

## Getting translated: Nietzsche's Panama Canal

Anthony Pym

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"The great Panama Canal to France has been opened...." Thus wrote Nietzsche to his friend Heinrich Köselitz (Peter Gast) on 22 December 1888, jubilant at the prospect of having his works translated into French. The translations would be an opening of some importance, not just a contact between oceans but apparently also an avenue of escape from the frustrations of writing in German for Germans. The move would make Nietzsche a properly European writer. And this enthusiasm coincided, at the end of 1888, with the date announced for the first passage through the Panama Canal. Yet history was not quite so automatic. No matter how slickly our philosophers now talk of "Europe since Nietzsche", as if everything were suddenly and irreversibly changed, translations, even of Nietzsche, even into French, are not easily produced. Many factors had to come together before the canal was functional.

My purpose here is to describe how hard it was for Nietzsche to get himself translated into French. Most of my information will be drawn from his correspondence, presented in chronological order and in summary form, paying some attention to the minor network of intermediaries participating therein, to their interrelations, and to a few wider modes of reception and influence. The story also has a moral: in historical terms, translations are difficult to produce not because texts are necessarily difficult to translate, but because far more than a source is needed for any translation project to become viable. Most of the cards are played well before anyone actually gets down to rendering language into language. Translation history should be written accordingly.

And so to the story.

The odd French note on Nietzsche can be found well before anything associated with the Panama Canal of 1888. Something like the standard review system caught him in its net as early as 1874, when the *Revue critique d'Histoire et de Litterature* (39: 206, 46: 318-19) published page-long mentions of the first two parts of *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, which had just been published (in 1873 and 1874). The anonymous reviewer, who renders the German title as *Considérations inopportunes*, mentions Nietzsche's critical attitude with regard to German culture, notes his favorable comment on French culture, sees his attack on the cult of history as a continuation of Schopenhauer, and translates a few sentences to indicate that this is a "publication originale, écrite avec une verve extraordinaire" (39: 206). Significantly, the longest passage chosen for translation focuses on the value of "life", which was to become the key term in Nietzsche's reception in the 1890s: "On honore plus, dit-il, l'histoire que la vie. Oui, on triomphe de ce que la science commence à diriger la vie..." (46: 318. Yet not a word about Nietzsche's one earlier book, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (published 1872); not a word about anything to follow.

And that's all. Clearly, the defeated France of the 1870s was not the most appropriate place to promote a Germanic writer, not even one who was so outwardly critical of German culture. If and when German thought was needed, attention would first be paid to Schopenhauer, then to Wagner. These reviews of Nietzsche had no immediate sequel in the France of the 1870s.

Yet there was no ban on translations: Three years later, in 1877, Nietzsche's *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (published in 1876) was translated into French by one Marie Baumgartner. Of course, this was not quite a French translation: Baumgartner was an Alsatian (nee Koechlin) and she published the translation in Basel, which was where Nietzsche had his chair. The translation belonged to the Europe that hides between France and Germany, the Europe of Nietzsche himself. Nor was this translation necessarily due to Nietzsche's value as a philosopher: 1876 was the inauguration of Bayreuth; the interest in the translation was first and foremost an interest in Wagner. Baumgartner's translation was not the great canal; she brought Nietzsche into French as just another commentator on Wagner.

Then a long silence.

Some nine years later, after a rash of Schopenhauer translations and the beginnings of the *Revue Wagnérienne*, there were chances for a more serious reception of things German in France. But who would take up Nietzsche's cause? The Wagnerians might be interested, if only Nietzsche hadn't become a rampant anti-Wagnerian in May 1878... They could scarcely be counted on to build a canal, at least not while they were busy defending Wagner. So who? This is where things start to stir in Nietzsche's correspondence, apparently at the initiative of Nietzsche himself (I will return to his motives soon).

We are now in late 1886. Because of ill health, Nietzsche left his chair in Basel some eight years ago. For eight years he has been wandering between Nice, Sils Maria and northern Italy, producing books, astounding books, at an astounding rate: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878-1880), *Morgenrote* (1881), *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882), *Zarathustra* (1883), *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886). None of this has been translated; very little has been commented upon outside of German letters; not a ripple has reached French. So Nietzsche himself acts. Let us now read some of the letters he sent and received, as edited by Colli and Montinari (1984-1986).

