

Inculturation as elephant: On translation and the spread of literary modernity

Anthony Pym

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Abstract: ‘Inculturation’ is the term authorized by Pope John Paul II from 1985 to describe ‘the incarnation of the Gospel in autonomous cultures and at the same time the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church.’ Inculturation thus involves, ideally, a double movement rather than a simple one-way translation. The concept has framed Vatican translation policies for the past two decades, with remarkably declining respect for the position or voice of any strong cultural other: for inculturation, translation is used, very clearly, to spread and modify just the one ideological system. Applied to literary history, this model seems well suited to the ways in which some literary systems have achieved degrees of globalization. At the same time, however, the model upsets some of the geometries commonly associated with translation, where at least two strong cultures are supposed to be involved and the exchange process is not usually presumed to result in one of the cultures being absorbed into the other. In short, the assumptions of inculturation would seem to contradict a traditional concept of translation.

This paper applies the model of inculturation to the translation practices associated with the early spread of literary Modernism, seen as the combined international impact of Aestheticist and Naturalist ideologies. The initial focus is on the *fin de siècle* period, when French was not seen as a foreign language to be translated so much as the language of the system to be extended. The result was the international dissemination of a remarkably centralized hegemonic European system, with few of the participative dynamics of the ‘republic of letters’ idealized by Casanova, and with remarkably little impact from translations. It was only much later, when literary Modernism actively sought dynamism from the exotic, that postcolonial translations into central languages would result in a significant revitalization of the literary system itself.

‘Isn’t it strange to identify foreign as in Latin, and foreign as in other-worldly?’ So asks Claire Mathieu in an online discussion on translations of the Catholic liturgy.¹ She was reacting to a short text (Pym 2011) in which I tried to make contemporary translation theory speak to American Catholics, some of whom are regularly up in arms at the relatively literalist Vatican doctrine of *Liturgiam authenticam* (2001). This part of the discussion concerned my knee-jerk use of the term ‘foreign’, corresponding to my unthinking assumption that translation necessarily works on a text that is from somewhere else. Mathieu comments: ‘I am struck by the repeated use of the word “foreign”: “explain the foreign” . . . “bring the reader into the foreign textual world”.’ Strange indeed. Why should she be so struck? First, I deduce, because the Latin language is not wholly foreign to regular users of the Catholic liturgy in the United

¹Mathieu’s intervention is dated June 6, 2011:
<http://www.praytellig.com/index.php/2011/06/06/academic-justification-for-liturgiam-authenticam/>,
accessed May 2012.

States, where Latin phrases are bandied about within the English and many users of the texts are assumed to have a grasp of the basics. And second, as Mathieu notes in her question above, the relative distance of that Latin, as a language that is not wholly home yet not altogether foreign, actively functions in the liturgy, through borrowing and syntactic calque, to create a sense of the 'other-worldly', a higher place, the sacred, a status to which both individual and congregation might aspire. That is indeed a strange identification: the partly foreign language, normally held in a geolinguistically horizontal relation and/or as a relation across time, works here as a higher place, in a spiritually vertical relation. The function of the foreign is not the unease of the traveller or the *unheimlich* that alienates in a negative way – rather, here, it provides occasion for aspiration.

That exchange has been worrying me. In so much of my work on translation over the past thirty-five years or so, I have assumed that texts come from a foreign place, and that translators work on that foreignness, which can be highlighted or eclipsed. Yet here, in this case, I must admit that Latin is somehow the home language of the Catholic liturgy: *Liturgicam authenticam* stipulates that all translations must be from the established Latin text and done as literally as possible. No matter how poorly understood or how frequently translated, Latin remains somehow present to mark the place of this particular culture. It is not an entirely foreign language. So translation, under these circumstances, need not be from an entirely foreign place.

In this essay I want to take that problem and map it back onto some of the research I have carried out over the past few decades. For a while I studied the way literary modernity spread out across the globe, particularly in the 1890s, from a nominal fountainhead in Paris. So was French the foreign language that generated thousands of translations? Not at all, now that I look at it: French was somehow the privileged language of that particular modernity; it was the language that provided the intercalated phrases, the one that signaled belonging to a particular literary moment; no matter how badly understood, French was not entirely foreign – it was the language that was supposed to be aspired to and possibly learnt, well or badly. One might say much the same these days about the use of English in any kind of science: we might translate from it, but it is not a language foreign to science – it is the language that signals the place of an international culture of science. In terms of these examples, Latin, French, and English, as not-wholly-foreign languages, cannot simply be treated as 'foreign languages' in discussions of translation. That much I should have known without any debate over the liturgy. Subsequent reflections have nevertheless brought me to something even more troubling, potentially, for the traditional study of translation.

When the Catholic Church now justifies its conservative and relatively literalist translation practices, it does so by referring to the concept of 'inculturation'. This is the term authorized by Pope John Paul II to describe 'the incarnation of the Gospel in autonomous cultures and at the same time the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church' (1985: 21). Inculturation thus involves, ideally, a double movement

rather than a simple one-way translation: 'Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community' (1990: 52). The concept has framed Vatican translation policies for the past two decades, with remarkably declining respect for the position or voice of any cultural other: for inculturation, translation is used, very clearly, to spread and modify just the one ideological system, which should be brought as close to the Latin as possible.

