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A LATE MEDIEVAL KNIGHT REFLECTING  
ON HIS PUBLIC LIFE:  
HUGO DE URRIÉS (C. 1405-C. 1493),  
DIPLOMACY AND TRANSLATING THE CLASSICS

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**ABSTRACT**

This article focuses on Aragonese courtier Hugo de Urriés's public profile by means of analyzing the critical points derived from examining his personal, political, cultural and historical stands making use of an invaluable primary source, his letter to Fernando the Catholic in the early 1490s. It is not often that the medieval scholar is presented with the chance to analyze a self-evident symbiosis between the public and private personae of a late medieval knight. As part of Urriés's public profile, his translation of Valerius Maximus and his foreword to King Fernando of Aragón are contextualized as an integral part of an agenda of legitimization of royal and imperial power, an agenda in which Urriés actively participated and one that he militantly promoted throughout his life. This article juxtaposes diplomacy, courtliness and translation of classics as a means of showcasing some of the markers of nation building in the years of the reign of the Catholic Monarchs.

**KEY WORDS**

Hugo de Urriés, Valerius Maximus, Translation of Classics, Fifteenth Century, Catholic Monarchs.

**CAPITALIA VERBA**

Hugo ab Urriés, Valerius Maximus, Translatio scriptorum optimorum, Quindecimum saeculum, Catholici reges.

Most scholarly attention given to the figure of Hugo de Urriés has traditionally been focused on his poetry and his role as a possible compiler of the *Cancionero de Herberay*, one of the most interesting and diverse courtly literature collections in the Spanish fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> His cultural, literary and political influence made him a very important man of his time. Moreover, it is not often that the medieval scholar is presented with the chance to analyze a self-evident symbiosis between the public and private personae of a late medieval knight. His poetry —most notably, that addressed to his wife— forms a rare and revealing corpus of late medieval and early modern ideas about gender relations and marriage. For this reason, he is better known for being the only Spanish courtly poet to address his poems to his wife: the so called “devout lover of married love”.<sup>2</sup> This unusual degree of public exposure of his private life has already attracted some critical attention.<sup>3</sup> This article, however, will focus solely on his public profile by means of analyzing the critical points derived from examining his personal, political, cultural and historical stands making use of an invaluable primary source, Urriés's introductory letter to Fernando the Catholic in the early 1490s.

Archival and historiographic research shows that Urriés was much more than an idle courtier who spent his time in Juan II of Trastámara's Navarrese-Aragonese court engaged in highbrow literary activities. His political life and his work as a translator of Valerius Maximus need to be discussed in further depth. Political influence and the translation of classical texts were intimately linked in the Spanish fifteenth century. Furthermore, the study of Hugo de Urriés's life throws some light on Juan II of Navarre's external policy and Navarre-Aragón's diplomatic relationship with England and France during his reign. As part of Urriés's public profile, his translation of Valerius Maximus and his foreword to Juan II's son, King Fernando of Aragón, Fernando the Catholic, will be contextualized as an integral part of an agenda of legitimization of royal and imperial power, an agenda in which Urriés actively participated and one that he militantly promoted throughout his life. This article will juxtapose diplomacy and translation of classics as a means of showcasing two of the markers of nation building in the early years of the reign of the Catholic Monarchs. This period was personified by Hugo de Urriés's endeavours and the

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1. It is worth noting that, despite Urriés's unmistakable hand behind the selection of materials of this courtly literature volume, he could not have been the compiler of the LB2 manuscript itself, which is a copy derived from different sources. See: Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero de Herberay y la corte literaria del Reino de Navarra*. Newcastle: Arts and Social Sciences Academic Press, 2009: 2-3; Aubrun, Charles V. *Le Chansonnier espagnol d'Herberay des Essarts XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Bourdeaux: Féret et Fils, 1951: 1; Beltran, Vicenç. “Tipología y génesis de los cancioneros: la reordenación de los contenidos”, *Los cancioneros españoles: materiales y métodos*, Manuel Moreno, Dorothy Severin, Vicente Beltrán, Cleofé Tato, Josep Lluís Martos, eds. London: Queen Mary and Westfield College, 2005: XLIII, 15.

2. See: Tillier, Jane Yvonne. “The Devout Lover in the *Cancionero de Herberay*”. *La Corónica*, 12/2 (1984): 265-274; Whetnall, Jane. “Unmasking the Devout Lover: Hugo de Urriés in the *Cancionero de Herberay*”. *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 74 (1997): 275-297.

3. This aspect of his life and works is better addressed in a forthcoming article: Conde Solares, Carlos. “Men who Talk about Love in Late Medieval Spain: Hugo de Urriés and Egalitarian Married Life”. *New Readings*, 13/1 (2013).



evolution of his public role through nearly every decade of the 1400s. When Urriés, in his old age, wrote his introductory letter to Fernando, he reflected on a life of loyal service to both Juan II of Navarre-Aragón and the Catholic King himself. He took pride in the fact that, during a century of political confrontation and intrigues, he always remained an active part of the winning side. Unlike many of his courtly contemporaries, he never strayed away from the party led by Juan II and his son Fernando the Catholic, despite the many chances provided during the century by the rifts created by, above all, Juan II's disgraced son Carlos of Viana. Urriés defined himself as<sup>4</sup>:

*...subdito e seruidor suyo y criado anciano del magnanimo padre vuestro, ca li año le serui continuadamente, e le seruieron tres generaciones de mi linaje, padres, hijos e nietos. E ahun a vuestra grande alteza assi en todas las guerras que houo e houistes como en los tiempos de paz e tranquilidad.*

This passage highlights Urriés's lineage-building ambitions. His background was relatively humble (youngest son of Felipe 'el Celludo', a lesser nobleman) and his intention was to consolidate his prestige so that his family could benefit from it. Perhaps as a result of Hugo de Urriés's achievements, his son Pedro became Fernando's ambassador and his grandson Hugo was emperor Carlos V's royal secretary.<sup>5</sup> His loyalty was, without a doubt, his greatest credential in his own eyes, but the late medieval idea of fully rounded knighthood and courtliness certainly went beyond military and political discipline. According to Ruiz Casanova's history of Spanish translation, the fifteenth century signalled the end of the dichotomy between arms or letters as ideals of life for a courtier.<sup>6</sup> Having spent half of his life engaged in military work, Urriés went on to become an important diplomat, poet and translator. Intellectual activity became a requirement for knights and courtiers by the end of the fifteenth century, when the different courts competed not only for military and territorial power but also fought for cultural domination.<sup>7</sup> Noble and even royal sponsorship was available for the purpose of the creation of libraries, compilation of *cancioneros* (such as the *Cancionero de Herberay*, for which Urriés was largely responsible) and also for the translation of classical works. What had previously been an individual task for men such as Archbishop Raimundo, Sancho IV or, just a few decades before Urriés's time, Enrique de Villena, became part of the

4. "...your old subject and server of your magnanimous father, whom I served continuously for 51 years, and so did three generations of my lineage, fathers, sons and grandsons. And still today I am serving your great highness, as I served you in the past, in your times of war and in times of peace and tranquillity" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio Máximo [Facta et dicta memorabilia (en castellano): Valerio Máximo]*. Zaragoza: Pablo Hurus, 1495: 6r).

I quote Urriés's prologue from the incunable volume held at Madrid's National Library (I-913). Transcriptions (introducing punctuation only) and translations are mine.

5. For full discussion of the Urriés lineage, see: Jordán, José. *Genealogía de la casa Urriés*. Valladolid: Maxtor, 2003 [1922].

6. Ruiz, José Francisco. *Aproximación a una historia de la traducción en España*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2000: 91.