20 September 1886: Nietzsche writes to Hippolyte Taine. Yes, Taine, the literary historian and art critic, writer of big books and bigger positivistic ideas, perhaps the least Nietzschean thinker one could find at the time. But Taine it was. The draft indicates that Nietzsche's letter accompanies a copy of the freshly published *Jenseits*, described as "difficult to understand, full of *Hintergedanken*, a foreign mode of thought that perhaps conceals as much as it betrays" (3/3: 253). But Taine is supposed to understand, to have something in common with Nietzsche, within "our Europe" (Taine was taking a cure in Geneva) and as an admirer of Henri Beyle...

17 October 1886: Taine replies: *Jenseits* is indeed "plein de 'pensees de derriere'; sa forme si vive, si littéraire..." and so on, flattering Nietzsche but doing nothing to further the work's reception.

(Then nothing.)

4 July 1887: Nietzsche to Taine: Sending two more books: recent reeditions of *Morgenrothe* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, which he explains were both written in Genoa (not Germany!). The letter is full of praise for Taine, exploiting every possible common point: he, Taine, has just written on Napoleon, solving, says Nietzsche, the problem of *Unmensch* and *Uebermensch* much better than Barbey d'Aurevilly's recent book on the subject; Taine, notes Nietzsche, has been mentioned in Bourget's latest novel, but will Dostoevsky's ghost leave Bourget no peace? (Nietzsche clearly believes these are the sort of things European men of letters should discuss). The letter-writer goes on to reveal himself as a loner ("Einsiedler"), as someone who has never cared about finding a readership ("bekümmere mich nicht viel um Leser und um Gelesenwerden") and who has in any case mostly been appreciated by old men (namely Richard Wagner, Bruno Bauer, Jacob Burckhardt, Gottfried

Keller). Implication, following the clubbish chat about recent French-Russian literature: Wouldn't Taine (aged 61) like to become a member of the old-men's club, perhaps by reading a bit of this poor hermit Nietzsche?

(Who could refuse such an invitation?)

12 July 1887: Taine (in Geneva) to Nietzsche: Expresses thanks for the nice words; will read the books when he gets back to Paris; hasn't seen Barbey d'Aurevilly's book yet ( "vous êtes plus au courant que moi de la littérature française contemporaine" – only foreigners think the centre knows the centre); appreciates Nietzsche's remarks on Napoleon: "rien ne peut résumer plus exactement mon impression que les deux mots allemands dont vous vous servez: Unmensch und Uebermensch" (apparently unaware that the words belong to Nietzsche, not to the German language).

(But nothing like a translation in sight...)

26 November 1887. Georg Brandes (in Copenhagen) to Nietzsche (in Nice). Brandes has received *Jenseits* and *Genealogie der Moral* (1887) from the publisher; already had *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches*-, has read them carefully, agrees with some ideas but fails to understand the critique of Christian pity and the general criticisms of women. "I know nothing about you. I am astonished to see that you are a Professor, a Doctor. But I congratulate you on not thinking too much like a professor." Although Brandes manifests clear and careful interest in the books received (note, however, that Nietzsche has published three further books that he has not seen), at this stage he could hardly be taken for a potential Panama Canal.

Early December 1888. August Strindberg (in Holte) to Nietzsche (in Turin): "Et vous voulez être traduit en notre langue Groelandoise: Pourquoi pas en Français et en Anglais?" Strindberg advises Nietzsche not to seek fame among "la sainte et sacrée canaille": "Mieux vaut garder la solitude distinguée, et laisser nous autres dix mille supérieurs aller en pèlerinage secret a votre sanctuaire afin d'y puiser à notre gré." (3/6: 376)

(Such is the price of being superior: no need to translate for the masses!)

8 December 1888. Nietzsche to Strindberg. *Ecce homo* should come out in German, French and English, at the same time. Would he like to do the French? The text, after all, requires a poet to translate it; it is "a thousand miles from all simple 'translators'. And who could do the English, so to produce "an *anti-German* book in England"? (emphasis Nietzsche's)

8 December 1888: Nietzsche to Taine (draft): Note to accompany a copy of the *Götzen-Dammerung*, described as "perhaps the most radical book yet written". Now Nietzsche's request is clearer (none of the literary Smalltalk; none of the restricted gentlemen's club; no sanctuary for a select group of superior beings): Could someone translate this book into French? In keeping with the more direct strategy, the declared readership is suddenly much wider: "I have readers all over the world, even in Russia [things Russian are very fashionable in Paris], but I have the misfortune to write in German, although I perhaps write it better than any German ever did." To whom, Nietzsche asks, should he send the work to be translated?