For much of the time I have been doing Translation Studies, the problems start from a source text here, a target text there, and a translator doing something between them. The concept of inculturation, however, suggests that we thus fail to see a good number of things, and not just the languages that encroach across all spaces. For example, we have somehow trained ourselves not to ask *what* is being translated – in the research I have done (so as not to throw stones at anyone else), I have more keenly kept track of *what languages* have been translated to and from, just as others have sought to judge the health or hegemony of cultures in terms of the *percentages of translations* on the shelves of any surviving bookshops. We ask a thousand questions about *what strategies* translators employ, what their *work habits* are, what *interventions* they have made, all as if the matter itself, the ideational import of the text, were somehow neutral or irrelevant to the geometries of cultures and languages. This is despite the message coming from activist translators and interpreters (for example, Boéri and Maier 2010): the messages of official culture get translated across borders, creating one kind of globalization; those of unofficial culture must find alternative translators if an alternative globalization is to resist. From that perspective, what matters is indeed *what* gets translated. By extension, in more than a few cases, the matter-to-be-translated surely invites and then embodies an act of inculturation – what is being moved is not just a text, a message, an idea, but an incipient extension of a whole culture, which itself is perhaps being transformed through the same acts of translation. If I had looked earlier at the *what* of translation, I might have come up with some better terms to describe what is going on.

So I posit here, as a working hypothesis, that the model of inculturation can be applied to the translational spread of large-scale ideological cultures like Christianity. Inculturation could potentially explain things about Buddhism, Islam, modernity, scientific method, liberal humanist universities, and information technology, for example. The list is very incomplete and scarcely thought-through; the project might be vast. The process also concerns the position and identities of individuals, precisely at the moment when they go beyond the boundaries of a cultural system and aspire to enter another, as if to a higher realm, particularly when the aspired-to culture is embodied in a not-wholly-foreign language. I thus also posit, from the perspective of such individuals, that some modes of translation enhance such aspiration. So I must look not only at what is translated, but also at *how* it is translated, or not translated, and how the mode of translation might interact with that quite specific sense of aspiration.

And so to two case studies from literary history.

Spanish and Portuguese into English in the nineteenth century

In order to write an entry for the *Oxford History of Literary Translation into English*, John Style and I compiled a list of literary translations that were done into English from Spanish and Portuguese in the nineteenth century. That was not an enormous task: previous lists of work from Spanish were available, as was a very solid survey of translations of Camões. Based on those sources, our own working corpus comprised first translations of books and plays from Portuguese and Spanish (excluding re-editions, publications in journals, pamphlets and odd handfuls of poems published in wider-ranging anthologies). The total of entries was 186, so we had a very manageable corpus of translations.

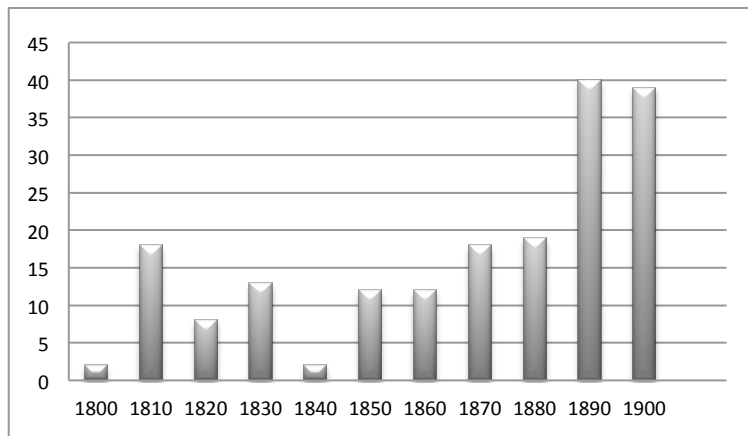


Figure 1. Translations of books and plays from Spanish and Portuguese to English, by decade

One of the first things you can do with this kind of corpus is map the translation flow over time. Figure 1 shows the result: not much at the beginning of the century, a lot at the end, and something happening around 1810 and 1830. A reasonable piece of translation history should be able to explain at least that pattern.

The numbers can take us a little further. If we collect the dates for the first publications of the works translated, we can measure the ‘translation delay’, that is, the number of years it took for the translation to be done (here counting from the start texts, not from intermediary translations or retranslations). The mean delays for each decade are shown in Table 1.

| Decade | Translations | Delay |
|--------|--------------|-------|
| 1790 | 3 | 194 |
| 1800 | 18 | 198 |
| 1810 | 9 | 210 |
| 1820 | 14 | 177 |
| 1830 | 3 | 282 |

| | | |
|------|----|-----|
| 1840 | 11 | 236 |
| 1850 | 13 | 196 |
| 1860 | 14 | 146 |
| 1870 | 20 | 278 |
| 1880 | 40 | 202 |
| 1890 | 41 | 47 |

We can now say that the age of the source texts was remarkably consistent – and remarkably old – for most of the period except the end. And that is about all that the numbers can tell us (which is one reason why none of the numbers actually got into the *Oxford History*).