7. Ruiz, José Francisco. *Aproximación a una historia...*: 91.



ideal of life for men like Urriés himself in Navarre-Aragón or, to quote an archetypal case, Diego de Valera in Castile. Both were late medieval examples of what was to become the clichéd ideal of the courtier of the Renaissance. Valera, better known than Urriés by today's critics, was much more than Urriés's almost perfect contemporary (c. 1412-c. 1480). He was, just like the Aragonese poet, a soldier and diplomat, a man who fought in several wars, travelled the courts of Europe, wrote many learned treatises and showed a keen interest in classical literature and historiography, just like the Guzmáns, Manriques, Estúñigas and Santillanas of their time.<sup>8</sup>

Urriés was a “medieval” translator, but he also embodied the ideas of a courtly code of thinking that was culturally influenced by the dawn of vernacular Humanism in the Iberian Peninsula. Urriés's translation of Valerius Maximus was only published posthumously, in 1495, by the Pablo Hurus publishing house in Zaragoza, but had been written three decades earlier, as shown in his prologue. He carried it out<sup>9</sup>

*...stando en Anglaterra e Borgoña embaxador de vuestra majestad e del preclarissimo rey e padre vuestro de inmortal memoria, fecha una consulta a vuestras excellencias, a mi fue necessario por no star ocioso procurar me passatiempo de lectura. E Carlos, el duque illustrissimo de Borgoña, mandome prestar vn libro por el muchopreciado.*

Ruiz Casanova considers that his translation of Valerius Maximus dated back to 1477.<sup>10</sup> However, Urriés must have completed this task a decade earlier, in 1466 and 1467, as he was in Burgundy preparing for a diplomatic mission that would take him to England in 1467 and 1468.<sup>11</sup> The importance of the exact date is that this journey almost coincides with the approximate timing of compilation of the *Cancionero de Herberay*, a process in which he was involved. *Herberay* (manuscript LB2 in the

8. On this side of Valera's profile, see: Lawrance, Jeremy. “On Fifteenth Century Spanish Vernacular Humanism”, *Studies in Honour of Robert Brian Tate*, Ian Michael, Richard A. Caldwell, eds. Oxford: Dolphin, 1986: 64-65.

9. “...being in England and Burgundy as an ambassador for your majesty and the enlightened king, your father of immortal memory, having consulted your highness. It became necessary for me, in order to escape from boredom, to find myself a reading passtime. And Charles, the illustrious duke of Burgundy, helped me borrow a book that was much appreciated by him” (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 3v).

10. Ruiz, José Francisco. *Aproximación a una historia...*: 124.

11. Urriés was sent to Bruges and England between the years of 1466 and 1469. The aim of this visit was to sign an alliance with the Duke of Burgundy and the King of England (see: Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 80). Extracts from Juan II's letter, written in Latin and still the lingua franca of diplomacy, to Edward IV of England during this mission can be found in: Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 81-82. Burgundy, where Urriés undertook the task of translating Valerius Maximus, was not meant to be more than a stopover for Urriés in order to prepare the strategy he would use in England. Edward IV might not have been entirely receptive, perhaps because of the alliance he had previously signed with Enrique IV of Castile (Ferguson, John. *English Diplomacy 1422-1461*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972: 58). This gave him time to translate Simon de Hedin's French version of *Facta et dicta memorabilia*.



Dutton coding) also contains the longest of his moralizing and exemplary poems.<sup>12</sup> Courtly poetry and translation of classical texts were clearly intertwined tasks for Urriés. This is apparent in much of the classical erudition that can be appreciated in the pieces of prose that open the *Cancionero de Herberay* (some by Urriés himself but others written by authors such as Pere Torroella or Juan Rodríguez del Padrón). Some of this erudition can be tracked back to Valerius Maximus (and most likely to Urriés's translation)<sup>13</sup>:

*E todo lo sobredicho actoriza e aprueua maestre Symon de Hedin con muchos e diuersos auctores, allegando sus libros e capitulos, e por special trahe mucho en ello a Tito Liuius, Orosio e Ysidoro, a Justino, a Sant Agustin de la ciudad de Dios, e a Lucano e a Solin, que hablo de las marauillas del mundo, e a Aulo Gelio, que tracta de las noches e costumbres de Athenas, e a otros que no curo de nombrar, pues son contenidos en el dicho libro.*

It is worth noting how Livy is the source of Coluccio Salutati's *Declamatio Lucretiae*, translated into Spanish in the *Cancionero de Herberay* by an anonymous author likely to be Urriés himself.<sup>14</sup> Orosius (through Boccaccio and translations of Valerius Maximus) was also the source for many of the "famous women" quoted by Pere Torroella in another of the opening pieces of prose of the LB2 manuscript. Urriés was part of the medieval canon of translators of classics and included his source, even though this was a vernacular translator like Hedin, into his list of auctoritas.<sup>15</sup> Urriés's views on translation of classics are clearly dependent on pragmatism and usefulness, and not necessarily linked to pre-Humanist erudition.

In order to fully comprehend Urriés's personal, cultural and historical stands, we must consider his late reflection on his fifty one years of service to Juan II of Navarre-Aragón. Given the dates, he must have entered Juan II's service around 1428.<sup>16</sup> Juan II had been crowned King of Navarre three years earlier, in 1425, after

12. This commonly used coding for Iberian courtly literature manuscripts is taken from: Dutton, Brian. *Cancionero del siglo XV c. 1360-1520*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1990-1991.

13. "And everything is sanctioned and authorized by Master Simon de Hedin using many different authors in each book and chapter. In particular, these authors are quoted: Livy, Orosius, Isidore of Seville, St Augustine of the City of God, Lucan, Solinus, who wrote of the wonders of the world, and Aulus Gellius, who wrote of the customs of Athens, and others that I will not mention because they are contained in the book" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...: 4r*).

14. Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...: 97-103*.

15. The French translation used by Urriés had not been printed until the 1470s and would then be reprinted by Mateo Husz in Lyon in 1485 and 1489 (Palau, Antonio. *Manual del librero hispanoamericano*. Barcelona: Palau y Dulcet, 1954: XXV, 91). This 1489 reprint contains a useful piece of information: that Hedin's translation had been finished in 1375, as a result of an assignment set to him by French King Charles IV, as Urriés indicated in the prologue he wrote in the 1490s. Hedin's translation only went as far as the seventh book. The remaining two chapters were translated into French by Nicolas de Goresse, who finished them in 1401 (Palau, Antonio. *Manual del librero...: 91*). Hugo de Urriés must have completed his mighty task in just seven months, those he spent in Bruges (Pellicer, Juan Antonio. *Ensayo de una biblioteca de traductores españoles*. Madrid: Antonio de Sancha, 1778: 89-90).

16. Sanz mistook his identity at this point, stating that he would join Fernando I of Castile (later to be Fernando of Antequera) and his retinue at a very young age. This Hugo de Urriés was one of Felipe el



marrying Carlos III's heir, Blanca of Navarre, in 1420.<sup>17</sup> After participating in the battle of Ponza, Urriés stayed in Italy until well into the 1440s, as can be deduced from the absence of documents related to him in the General Archive of Navarre. He returned to Juan II's court around the years of 1448-1449.<sup>18</sup> His role, for the first half of the century was that of a protégé, man of action, soldier or military knight. Dated 15 March 1448 (a few days before the death of Princess Inés of Cleves) there is a paper in which Carlos of Viana gives the places and castles of Santacara and Murillo el Fruto to his adviser and chancellor Juan de Beamonte. Murillo would then be given to Urriés by Viana's arch-enemy, his father Juan II.<sup>19</sup>

His longer than thought stay in Italy is of interest when we consider his later endeavours, as his long time in Alfonso V's deeply Humanist Neapolitan court must have done no harm to his interest in classical Rome. Urriés recalls Alfonso V's magnificent library and its variety of Roman sources. In his prologue to Fernando, Urriés revealed how Juan II's brother paid particular attention to the stocking of his Neapolitan library with books that could legitimize his knowledge of Imperial Rome in order to establish himself as a successor of the great rulers of the past<sup>20</sup>:

*...el serenissimo rey de Aragon e de las dos Scicilias don Alonso de gloriosa memoria, tio de vuestra majestad, ya sea que touiesse grande famosa libreria de muchos e diuersos libros contenientes algunos dellos los fechos romanos. E por esso mando fazer dobladas diligencias*

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Celludo's brothers, and belonged to a previous generation. Sanz, Jacobo. *"Dezir del casamiento" de Hugo de Urriés; va seguido de una "Difinición de amor" del mismo*. Salamanca: Europa Ediciones de Arte, 1993: 5.

17. Urriés, lacking the nobility and clergy titles of his older brothers, earned the confidence and respect of the royal family thanks to courageous services to Alfonso V in his first Italian expeditions; see: Marino, Nancy. "Hugo de Urriés: embajador, traductor, poeta". *Boletín de la Biblioteca Menéndez Pelayo*, 53 (1977): 4.