11 December 1888. Strindberg to Nietzsche. Would be pleased to translate into French but would need to pay a French reviser: "... la traduction de votre ouvrage est une grosse question d'argent et vu que je suis un pauvre diable, je ne pourrais vous donner un rabais...". Offers to help to find someone else. Says not to worry about being translated into English: "un pays 'empretraillé' par l'arrivée des femmes..."

14 December 1888: Taine (in Paris) to Nietzsche (in Turin): Reception of the *Götzen-Dammerung*, but "je ne sais pas assez bien la langue pour sentir du premier coup toutes vos audaces et vos finesses [...]. Puisque vous souhaitez un lecteur compétent, je crois pouvoir vous

indiquer le nom de Mr. J. Bourdeau, rédacteur du *Journal des Débats* et de la *Revue des deux mondes*, c'est un esprit très cultivé, très libre, au courant de toute la littérature contemporaine; il a voyagé en Allemagne, il en étudie soigneusement l'histoire et la littérature depuis 1815, et il a autant de goût que d'instruction. Mais je ne sais pas s'il est de loisir en ce moment. Il habite Paris, rue Marignan, 18."

(At last, a real contact! And Taine has at last fobbed Nietzsche off onto someone else! One wonders if he really made much sense of the *Götzen-Dämmerung*.)

17 December 1888. Nietzsche to Taine, expressing thanks for words that have broken Nietzsche's "complete isolation". Taine's encouraging comments on *Jenseits* were "really the first voice I heard... the first profound and encouraging words from beyond Germany".

(And now that the French translation has apparently been arranged, two long letters, straightaway, to drive the deal home:)

*Circa* 17 December 1888. Nietzsche to Helen Zimmern, asking her to translate "Nietzsche contra Wagner" (signed by "Peter Gast") into English (five days later he will tell Köselitz the text is not to be published as such, since it will appear in *Ecce homo*, however: ) "It is now absolutely necessary that I become known in England, since my next works [*Ecce homo* and what else?], which are ready for publication, will appear in English, French and German." The German public is now unbearable: Nietzsche fears confiscations and police repression. In order to undertake the mission of annihilating Christendom, it is now necessary to have a reputation in America, England and France... In the name of "freedom of the press". But what should be translated? The critique of Wagner, obviously, since "an English journal (*Century Review* or similar) seems to have declared war on Wagner. If you like I'll send you my piece. It's excessively nasty [über alle Maßen boshaft] and could have been written by a Parisian." Strategy: Write for the English debate about Wagner, at least for starters, and sound like a Parisian, since that's where the English are taking their debates from anyway. Nietzsche suggests something might also be translated from the *Götzen-Dämmerung*: "It is anti-German and anti-Christian par excellence – so it should work well on the English, shouldn't it?" "Ich bin gar kein Mensch, ich bin Dynamit." In a final note: "On Monsieur Taine's advice I am now in contact with Monsieur Bourdeau, the distinguished Chef-redakteur of the *Journal des Débats* and the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, who has been recommended to me as one of the most intelligent and influential people in France. He should prepare for the translation of the work." (3/5: 536-37)

(The translation into French thus becomes an argument for a translation into English.)

*Circa* 17 December 1888. Nietzsche to Jean Bourdeau (draft): "I desire to be read in France; more, I esteem it necessary." Although "perhaps the strongest living mind", Nietzsche cannot bear "the absurd borders that the abominable lie-infested politics of dynastic interests have drawn between peoples". It is most important that he be read in France: "I'm told that I basically write in French, although I have attained something unattainable in German, especially in my *Zarathustra*." So is he German? – "four generations ago my forebears were of the Polish nobility", and as some kind of consequence Nietzsche is "the most solitary of Germans". But: "Now I have readers everywhere, in Vienna, Saint Petersburg, Stockholm, Copenhagen... but not in Germany" (no, no, he's not really German!). There follows a brief autobiography, notes on his friendship with Burckhardt, Wagner... and then, out with it: "Consider, dear sir, if the *Götzen-Dämmerung*, a very radically conceived and formally daring book, should not be translated." Next: "As for the piece on Wagner [*Der Fall Wagner* appeared in 1888], I'm told it's so French in thought that it could not be translated into German." Nietzsche now announces two books ready for publication: *Ecce homo* and *Umwertung aller*