So what was happening here? Can it be described as any kind of inculturation?

The first rise in translations follows the Peninsular Wars, which marked sustained British intervention in Portugal and Spain from 1808.² The Iberian Peninsula became a place which a few present and future translators would visit: Byron spent time there in 1809; Southey engaged Wordsworth and his circle in the cause of supporting the wars; Longfellow was there in the 1820s. The very positive values projected on Portuguese and Spanish cultures were, however, very much those of a bygone heroic age. We find Southey vowing to ‘hold up the war as a crusade on the part of us and the Spaniards (I love and vindicate the crusades)’ (Letter to Grosvenor C. Bedford, November 17, 1808, in Southey 1849-50, vol. 3, p. 187). In a further letter on the Peninsular Wars we read:

This is something like the days of old as we poets and romancers represent them – something like the best part of chivalry: old honours, old generosity, old heroism are reviving, and the cancer of that nation [France] is stopped, I believe and fully trust, now and forever.

(August 16, 1808, in Southey 1849-50, vol. 3, p. 162)

Not surprisingly, the translations that responded in some way to the wars were mostly of medieval or sixteenth-century texts, selected and mixed with considerable literary liberty. The overall delay of just under 200 years puts us at around the time of Camões, Cervantes and Calderón, who are indeed the authors that dominate the corpus. The more distant medieval texts were rendered sporadically throughout the century, often as *exercises de style*. For example, there were seven versions of the anonymous epic *El Cid*, although the most popular remained Southey’s *Chronicle of the Cid*, compiled from various sources and running through editions in 1808 (reviewed by Walter Scott in 1809), 1846, 1883 and 1894. The texts were generally rendered into English with abundant archaisms, presumably in order to project a noble other from the past. Such features might indicate an operation of *translatio imperii*, whereby the cultural virtues of the Portuguese and Spanish empires should now be inherited by the

² The inflection is even more pronounced if we factor in a number of re-editions. Mickle’s 1775 version of *Os Lusíadas*, for example, reached its seventh edition in 1807, and its eighth and ninth in 1809.

British. To translate from the Iberian past would be to take over the mantle of empire, with all the noble trappings that age thus implied.

Of course, that is too convenient an explanation. The literary relations between Spanish, Portuguese and English were often indirect. At the beginning of the century, the central language for European translation flows was mostly French. Many of the English texts reaching Portuguese and Spanish came via French, with the mediation only diminishing as exiled Iberian groups established themselves in Britain and, later, as English studies developed in the peninsula. On the other hand, comparison with the Van Bragt catalogue of translations into French (1995) shows little evidence of significant French mediation in the reverse direction. Although two early English versions of *Os Lusíadas* did indeed appear after French publications, the trace of such mediation has been effaced in the translations; some drama translations in *The Theatrical Recorder* of 1805 and 1806 were probably via French; an 1847 Portuguese *History of Ceylon* certainly reached English through French; but there appears to be little else. That is, although the movement *from* English into Portuguese and Spanish had strong French mediation, the reverse movement did not.

This strangely asymmetric French connection was of some significance as a negative node. The simple point is that the Peninsular Wars were against Napoleon, and the cultural engagement of English letters with things Iberian was basically in search of an anti-French cultural alliance. That kind of cooperation could scarcely be based on awareness of the current state of Iberian economics, politics or military strength – the peninsula was in considerable disarray for most of the nineteenth century, and the more cosmopolitan Iberian intellectuals were getting their culture through Paris anyway. It was far easier, in such circumstances, to seek the heroism of the past, and to translate from there, carefully skirting around the role of Spain as an unreliable partner and traditional enemy (Inquisition, Armada and all). A *translatio imperii* there may have been, and it may even have entailed some degree of aspiration, as Romantic heroism sought distant models for military engagement with Islam (*El Cid*) and the conquest of India (*Os Lusíadas*). And that very basic Romantic aspiration remained in place for a long time – translation cultures easily outlive the literary movements they were based on – breathing life into translation projects that might otherwise seem anachronistic.³ That said, if there was any kind of prolonged inculturation, it must be seen as an ultimately failed attempt to form a European culture able to stand as an alternative to the French present.

The piece of our corpus that remains – the forty or so translations at the end of the century – were mostly Naturalist novels, responding to an entirely different cultural

³ There are so few items in our corpus that some translators leave deceptively large footprints. In the 1860s and 1870s, for instance, there was a sudden wave of Calderón translations (twenty individual plays, as against just three for all other Spanish playwrights). The significance of the fact is to be sought in the enthusiasm of two translators (Edward Fitzgerald and D. F. McCarthy), both of whom brought out collections of plays, rather than in any general cultural trend.

dynamic. Remarkably, texts less than fifty years old were only consistently translated from the 1880s onwards. The rise of international Naturalism in the 1880s, fundamentally inspired by the likes of Zola and Huysmans, was a literary culture that tended to take its inspiration and scandals from Paris, which simultaneously channelled the Scandinavian theatre and Russian novels. That configuration allowed Iberian cultures a fresh narrative voice with which to speak about their contemporary realities. For the writers, one of the appeals was the aspiration to science, and hence a rationalist improvement of society. For publishers, the appeal had more to do with the production of mass literature, the circulating libraries, and the market value of the scandalous and the exotic.

