

Catalogues and Corpora in Translation History

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The current interest in translation history is steadily revealing a general lack of solid bases for empirical research. This is particularly true in cultures where bibliographical sources are weak. In one such field, Brazilian researchers (Paes 1990, Milton 1993, Wyler 1993) have recently lamented the meager references available for a history of translation in their country. In fact, each writer has regretted that previous writers have not done the necessary groundwork. It is not for me to tell Brazilians or anyone else how to write their history. But I could suggest that individual lamentations should eventually give way to research teams prepared to look for the lacking material. I could further propose that Brazilians should not be alone in undertaking such a project, since translation flows tend to concern transcultural networks rather than isolated states or empires. For example, Paes's anecdotal mentions of Brazilian nineteenth-century translations (1990: 15-27) ring many bells for anyone with a knowledge of French translators of the period, to the extent that one can often predict the French translations the Brazilians were working from. One wonders whether Brazilian translation history could really be separated from the history of translation in Europe.

But teamwork and transcultural perspectives are fairly obvious considerations. Perhaps greater orientation can be obtained from the empirical research already done on other cultures, particularly from work on the more central cases where raw data are not particularly lacking. Such orientation need not mean copying everything that has been produced elsewhere; it should have more to do with avoiding previous mistakes. A brief survey of a few mistakes could thus indicate aspects that Brazilian or other research teams might want to avoid when they eventually get down to constructing their own quantitative bases.

My purpose here is to describe some shortcomings found in this first and most basic step in translation history. My main illustrations are four bibliographies that I have been using - or would like to have been able to use - for research on French and German literary translation at the end of the nineteenth century. I will briefly analyze these bibliographies in terms of a distinction between catalogues and corpora, then outline several very simple hypotheses that can be based on them. But to do this properly, I must first insist on the reasons for undertaking quantitative research in the first place.

Reasons for quantitative research

Even when bibliographies of translations are available, translation history is often reduced to a sequence of translation theories. The result is usually unbearable repetition. George Steiner's focus on theory allows him to see translation history as a constant search for fidelity (1975: 261-262); Mary Snell-Hornby consequently describes centuries of serious thought as a "heated debate" of little import for the present (1988: 22, 26); and deconstructionists like Rosemary Arrojo further relegate the same centuries to the level of a benighted "logocentricity" that has to be overcome (1993: 92). The focus on theory thus becomes a way of getting rid of history. To achieve this aim, non-historical approaches systematically overlook the strategic and frequently defensive roles played by theorization. No one writes a theory to state the obvious; many translators have theorized in order to conceal their far more interesting translation practices. Awareness of the strategic or even misleading role of theory means that translation history cannot be based exclusively on what was said about translation. Good historiography requires awareness of what translators actually did.

For similar reasons, it is rarely possible to construe much history from the analysis of isolated translations. If, for example, one's only references for Medieval translation are troubadours and Chaucer, the rise of the printing press might appear to coincide with the inferiorization of translators as non-original writers (cf. Bassnett 1991: 23). This is an interesting hypothesis. But a wider vision of Medieval translation can locate a functionally duplicitous inferiorization of translators within religious and philosophical textual practices several centuries prior the printing press (cf. Norton 1984: 59-89; Copeland 1991: 52-53). Indeed, Medieval ideologies of the translator's inferiority tended to mask over several other good reasons why literalist strategies were often preferred. Particularly when transferring (or creating) dissident knowledge, translators could protect themselves by claiming to be "merely translators" (Pym: forthcoming). Such reasons had nothing to do with printing presses. Or again, to take a further example, nineteenth-century metaphors describing translation in imperialistic or highly gendered registers might be regarded as strategies whereby translators tried to establish market acceptability for products that had little to do with those registers, in the same way as post-colonial or feminist registers might now seduce a certain academic market, quite possibly for translation practices that have changed very little. Whatever the case, one must have more than anecdotal data in hand before defending globalising hypotheses about technology, imperialism or gender.

Just as any text gains meaning and function from the norms of its genre and context, so translations must be placed within the norms of the pertinent translation practices. The history of one translation is inseparable from the history of the numerous translations that contributed to its setting. This means that research must at some stage seek information on properly translational contexts. It must ask what translations were generally carried out, when, where, by whom and with what frequency. By quantitative methods I mean the constitution and

organization of evidence able to answer these questions. Such work properly belongs to archeology, leaving to historiography the far more difficult question of causation.