*Werthe*, “but they must first be translated into French and English, since I do not wish to leave my fate in the hands of any measures taken by the Kaiser’s police”. Increasingly incoherent self-praise for a work now called the *Marteau des Idoles*, totally misunderstood in Germany, since “it’s high time I come into the world once again as a Frenchman...”. Translate this book (the *Götzen-Dämmerung*, which Nietzsche twice insists could be called *Marteau des Idoles*), “and the rest will follow”, this rest being *Zaruthustra*, “but one cannot begin with that...” (3/5: 532-6). The letter closes with a further reference to the threat of police censorship in Germany.

18 December. Nietzsche to Strindberg. Don’t worry about the translation; Bourdeau will do it; nothing is now more important than “this opening of my Panama Canal to France”.

Let’s take stock. The long text I just summarized, the letter to Bourdeau, is a draft, perhaps more incoherent than the letter actually sent, yet certainly touched by an erratic mind (Nietzsche’s final breakdown would come just a few weeks later). The text nevertheless indicates how important the fact of translation was felt to be. Nietzsche has no time for the careful strategies used with Taine; the second person is hardly present here; he virtually takes for granted that Bourdeau will do the translation; the letter is a plea, even a demand, that this be done quickly. And yet there is a thinking mind here, manipulating ideas that are not necessarily tainted by insanity: Hayman (1980: 273) dates Nietzsche’s fantasy about Polish ancestors from as early as 1884. Here, in 1888, Nietzsche is creating the kind of self-image that he thinks will get him translated; he is reinventing himself for translation; his last works are being written for translation. Not by chance, many of the myths that would dominate his reception in France in the 1890s are flaunted by Nietzsche at this time: his non-Germanness (Polish nobility and all); the French bases of his thought (yes, a French thinker who had the misfortune to be born into the German language) and his non-appreciation in Germany (we’ll see in a moment). Note also the place of Wagner in the mix. Nietzsche knows he has a good chance riding into France on an anti-Wagnerian wave, yet his most sincere boasting is for his most properly Nietzschean endeavors. This suffering mind is not devoid of a few basic principles of marketing. Nor is it above expressing genuine joy at the prospect of being translated:

22 December 1888: Nietzsche to Köselitz: “An indescribably fine letter from Monsieur Taine in Paris. [...] He complains that because of *toutes mes audaces* and *finesses* he cannot understand German well enough – at least not at first glance – and recommends that I contact, as a competent reader who has deeply studied Germany and German literature, none other than the Chef-redakteur of the *Journal des Debats* and the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, Monsieur Bourdeau, one of the most influential personalities in France. He should take care of my reputation in France, and of the question of translation, on Monsieur Taine’s recommendation. – The great Panama Canal to France has been opened. [...] – Erster Schnee, hübsch!!!”

(But what is Bourdeau going to make of all this?)

There follow seven letters dated within nine days of each other, mounting the crescendo of Nietzsche’s efforts to get translated (ah, but I’ve been selecting the letters):

27 December: Bourdeau to Nietzsche: Is in the countryside; will try to do “une courte analyse de votre brochure sur Wagner” for January; will read the rest during the winter; “vous me faites beaucoup d’honneur et de plaisir en vous adressant a moi...”.

29 December 1888. Nietzsche to Bourdeau (draft): Says he understands that Bourdeau has little time for him, and he can wait.

(Can he really?)

1 January 1889. Nietzsche to Bourdeau: “I enclose the end of my proclamation. [...] I believe it is possible to bring order into the whole absurd situation of Europe through a kind of world-historical laughter, without shedding a single drop of blood. In other words, the *Journal des Debats* should suffice...”.

(What proclamation?)

2 January 1889: Köselitz to Nietzsche: “I’m overjoyed about Taine. I’m thinking not so much of the influence on the French, but the influence that the French translation will have on Mohammedans, Russians and other despots.”

(Such are the joys of an international language!)

2 January 1889. M. G. Conrad (Munich) to Nietzsche: “I have presented your name to the editors of the January issue of *Die Gesellschaft*.” He says the Munich-based journal is also to review Nietzsche’s writings on Wagner.