This change marked a radical shift not only in the age, content and form of the works translated but also in the cultural identity of the translators. As the British and east-coast American publishing houses became the driving force behind the importation of literature, translators lost much of their independence and personal input, assuming an industrial status well removed from the gentlemanly work of previous generations. There was also a pronounced shift in sexual identity. The percentage of women translators in our corpus is just above twenty per cent for the period through to 1880; the figure for the period after 1880 rises to eighty-three per cent. The most prolific translator in the later decades was no doubt the American Mary Jane Serrano (d. 1923), whose work was published in New York and Boston. Between 1889 and 1900 Serrano rendered some thirteen novels from Spanish and Portuguese (Eça de Queirós, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Alarcón, Galdós, Valera), in addition to work from French. Productive at an industrial rate (seven of her translated novels are listed as being published in 1891 alone), Serrano was criticized for inaccuracies and abridgements. Her translations stay as close to the source as possible, stepping away from any fast balls.

We thus find that what might otherwise appear to be the one translation flow, the one set of translations going in the one direction, in fact comprises at least two very different cultural dynamics, with very different translators, different translation strategies, different historical reasons for translating, and indeed different concepts of what translation is. There is no reason why the one directionality should be channelling the same contents. If there is any incipient inculturation here, it is probably in the first dynamic, the call to heroism, and not the second, the industrialization of Naturalism. And that first dynamic was facing an extremely daunting task: to convert a traditional enemy into a current ally. In political terms, it did not fail entirely: Britain became an ally of Spain and then Portugal, and the Napoleonic armies were indeed driven out of the peninsula. In longer-lasting literary terms, however, there would seem to have been no formation of a wider or higher cultural entity.

One of the reasons for this failure might be sought in the lack of a not-quite-foreign language able to mark the path of aspiration. Spanish and Portuguese remained firmly on the 'source' side of the translational equations, only occasionally stepping across in the names of places and people, as so much local color. The language of

aspiration, such as it was, could only have been the archaic diction drawn from Romantic reconstruction, and that language could scarcely be contemporaneous with the Spanish or Portuguese texts being represented. Southey's *Chronicle of the Cid* (1808), for example, had to deal with the problem of representing a twelfth-century text in the absence of any twelfth-century English available for the task (Spanish has changed much less than English). The resulting compromise is strangely reminiscent of the Authorized Version in rhythm, syntax and diction: the archetypal Crusader thus gains biblical authority, as might befit a struggle against Islam, which was indeed the matter translated. At the same time, however, the Biblical tone is combined with the flatness of medieval narrative, producing occasional comic effects:

Now it behoves that ye should know whence he came, and from what men he was descended, because we have to proceed with his history [...]

(1808: 2)

At this time it came to pass that there was strife between Count Don Gomez the Lord of Gormaz, and Diego Laynez the father of Rodrigo; and the Count insulted Diego and gave him a blow [...]

(1808: 3)

Our corpus has much more in that vein, comprising a miserable ruck above which the voices of Shelley, Longfellow and Edward Fitzgerald occasionally rise with considerable splendour. To illustrate the ideological reach of the project, and its literary depths, we awarded the prize for bad archaism to James Young Gibson,⁴ whose rendition of Cervantes' tragedy *Numancia* was published in London in 1885. The play is about heroic resistance to the long siege of a city, and the translator's Dedication explicitly links the matter to the heroism of Charles George Gordon and the two-year siege of Khartoum that ended tragically in 1884 ('This Quixotism, what is it but the sublime of imprudence?'). And the diction reads, to select almost at random:

Scipio: In very sooth, I am content to view
How Fortune's wishes tally with mine own;
Without a struggle, by my wits alone
The occasion comes, I sense it as my due,
For when it flits and runs and once hath flown,
Full well I know in war we pay the cost,
Our credit vanishes, and life is lost.

(1885: 55)

⁴ See the *Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1900*, vol. 21, pp. 277-78. In our entry in the *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, this James Young Gibson (1826-1886) is mistakenly confused with the James Young Gibson (1859-1935) who was a clerk, then magistrate and interpreter, in Zululand (see *Dictionary of South African Biography*, 1968, vol. 4, p. 180).

This may have been a slightly foreign language, perhaps arousing aspiration to a heroism justified by the past – there was still at least the attempt at inculturation into *translatio imperii*. By 1885, though, the movements of translation were doing several quite different things, working from the present rather than the past.