The need for quantitative research has long been proclaimed by scholars in the Netherlands, Belgium, Tel Aviv and Göttingen. Despite their differences, all these groups are working in what has come to be called descriptive translation studies. Yet the interest of quantitative methods need not be restricted to those who would passively describe the past.

My own position with respect to descriptive approaches (elaborated in Pym 1992a, 1992b) is perhaps best qualified as uneasy agreement. Since I see historical research as a problem-solving activity addressing questions of concern to the present, I am not overly interested in aspirations to pure research (cf. Delabastita 1991: 152), non-evaluation (cf. Lambert 1989: 223-224) or completeness as an ideal allowing the discovery of systemic laws (D'hulst 1987: 17 & forthcoming). I am happy to invest a great deal of my own subjective and historical position in the formulation and reformulation of hypotheses; I am very interested in avoiding technocratic boredom; and since I don't consider myself to be a mere bearer of systemic functions I am reluctant to describe other human translators in this way. But then, broadly with Popper, I do what I can to make my subjective hypotheses falsifiable. They must be tested, modified and re-tested through confrontation with empirical data. My quantitative methods thus do not involve drawing up lists for the sake of lists; there can be no description for description's sake. Yet there is an important moment when hypotheses must undergo the humility of testing, going out into the world in quest of some degree of non-falsehood, seeking support in empirical evidence. This is where historiography meets archeology, quality meets quantity, judgements of value meet judgements of fact. This is where quantitative methods are required. It is also where a fundamental distinction can be proposed between catalogues and corpora.

The difference between catalogues and corpora

The four works I am about to describe all call themselves "bibliographies". This is fair enough. Bibliographies are lists of references to written or printed documents, in this case translations. But some bibliographies are more properly called "catalogues" and others are better known as "corpora".

Let translation catalogues be lists of translations within a specified field for which the ideal is to have data on *all* the translations. A catalogue's main function is to approach maximum completeness so as to enable any particular piece of information to be found. Corpora, on the other hand, are better seen as lists of translations drawn up according to strictly controlled criteria, of which relative completeness may or may not be one, in order to test a hypothesis or set of hypotheses. The degree of completeness necessary for a corpus can only depend on the nature of the hypotheses to be tested.

One might say that a corpus is a special-purpose catalogue, or that a catalogue is a

general-purpose corpus. But the distinction between the two terms is not entirely gratuitous. The movement from catalogues to corpora in fact involves forming the object of study - in accordance with Durkheim's first rule for sociology -; it recognizes that although archeological data are found, history has to be modeled.

The groups working in descriptive studies have deployed considerable resources in order to constitute data. But are the resulting lists properly catalogues or corpora? As far as I can tell, most selection criteria have been based on an initial ideal of target-side completeness rather than rigorously selective representativeness. The researchers have set out to locate all the translations appearing in a given language in a given genre in a given period. The purpose of one major Leuven project is correspondingly described as being simply "to study" the field thus defined (1984: 149), without clear reference to any constitutive hypotheses. Similarly, a Göttingen project on translation anthologies (outlined in Frank & Essmann 1990) seems to assume that the pertinent categories will arise from the systematic constitution of extensive archeological data, without great preliminary theorization or formulation of falsifiable hypotheses. Since the data have not been constituted in order to answer any particular question, the results should have more to do with catalogues than with corpora.

The main practical problem with this approach - quite apart from the illusory nature of objective completeness - is that one tends to discover far more translations than were hoped for. When working on *fin de siècle* variants and translations of the Salomé theme (Pym 1989) I initially formulated hypotheses on the strength of works mentioned in secondary sources, mainly literary histories. But my initial expectations had to be significantly revised once I got down to the business of collecting actual titles. Where I thought there would be just a few versions, I finished up with some 388, far more than I had time for. I had to separate important from unimportant data. I needed a corpus, not a catalogue. In this case I decided to base my selection criteria on numbers of reeditions and reworkings, extracting a manageable corpus of just 15 strong versions.