3 January 1889. Andreas Heusler (Basel) to Nietzsche: No, Heusler can’t advance 11000 marks for anything! No, Nietzsche should *not* try to print or market his own books (since “das Selbstverlag für jeden Autor etwas ganz Fatales ist”). “There must be another way. You hope there will be an increase in the demand for your works thanks to your new contacts with French friends. If your expectations are met, you should have no trouble finding a publisher in Leipzig...”.

(So why does Nietzsche so dearly want to be translated into French? Because he fears police censorship? Because he secretly writes like a Frenchman anyway? Or because financial success in Germany depends on a reception in France?)

(Then, at long last:)

4 January 1889. Bourdeau to Nietzsche: Has not yet had time to read the books. But: “J’ai reçu également votre manuscrit de Turin [the proclamation!], qui témoigne de vos sentiments anti-prussiens, et qui ne peuvent que resserrer les liens de sympathie entre un auteur tel que vous et un lecteur français.” [That’s surely why it was written! But now:] “Il ne me semble pas de nature à pouvoir être publié.” Full stop. End of paragraph. No reason given. But I’ ll let Bourdeau make his own excuses:

“Je vous ai dit, je crois que je comptais rendre compte de votre brochure contre Wagner dans le journal des Debats. Je suis malheureusement occupé ailleurs en ce moment, et obligé d’ajouter ce travail qui serait pour moi des plus agréables. / *Je ne suis pas, comme vous le supposez, rédacteur en chef du Journal des Débats, mais simple collaborateur intermittent, des Débats et de la Revue des deux mondes, pour les oeuvres étrangères. C’est vous dire que je suis obligé de soumettre à mes directeurs les sujets dont je m’occupe, et que la date de l’insertion des sujets ne dépend pas de moi. Il y a tant de sujets et d’écrivains de journaux et de revues, que l’on attend parfois très longtemps. / Je vais vous faire adresser une traduction partielle de Schopenhauer pour laquelle je demande votre indulgence – à l’égard du traducteur.*” (emphasis in the text)

Thus did Jean Bourdeau, probably not knowing what to make of Nietzsche, deflate the whole series of hopes that had begun with the letter to Taine: no translation, no serious reception, just a minor journalist, full of Parisian haste, who exchanges Nietzsche for his version of Schopenhauer, and closes the Panama Canal.

Schockenhoff (1986: 81) picks up the idea that Nietzsche’s nontranslation into French may have helped bring on his final collapse, and that the need to atone for Bourdeau may have motivated Henri Albert, the Alsatian translator who did eventually bring almost all of Nietzsche

into French. Yet the supposed French guilt seems to miss out by a day or so: Bourdeau sent his snivelling excuses from Paris on 4 January; Nietzsche collapsed in Turin on 3 January.

Did Bourdeau do anything at all to help Nietzsche? Genevieve Bianquis (1929) says he did indeed publish an article in the *Journal des Debats* in late 1888. Her affirmation has been repeated by a short chain of authors down to and including a recent claim that Bourdeau “indeed began to write about Nietzsche at the time of his mental breakdown” and “Bourdeau’s essays solicited a great number of articles and translations of Nietzsche” (Behler 1996: 295). Strangely enough, I have not been able to locate any 1888 text by Bourdeau and it seems clear from the above letter of January 1889 that nothing had been published prior to that date. Although Bianquis claims to cite this unnamed text, what she offers is actually from Bourdeau’s later collection *Les Maîtres de la pensée contemporaine* (1904), which makes many references to the Nietzsche criticism of the 1890s and thus could not be from 1888. Further, none of the many French articles on Nietzsche written through to about 1895 appear to make any reference to Bourdeau. The man in question would seem to have taken Nietzsche seriously only after someone else in France had done so.

So who, among the small network of intermediaries crisscrossing this correspondence, who finally opened the Panama Canal?

Was it perhaps the English debate about Wagner? In May 1889 Helen Watterson did indeed translate some aphorisms for the *Century Magazine* in New York (“Paragraphs from the German of Friedrich Nietzsche [sic]”). But her work was without consequence; the idea of translating Nietzsche into English would not resurface until 1894. New York was not the great opening link.