Francophile modernity in Latin America and Australia

Let me go back to earlier research I did on how, starting just a little later than 1885, French aesthetics influenced literary production in Australia and Latin America (Pym 1992, 1996). Although those studies certainly came across translations, I was more seriously looking for what I termed ‘strategies of the frontier’, broadly understood as ways the foreign could open space for a home cultural identity. In both cases I was able to detect elements of a general strategy of the ‘cultural lever’, whereby French influences were used to move the decolonizing peripheral culture (in Australia and the Latin American republics) away from the dominance of the colonizer (London and Madrid), thus allowing a more regionalist voice. At the time, that was how I sought to explain why certain parts of those literary cultures turned to Paris, bearing in mind that France was relatively weak as a political and economic power – the dynamic was predominantly cultural, unmixed with the military, political and then industrial concerns that marked the Spanish-Portuguese-English translation dynamic.

Let me now try to reinterpret the data used in those studies on *fin de siècle* Australia and Latin America.

First, this is a field where a narrow sense of translation does not serve us very well. For the Naturalist side of the aesthetics, to be sure, one could indeed draw up a fairly stable corpus of novels translated from French into English and Spanish, as we did for translations from Spanish and Portuguese into English. For what might be called the ‘Aestheticist’ or ‘Symbolist’ side, however, the enterprise is far more complicated. Since the peripheral cultures had virtually no market for translated poetry in book form, the few translations tended to be found in generalist magazines, newspapers, ephemeral *petites revues* and critical essays. The translations are certainly there, but their number is not enormous and they are rarely functioning on their own – they are part of wider acts of cultural transfer involving literary recreation, allusion, textual exegesis, historical explanation, news reports, cultural politics, partial manifestos, a few parodies (in Australia), and no small amount of literary gossip. The translations are so difficult to separate from the wider functions of all that embedding material that it really makes little sense to study one without the other. Quantitative methods become relatively inappropriate.⁵

⁵ Quantitative historians of Latin American translations were duly scandalized when my book on the history of Hispanic interculturalities (Pym 2000) analyzed only one phrase of Latin American translation (a line from Hugo cited in a poem by Darío). It was nevertheless possible to spend a whole chapter explaining that one translated phrase.

A second complicating factor is the evidence that poetry was read, or was supposed to be read, directly in French, and this might account for a certain lack of translations. For example, in a popularizing work like Víctor Pérez Petit's *Los Modernistas*, published in 1903, we find the French (and Italian) literary texts cited without translation, whereas the few German pieces have been anonymously transposed into Spanish: it is assumed that the reader is able to read French but not German. This may have been a well-founded assumption, given the cognate status of the French and Spanish languages and the existence of a *latifundista* class that could pay for a private or foreign education. Australia shows some signs of similar linguistic pretensions in the same period, but without anything like the same degree of surety. In Sydney, for example, A. G. Stephens' *The Bookfellow* published poems by Baudelaire and Verlaine in French in 1899, not just to be read but also to be translated by the readers, in open competition. As it happened, none of the readers' versions of Baudelaire was considered fit to be printed, and no prize was given for versions of the 'easier' Verlaine, where translators were pointedly reminded that 'the rhyme scheme must be preserved, and the meaning' (*The Bookfellow* 29 April 1988; see Kirsop 2005).⁶ So there must be real doubt as to the extent of competence in French, even among the few readers of a fledgling literary journal.

There should be little doubt, however, that the French language signaled cultural distinction and aspiration. In Latin America, Gallicisms of all kinds entered the upper strata of urban life. In Santiago de Chile in the 1890s, the newspaper *La Época* published its Parisian gossip in French, the Parque Cousiño was an imitation of the Bois de Boulogne, and 'in elegant homes, the furniture and the liqueurs, the carpets and the ceramics were also French [...] the books that the new writers exchanged among themselves were written in France and generally published in Paris' (Silva Castro 1956: 231). In Mexico City in slightly earlier years, according to Riva Palacio (1882: 155), 'everyone says *bouquet* instead of "ramillete", *timbre* instead of "sello", *chic* instead of "gracia", "gusto", or "garbo", *reverie* instead of "ensueño" or "delirio".' The writer Gutiérrez Nájera remarked, 'we were literally French minds deported to American soil' (1894: 98). As for *fin de siècle* Australia, we find writers and editors changing their names: George Lewis Becke wanted to be known as 'Louis', Charles Withers wrote in Western Australia as 'Andrée Hayward', and John Feltham Archibald, editor of the *Bulletin*, famously took to calling himself 'Jules François'. The weekly at the center of Australian nationalism was in the hands of a decided Francophile. There was also a distinct painterly Francophilia: Jose notes of the younger Sydney artists of the time that 'their jargon was nearly all French - *plein air* and *nature morte*' (1933: 24), and the Sydney artists gathered at the 'Café Français' and the 'Paris House'.

⁶ Note that translational adequacy, for Stephens, meant that 'the rhyme scheme must be preserved'. This effectively turned the competition into a test of versification, despite several notes in *The Bookfellow* concerning debates over the use of blank verse. French translations of foreign verse at this time were still mainly in prose or free verse.