In principle, a relative abundance of information exists for those who know where to look. Finding translations is mostly a matter of going beyond traditional secondary sources and digging around in bibliographies and publishers' catalogues. Yet this joyous abundance also tends to produce rather uncomfortable quantities of borderline cases. Exactly what degree of "adaptation", "rewriting" or "Nachdichtung" is to be included as a translation? Should there be any radical distinction between intralingual and interlingual translation (cf. D'hulst forthcoming). How can genre limits be fixed *a priori* when one of the things history does is change genre limits? Where should period limits be established, and according to what criteria? Should selection be based on the limits of the target culture (which always has to be defined), the target language (rarely the same thing as a culture), or combinations with selected source cultures and/or languages? These questions can only be answered once strong working hypotheses have been formulated. One has to know - and reformulate if necessary - exactly what problem is to be addressed.

A certain descriptive ideology would overcome these difficulties by assuming that all pertinent criteria and limits will be manifested by the lists themselves. There is no doubt that translational peritexts can indicate the way translation relates to other rewriting practices within a particular target culture; varying frequencies of translations do indicate peaks and gaps that are useful for periodization; the relation between intralingual and interlingual work can indeed be picked up from secondary sources. But this does not mean that all the criteria indicated by the object itself are immediately pertinent to the questions to be answered. One can set out to list and quantify every phenomenon under the sun, but researchers are paid to produce significant products. If priority is not given to the problem to be solved, one is quickly swamped in a sea of data where solutions can only be found by accident. The truly pertinent criteria first belong to the time and place of the researcher, to Gadamer's notion of necessary prejudice. It is then in the moment of testing that these criteria confront and adjust to whatever categories ensue from the object as corpus.

My wider argument here is against the belief that catalogues alone can produce substantial knowledge. The argument is theoretical, hermeneutic. But it can be demonstrated quite easily, simply by looking at a few bibliographies of translations.

Shortcomings in bibliographies: four examples

Although bibliographies are often thought to be ideologically neutral, they tend to assume criteria that concern rather more (or less) than completeness. This means that lists appearing to be catalogues are often unwitting corpora, incorporating agendas that are more or less concealed. My comments on the following four cases are written from the perspective of an only moderately satisfied user.

- Anselm Schlösser. *Die englische Literatur in Deutschland von 1895 bis 1934*. Jena: Verlag der Frommannschen Buchhandlung Walter Biedermann, 1937. 6,493 entries. 535 pp.

Schlösser sets out to study the reception of "English" literature (everything non-American) in "Germany" (wherever German is spoken, a definition of some importance in 1937). Since the data provided by periodicals and reviews only reflect reception by literary critics, Schlösser chooses to study publishers' catalogues, which he believes will reflect the general reading public (p. 1). He thus draws up a list comprising all the catalogued translations and, in a separate list, all the works published in English in Germany (that is, non-translated works). Anthologies are given in yet another list. The lists are analysed in terms of the age of the source texts (modern/older literature), genre, the most published authors (presumed to be the "most read"), the publishing houses, and the major translators. The analyses are presented in tables, graphs and a historiographic narrative. The study could be a model of its genre. If only we knew what it had set out to achieve.

Schlösser wants to study "literary reception", ensuring the literariness of his object by excluding school textbooks and all other pedagogical material. He does not say why anyone should study literary reception, nor why this particular patch of history might be of interest, nor indeed if there are or could be any hypotheses concerning the field. His study can thus only describe what is there. It cannot say what is *not* there, nor what is or might be important. Schlösser's only operative hypothesis in this regard is that publishers' catalogues are significant because they reflect the "general reading public". Yet this belief is never tested or questioned, even when it is openly contradicted by a struggle between two publishing companies which in 1933 consciously flooded the German market for English-language publications (33). If a market can be flooded, then publishers' catalogues cannot reflect a reading public. To get from the catalogues to the public with any degree of certitude (although we still don't know why), greater account must be taken of publishers' strategies as a major category of mediation.

Schlösser's lists are defined in terms of catalogues, aiming for total coverage within a field defined by exclusion of the fields dealt with elsewhere. The first half of the nineteenth century had been studied by Sigmann; the American novel in Germany had been studied by Vollmer for 1871-1913; Shakespeare reception had been covered by Schücking-Ebisch. So Schlösser avoids most of the nineteenth century, leaves out American literature, and makes no mention of Shakespeare. This could be a good way of delimiting a useful catalogue (one must do something that has not been done before). But it is a disastrous way to constitute a corpus for the study of reception, since there is no guarantee that the most significant data are not precisely those that have been left out. Can we be sure that American literature followed a separate reception process in Germany? What is the good of distinguishing between canonised and recent literature if one leaves out precisely the most canonised author? Despite all the analysis, we are left with a catalogue that, quite apart from being full of holes, is of little use as a corpus.

