Translations and Translators of English-language Literature in Catalan Literary Publications and Series between 1868 and 1910

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Abstract

Translations into Catalan of English and American authors during the final quarter of the nineteenth century are few and far between. Numerically, English-language literature most likely ranks fifth or sixth among all the translations of this period. We take inventory here of translations found in Catalan magazines from this time (the oldest dates from 1868) and in published series that came out at this time (if these continued until later, we trace them up to their final year). At the same time, the translators are examined, including reference, where available, as to whether the translations are direct or indirect. Finally, we consider some possible causes for the low English-language volume in Catalan translation during the period.

Keywords: English-language literature; translation into Catalan; periodical publications and series; the period between 1868 and 1910.

Resum

Les traduccions al català d’autors anglesos i americans durant el darrer quart del segle xix són força escasses. En el total de traduccions d’aquest període, la literatura de llengua anglesa difícilment es troba entre les cinc primeres posicions. En aquest article fem un recompte de les traduccions en revistes i en col·leccions catalanes del període esmentat (des del 1868); i en el cas de col·leccions que van continuar després del 1900, en fem un seguiment fins a l’últim any. Alhora, n’analitzem els traductors i esmentem, quan és possible, si les traduccions eren directes o indirectes. Finalment, sospem les possibles causes per les quals les traduccions de l’anglès al català són tan escasses durant aquest període.

Paraules clau: literatura de llengua anglesa; traducció al català; publicacions periòdiques i col·leccions; període entre 1868 i 1910.

Summary

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From the first translations to the end of the century
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Annex: List of translations
Translation into Catalan in the nineteenth century

It should be kept in mind from the outset that throughout the nineteenth century, where Catalan is concerned, translating was a task taken on by writers or avid readers, there being no professional translators as such; these would not appear until well into the twentieth century (even then, in combination with other literary-related work in order to make ends meet). This is due to the precarious nature of first-rate literature in Catalan and lack of Catalan-language schooling, as well as the resulting lag in the Catalan publishing market (though not the case for Spanish, since Barcelona emerges as the publishing hub of the wider Spanish State).¹

The panorama might be summed up in the fact that, throughout the nineteenth century, there was surely no publishing house that came out with a series of books in Catalan.² This situation did not begin to change until the turn of century.³ So it comes as no surprise that book translations into Catalan were scarce. The final third of the century marks a shift, when the Renaixença movement had gathered enough steam to create platforms, albeit precarious, to help strengthen its hold. To this end, newspapers proved indispensable, disseminating numerous translations of poetry and short stories, and launching new books both in serial supplements and full volumes that appeared periodically.

In any event, the series we find in the nineteenth century are part and parcel of serial supplements which, as we know, help consolidate readerships by offering a twofold product (the periodical publication and the book divided into various installments); Spanish-language newspapers had already been using this system for some time.⁴ It is here that English-language authors, as can be seen in the annexed list, will appear, though not before the turn of the century. This list is not meant to be comprehensive, especially where texts appearing in periodical publications are concerned, particularly in the twentieth century, given the variety and sheer number of these —often short-lived or found to be incomplete in the archives. In contrast, the list tends to be exhaustive for books appearing in series, often in tandem with periodical publications.

From the first translations to the end of the century

The first translation identified is Benjamin Franklin’s opuscule Lo camí de la fortuna: consells brèus y senzils per esser rich, 1868, translated —it is uncertain whether from English— by the writer and professor at Universitat de Barcelona