At this point, research can easily sink into the quicksands of detail. Since the cultural processes were very much of cities, are we sure that Santiago was like Mexico, Sydney like Melbourne? And if French was being used in fanciful names and technical terms, to what extent was it actually being understood? Then, since these are small milieux, one can more or less count the Latin Americans' trips to Paris, identify the unsuccessful contributors to *The Bookfellow's* translation competition (as Kirsop actually starts doing), or assess the extent to which French was effectively being taught at the universities (Kerr's 1975 account of the Sydney professors sounds pretty grim, and might partly explain why the translation competition had no winners – but then one must then wonder where A. G. Stephens got enough good French to be the judge).

We don't see the woods for the trees, or the inculturation for the translations, or the elephant in the room.

When I now look at those five issues of *The Bookfellow* in 1899, the ones where the two poems are proposed for competitive translation, the first thing I see is a brave and perilous attempt to create a small periodical devoted to literature and things literary: a *petite revue*. And when literary historians look at the Latin American translations, imitations and commentaries, one of the things they all see is the seminal role played by the *Revista Azul* in Mexico, founded by Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and friends in 1894. The important thing is perhaps not the isolated translations, but the attempt to transfer a particular kind of publication space. If we look at literary exchanges between French and German in this period, the same transfer is in evidence, but with rather more successful results (Pym 2007). In fact, if one looks at accounts of French poetry at the time, the ephemeral literary periodicals might be regarded as the most active literary form of the period: Michel Décaudin's *La Crise des valeurs symbolistes* (1981) basically comprises genealogies of who joined whom on which *petite revue*, to the extent that the most significant literary products of the time were probably those ephemeral collective periodicals. In both the center and the periphery, spaces were being created where writers would meet with writers (and occasionally with painters) in order to create incipient avant-gardes. To find out what was happening, one would go to those marginal spaces, wilfully separated from mass circulation and wider publics.

So let us look briefly at the *Revista azul* and *The Bookfellow*, as examples of what might happen when the *petite revue* form operates on a periphery.

The Mexican periodical was actually born as the Sunday edition of the newspaper *El Partido Liberal*, where Gutiérrez Nájera was head copyeditor. Each edition had just sixteen pages, 'beautifully and elegantly printed,' cost double the price of the regular newspaper (the publication contract is cited in Ziegler 2005: 208) and had a print-run of less than a thousand. The newspaper described itself as a *Diario de política, literatura, comercio y anuncios*, and the founding of the review was described by Gutiérrez Nájera as simply giving literature a place of its own: 'for the "mad woman" of

the house, we had no house, and so we founded this *revista*' (1894: 1). The journal's aesthetics were decidedly Parnassian, seeking a modernity of elaborate forms and carefully avoiding the debates about *décadence*, which were more contemporaneous: a certain belatedness was safer. The citations and reports draw on European models, mostly but not entirely French. Gutiérrez Nájera explicitly sought a mixing of literatures (a position echoed by José Martí), which in practice meant European plus Latin American (and excluding the Indoamerican). This controlled internationalism was taken seriously: in its three years of existence, the review published some ninety-six Latin American authors, and it is justly cited as having created the *Modernista* movement. If we look for a political message behind the European orientation, however, there is remarkably little to be found; politics and literature did not mix here. In fact, political questioning did not mix with the parent newspaper either: *El Partido Liberal*, despite its name, was one of several periodicals subsidized by the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship, and that alignment was never questioned by the mad woman in the literary house. That should explain why the *Revista azul* emphasized the role of classical models and took care to distance itself from anything remotely connected with drugs, homosexuality, or decadence. Dependence on the dictatorship was made abundantly clear when Porfirio Díaz withdrew the newspaper's subsidy in October 1896, and the *petite revue* died as a result (although a version was reborn in 1907).

That political location of a Parnassian modernity becomes significant if we compare the Latin American *petite revue* with a similar attempt in Australia. A. G. Stephens, a newspaperman and literary editor for *The Bulletin*, founded *The Bookfellow* in 1899, when it lasted for five issues (it was later revived several times). The review could not make a profit, but its print run is mentioned as a respectable 2,500. Those five issues include not only the winner-less translation competitions but also numerous notes on what was happening in the literary worlds of Paris and London. Here, for example, are the names dropped in the first issue: Swinburne, Rodin, Sarah Bernhardt, Nietzsche, Whitman, Puvis de Chavannes, Dumas, Rossetti, Baudelaire, Whistler, D'Annunzio, and Mallarmé – the names are not all French, but they might all have been circulating in Paris. So where did the news come from? The notes show the editor was reading periodicals from London, not Paris: *Pall Mall Magazine*, *Critic*, *Star*, *Studio*, and *The Graphic*, although there is also a mention of the *Mercure de France* as being 'the best French literary magazine'. A. G. Stephens makes no direct citation of anything French: the language is there, in the background, but the news has largely been filtered through London. For direct knowledge of French, one has to turn to Christopher Brennan's pieces on 'Newer French Poetry', which appeared in *The Bulletin* as well as in *The Bookfellow*, and it is there that one finds the only translations that might have carried some authority.