- Liselotte Bihl, Karl Epting. *Bibliographie französischer Übersetzungen aus dem Deutschen 1487-1944. Bibliographie de traductions françaises d'auteurs de langue allemande*. 2 vols. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1987. xviii + 1311 pp. 12,289 entries.

As is indicated in Landwehrmeyer's preface to the work, the Bihl/Epting bibliography of French translations from German is very much part of the relations it tries to reflect. The initial plan was drawn up by Karl Epting when he was director of the German Institute in Paris during the Nazi Occupation. The bibliographic sources had been conquered. A first card index was carried out under Epting's control and the original concept would appear to have been his alone. As such, the project is not entirely separable from a certain direct interest in translations. The German Institute itself published French versions of Hölderlin following the 1943 centenary of the poet's death. Epting not only conceived the catalogue, he helped produced titles for it as well.

The initial work was later revised at the University of Tübingen, mainly by Liselotte Bihl from 1979. The data were checked with the Catalogue des Imprimés at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and sometimes with the actual publications, adding numerous entries and correcting many others.

The classification is by periods and genres, in accordance with Epting's original plan. The periods begin with the printing press and then correspond to French political regimes, the dates of rupture being 1789, 1815, 1830, 1848, 1870, 1918 and of course 1945. Although I have elsewhere praised this style of periodisation because the divisions affect both the cultures concerned (1992c: 211), subsequent work with the catalogue has aroused less enthusiasm. Paradoxically, the periodisation tends to hide the effects of political ruptures, since considerable re-elaboration is needed to locate the translations immediately before and after each historical watershed. The periods also make the translation history of individual works difficult to follow. Similar problems ensue from the six genre divisions. In principle, no genre is excluded, resulting in miles of children's literature, popular novels and ephemeral tracts that are unfortunately absent from other catalogues and whose titles sometimes make good reading. Yet the genre divisions themselves are occasionally worthy of Borges. For example, "archeology" is with literature (genre 1) but "history" and "prehistory" are with geography (genre 2), "anthropology" is with mathematics (genre 4) and "sociology" is with law (genre 5). Any corpus to be extracted from these categories has to weed out a lot of unwanted material.

Such problems are nevertheless easily overcome, since data-processing has blessed the bibliography with indexes of authors, translators and publishers. Without these indexes, the genre range and periodization would probably make the work unworkable. With them, just about everything is possible. The information one requires can be selected and recompiled.

The obvious lesson to be learnt here is that period and genre divisions are not really useful in catalogues. All that really matters is that indexes allow the information to be reprocessed by the user, who can then constitute corpora. In fact, the Bihl/Epting catalogue should probably not have become a book. It would be far more useful as a simple data base available for editing on demand. Rather than follow fixed period or genre divisions, one should be able to select fields on the basis of actual dates and key-words in titles.

In this case, the bibliography's main attraction is indeed its relative completeness as a catalogue extracted from catalogues. But there can be no illusion of total coverage, even after so many years of work. The entries were not systematically checked against the card indexes at the Bibliothèque Nationale (xvii), thus allowing for considerable *terra incognita*. When constituting a corpus of French Wagner translations (see Fig. 2 below) I had no real trouble finding 23 editions omitted in Bihl/Epting. Corpora must be prepared to go beyond the available catalogues.

- Hans Fromm. *Bibliographie deutscher Übersetzungen aus dem Französischen 1700-1948*.

6 vols. Baden-Baden: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1950-1953. 27,790 entries.

Fromm's bibliography was compiled in 1946-49, at a time when German libraries were understandably in considerable disarray. The prime data thus comes not from books but from publishers' catalogues, as was the case with Schlösser's work. Surely it would have been better to wait for the libraries to become organised? But the historical moment called for the bibliography as a reorganisation and reorientation in itself. Sponsored by the French High Commissioner for Germany, the work was part of a wider attempt to redress past conflict through cultural *rapprochement*. Interestingly enough, at least seven anthologies of French poetry were published in German in 1946-48. Like the anthologies, Fromm's bibliography is concerned with indicating and extending the place of French literature within German culture.