The Marquis of Santillana mentioned Urriés in the 71<sup>st</sup> stanza of his *Comedieta de Ponza* —he appeared among the Aragonese captains involved in 1435. He was then also at Alfonso V's Neapolitan court for several years. Following Neapolitan archival documentation (mainly listings by Italian humanist Giovanni Pontano) Benedetto Croce included him in the list of permanent Spanish courtiers in Alfonso V's retinue (Croce, Benedetto. *La Spagna nella vita italiana durante la Rinascenza*. Bari: Laterza, 1917: 263).

18. These crucial years of his life can be reconstructed with documents held in the General Archive of Navarre. Chamber of Accounts. box 152, numbers 20, 15 and 30, 30. He was warden of the castle of Murillo el Fruto, Juan II's cup bearer and also became governor of Fraga during the civil wars in the Navarrese-Aragonese kingdom.

19. Archivo Real y General de Navarra. Accounts. box 154, number 23. This document reveals how the post that Urriés would take following the Prince of Viana's fall from favour belonged to none other than the Chancellor of the Beamonte party himself. This was obviously a post of vital importance for Juan II's strategic interests, and Hugo de Urriés must have been one of his most loyal subjects. Therefore it seems reasonable to think that Hugo de Urriés's Italian adventure lasted just over ten years, and that he rejoined the Navarrese court in 1448, considerably later than Nancy Marino thought (Marino, Nancy. "Hugo de Urriés...": 4). For full discussion of General Archive of Navarre documentary evidence on Urriés, see: Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...: 77-85*.

20. "...his Highness the King of Aragón and of the two Sicilies, Alfonso of glorious memory, uncle of your Majesty, had a great and famous library with many different books, a number of which spoke of the Romans. And for that reason he ordered to undertake the laudable enterprise of launching a search all over Europe to satisfy his desire to find a book that would fully instruct him in the beginning, middle and end of the Roman Empire, and in their conquests and their prosperity, all of which is discussed extensively and concisely in this book, in such a way that all of the most essential facts can be found when reading it" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...: 4r*).



*por toda la Europa mostrando mucho dessear tener libro que lo informasse complidamente del principio, medio e fin del imperio de Roma e de sus conquistas e prosperidades, lo qual en este se contiene dello assaz extensamente, e algo con breuedad, empero en tal manera que lo bueno e mas essencial todo se halla en el no subseguidamente mas leyendo lo todo.*

This passage also illustrates how, during his time in Italy, Urriés became a close confidant of Alfonso, who was looking for a book, such as *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, that could instruct him and his court in the endeavours of the Roman Empire from a global and diachronic perspective. Considering his background as a low-ranking nobleman, Urriés used his fifty one years of service to Juan II of Navarre-Aragón as a means of establishing his credentials in the eyes of his son, the Catholic King. Moreover, his revelation of some of Alfonso V's confidential ambitions was also used in that same spirit of highlighting his own importance in his uncle's court<sup>21</sup>:

*E vean vuestras excelencias quanto reputada es hoy en dia la Hyspaña que yo e otros oymos dezir al magnanimo e victorioso rey don Alfonso, tio de vuestras serenidades, que si el drecho le diera la señoría de los reynos de Castilla con los de Aragon que su alteza poseya, que no dudaria de se fazer señor e monarca del poderio mundano.*

Urriés intelligently contextualizes Fernando's power and his achievements. The Catholic Monarchs now control both Castile and Aragón, and Urriés legitimizes their expansive nation building by stating how their predecessors would have liked to be in their position to implement the same agenda. In doing this, Urriés establishes himself as not just a loyal subject but, crucially, a knowledgeable one that had previously deserved the confidences of Fernando's father and uncle (Juan II and Alfonso V). His translation of *Facta et dicta memorabilia* is also presented as an essential document in helping to secure Fernando and Isabel's status as moral successors to the Holy Roman Empire. His trustworthiness was based on his constant and faithful political and military allegiances. Even though the topic was perhaps too sensitive to mention in his overture, Urriés's loyalties never wavered and, unlike many of his counterparts, he never joined Viana's alternative—between 1451 and 1456, Hugo de Urriés was entirely devoted to military work, in the context of the skirmishes that took place along the Navarrese-Aragonese borders, defending Juan II's party.<sup>22</sup> The last document referring to Urriés in Navarre is from 1457.<sup>23</sup> Following Alfonso V's death, Hugo de Urriés must have accompanied Juan II on his coronation as King

21. "Your excellence, Spain's reputation today is very highly regarded, since I, and others, heard your uncle, the magnanimous and victorious King Alfonso, say that had the law given him the power over the Kingdoms of Castile, together with that of Aragón, which he possessed, he would not hesitate in taking over the entire world" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 5v).

22. Aragonese chronicler Jerónimo Zurita mentioned him among other mounted captains in 1452 (Zurita, Jerónimo. *Anales de la corona de Aragón*. Ángel Canellas, ed. Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1973-1978: IX, 16). Still in 1452, Juan II's army, with Urriés as commander, defeated the Prince of Viana's supporters, preventing his coronation in Catalonia. Once the rebellion was put down, Urriés returned to his position as warden.

23. This document is in the General Archive of Navarre. Chamber of Accounts. box 152, number 31.





of Aragón in 1458. He would always be part of his party, and his influence would never cease to grow.

Urriés's two-legged ambassadorial trip to Burgundy and England between 1466 and 1469, during which he undertook the task of translating Hedin's French version of Valerius Maximus's *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, was his most important diplomatic mission, but it was not his first. His political and military profile had gradually been evolving into an ambassadorial one. Without a doubt, his interest in translation of the classics stemmed, to no small extent, from the courtly perception of what was appropriate for his public persona. The apparent gap in his biography between joining Juan II in his coronation in Aragón in 1458 (noticeable by the sudden lack of Navarrese archival documents referred to him from that year) and his crucial diplomatic mission of 1466-1469 is filled with his first visit to England, which had begun on 13 November 1461, and further military engagements.<sup>24</sup> After this first diplomatic visit to England, Urriés returned to Juan II's court, which was then in Aragón. As Juan II's authority in Navarre and Aragón became stronger, so did Urriés's profile as a respectable figure in the king's entourage. Following Viana's death, rebellions continued in Catalonia in the name of the deceased prince, and between 1461 and 1463, Juan II had to rely on assistance from France. Domestically, Urriés's military role was key during these turbulent times, as he was in charge of defending the border in Fraga, Huesca.<sup>25</sup> He was no longer standing directly in the line of fire, as he had been in Ponza some years before. Urriés's new role was a reflection of his personal success, showcasing social mobility through intellectual and political prowess as well as military services. At a time when Urriés was writing the best of his courtly literature, his political role was gradually shifting from the battleground to the higher echelons of diplomacy and military politics.

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24. See: de los Ríos, José A. *Historia crítica de la literatura*. Madrid: Gredos, 1969: VI, 254. Navarre and England had traditionally had a friendly relationship, at least from the first third of the fifteenth century. The Navarrese had previously collaborated with English settlers in Gascony in order to keep the French at bay (Ferguson, John. *English Diplomacy...*: 39). This was a very delicate diplomatic relationship for Juan II, since he needed to secure England's neutrality in his collaboration with France, an alliance that had been forced upon him in order to effectively deal with the internal rebellions in the Aragonese kingdom. From 1459 Juan II had tried to prepare the ground with the presence of Valencian diplomat Vicent Clement in the English court (Ferguson, John. *English Diplomacy...*: 57). However, Clement returned very ambiguous messages from the English monarch, and Juan II decided to send Hugo de Urriés, a man in whom he had full confidence. No breakthrough emerged from the mission, although what happened shows that Vicent Clement was considered a less than trustworthy ambassador in terms of the interests of Navarre-Aragón. Clement would then spend most of his diplomatic life engaged in English missions in the continent; see: Tate, Robert B.; Fernández, A. "Vicent Climent: un valenciano en Inglaterra". *Estudios de Historia Moderna*, 6 (1956-1959): 133-139. Clement still acted as a link between Juan II and Edward IV until 1462, when a safe conduct for this purpose is recorded in England (Scofield, Cora L. *The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth, King of England and of France and Lord of Ireland*. London: Longmans, 1923: 430). From 1464, he acted as papal nuncio and deacon (*Calendars of Patent Rolls 1461-1467*. London: H. M. S. O., 1900). This increased Hugo de Urriés's future diplomatic responsibilities (Ferguson, John. *English Diplomacy...*: 58). During these years, Urriés was to maintain close contact with the Valencian diplomat, who was acting as a sort of double agent, for both England and Aragón (Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 79).