If Brennan was the local source of knowledge about French poetry (although he had been to Berlin, not Paris), what was his function as a translator? Part of an answer might be gleaned from his partial version of what he considered Mallarmé's unfinished masterwork 'Hérodiade', which I have compared (Pym 1996) with the translation of the

same text by Arthur Symons, published in the eighth (and last) issue of the London *Savoy* in 1896. Although both translations now sound excessively marked by Victorian diction, Symons was visibly translating for an audience, adapting content to rhyme where necessary, whereas Brennan was translating for the text, remaining as literal as possible – Brennan’s rendition was part of a philological and philosophical explanation, whereas Symons’ translation came next to elegantly erotic drawings by Beardsley. The different co-texts have consequences within the translations themselves. For Mallarmé’s ‘frisson blanc de ma nudité’, Symons has ‘white quiver of my nakedness’, whereas Brennan wants neither nudity or excitement in his ‘white shudder of my birth’. Or again, for ‘J’aime l’horreur d’être vierge’, Symons has ‘The horror of my virginity / delights me’, while Brennan can name neither virginity nor delight: ‘The horror of a heart untaught / woos me.’ Symons’ Mallarmé became part of the scandals of London, feeding into the same theme as the *Salomé* that Wilde had published (in French and English) in 1893. The Australian’s Mallarmé, on the other hand, was saved from decadence by an assumed work ethic: since the French poet had spent most of his productive life on the text, Brennan’s translation was itself heavily worked, abstruse, distant, and decidedly other-worldly, thanks to a language designed to hide any content that might have been remotely scandalous. Unfortunately, scandal and gossip were part of what the *petites revues* lived on – as A. G. Stephens later commented with respect to Brennan’s exegeses, ‘general readers requested something more amusing’ (1933/1969: 142).

To return to *The Bookfellow*, an abyss clearly separated Brennan’s Mallarmé from the translation competition that had no winners, and any ‘newness’ that Brennan contributed was likely to create more shudders than *frissons*. Notwithstanding this, A. G. Stephens was keen to reclaim the image of an avant-garde Paris. For instance, he notes that ‘the English stage has lost the literary value and flavour maintained by the French’ (February 18, 1899), while on the anti-British side he takes pains to denounce Kipling as ‘literary footnote to the empire’, complaining that ‘the English have merged criticism with patriotism’ (March 25, 1899). The imperial literary culture, to which the earlier translations from Spanish and Portuguese had contributed, was still there. But now there was a clear alternative in things French.

In the Australian case, unlike Latin America, a symbolic allegiance to French culture already had a political content. In 1887 *The Bulletin* cited France as living proof of successful protectionism, opposed to ‘the decadence of Free-Trade England’ (December 3, 1887). In the same edition, in preparation for the centenary celebrations of Australia’s colonization, *The Bulletin’s* account of history pauses to mention La Pérouse’s unfortunately mistimed visit to Botany Bay: ‘But Providence, which designed the country for Caliban, had arranged that the future of Australia should not fall into the hands of a people fresh from the partial awakening of the French Revolution.’ The nationalist writer Henry Lawson declared that in 1887 he ‘dreamed of dying in the barricades to the roar of the Marseillaise – for the Young Australian Republic’ (1899/1972: 110). Far from supporting a local class-based dictatorship, the attempts at

an Australian inculturation were framed by national liberation: France was a republic, and Australia should be one too, in the here and now.

A world republic?

Parts of literary culture in Australian and Latin America thus turned to French aesthetics at approximately the same time, thanks to the same basic postcolonial logic, and translations were part of that cultural process, linked to the form of the *petite revue*. The political contents were nevertheless radically different in the two cases, and this difference is important to retain.

We might now ask if these case studies in some way indicate the one underlying process of inculturation. Have we perhaps merely picked up pieces of what Pascale Casanova (1999/2004) has conceptualized as the development of a 'world republic of letters'? Did the cultural transfers operate in such a way that separate literatures were moving into the one world literature, particularly as centred on Paris?

Part of the process described by Casanova does seem to capture the literary transcendence that peripheral writers aspired to: 'The author as exceptional and the text as unattainable infinite have been declared consubstantial with the very definition of literary activity' (1999/2004: 349). Casanova sees this in terms of writers' separation from their home contexts, leading to 'their exclusion or expulsion – to use the language of the church, their definitive excommunication – from history, which stands accused of being incapable of rising high enough in the heaven of pure forms' (1999/2004: 349). Through this kind of inculturation, one moves from historical society to a transcendent world republic, and translation plays a crucial part in getting there, since '[c]onsecration in Paris is indispensable for authors from all dominated literary spaces' (1999/2004: 127).

So is this what was happening?

One of the main problems with Casanova's history is that it has little methodology beyond the selection of convenient names. If you pick the right handful of writers, anything can be demonstrated. Although sometimes presented as an application of Bourdieu, there is nothing sociological in the portrayal of this republic. To have any kind of empirical discovery procedure for the social, you need at least a controlled sample of some kind. That is one reason why I have gone back to a study that attempted to account for all the translations within given parameters; it is also why I have tried to look at two peripheral reviews as whole collective publications functioning in particular social contexts. And that methodology, I suspect, is perhaps why I do not quite find what Casanova says we should find.