Fromm excludes the following references (pp. xiv-xxvii):

- Those for which the original French titles could not be ascertained (thus excluding not only pseudotranslations but also ephemeral publications not found in the unnamed French catalogues).

- "All writings of a restricted scientific, medical and technical nature, unless they possess particular cultural and historical significance" (implying that the remaining titles are of "cultural and historical significance", a concept that remains undefined).

- All children's books, as far as they could be recognised from the title (obviously not thought to be of "cultural and historical significance", even though the most translated titles in Bihl/Epting are precisely children's books, perhaps the most socially influential of all translations).

- All musical and illustrated works in which the text is of incidental or secondary importance (thus introducing a very important grey area with respect to opera, to which we shall return below).

The criteria of inclusion are as follows:

- "The term 'translation' has as a rule been extended to include free adaptations". But since we are given no definition of either term, and since we know that the compiler has not seen the actual texts anyway, the real criterion must be some degree of paratextual translationality indicated in the publishers' catalogues.

- All editions and reprints are listed.

- Titles from periodicals and collective publications are included as an appendix to each author article. These added entries can represent anything from a single poem to a full-length essay, exploding anthologies into individual entries for each author. The result is a rather long bibliography with several rather obvious holes. But the material from periodicals is often useful for locating translations of minor poets and the first translations of major though initially marginalised poets. Unfortunately, Fromm's is the only bibliography to include this information in this way.

- Titles are included as translations from the French *language*, regardless of the author's

nationality (French, Belgian, Swiss, Canadian). This creates a problem with respect to the many Germans who wrote in French, from Frederick II down. The catalogue thus gives these cases in a separate list, which is not inconsiderable (some 553 separate works written in French by German authors). Obviously, the general criterion of nationality was not important, but the criterion of *German* nationality was extremely important. The bibliography was by no means value-free.

In all, Fromm's work is a flawed catalogue whose constitutive criteria remain unrigorous and in some cases difficult to justify. One suspects that the compiler was a little too keen to participate in the transcultural relations that his bibliography purports to represent.

- Joseph Jurt, Martin Ebel, Ursula Erzgräber. *Französischsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur 1918-1986/87. Eine bibliographische Bestandsaufnahme der Originaltexte und der deutschen Übersetzungen*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1989. 908 pp.

The research for this bibliography of German translations from "contemporary" French literature was carried out in 1984-87 at the University of Freiburg as part of a wider project on the German reception of French literature. Given the dates, the compilers obviously sought no temporal distance between themselves and their object ("Gegenwartsliteratur" here means texts of extreme contemporaneity with the data-gathering process). This should perhaps not be surprising, since similar proximity characterized the work of Schlösser, Epting and Fromm. All these bibliographies were indeed "in" translation history. What is surprising, however, is the way the compilers in this case imply that their work should affect the object.

The bibliography was based on the "impression that the transfer of contemporary French literature in West Germany is strongly deficient [stark defizitär]" (ix). The economic register of "deficient/deficit" is most peculiar. Talk about a "trade deficit" would imply Germany receives more French goods than France receives German goods. A deficit means you have to *export* more. But here it means that Germany should *import* more, since the importation of culture is obviously considered a good thing (by whom?, to what end?). Further, since there is no quantitative indication of the French reception of German literature, the deficit must be in relation to an ideal level fixed somewhere in the past of German literature itself. This becomes more explicit in a reference to "the transnational flow that is slowing down and becoming thinner" (ix). But any quantitative basis able to support such a reference is rigged in terms of an enormous criterion of abstract literary quality: a "reception deficit" is apparently only meaningful in relation to "qualitatively valuable literature" (x). The bibliography itself thus attempts to list all that is best in contemporary French literature, indicating the works that have been translated into German and those that have yet to be translated. The result is reams of untranslated titles and some doubts as to whether they would all have to be translated if the apparent deficit were ever to be made up.

The actual procedure used to select the best French works is rather farcical. The compilers attempt to quantify the results of French canonization, then criticize this canonization as

"francocentric" (xvii) - as if they had a truer appreciation of the object to be described -, and finally add fifty of their own favorites once they realize that the 508 most canonized authors are too old to be really contemporary. The result is a hermeneutic potpourri of subjective idealization and gratuitous critique, unable to decide if the object is in statistics or in a blissful future of total and immediate translation. The bibliography is worthless as a statistical basis and perhaps superfluous as a guide to the perplexed. No one would consult it just to know if a contemporary French work had been translated into German, since they would get a more certain answer by contacting the French publisher. And the compilers themselves could probably have achieved their interventionist purposes more efficiently simply by writing about why their favourite French authors should be translated. Or better still, perhaps they should have done the translating.