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¹ For an overview of this problem, see Pinyol i Torrents (2006).
² The only exceptions being «Biblioteca de La Renaixensa», launched in 1879, which published only eight titles, and «Biblioteca Popular Catalana» (1892-1894), with half a dozen.
³ For an analytic view of the problems of the Catalan publishing market, see the remarkable study by Castellanos (1996).
⁴ Despite the importance of the history of serial publications in Catalonia, there has been no overall study of them; tentatively, regarding the period dealt with here, see Figueres i Artigues (1999: 229-243) and also Duran i Tort (2001: 178-191).
Gaietà Vidal i Valenciano (1834-1893). His also is the 1872 Spanish translation.\(^5\) Not until a dozen years later do we find works by English authors; namely, in the «Biblioteca del Diari Català» (1879-1881),\(^6\) which published, in installments, three writers in two volumes: el *Viaje d’un naturalista al rededor del mon, fet a bordo del barco «Lo Llebrer»* (*The Beagle*),\(^7\) by Charles Darwin, and *Noveletas escullides de Edgar Allan Poe y Bret Harte. Traduhidas expressament pera lo Diari Català*.\(^8\) What is interesting about these translations is that they are based on the French, suggesting the difficulty of getting hold of English-language translators; the «Biblioteca del Diari Català», which only published three titles —these two and the *Ilíada”—, translated Homer from the French as well. Finding translators of Greek must also have been difficult. Or perhaps publishing imperatives required a pace of production that an expert translator capable of direct translation was unable, or unwilling, to take on. Be as it may, the question (which lies beyond the scope of this article) of direct translation and foreign-language competence in the nineteenth century is one that is complex and, to date, entirely unexamined.

The Biblioteca played a key role; it stands as the first serious attempt to come out with a modern publishing series in Catalan, featuring translations of first-rate world-wide literature and thought. The undertaking by the newspaper’s founder and director Valentí Almirall is remarkable despite the paper’s short life and the fact that the translations were indirect. The bid for modernity comes through clearly in P. Sacases’s presentation of Bret Harte with the translation of the short story «La sort del camp bramador» in the paper’s Thursday literary section: «(...) és el novel·lista avui en voga en los Estats Units. Los cuentos de Califòrnia, dels que és lo més notable lo que comencem avui a publicar, són obretes interessants, i la idea culminant d’aquest és novíssima. Per aquestos motius lo publiquem.»

Particularly interesting is the serial supplement of the newspaper *La Renaixensa*, which, under the title «Novelas catalanas y estrangeras», appeared between 1892 and 1902. Blending Catalan and foreign-language narrative, it stands as the first Catalan-language series with a clear publishing agenda, and for ten years produced the highest number of authors and works up to that time in a series; and although the works of Catalan writers featured were largely rural and ideologically conservative, the imported works —selected to appeal to the paper’s readership— aimed, as Carola Duran has remarked,

6. On translations in this series and in the newspaper, see Llanas and Pinyol i Torrents (2004).
7. Josep M. Camarasa, in his introductory study to the facsimile republication of this edition, writes the following: «El nombre i la qualitat dels gal·licismes, (...) molt nombrosos, (...) ens ha fet concloure que Leandre Pons i Dalmau no traduí directament l’obra de Darwin de l’edició original anglesa de 1860, sinó de la traducció francesa de 1875.» (Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona / Alta Fulla, 1982, xvi). On the publishing of the volume, see Figueres i Artigues (1999: 271-279).
8. On this volume and translation via the French, see Figueres i Artigues (1999: 279-286).
to disseminate a number of European authors translated into Catalan for the first
time, comprising a wide and varied repertory that any culture in circumstances
similar to ours would be hard put to match. Not that these authors are especially
new in their own countries; still, they are new to Catalan readers, given the slow
pace of the spread of cultural events. (DURAN I TORT 2001: 186)

Yet English-language literature does not loom especially large here, not exceeding
two writers: Dickens — a longstanding classic, well known to the paper’s
readership — with two novels; and Mary E. Braddon, the popular and prolific
Victorian writer who died in 1915, during that time at the height of her career
with various works already available in Spanish.

Apart from books the presence of English-language writers is scarce: two
poems by English Romantics (Byron, Shelley), three prose works by American
writers (Franklin, Emerson, Harte), two poems of American Romantic author-
ship (Longfellow), nine pre-Romantic texts by Ossian (supposed medieval
author invented by James Macpherson), a poem by Pre-Raphaelite Dante G.
Rossetti and the famous soliloquy from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Slim pickings for
a thirty-year period, so we can safely say that English-language literature trans-
lated into Catalan during the last third of the nineteenth century amounts to a
token swatch. Scarcer still are references to it in literary criticism. Are we to
conclude that English-language literature was unknown? Hardly, especially if
we keep in mind that numerous authors and works were available in Spanish
translation, not to mention that the Catalan intelligentsia could read French trans-
lations; and these, in fact, may have paved the way for Catalan translations since
it is likely that a number of the texts inventoried are not direct translations from
the English.