The first of the above studies, on the translations from Spanish and Portuguese into English, shows a literary network that was rigorously anti-French in its foundational

ideology, and which managed to survive in one form or another through to the period in which the 'world republic' was supposed to have been formed. Fair enough: that might be the kind of literary regime in opposition to which the 'republic' was formed. The negative comparison is also useful to the extent that it helps us locate a temporal dimension for the content being translated. In the imperial regime, translations from a distant past enhanced a relayed nobility; in the more properly modernist regimes at the end of the nineteenth century, translations from a near present, accompanying fresh news from the international centres, created the sense of an international *Jetztzeit* (to borrow Benjamin's term), a 'now-time', a dimension in when all pasts can be replaced by activity in a shared extended present. That is indeed what modernity is about. It is not just literary transcendence – which existed prior to modernity and in competition with it (and for that matter can be dated back to Boethius, at least) –, it is the sense of a shared present, marked by translations across space more than across time.

Further, any 'excommunication' was not necessarily from a historical localism or outdated ethics of the literary *banlieues* (to use Casanova's derogatory term), but from active national contexts in which the *petites revues* gained a political content, either by supporting a *latifundista* dictatorship (figuratively supplying a dominant class with luxury consumer objects) or by associating with a nationalist republicanism. Both political extremes benefited from the sense of modernity, since neither movement had any millennial right to which it could lay claim. To translate from the extended present served both decolonizing cultures well enough.

The most worrying part of Casanova's construal is nevertheless this assumed 'consecration in Paris', which certainly works for her selected cases but is not strongly in evidence in my studies. This is where translations are supposed to be most operative, as peripheral authors apparently have to be translated into French in order to become known throughout the rest of the 'republic'. Yes, that did indeed happen for the Russian novel, Scandinavian Naturalism, and Nietzsche, belatedly. But it did not happen so easily for the Australians or Latin Americans. The French journals of the time did not translate anything Australian or Latin American, as far as I have been able to find, and the historical accounts of the period indicate relatively little awareness of what all these minor foreigners were doing in Paris. Indeed, Joseph Texte, a literary historian of the day, regretted the lack of French influence abroad, remarking that the only thing the foreign press paid attention to were the scandals of supposed *décadence* (1899: 698-700). None of the Australians actually got to know Paris in any profound way, and we have seen that *The Bookfellow* actually relied on the London periodicals for its literary news. True, Brennan wrote to Mallarmé, and the latter replied; Brennan sent his poems to the *Mercure de France* and was reviewed, negatively, by the translator Henry Davray, but that was that: hardly a consecration.⁷ As for the Latin Americans, many stayed for

⁷ See Austin (1969: 154-62). Davray's review appeared in the *Mercure de France* of October 24, 1897 (p. 299). Mallarmé is supposed to have rebuked Davray for the negative comments.

some time in Paris and were able to publish there in Spanish,⁸ but the autobiographies indicate no sense of a triumphant induction into a new state. Darío said of French society: 'I have always felt myself a foreigner in their midst' (1911: 14). Manuel Ugarte, who was a member of the group that established itself in Paris at the turn of the century, describes the Latin-Americans' voyages to the centre not in terms of a revelation but as the 'general exodus' of an 'unfortunate, defeated generation' (1943: 7-8). He goes on to confess that, in Paris, 'we were anonymous *rastas*' (ibid.: 25).

Yes, there may have been a desire for consecration: books were sent, and voyages were made. But the desire might equally have been to learn a relatively unknown language, or to find a shared meeting place, or to gain the perspective of distance. If a republic implies equality and voting for a leader, the term would certainly not describe the way literary modernity greeted these particular aspirants. More important, if republican democracy implies ease of communication in public discussion, to the extent that people feel they are co-authors of their laws, then there was very little republicanism around: French was still a relatively opaque language for many, and that very opacity tended to enhance its value, at the same time as there were few translations, and hence little active interest in communication, from French into the languages of the periphery.

The model of inculturation proposes that peripheral cultures aspire to features of a wider or more central culture, and that both sides of the equation are modified as a result. When our case studies are viewed in this light, they seem thankfully far from anything like the history of Christianization: a certain common aspiration is certainly in evidence, as is a certain geographical centre for the projection of the corresponding illusions, but it is very difficult to see the culture of the centre being enormously transformed as a result. The few translations tended to have a conservative, reinforcing influence on dominant cultural forms. On the other hand, it is relatively easy to see how a mode of inculturation transformed parts of cultures on the periphery, and indeed created new spaces and modes of literary production, with long-standing consequences. Far from being 'excommunicated' as they sought to enter a more international circulation of value, the peripheral figures strategically enhanced their local status, occasionally using translations, but more often using the mystique of a foreign language and culture that could seem, not quite republican, but perhaps other-worldly.

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⁸ In 1912 the director of the Cuban national archives complained that Latin Americans were reluctant to read locally published works, 'and if they ever do deign to accept a Latin American fruit, it first has to be peeled by a Garnier, a Michard, or an Ollendorff [all French publishers]' (Alcover 1912: 61; my translation).

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