25. Marino, Nancy. "Hugo de Urriés...": 5.



Social mobility through intellectual and political worthiness could be linked to the agenda of the Navarrese-Aragonese elite of Urriés's time. This cultural and social programme mirrored the preoccupations of both King Juan II of Navarra-Aragón and his son Carlos of Viana as (often confronted) political figures as well as patrons of cultural projects. We know that both of them took a keen interest, for arguably different reasons, in having access to the wisdom of the classics. Carlos himself was a translator (reflecting his "philosopher prince" personality) and Juan II, whose evolution throughout the century (from "medieval king" to sponsor of culture) mirrored in more ways than one that of his protégé Urriés, had previously commissioned a translation of Virgil's "Aeneid", a task that was completed by Enrique de Villena.<sup>26</sup> The seeds of Fernando the Catholic's obsession with not just political but cultural domination and legitimacy can already be found in his father Juan II, and Hugo de Urriés's foreword to Fernando speaks volumes of his level of political awareness. In other words, Urriés knew that, for his king, a respectable court was one that had a respectable library. The distribution of Valerius Maximus in late medieval Spanish libraries was, at best, limited. Gemma Avenoz found ten citations in different peninsular sources of perhaps no more than six versions: one or two from Aragón, two Catalan ones, and two Castilian ones, the newest of which was Urriés's.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it seems likely that Urriés thought that translating Hedin's French version, whilst waiting to receive permission to visit the English court, was time well spent, something he would then explain in his introductory letter, because of the wisdom and statecraft that could be learned from the writings of the Roman historian. Urriés considered that he had translated<sup>28</sup>

*...el mejor tractado que houiesse jamas oydo ni leydo. Delibere transferir lo del lenguaje frances en el destos reynos de Castilla e de Aragon, subditos de vuestra serenidad, ca vi por esperiencia tener lo que no alcanza en vn solo volumen otro libro alguno, a mi parecer, en la mayor parte de la cristiandad, de la qual yo he andado e visto lo mas fermoso e politico e digno de notar (...) Las hystorias e poesias que Valerio toca en tamaño cumplimento e multiplicacion de cosas admirables e de buena doctrina moral e spiritual, que no hay hombre que algun tanto a lectura inclinado sea que se harte jamas de leer (...) No lo hay en la Hyspaña en vn volumen e lengua vulgar tan moral e hystorial, ni que tracte de tantos e tan marauillosos enxemplos.*

26. Ruiz, José Francisco. *Aproximación a una historia...*: 99.

27. Avenoz, Gemma. "Antoni Canals, Simón de Hesdin, Nicolás de Goresse, Juan Alfonso de Zamora y Hugo de Urriés: lecturas e interpretaciones de un clásico (Valerio Máximo) y de sus comentaristas (Dionisio de Burgo Santo Sepulcro y Fray Lucas)", *Essays on Medieval Translation in the Iberian Peninsula*, Tomás Martínez, Roxana Recio, eds. Castellón: Universitat Jaume I, 2001: 46.

28. "...the best treatise I have ever read or heard about. I decided to translate it from French into the language of these Kingdoms of Castile and Aragón, subject to your royal highness, because, in my experience, no other book contains in a single volume as much wisdom as this one, in my opinion, anywhere in the Christian world, of which I have seen and visited the most beautiful and noteworthy parts (...) The multiple stories and poetries narrated in detail by Valerius Maximus are all to be admired and provide good moral and spiritual doctrine, and there is no man with the slightest inclination to reading that could ever get tired of reading it (...) There is nothing like this in Spain, in just one volume, containing such moral and historical teachings, and narrating such wonderful examples" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 3v-4v).



Without a doubt, the Navarrese-Aragonese court had no previous access to a vernacular *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. Even in Castile, the only recorded volumes of Valerius Maximus's work were in Santillana's library, and not even Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, Juan II of Castile or the Villena library held copies. A vernacular copy was recorded in the 1499 catalogue of Isabel the Catholic's library.<sup>29</sup> This must have been one of Urriés's 1495 incunabula.

But was this translation enough for us to consider Urriés a man of the pre-Renaissance, a proto-humanist or even an early Humanist? Translation of classics flourished throughout the entire Middle Ages. However, by the end of the fifteenth century, the social and political prestige of the translation activity had increased considerably, and this can be easily related both to the Catholic Monarchs' political agenda (on which I shall expand later) and to the dawn of cultural Humanism in Spain. If we follow Peter Russell's definition of (the practical lack of) Iberian Humanism in the fifteenth century, Urriés most certainly could not have been labelled a Humanist in any of its variations, vernacular or otherwise.<sup>30</sup> Russell considers that translators such as Urriés "medievalized" classical works and did not follow the doctrine of Italian Humanism. On the other hand, authors such as Jeremy Lawrance have defined and described a less pompous and more accessible "vernacular humanism" in Spain.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, Urriés could be defined as a *medieval translator* directly benefitting from a new-found environment that enhanced the prestige and promoted the translation of classical wisdom, a prestige that would lead to the Catholic Monarchs' investment in classical erudition in the vernacular to support a political agenda.

Buezo's textual analysis of Urriés's translation finds how Urriés took the time to correct errors in the textual transmission of the witness he was translating and how he was very careful when it came to respecting both the content and the structure of the original.<sup>32</sup> Technically speaking, this ecdotic perfectionism could be interpreted as an early indication of Humanism. On the other hand, when assessing Urriés's translation, Di Stefano regrets that not only his but his model's translation was already very far away from the Latin original.<sup>33</sup> Both Castilian translations of Valerius Maximus came from Latin glosses of the original.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, what Urriés

29. Crosas, Francisco. *De diis gentium. Tradición clásica y cultura medieval*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998: 16-17.

30. Russell, Peter. *Traducciones y traductores en la península ibérica (1400-1550)*. Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1985: 61-62.

31. Lawrance goes so far as to say that, even in Italy, nobility preferred vernacular versions rather than erudite antiques (Lawrance, Jeremy. "On Fifteenth-Century...": 78-79).

32. Buezo, Catalina. "Las traducciones vernáculas de Valerio Máximo en el cuatrocientos hispano. El códice de la Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia". *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 185/1 (1988): 53.

33. Di Stefano, Giuseppe. "Tradizione esegetica e traduzioni di Valerio Massimo nel primo umanesimo francese". *Studi Francesi*, 21 (1963): 408.

34. Simon de Hedin himself admitted that he was following glosses by "Maistre Denis du Bourg", Dionisio de Burgo Santo Sepulcro, an Augustine friar who worked in Avignon, friend of Petrarch and instructor of Boccaccio (Avenozza, Gemma. "Antoni Canals...": 48).



did was translate into Spanish an already modified version of Valerius Maximus's Latin original. Hedin and Goresse had produced a compilation, in French, of the most readily available medieval and pre-humanist interpretations and explanations of the Latin text.<sup>35</sup> Urriés was aware of the nature of his source and had no reason to hide the *medieval* nature of its commentary<sup>36</sup>:

*...en el dicho libro hay infinitos enxemplos e maravillosos que Valerio saco de diuersos libros de todos los actos e propositos humanos que entre hombres pueden acaecer, assi buenos como viciosos, los textos e sentencias de los quales declara e moraliza el dicho maestre Simon de Hedin (...) e cada qual de los capitulos tiene muchos articulos con addiciones del trasladador.*

Hedin and Goresse's purpose, much like Urriés's, was to make the book accessible for a nobility that was largely illiterate in Latin, using medieval erudition to bring the text closer to the target readers of their time rather than trying their luck with the opposite approach, more in line with Italian Humanism, of bringing their contemporaries to understand the language and the content of the Latin original. Urriés would then be a merely acritical vehicle of transmission of a French vernacular text and, to critics such as Russell, nothing like a Humanist.

However, if we consider that the Italian ideal of a Humanist had a great deal to do with being precisely that type of acritical broadcaster of classical wisdom (just using Latin rather than vernacular texts) we could easily be tempted to think that the difference was barely superficial. Moreover, allegorical and moral commentaries, insertions and interpretations of Latin texts were not an exclusively medieval practice. Urriés was by no means an ignorant translator, and he knew full well that what he was rendering into Spanish was a text full of insertions from later dates, as shown in the previous extract.<sup>37</sup> Given the majesty of the addressee, Urriés's assessment of his own ability as a translator can hardly be detached from formulaic expressions of modesty and *captatio benevolentiae*. However, his tone, and his actions, always remained upbeat about the quality of the gift he was giving to the kingdom<sup>38</sup>:

35. See: Avenoz, Gemma. "Antoni Canals...": 49.

36. "...in this book there is an infinite number of wonderful examples that Valerius Maximus took from various books, covering all human facts and customs, both virtuous and vicious, the texts and moral teachings of which are declared and moralized by Master Simon de Hedin (...) And each of the chapters contains many sections, with additions from the translator" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 3v-4r).