Just for the record, the selection criteria were to include only independent publications (i.e. books), to exclude collective works with more than three authors (i.e. anthologies), to include only original editions (so reedition cannot be used as an index of target-culture importance) and to include "all forms of translation" (the limits of which remain mysterious). These decisions appear to have been arbitrary, unworthy of a corpus yet too restrictive to make this a workable catalogue. I am unable to use the result.

Lest the above comments give the impression that bibliographies are getting worse with time, note should be made of the quite excellent work done on German translations from Swedish and Italian literature (Quandt 1987-88, Hausmann 1992). But does this mean that most of the more substantial bibliographies are by Germans? There are of course several classic catalogues produced by non-Germans (although Morgan 1922 and Duméril 1934 are still concerned with translations of German literature), not to mention the *Index Translationum*. Yet there must remain the suspicion that a certain will to completeness is itself a culture-specific trait. When the *Index Translationum* indicates that German receives the highest number of literary translations, is this a social reality or merely a reflection of exceptionally good German cataloguing? Not everyone has the time and energy needed to put so many small things in their place.

The compiling of catalogues is of course an entirely legitimate and useful activity. If treated as archeology - if not confused with the actual carrying out of historical research -, it should be welcomed by those less-self-sacrificing souls who seek the more immediate results made possible by specific corpora. Despite their unfulfilled ambitions to completeness, catalogues are necessary for the construction of corpora. If future catalogues are to become properly functional in this way, they might even benefit from a user's shortlist of desiderata.

First, as we have seen, a catalogue should serve as a data base and no more than a data base. In general, period and genre divisions are not required and, if used, should be surmountable. This means that one should be able to extract corpora based on alternative divisions. When access is facilitated in terms of key words, dates, authors and translators, the building of corpora could even be a painless affair.

Second, within the widest possible boundaries, coverage should be as complete as possible, without criteria of quality or quantity. This is vital in the case of lyrical expression, where translations published in periodicals and anthologies are often more influential than those published in individual books. When one catalogue includes such information and another does not (Fromm does, Bihl/Epting does not), corpora requiring the two catalogues are simply blocked by unreasoned selection criteria.

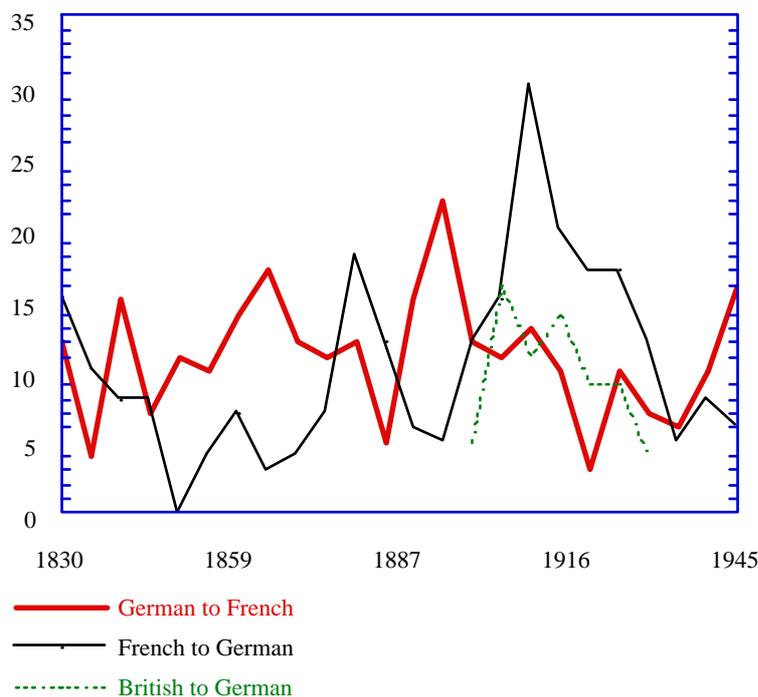
Third, the existence of possible lacunae should be indicated clearly, along with the exact procedures used to compile the catalogue. When this is done, users of the catalogue will know the areas in which any extracted corpora are likely to be biased.