Was it the famed Scandinavian connection, with Brandes and Strindberg finally revealing Nietzsche to the world? Possibly: something of *Zaruthustra* was translated by Sophus Michaelis in May 1889; texts by Ola Hansson on Nietzsche appeared in German in November 1889; the *Neue freie Presse* talked about “Der Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien” in the same year; Brandes published on Nietzsche in German in April 1890.<sup>1</sup> I take these details from *Die Gesellschaft* of October 1890 (article by Leo Berg), where it is clear that Munich was following Scandinavian attention to Nietzsche. But this was made clear *in Germany*, on the basis of Hansson and Brandes writing *in German*. Even if there had been a Scandinavian translation, it was still not the Panama Canal Nietzsche sought, since none of this Nordic network would seem to have connected with the ocean Nietzsche wanted to reach (Ola Hansson would not be translated into French until April 1892).

So who opened the canal?

I suspect the most effective agent was perhaps the least expected: M. G. Conrad, whom we spotted writing to Nietzsche on 2 January 1889, did indeed open the way for Nietzsche to be discussed in *Die Gesellschaft*... a Munich-based publication of nationalist-naturalist allures (it carried translations of Zola and a portrait of the Kaiser). Hardly the place one would expect to find a radically anti-German Nietzsche! But there he is, from September 1890, with a biography in the first person (“My ancestors were of the Polish nobility”), compiled by Conrad from Nietzsche’s own notes, followed in October by Berg’s article and the references to Scandinavian receptions. This was surely the beginning of the canal. In Germany.

Strangely enough, the articles in *Die Gesellschaft* are the only secondary texts actually cited by Teodor de Wyzewa, a French-Polish Wagnerian of long standing, who published a substantial article on “Frédéric Nietzsche [sic], le dernier metaphysicien” in the *Revue bleue* about a year later, in November 1891. In this article Wyzewa repeats most of what he has read in the German press: Nietzsche’s reputation “n’ a pas encore pénétré en France; mais

depuis longtemps déjà sa réputation a dépassé l'Allemagne; en Suède, en Danemark, en Russie, en Hollande, en Italie, Frédéric Nietzsche est dès maintenant fameux...". Although Wyzewa talks about Nietzsche's *oeuvre* as if it had read it all, he cites only a few passages from *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* and describes Nietzsche as producing nothing but aphorisms (which would suggest he had read nothing but *Menschliches*). More important, Wyzewa simplifies the philosophy as much as he does the philosopher's name (spelled "Nietzsche" throughout, which does indeed make the typing easier): he portrays a philosopher who has done nothing but copy the French, a nihilist who was basically destructive, pessimistic, infantile, a potential star for young people who like that sort of thing. In so doing, Wyzewa produces much of the imagery that Nietzsche himself had concocted for translation.

Wyzewa's essay was influential for two main reasons.

First, it was plagiarized in English by John Davidson in 1891 and again in 1893, forming the first British commentaries on Nietzsche's work (see Thatcher 1970: 64-68): "Although his reputation is widespread in Germany, Sweden, Russia, Holland, Denmark, and Italy, Frederick Nietzsche [sic.], except to a few specialists, is hardly even known by name in France and England". Wyzewa was the link between Germany and England.

Second, and more important, Wyzewa was wrong enough to start a debate in Paris: his vision of Nietzsche was quickly challenged by the young generation of Daniel Halévy, Fernand Greggh, Robert Dreyfus, Jean de Néthy and through to Henri Albert. Thanks to these debates, focused on the positive Nietzschean value of "life" (but it had been there way back in 1874!), the German was translated into French. In 1894 Albert, working for the *Mercure de France*, negotiated the translation rights for Nietzsche's complete works; the rights for English were negotiated in 1895. The canal was finally functional.

But that's another story.

Work had begun on the Panama Canal in 1880; Lesseps announced its completion for 1888, the year in which Nietzsche used the metaphor. But the French company went bankrupt; the project could not be completed; the Americans took over; politics got in the way; the Panama Canal was not opened until 1914, thirty-four years after it was begun. The translations of Nietzsche's books into French would not be completed until 1909, thirty-five years after the first French reviews of his work. The philosopher's metaphor was perhaps more motivated than he knew.

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## **AUTHOR**

*Anthony Pym*

Enseigne à l'Université Rovira i Virgili en Espagne. Parmi ses livres : *Translation and Text Transfer* (1992), *Epistemological Problems in Translation and its Teaching* (1993), *Pour une éthique du traducteur* (1997), *Method in Translation History* (1998). Ses recherches sur les réceptions françaises et anglaises de Nietzsche seront poursuivies dans le cadre du Centre pour la recherche sur l'internationalité des littératures nationales (SFB 529) à l'Université de Göttingen en Allemagne.

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