37. According to Avenoz, he respected those annotations because he found them useful for the target readers and he had the work of Hedin and Goresse very high in his estimation (Avenoz, Gemma. "Antoni Canals...": 51).

38. "...aware of the special nature of this treatise, and since I did not ignore my little competence to bring to my nation this singular benefit, I undertook the task of said translation. It was hard work for me, because I had to read, write and translate the whole book by myself in seven months. The short time, the weakness of my wisdom, and the enormity of the task were the reasons why I could not translate it in the high and elegant style that I should have done. And I did this against the advice of some friends who told me: 'Hugo de Urriés, this task is for a wiser and more historically aware man than you are'" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 4r).



*...reconocida la tanta singularidad del dicho tractado, ya sea que no ignorasse mi pequeña suficiencia por traer a mi patria este singular beneficio, propuse de fazer la dicha translacion, que me fue trabajo muy grande, ca houe yo mesmo de leer, screuir e transferir todo el libro en siete meses, e por esso la breuedad del tiempo e la flaqueza del ingenio e la grandeza del dicho tractado causaron que no lo pude traduzir en aquel stilo alto y elegante que hazer se deuiera. Y esto emprendi contra el consejo de algunos amigos que me dixieron: "Ugo de Vries, essa empresa es para hombre mas docto e hystorial que soys vos".*

Therefore, against the advice of those people (real or not) who considered that a man like Urriés would not be able to dignify such almighty task, the Aragonese courtier and ambassador decided that it was worth the effort and did it anyway. The fact that it took him over a quarter of a century to find a publisher would be a consequence of the new political agenda and an indication of his growing prestige rather than a negative reflection on the quality of his work.

In order to understand the full extent of Urriés's approach to translating a classical text, we need to contextualize his task within the predominant ideas about this activity in the Iberian Peninsula of his time. Alfonso de Madrigal (El Tostado) was the most influential medieval scholar to set the theoretical framework of translation in the fifteenth century. In his *Tostado sobre el Eusebio*, written 1450 and printed 1506-1507, Madrigal defined the difference between two types of translators: those who translated word by word (he called them "interpreters" and believed that theirs was the finest form of translation) and those who used explanations, insertions and interpolations (he believed that this approach was for those of lesser wisdom).<sup>39</sup> According to his ideas, Urriés followed a trend, informed and promoted by nationalism by the time he wrote his introductory pledge of allegiance to Fernando, that denied the inferiority of the vernacular.<sup>40</sup> In this, Urriés was a man of his time, a time that took the translation of classics beyond the borders of medieval scholasticism.

According to Roxana Recio, the first three quarters of the fifteenth century were a time of latinizing translations in the Iberian Peninsula, a time of mistrust of the vernacular. Authors would discard this discrediting of the vernacular in the final years of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth, slowly but surely focusing on a methodology that would show reverential respect for the content of the original works whilst being openly unapologetic about their careful use of the vernacular.<sup>41</sup> Urriés was clearly concerned about being able to translate the sense rather than style<sup>42</sup>:

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39. However, Madrigal was not a radical Latinist, as he acknowledged that the first type of translation was also problematic, since using the same words as the original was impossible (Recio, Roxana. "Alfonso de Madrigal (El Tostado): la traducción como teoría entre lo medieval y lo renacentista". *La Corónica*, 19/2 (1991): 119-120).

40. Recio, Roxana. "Alfonso de Madrigal...": 112.

41. Recio, Roxana. "Alfonso de Madrigal...": 112.

42. "...on being told that the book was Valerius Maximus's, considering that the original was difficult to understand apart from for the highly cultured and those who are experts in the histories, Roman and



*...en diziendo me ser Valerio Maximo, por aquel en su prima forma ser dificil de entender sino por los muy doctos y expertos de diuersas hystorias, en special de las romanas e griegas, yo començe a leer en el como forçadamente, su alto stilo y escuras sentencias mucho temiendo.*

Such style difficulties were not a deterrent for Urriés, as he focused on extracting practical moral and philosophical lessons from the text, even if this entailed adding insertions and even explanatory glosses in the form of versified moralising poetry, which was the trademark of his *cancionero* poetry.

In his prologue to Fernando the Catholic, Urriés declared himself proud of the work he had done a few decades earlier, and for which he had significantly failed to find a publisher until the 1490s, under the reign of the Catholic Monarchs and 25 years after the arrival of the printing press in Spain<sup>43</sup>:

*E porque fasta la presente jornada no he fallado scriptor que a mi voluntad trasladar este libro quisiessse, he diferido de lo presentar a vuestra excellencia. Mas agora que tengo buena oportunidad para lo poner a la emprenta, he delibrado, pues en esta guerra santa no puedo personalmente hazer seruicio a vuestra majestad por el impedimento de mi senectud, de le seruir con este libro.*

Reflecting upon his life of service, Urriés likened military to cultural and political service. The fact that he spent seven months in Bruges completing his translation whilst waiting to finally be received by the English king in 1468 shows to what extent diplomacy and studying classical works were often tasks for the same type of person.<sup>44</sup> For Urriés, just as military work had granted him the respect of the royal family and poetry had given him a reputation as a man of letters at court, engagement with classical works, even if rendered from vernacular sources, was also a fitting, prestigious occupation in the eyes of the king, the nobility, the courtiers, and the political elite.

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Greek in particular, I started to read it not without great difficulty and almost by force, very fearful of its style and its dark phrasing" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 3v).

43. "I had delayed the presentation of this book to your majesty because until now I could not find a printer that would publish this book to my liking. But now that I have a good chance to send it to the print, I have decided to do so, since my old age is preventing me from serving your majesty personally in this, your holy war, so I can serve with this book" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 4v).

44. Having completed his translation of Valerius Maximus, Urriés then reached the English court in May 1468. The Aragonese party's was not the only diplomatic visit received by Edward IV on that year. On 17 May 1468, the Archbishop of Bath, Robert Stillington, informed Parliament that the king was about to sign strategic alliances with Castile, Aragón, Denmark, Scotland, Naples and the Dukes of Burgundy and Brittany (Ross, Charles. *Edward IV*. London: Eyre Methuen, 1974: 112). The aim of this agreement was to build a common front against Louis XI of France, who was actively and logistically supporting the Catalan campaigns led by the Duke of Calabria and René d'Anjou. Whilst Urriés was in England, Edward IV sent Vicent Clement to the court of Zaragoza (Scofield, Cora. *The Life and Reign...*: 430; Calmette, Joseph; Périnelle, Georges. *Louis XI et l'Angleterre (1461-1483)*. Paris: Auguste Picard, 1930: 100). A letter from Juan II to Edward IV dated 21 October 1468 explained to the English king the reasons for Urriés's presence in England and also acknowledged the arrival of Vincent Clement (Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 81).



Urriés was very careful to respect his interpretation of the spirit and the structure of Valerius Maximus's work, using glosses and writing with the clear, rationalistic and direct style that he normally used in both his courtly poetry and his diplomatic letters. In his willingness to translate the sense of a piece rather than style (in his prologue he often repeats the idea that he could not cope with the "stilo" but was more than happy with the "materias"), Urriés followed Alonso de Cartagena's translation handbook, as defined by Buezo.<sup>45</sup> Royal and noble patrons were seeking practical lessons from the classics, and in the words of Lawrance, ancient history and moral philosophy were seen as "relief from boredom" (in the words of Urriés, he did it "por no star ocioso") and "exempla as a desideratum", becoming both "exemplo e consolación".<sup>46</sup> For this purpose, Urriés could find plenty of useful "examples" in Valerius Maximus, whilst the explanatory nature of the French textual tradition he was using provided plenty of philosophical reflections.

