially accepted the opinions of the authors.]

In essence, Varela is saying that his book was put together through various forms of translation, including summary and adaptation. He goes even as far as to indicate that some of the source material is cited but some is not. At least fifteen authors are explicitly translated (González Núñez, 2018b), at times in rather lengthy fragments that can stretch for several pages. Further, as Villegas has shown (1989), the book contains a great deal of translated material from an 1850 book by Ira Mayhew titled *Popular Education: For the use of Parents and Teachers, and for Young Persons of both Sexes*. The similarity in the titles is telling, and Varela's book is clearly a translation, in part, of Mayhew's book. But Mayhew goes uncredited. It was not until Villega's study on the matter that people were even aware of how much of *La educación del pueblo* is translated material. Varela patches together Mayhew, the other authors, and his own commentary seamlessly, creating one coherent whole. A striking difference between Varela's book and his sources has to do with the omission of the many pages that their authors dedicated to defending religious education in school – something Varela, as a committed positivist, openly disagreed with. All in all, the book is not a translation in a way that would be readily recognizable by readers,⁸ but Varela created it by employing a range of translational and authorial functions. What is evident here is that Varela was employing translation as a tool to create and organize a vision for reform. In short, translation was being mingled with original writing as a tool to persuade readers about Varela's own reformist vision.

4.3 *La enciclopedia de educación*

As stated above, one of Varela's concerns was the scarcity of quality education-related materials that were available to his fellow citizens. Education could not be transformed in a vacuum of knowledge. Reformers needed to know what the best teaching methods were, how to design school buildings and furniture, how to organize a public school system, etc. Varela's solution to this problem came in the form of a periodical titled *La Enciclopedia de Educación*, which began publication in 1874. This quarterly published Varela's translations of a number of articles on education (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 158).

In 1878, now as part of the government, Varela was instrumental in getting these articles compiled and published by the authorities in book form under the same title of *La enciclopedia de educación*. The book collected at least fifteen

⁸ For example, a parliamentary member in an 1880 session of the Chamber of Representatives spoke highly of Varela and his work but nonetheless noted that *La educación del pueblo* "no es un libro que tenga mucho de original" [is not much of an original book] because Varela was acting mainly as a compiler and editor (Asamblea General, 1881, p. 485). No mention is made of his work as a translator.

authors through translation, as well as an original article in Spanish and several legal texts (González Núñez, 2018b). This was volume one of what was expected to be an on-going, multi-volume endeavour, but Varela's premature death meant there would be no more volumes (Herrero y Espinoza, 1885, p. 161).

In his foreword to the book, Varela is straightforward about what motivated him to embark on this years-long translation and publication project: there was no consequential material available in Spanish. In his words, “[e]scasas, y [...] de escasa importancia, son las obras que sobre esa materia se encuentran en español” [the works on this subject in Spanish are few and [...] of little note] (Varela, 1878, p. 9). In his mind, given that everyone, from teachers to parents, is an educator, it became incumbent to “dotar al castellano de aquellos elementos que le faltan” [give Spanish those things it lacks] in terms of how to teach (Varela, 1878, p. 10). Having identified the problem – scarcity of materials – Varela pondered the solution. One option was to simply develop all the materials that were needed, or in this specific case, to write the encyclopaedia on education from scratch (Varela, 1878, p. 10). The other option was to select key texts from around the world and translate them (Varela, 1878, p. 10). Varela dismisses the first option by arguing it is beyond his own capacity (Varela, 1878, pp. 10-11). He also argues that he would much rather give people a chorus of voices to listen to and have every person come up with their own pedagogical views (Varela, 1878, pp. 11-12). In short, Varela believed translation was a legitimate means to import the best and most influential ideas regarding education into a context that, in his estimation, lacked such ideas. Here translation was envisioned as a tool for the betterment of an entire society that lacked certain knowledge in its own language.

5. A conclusion: translation among 19th century Latin American intellectuals

This paper has considered the historical context in which Varela lived, a number of key events in his life (in terms of leading an educational reform), and the translations he deployed as part of his efforts at that time. Based on that information, we are ready to draw some conclusions about the role that the practice of translation played in this rather consequential period of reform. Such conclusions are a reflection of this particular case study, but they are also a contribution to a broader understanding of how some of South America's key intellectuals during the second half of the 19th century conceptualized translation.

Translation in Latin America during the turbulent first half of the 19th century was mostly carried out by intellectual elites. The history of translation in Spanish America during this period is peppered with figures such as Francisco Miranda, Andrés Bello, Mariano Moreno, and Vicente Rocafuerte. Only the elites had the time, resources, and formal education necessary to engage in translation projects that were, for the most part, not aimed at making ends meet (González Núñez, 2018a, p. 91). These translation projects seem to follow two general lines. On the one hand, many of them were literary translations, such as *El solitario o el misterioso del monte*, which was Eduardo Barry's translation of Charles-Victor Prévot's novel *Le Solitaire* (Hernández González, 1991, pp. 349-350). On the other hand, there were a number of translations aimed at effecting profound changes in the political systems of the target cultures (see, generally, González Núñez, 2018a). Along this line, intellectuals translated books, proclamations, pamphlets, news reports, letters, speeches, constitutions, etc. For example, Manuel García de Sena selectively translated constitutions, books, and pamphlets from a number of authors, including Thomas Paine, in an effort to present a political system similar to that

of the United States as an option for the emerging Venezuela (González Núñez, 2014).