Catalogues into corpora: one example

Even when the above criteria are not met, catalogues can be used as suggestive if inexact sources of quantitative information. Sheer quantities of entries often smooth over lacunae. In the case of my current research on the translation of lyrical texts between French and German at the end of the nineteenth century, a reasonably extensive corpus (252+298 titles) could be extracted from the combination of Bihl/Epting and Fromm (using Schlösser as a further indication of translative activity). This corpus could then be used to test and reformulate my initial hypothesis that translation was causally related to genre prosification (cf. Pym 1992a). But the procedure was neither easy nor conclusive.

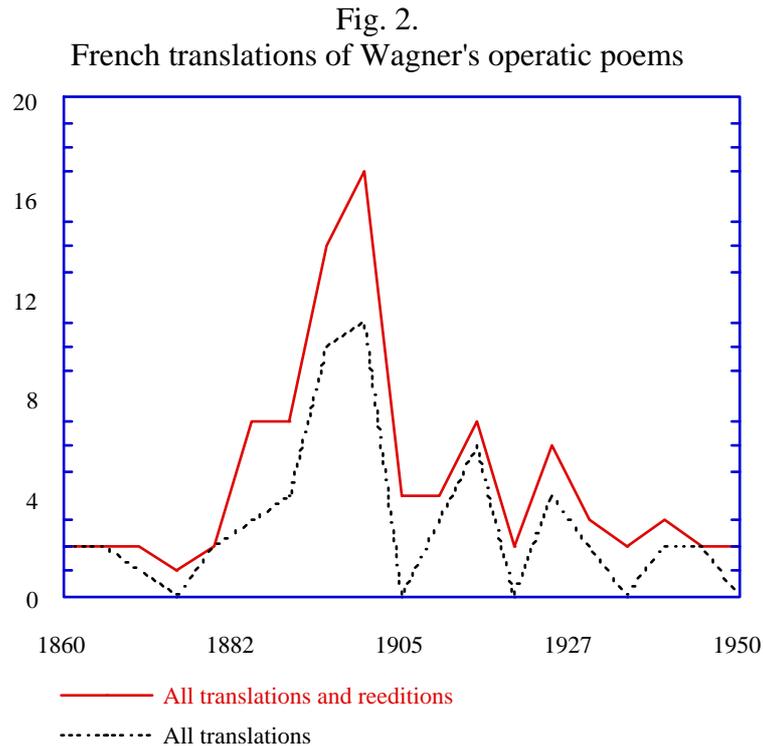
Given the deficiencies of the catalogues, the corpus had to be constituted from a lowest common denominator, leaving out reeditions and translations appearing in anthologies and periodicals. A "translation" was simply accepted as any text listed in either bibliography (cf. Toury 1985), since the application of a strict definition at this stage would have required too much effort for too little reward. "Lyrical texts" were similarly defined in a consciously inadequate way, resolving borderline cases by accepting as lyrical any work peritextually described as a "poème", "poésie", "chanson", "ballade", "Lied", "Gedicht" or "Lyrik" (including cognates of these words but excluding distinctions between verse and prose, since one of the aims of the research was to test hypotheses concerning the prose translation of lyrical texts). The resulting corpus then gave the following chronological distribution:

Fig. 1.
Translations of lyrical texts, from Bihl/Epting, Fromm and Schlösser
(showing "twin peaks")



Despite all the problems with the catalogues, the distribution of this corpus is suggestively neat. The German-to-French flow clearly peaks in the 1890s and is then overshadowed by a French-to-German movement peaking in the 1900s (further supported by the English-to-German movement based on Schlösser). This "twin peaks" model is remarkable on two counts. First, when one direction increases, the other decreases, suggesting that something went from German into French and then, after some transformation, from French into German. Second, although sharp decreases were expected to be associated with 1870-71 and 1914-18, the actual "twin peaks" occur in a long period unaffected by war. The corpus thus indicates a phenomenon that had been unforeseen in initial hypotheses concerning the effects of war.