Given the difficulty of Urriés's diplomatic objectives, his public life was about prudence and cunning too. These had traditionally been the two components of "sapientia". Reading Urriés's exordium in conjunction with his diplomatic letters, it is immediately clear that his main worry was to showcase his own expertise, his own "sapientia".<sup>47</sup> This was the defining skill of the ultimate late medieval man of arms and letters. Urriés participated, in these late decades of the fifteenth century, in the aspiration to be the embodiment of the ideal conjunction of intellectual and physical prowess, becoming the perfect warrior-knight later defined by Castiglione. His other cultural activities, such as compilation of *cancioneros* and engagement in courtly literature and poetic debate, were also useful when it came to interacting with the courtly elite and showcasing wit, intelligence and finesse in a ludic setting.

Urriés's integration in the Iberian elite is shown in a clear light by his final diplomatic mission for Juan II, which started in 1473. He travelled from Bilbao to Flanders in early September in order to seek allies for the imminent war against the French. From Bilbao, Urriés wrote to Juan II reporting details of great strategic importance. In his letter, Urriés told the King of Aragón how it would be advisable to be on good terms with Edward IV.<sup>48</sup> But, without a doubt, the most remarkable aspect of this letter has to be its tone. Hugo de Urriés took liberty not only to advise the king on his foreign policy, addressing him directly, but also to assess the situation and tell him what needed to be done. The letter was not just informative, Urriés seemed to have a very conspicuous role in Aragonese government and

45. Buezo, Catalina. "Las traducciones vernáculas...": 53.

46. Lawrance, Jeremy. "On Fifteenth-Century...": 66.

47. Transcriptions of Hugo de Urriés's diplomatic letters to Juan II and, in later years, to Fernando the Catholic, can be found in: Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 80-83. The tone and the contents of his letters showcase not only his excellent degree of expertise in European affairs but also his growing influence. His later letters strongly advise the kings on their external policies and suggest alliances and future actions they should take. Urriés would become almost a foreign affairs minister for both Juan and Fernando.

48. A full transcription of this letter can be found in: Fernández, Cesáreo. *La marina de Castilla desde su origen y pugna con la de Inglaterra hasta la refundición en la armada española*. Madrid: El Progreso Editorial, 1894: 454-455, and in: Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...* 82-83.



decision-making. In his last paragraph, Urriés firmly stated that Aragón had to seek collaboration with the English<sup>49</sup>:

*...e concluyendo, senyor muy excellente, (...) seria bien menester (...) questouiese en concordia con el Rey d'Anglaterra.*

When reading such extracts from this diplomatic letter, it becomes clear that Urriés's role had evolved. He was no longer a protégé and servant from the lesser nobility, but a fully-fledged politician, and someone whose opinion was respected by the king himself. Quite simply, his all-round performance as a man of arms, letters, courtly finesse, classical knowledge and worldly wisdom had earned him remarkable success in terms of social mobility and political power. Urriés returned from this diplomatic mission in 1475. It is worth noting how he had been sent to his final posting as an envoy by Juan II in 1473 but he responded to Fernando in 1475.<sup>50</sup> The times were changing and the king he had served for half a century, blind and very ill, continued his reign in Aragón, king in name only, until his death in 1479. But Hugo de Urriés's influence survived his protector, as he remained an enthusiastically active player in the game of courtly politics of his time.

Every aspect of Urriés's life had an influence in his other activities. As we have seen so far, Urriés alternated periods of military endeavour with other extended intervals of diplomacy, poetry and translation. Urriés's learned cultural baggage was reflected in the *Cancionero de Herberay* in various forms.<sup>51</sup> His diplomatic missions in England left some visible markers such as his mention of an English character.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, his military and courtly time in Italy shaped, to a large extent, the selection of materials of the tradition that produced *Herberay*. This was most visible in the pieces of prose that open the volume, some of which were informed by an incipient vernacular Humanism: the *Letra de los çitas a Alexandre* was an adaptation

49. "...and, in conclusion, my excellent Lord, it would be advisable to seek an alliance with the King of England" (Real Academia de la Historia. Salazar y Castro Collection. Document A9).

50. This letter is dated on December 1475. It can be consulted in the *Borrador de la biblioteca de escritores del Reino de Aragón que escribía el cronista D. Juan Francisco Andrés* (Biblioteca Nacional de España. Borrador de la biblioteca de escritores del Reino de Aragón que escribía el cronista D. Juan Francisco Andrés, f. 462-465).

51. For example, in the final poem of the *Cancionero de Herberay*, a long rationalistic discussion on the topic of fickle Fortune (LB2-201), Urriés quoted not only the archetypal case in Spanish literature, that of Álvaro de Luna, but he also referred to a character clearly alien to Iberian tradition: *Pues no es d'olvidar / el que Duch se llamava / de Sofolech en Anglaterra, / el qual sin otro mandar / la cort e rey governava / en paz e tiempos de guerra. / Pues aquel tú lo puyaste / debaxo en alto grado / con muy desigoal favor, / e con rigor le causaste / que fuesse despedaçado / con voz de vil e traydor* (LB2-201, lines 205-217). See: Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 83-84.

52. *El duch de sofolech* quoted by Urriés was none other than William de la Pole, first Duke of Suffolk and Henry VI's favourite. In a twist of Fortune similar to Luna's fate in Castile, he was imprisoned and later killed in the Tower of London in 1450 (Richardson, Douglas. *Plantagenet Ancestry: A Study in Colonial and Medieval Families*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2004: 612). Hugo de Urriés clearly wrote his poem after having been in direct contact with the English political context. The Duke of Suffolk's death had an enormous impact in England, as Álvaro de Luna's had in Spain (Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 83-84).





of certain passages by Quintus Curtius using pre-humanist and Humanist sources such as Gautier de Châtillon.<sup>53</sup> Rodríguez del Padrón's *Epístola de la Madreselva* was taken from Ovid's *Heroides* using both medieval sources (such as Alfonso X's *General Estoria*) and Humanist renditions.<sup>54</sup> The opening *Declamación de Lucrecia* was also an adaptation of Livy more directly sourced from Italian Humanist Coluccio Salutati and quoted by many fifteenth century Iberian poets, most famously by Santillana.<sup>55</sup> In some cases, the erudition shown by poets such as Pere Torroella in his *Razonamiento* can be directly linked to Humanist sources (such as Giovanni Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* in Torroella's enumeration of virtuous women) and vernacular ones, such as Urriés's own translation of *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. This informed suspicion is supported when we see that some of the rubrics of these pieces of prose are addressed to a certain "Mossen Hugo", without a doubt referring to Hugo de Urriés.

The notion of courtliness as an ideal of life, as well as the definition of the essence of knighthood shaped Hugo de Urriés's public stand. Having served Juan II for fifty one years, between 1428 and 1479, his success was not just about his loyalty to his king but also about his ability to adapt his profile to what was required at all times. As seen before, his enthusiasm for the Catholic Monarchs and their ideological programme led him to apologize to Fernando for not being able to take part in the campaigns of Granada, at a time when he was already an octogenarian. His approach to his translation was also pragmatic, in the sense that classical moralists and historiographers offered the Catholic Monarchs and their noble readers practical lessons on conduct, statecraft, warfare and secular ethics based on empirical examples. Valerius Maximus addressed very relevant problems, such as the conduct and duties of rulers, the role of the institutions, military discipline, strength of spirit, social mobility, assertiveness of public speeches, friendship, loyalty, generosity, religious piety, education, chastity, spirit of justice, wisdom, cunning, drive for glory, avoiding despotism, rejecting vindictiveness and promoting a collective idea of patriotism. Nationalism and the legitimization of a new golden age by making use of a classical golden age were at the core of this phenomenon.<sup>56</sup> Hugo de Urriés enthusiastically contributed to this agenda, clearly drawing parallels between imperial Rome and

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53. See: López, Francisco. "Prehumanismo del siglo XV: la *Letra* de los escitas a Alejandro del *Cancionero de Herberay des Essarts* y las formulaciones utópicas en la Edad Media", *Medieval, Renaissance and Folklore Studies in Honor of John Esten Keller*, Joseph R. Jones, ed. Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 1980: 195. Urriés also refers to Alexander the Great in his prologue, mentioning that Valerius Maximus covered some of his life: *E ahun se alcança en este libro assaz parte de los imperios de Babilonia e de Madeconia e del grande Alexandre*. "And this book even covers part of the Babylonian and Macedonian empires, and Alexander the Great." (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas...*: 4r).

54. Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 104.

55. Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 97-99.