The present case study points to some continuity from the first to the second half of the century in question. To begin with, translation continued to be an activity associated with social elites, including intellectuals. In Varela's case, he was, as stated above, part of a family network of wealthy, educated, and well-connected individuals in the River Plate area. This allowed him to learn other European languages, travel outside the region, and dedicate time and effort to translating. In addition, literary translation continued to play an important role. Intellectual elites had access to publishing resources, and they used periodicals to publish their literary translations. As stated above, Varela himself attempted some literary translation before beginning his crusade for educational reform. This was in line with what was often seen in 19th century Uruguay, where literary translations were published in periodicals⁹ (Ortiz, 2013, p. 441). Due to the nature of the medium, if a text was particularly lengthy, then it would be published in instalments. In turn, the second broad line of translations during the early 19th century (those designed to effect profound cultural changes) seemed to become less common once the emerging republics developed their own political models. This makes sense – during a revolution many options are open, but as the situation becomes more stable, some options are adopted over others, and this reduces the amount of new options that can be put forth. Or at least it reduces the fields in which new options are sought. Inasmuch as the state is still engaged in nation building, particularly in the early stages of it, there will be room for presenting a different range of options. This is in essence what happened in terms of the education reform of late 19th century Uruguay. Whether to adopt a monarchy or a republic was not really at issue at this point (as it had been, for example, in Buenos Aires decades earlier). As explained above, the issues of the day had more to do with how to organize the state economically and socially.

In this regard, public education was a field where a wide range of options could be presented. For Varela, translation was a valid means of presenting these options. This is attested by his wide use translated material, from *Manual de lecciones sobre objetos* to *La enciclopedia de educación*. It is also attested by his constant weaving in and out of translation, most obviously in *La educación del pueblo*. Even in other works, his reliance on translation as a way to propagate specific ideas is robust. For example, in *La legislación escolar* he quotes a number of authors through translation, including a sixteen-page¹⁰ extract from Herbert Spencer. Varela's use of translation to propagate these options not only took place in books but also in his newspaper articles and essays (Bralich, 1989, p. 94).

In essence, the Latin American intellectuals discussed in this case study felt that translation was a valid means of bringing in from other cultures what was lacking in their own. It is no wonder that Varela and his allies in the Society of Friends of Popular Education consulted Barnard's *American Journal of Education* freely and often (Bralich, 1989, p. 34). They saw themselves as reformers, and in bringing about reform, it made sense to look at what they considered the successful experiences of others. These insights and experiences in foreign lands could only be brought into Uruguay through different language transfer strategies: translation, paraphrase, summary, etc. Of course, because Varela and his associates saw their role not as importers of texts but as reformers of education, they engaged in many activities besides translation. They lectured,

⁹ Examples of periodicals in Varela's day included *La Bandera Radical* and *La Revista Literaria*. Such publications appeared with varying frequencies and sprung in and out of existence. Their contents included political opinions, essays on diverse topics, and literature, often published side by side. They were instrumental in disseminating new ideas.

¹⁰ Pages in this example refer to the pagination observed in the 1964, two-volume edition of *La legislación escolar*, as part of a collection of Uruguayan classic texts.

trained, lobbied, etc. As part of these broader efforts, they deployed translation strategically. Thus, when Varela gave his 1868 lecture, he quoted several authors he had translated himself. And when he needed to train teachers on the use of object lessons, he translated materials (including a book) for that purpose. In essence, he was not translating to simply make information available but to achieve specific aims within the broader reformist agenda.

It should be noted that not everyone agreed with Varela's generous reliance on translational activities. A number of authors did in fact set out to write their own books instead of relying on what had been previously written in other languages. In some cases, as when teaching national history, this solution was the only one that made sense. Thus, the local origin of books like Francisco A. Berra's 1881 *Bosquejo histórico de la República Oriental del Uruguay* [Outline History of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay] should come as no surprise.

Nevertheless, it was not simply an issue of subject matter. This is well exemplified in the differences that arose between the aforementioned Berra and Varela. As should be clear by now, Varela was not interested in creating a new pedagogy but in introducing what he deemed was the successful pedagogy of others, as deliberately filtered through his positivist worldview. With this aim in mind, translation makes sense. Berra, on the other hand, opted for creating his own pedagogical materials. As a member of the Society who had done much research himself into pedagogy, philosophy, law, etc., Berra did not agree with much of "Varela's second-hand pedagogy" (Hentschke, 2016, p. 163). Berra felt that rather than a patchwork of practical ideas imported from overseas, pedagogy in Uruguay needed to be developed from a solid theoretical foundation and built on scientific principles (Hentschke, 2016, p. 164). He developed his own theory of pedagogy, which took the form of a highly theoretical approach to teaching that required educators to adopt a malleable teaching style based on laws he had derived (Hentschke, 2016, pp. 165-173). He published his theories in 1883 under the title *Apuntes para un curso de pedagogía* [Notes on a Course on Pedagogy].¹¹ Both Varela and Berra championed educational reform, but their relationship became rather tense over their different approaches to teaching (Dumar, 1997). These different approaches were reflected in their different strategies toward advancing their own views. While Varela translated in order to attempt to import options from the United States, Berra created original works in order to produce new options.

With the benefit of over a century of hindsight, it seems both Varela and Berra were right to some extent. This is not the place to try to sort out their philosophical differences, but it is a good place to point out that both of these 19th-century Latin American intellectuals left their mark by helping organize and modernize education. They both became influential in their own right, and while it is Varela that attained hero stature, both had much to offer in their quest for what they termed "popular education." One relied on translation much more than the other did, but both were successful reformers. Clearly, in terms of introducing new options to Latin America in the second half of the 19th century, translation continued to be a viable approach, even if not the only one. Whether that viability will hold true in the first half of the 21st century is a question that could well be worth exploring.

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¹¹ Berra would continue to refine his ideas and in 1896 would publish an updated theory under the title *Resumen de las leyes naturales de la enseñanza* [A Summary of the Natural Laws of Teaching] in Argentina (Hentscheke, 2016, p. 168).

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