Close inspection of these peaks shows that much of the movement into French comprised translations of Wagner's "poèmes d'opéra" (which had initially gatecrashed the corpus thanks to the term "poème"). The distribution of this minor corpus (107 titles) could in this case be further confirmed by inclusion of reeditions:



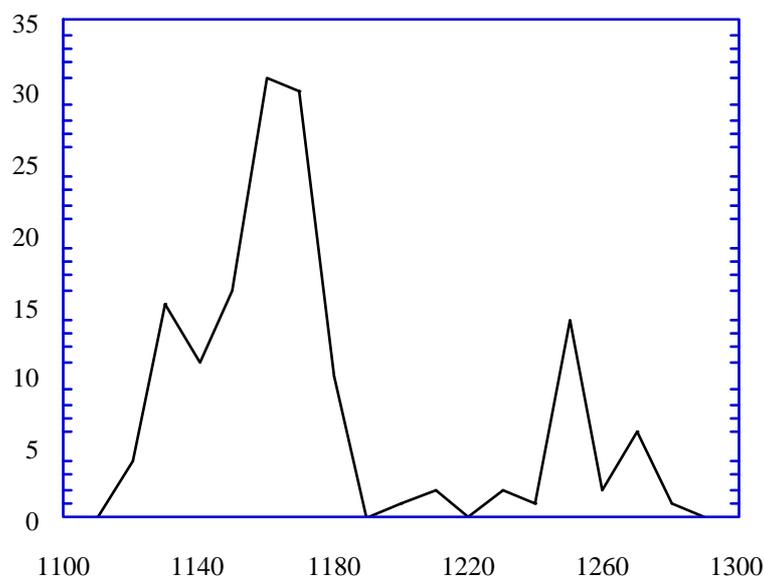
Although the peak here comes slightly later than the general one shown in Fig. 1, it remains an interesting explanation. The movement into German, coming after the transfer of Wagner, was then marked by the translation *en masse* of the French Symbolists and Post-Symbolists. One might thus hypothesize that Wagner was translated into French, influenced Symbolist aesthetics, and the result was then translated back into German. None of this had been foreseen in my initial hypotheses, which were based on a naïve notion of "lyrical expression" as the stuff of poets rather than musicians. But the late nineteenth century thought otherwise. The French Wagner was indeed read as a poet. The hypothesis that his influence extended right through Symbolism and back into German can moreover be supported by readings of Max Nordau (1892-3 I: 267-332), who was opposed to both movements, and Edouard Dujardin (1931), who claimed that Wagner's influence not only helped to prosify French verse but eventually culminated in Joyce. The quantitative phenomenon was unexpected but perhaps not entirely illusory. It had been observed before. But no one had previously used it to relate prosification to translation.

The shift from catalogues to corpora is thus able both to falsify hypotheses and to found further hypotheses. Yet this does not mean that everything can be done on the level of such corpora. In this particular case, subsequent research has shown that the cultural functions of lyrical translations were located more in periodicals ("petites revues") than in book publication. I am now in the process of constituting corpora extracted directly from a systematic reading of the main literary periodicals of the period, starting of course with the *Revue Wagnérienne* (1885-1888). The general catalogues have little to say at this stage of investigation. But without them, I could not have formulated the new hypotheses I am now

testing. Quantitative methods cannot in themselves write good history. But they can help us head in the right direction.

One final methodological hypothesis should be mentioned here. Observing the almost fractal nature of the above graphs, which jump up and down rather than form smooth curves - the smaller-scale graphs for individual periodicals also jump erratically -, one might be led to believe that translation responds directly to the ruptures of wars, revolutions, economic cycles and general transcultural disturbances. However, when a similar analysis is made of the documented translations from Arabic carried out in Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (147 titles), we find remarkably similar patterns, without explanatory wars or revolutions (I include the following graph basically to upset those who believe in a unified "Toledo School": the first major peak was into Latin and was sponsored by the church, the second major peak, after 1250, was mostly into Castilian and had Alfonso X as its patron):

Fig. 3.
Translations from Arabic in Spain, 1100-1300



Could these abrupt parabolic distributions be due to the nature of translation itself, at least as we find it in the more central cultures? As a relatively expensive strategy for transcultural communication, translation could well be only viable for short-term projects, giving way to alternative strategies involving language-learning (when there is more material to be communicated) or non-communication (when not). More disturbingly, a similarly parabolic distribution can be found in the recent history of translation studies itself, perhaps in mediated response to fluctuating short-term demands for translations. Are these graphs suggesting that the social interest in translation will soon decline? Perhaps we should be preparing for wider or alternative fields of study. This, at least, is a working hypothesis that we should be interested in testing.

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