56. Lawrance, Jeremy. "Fabulosa illa aurea secula: The Idea of the Golden Age at the Court of Isabel", *The Spain of the Catholic Monarchs. Papers of the Quincentenary Conference*, David Hook, ed. Bristol: HIPLAM, 2008: 1, 17, 29; Russell, Peter. *Traducciones y traductores...*: 9.



imperial Spain under the Catholic Monarchs when addressing his introduction to Fernando<sup>57</sup>:

*E mi opinion es que no fue en aquellos tiempos rey, principe ni señor renombrado en toda la redondez de la tierra que en este libro no sea contenido, ni que digno entonce fuesse ni despues haya sydo merecedor de tanta gloria, triumpho, renombre y ençalçamiento como vuestra serenissima persona.*

Moreover, Urriés chose to comment on those passages of *Facta et dicta memorabilia* that addressed glorious aspects of Roman Spain, intentionally linking the Catholic Monarchs with the most remarkable anecdotes related to the province of Hispania, hence contributing to the narrative of nation building and legitimate imperial continuity. Urriés mentions the importance of Spain and the bravery of its people in the times of Hannibal, Scipio Africanus, Pompey the Great, governors Petraeus and Afranius, Julius Caesar and the triumvirate. He also extracts the passages about Quintus Sertorius, shepherd Viriatus, and the sieges of Sahagún, Numantia, Murviedro and Zamora.<sup>58</sup>

This overall picture of nation building and underpinning of imperial moral legality would not be complete without linking Fernando to Visigothic legitimacy, starting with Pelayo. The intention was clear: to assert that Fernando had completed what Pelayo had begun, the expulsion of Islam from the Peninsula<sup>59</sup>:

*Ca nunca de don Pelayo aqua el infante godo, en el tiempo del qual milagrosamente la yra diuinal cesso de perseguir los cristianos spañoles, dando les victorias increybles, vieron la Hyspaña nuestros antepassados ni los presentes sin bollicios y alteraciones como agora ni con tanta justicia e seguridad de caminos e stados, ni los reyes assi obedecidos señores e seruidos con mucho acatamiento (...)sin duda toda la Hyspaña vendra en vuestro señorío, segun que fue de los reyes godos vuestros antecessores, los quales conquistaron muchas tierras e prouincias, e Roma con lo mas de la Ytalia fasta que echaron de la Gallia que agora se dize Francia e despues de la Hyspaña a los vandalos, alanos, sueuos e silingos. En la qual tomaron la fe cristiana, e permanecieron e permaneceys hoy en dia, ca descendeys de su sangre e real corona, que ha dos mil años que houo principio, e siempre ha durado por*

57. "And it is my opinion that there was never in those times a prince, king or lord as renowned as your majesty, anywhere in the world, of those contained in this book. There was never anyone as deserving of glory, triumph, fame and acclaim as your highness" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 4v).

58. de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 5r -5v.

59. "Never since the times of Visigothic lord Pelayo, in whose times, by art of miracle, divine wrath ceased to punish the Spanish Christians rewarding them with unbelievable victories, have Spain or our ancestors seen an era like this one, without instability or altercation, and with justice and safety on all our roads and states. Never have the kings been obeyed with such discipline. Without a doubt, the whole of Spain will be under your lordship, just like it was under that of your predecessors the Visigothic kings, who conquered many lands and provinces, even Rome and most of Italy, and they expelled the Vandals, Alans, Sueves and Silings from the Gaul, now called France, and then from Spain. And they embraced the Christian faith, and they kept it, as you keep it today, because you descend from their blood and royal crown, which started two thousand years ago and has lasted by succession of kings until your excellency. Such durable stability cannot be found or read in any other dynasty or lineage of kings" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 4v -5r).



*succession de reyes fasta vuestras excellencias, la qual estabilidad e durada no se falla ni se lee que jamas houiesse ningun linage ni corona de reyes.*

Urriés's positive perception of his own work was based on its usefulness.<sup>60</sup> The above paragraph of his foreword cannot be underestimated in terms of propping up Fernando's agenda: the Catholic Monarchs needed historical legitimization for both their own power and their ambitious political and military endeavours. Urriés could provide two thousand years' worth of legitimacy. When his model, Simon de Hedin, presented his translation to Charles V of France, he also stated that his aim had been to translate, phrase by phrase, from clear Latin to understandable French vernacular, thus delivering an immediately useful product.<sup>61</sup> Urriés talks of the "service" he is providing with his translation, aware of the fact that translating is no longer a second-rate task and, to a large extent, without feeling the need to present his product wrapped in a formulaic or apologetic *captatio benevolentiae*. There is, of course, modesty in his tone, but this should be understood mostly in terms of the addressee of his words and not in terms of the worthiness of his task, which he clearly felt was unquestionable. Urriés went even further, and his preamble seemed to suggest that his intellectual service more than made up for his inability to take part in the campaigns of Granada. His service was important, amongst various other practical, political and cultural reasons, because of the lack of vernacular copies of *Facta et dicta memorabilia* in the Navarrese-Aragonese court. Availability of such texts was a growing concern for the court, and the classical questions posed by the narrative of Valerius Maximus were of great interest to the elite. This increased appeal of the classics was reflected not only in the catalogues of late medieval libraries but also in the type of courtly literature in which Urriés himself engaged, as erudition became an obsession for the canon-builders of his time, such as Santillana and Mena.<sup>62</sup>

His volume was only printed three decades after being written and there is no significant evidence of its manuscript circulation before 1495. Again, evolving cultural and political perceptions of usefulness were part of the reason for this.

60. Even his courtly poetry, a literary genre often perceived as a shallow form of entertainment, was impregnated by moral reflection, practical advice and social criticism, with poems addressing moral and political corruption. Of particular interest are *El de los grosseros* and *El de los galanes*, both in the *Cancionero de Herberay des Essarts*, manuscript LB2. For a full discussion of these poems, see: Conde Solares, Carlos. *El Cancionero...*: 85-95.

61. See: Russell, Peter. *Traducciones y traductores...*: 21. Urriés also tries to underline the usefulness to Spain of Simon de Hedin's original, by stating that *de otros viriles actos e animosos faze testigo maestre Simon de Hedin en el presente libro, alabando singularmente el osado animo e fortitud de questa nacion* (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 6r). "Master Simon de Hedin testifies of other virile and brave acts in this book, praising in particular the daring spirit and courageous disposition of our nation".

62. Lawrance, gathering evidence from Menéndez Pelayo, found that, at the very least, these classics were available in the vernacular in Urriés's time: Livy, Caesar, Quintus Curtius, Josephus, Justin's epitome, Valerius Maximus, Orosius, both Plinies, Plutarch, Procopius, Sallust, Vegetius, Frontinus, Polybius, Eutropius, Thucyclides, Homer, Lucan, Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, Lucian, Eusebius, Palladius, Boethius, Seneca, Plato and Aristotle (Lawrance, Jeremy. "On Fifteenth Century...": 65). This listing shows the growing popularity of historiography and philosophy.



According to Catalina Buezo, its publication in 1495, together with other vernacular versions of classical works, supports the suspicion that a circle of translators was working for Pablo Hurus in Zaragoza between 1491 and 1499.<sup>63</sup> For Pablo Hurus, his business was about both honouring and being useful to his kingdom, “para honra y utilidad del reino”.<sup>64</sup> Hurus benefited from a new official law on production and dissemination of books and classical knowledge. This law was elaborated in the 1470s and 1480s and meant that the vast majority of incunable volumes published in the 1490s, such as Urriés's, were written in the vernacular.<sup>65</sup> The law had much to do with the development of what has been called Iberian vernacular Humanism, since, unlike in Italy, the ideal of installing a cultural programme based on a reading knowledge of Latin was deemed unrealistic.<sup>66</sup>

Urriés rounded off his militant eulogy of Fernando's ruling programme by underpinning his historical legitimization with enthusiastic glossing of his flagship projects, the conquest of Granada and the expulsion of the Jews. He welcomed and encouraged the holy war that the Catholic Monarchs had undertaken, asking Fernando to<sup>67</sup>

*...en loor de la diuinal prouidencia e aprouacion de las celestiales influencias prosiguir la destruction de la secta mahometica, como sancta e prosperamente principiada teneys, e ahun victoriosamente concluyda en la entera conquista del reyno de Granada, y en la sancta expulsion e destierro de la pessima generacion de los judios, de cuya ponçoñosa y enconada malicia han emanado las infinitas heregias que manzillauan vuestra Hyspaña. Ca segun vuestros grandes complimientos e corporales e mentales disposiciones e osada fortaleza de vuestros subditos, ninguna generacion ni poderio real puede a vuestra viril, cristiana, e poderosa exsecucion resistir.*

In doing so, Urriés reflected on his own life of military service to Juan II of Navarre-Aragón and to his son Fernando. Allegorical language and moralizing intent were two of the key aspects of many of these vernacular translations, and Urriés found the perfect way to relate his work to the more pressing issues of the king's agenda, undoubtedly linking the potential teachings that could be extracted from his book to successful statecraft and government, hence contributing to the completion of the Reconquest with his wisdom rather than his strength, given his presumable physical weakness in his old age. His translation of Valerius Maximus added the

63. Buezo, Catalina. “Las traducciones vernáculas...”: 52.

64. See: Carrera, Avelina. “Dos manifestaciones político-culturales del siglo XV español: las primeras traducciones castellanas de las monografías de Salustio”. *La Corónica*, 37/1 (2008): 92.

65. Carrera, Avelina. “Dos manifestaciones...”: 92.

66. See: Fernández, Luís. “Alonso de Cartagena y el humanismo”. *La Corónica*, 37/1 (2008): 208.

67. “...in agreement with the divine providence and with approval of heaven, continue with the destruction of the Islamic sect, as you are saintly and prosperously doing already with the victorious conquest of the Kingdom of Granada, and with the holy expulsion and eradication of the abominable Jewish lineage, whose poisonous and inflamed wickedness have exuded the unending heresies that were besmirching your Spain. Because with your great qualities, your mental and bodily strength, and the brave fortitude of your subjects, no race or royal power can resist your virile, Christian and powerful disposition” (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 5r).



stamp of “auctoritas” to Fernando and Isabel's embodiment of the continuation of the Holy Empire, linking them to Rome, Pelayo and Visigothic legitimacy and contextualizing their military agenda as a culmination of a divinely predetermined interpretation of history. In this part of his prologue, Hugo de Urriés militantly participates in the construction of the idea of a new fabled golden age under the Catholic Monarchs, celebrating some of their policies, such as the above mentioned expulsion of the Jews and the campaigns of Granada, and even before Columbus's expedition returned with news of the discovery of the New World. For Lawrance, this type of language, used in the final years of the fifteenth century, was aimed at building a new cultural canon to support the idea of the golden age of empire, informed by nationalism, late medieval apocalyptic and, crucially in Urriés's work, comparison with Imperial and Augustan Rome.<sup>68</sup> In fact, all of the values mentioned before and promoted by Valerius Maximus's *Facta et dicta memorabilia* were directly transferrable to the Spain of the Catholic Monarchs.

Other prologues addressed to the Catholic Monarchs in the same period shared this tone. For instance, Antonio de Nebrija's prologue to his *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, also praising the Reconquest of Granada, celebrated<sup>69</sup>

*...que después que vuestra Alteza metiese debaxo de su iugo muchos pueblos bárbaros et naciones de peregrinas lenguas (...) entonces por esta mi arte podrían venir en el conocimiento della como agora nosotros aprendemos el arte de la gramática latina.*

That is, at the same time that Urriés was writing his prologue to Fernando the Catholic, the idea of the vernacular as the language of the new empire was being promoted by the intellectual elites, and praising the virtues of the Catholic Monarchs' belligerent policies was also commonplace for learned courtiers, as they embraced the idea of a new golden age that was the legitimate continuation of Imperial Rome and Visigothic Christianity.

Hugo de Urriés died at the age of eighty seven, according to Marineo Sículo's *Epistolarium familiarium*. When he died, he was a Knight of the Order of St. George, whom he mentions in his prologue to Fernando as his intercessor for divine inspiration when undertaking the task of translating *Facta et dicta memorabilia*<sup>70</sup>:

*...houe deuoto recurso al ajutorio del glorioso cauallero Sant Jorge por leer de su habito e profession, ahunque indigno, el qual me recabo la gracia del eterno fijo de Dios, inuocando*

68. Lawrance, Jeremy. “Fabulosa illa aurea secula...”: 3, 17.

69. “...that after your Highness subjugated many barbarian people and many nations of outlandish languages (...), thanks to my work they will be able to learn it (the Spanish language) just like we now have to learn Latin grammar ourselves” (Quoted from: *La gramática de la lengua castellana de Antonio de Nebrija (1492)*, Antonio Quilis, ed. Madrid: Aguilar, 1992: 98; Lawrance, Jeremy. “On Fifteenth Century...”: 4-5).

70. “I had recourse to the intercession of St. George, the glorious knight, by reading of his endeavours and achievements, and, although I am not worthy of his help, he granted me the grace of God's eternal son, invoking the intercession of Our Lady, his holy mother, by virtue of whom I managed to complete this task by awakening my weak and unrefined spirit” (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...: 4r -4v*).



*la intercession de nuestra señora su bendita madre, por virtud de la qual di fin e cabo a la dicha obra adelgazando e despertando mi rudo e flaco spirito.*

Part of his own legitimacy had to do precisely with having achieved such honours through constant and loyal services to his king. Urriés could hardly hide his pride when he looked back upon his life and realized how much upward social mobility he had achieved through being able to travel the world and meet the powerful<sup>71</sup>:

*E ahun vuestros merecimientos reales son tantos que en quantas hystorias he leydo que son asaz de reyes e reynas, ni en dizesiete reyes que yo he visto e conocido, e reynas veynte e quatro, a menos de quatro padres santos e muchos otros principes e grandes señores, toda fiction e lisonja cessantes, en todas virtudes e nobles costumbres sin defecto alguno par no he fallado a vuestras excellencias, en majestad, virilidad, humanidad e noble consejo, ni en tanta perfeccion.*

Given that Urriés did not mention the discovery of America in his foreword to Fernando, the obvious conclusion is that he must have died very shortly before Columbus's emissaries brought news from the New World, but undoubtedly after the expulsion of the Jews; that is, Hugo de Urriés would have died, at the age of eighty seven, by the end of 1492 or by early 1493, two years before his translation of *Facta et dicta memorabilia* was finally published. Urriés lived a remarkable life of service to both Juan II of Navarre-Aragón (for over half a century) and Fernando the Catholic in his final years. If, at the beginning of the century, men like Enrique de Villena had been criticized by noblemen because of their love for books and not arms, Urriés always delivered what was expected from him, from his military services in Italy and in the Navarrese-Aragonese civil wars in the first two thirds of the fifteenth century to his intellectual, diplomatic and political expertise in the last third.<sup>72</sup> In this context, Urriés was the perfect courtier. According to Carrera de la Red, the elites controlled political power in the first half of the century legitimized by their military achievements.<sup>73</sup> In the second half of the century, some of those elites were not the masters of military prowess but the masters of intellectual activity, and in particular, those with an in-depth knowledge of the classical world, its philosophy and its moral teachings. With his translation, Urriés firmly believed that he could

71. "And your royal merits are so many that exceed all the stories that I have read of kings and queens. None of the seventeen kings, twenty-four queens, no less than four popes and many other princes and great lords that I have seen and met, leaving all flattery aside, come close to your excellence of virtues and noble habits, and I have never found anyone like your excellence in majesty, virility, humanity and noble governance, and nobody as perfect" (de Urriés, Hugo. *Las rúbricas de Valerio...*: 5r).

72. For Nicholas Round, these different attitudes to learning between the older and younger generations of the nobility were made explicit by Enrique de Villena's grandfather's disappointment at him not being a knight. See: Round, Nicholas. "Renaissance Culture and its Opponents in Fifteenth-Century Castile". *Modern Language Review*, 57 (1962): 207. On the other hand, for younger men like Santillana, men like Villena were nothing less than contemporary men of letters descending directly from none other than Valerius Maximus himself (see: Twomey, Lesley. *The Fabric of Marian Devotion in Isabel de Villena's Vita Christi*. London: Tamesis, 2013).

73. Carrera, Avelina. "Dos manifestaciones...": 74.



provide a crucial service despite his old age. He could no longer be a military knight, but he had become a philosopher knight whose legitimacy had been secured by means of excelling, throughout his life, in everything that was appropriate to his own age and, crucially, what was required in the changing world he had to live in. Hugo de Urriés, following a life of military, literary, political, diplomatic and erudite achievement, could be forgiven for his pride when looking back at his lifetime. He was the perfect example of the ideal man of arms and letters of the Spanish fifteenth century.