The serial supplements in *La Veu de Catalunya* are particularly interesting as
well. Stepping up production from weekly to daily in 1899, this newspaper, con-
nected with the Lliga, features serial supplements from the outset, appearing reg-
ularly especially during the first two years. Familiarity with English-language
literature had taken a turn: the works appearing in 1899 and 1900 were mostly
those of English-language authors. On the one hand, there were well-known, fairly
contemporary writers already published in Spanish, and even in Catalan (two
who had passed: Dickens and Mayne-Reid; and another who would pass in 1902:
Harte). On the other hand, living writer Marie-Louise Ramé (Ouida), bestselling
author of sentimental novels, had not, it seems, been translated into Spanish; nor
had her Irish contemporary A. Upward, his career then thriving; and another, who
had passed several years earlier (in 1885), H. Cronway, had been translated into
Spanish. Still, in all cases, the writers were well established and clearly success-
ful, and so, quite suitable for a platform — the serial supplement — that was
expressly popular in character. Of course, fine literary quality was not always the
overall aim. As for the translators, not a single one is known since their names
never appeared: a working example of the small regard in which they were held
at the time, especially where publications for the general reading public were
concerned.
Looking at translations of shorter works and fragments, although less frequent, we find that they appear across a wider spectrum of periodical publications (Lo Gay Saber, La Ilustració Catalana, Diari Català, Museo Balear, Calendari Català, La Veu de Catalunya, La Creu del Montseny, Catalònia) and that they were penned by a number of translators including—besides anonymums and initials (J. F. G., which may stand for Josep Franquesa i Gomis)—literary critics (R. D. Perés, F. Miquel i Badia, C. Barallat), writer-translators of varied renown (A. Masriera, M. V. Amer, E. Franco, J. Pérez Jorba), second-tier writers (F. Fayos) and literary buffs of unrecorded biography (P. Sacases, J. Freixa i Clos).

The case of Shakespeare translations

The translations of Shakespeare are interesting for several reasons. In the first place, the earliest translations are rather fragmentary and come fairly late in the day, (Franquesa, Llanza, Barallat); an entire book does not appear until Hamlet, penned directly from the English by Artur Masriera, published in 1898. That same year another version had come out, «accoutered to the Catholic stage», by Gaietà Soler (a priest using the pen name Àngel Guerra). The hapless result is fairly well known, and has been described by Dídac Pujol in this way:

> Soler’s adaptation is not merely cut down to «three acts» (48 pages in all), while this longest of Shakespeare’s tragedies contains five acts. It features alterations in form (the entire work is written in verse), modifications of plot (in the end Hamlet lives and accedes to the throne) and the omission of all female characters (neither Ofelia nor the Queen appear in their roles). (Pujol 2007: 33-34)

At any rate, the oldest «version» is an adaptation, published in 1878 by Víctor Balaguer under the title Las esposallas de la morta (a retelling of an 1849 tragedy of his own) and he «adapts» Romeu i Julieta —reducing, as Pere Farrés shows, the original Shakespeare by one-fourth: «scene 5, act 3; fragments of all five scenes in act 4; and the last, scene 3, act 5.» (FARRÉS 2001: 15).

This adaptation was in turn parodied—as was typical of Catalan theater at the time—in Las ventallas de la porta (1881), by Josep M. Codolosa. There is an older parody as well, Otello il moro de Valenzia, by a now-forgotten Abelard Coma, which opened in 1873, published in 1874 and republished in 1896 and 1902. This same work was once again parodied in 1884 by Antoni Ferrer and Alfred Pallardó in Otel·lo o il moro di... (adding in the name of the location at each performance), written in an Italianized Catalan.

Parodies aside, Shakespeare was a favorite among Catalan writers and literary buffs. Translations continued to appear in magazines and books, and above all, there were series featuring Shakespeare only—a trend still going strong today—

10. It is undoubtedly because of such manipulation that Masriera, in the prologue to his translation, lashed out against «traitors» and «the unscrupulous» who modify the original texts.
the first of which was the «Biblioteca Popular dels Grans Mestres» (1907-1910), numbering sixteen titles, several by writers and translators of note (Salvador Vilaregut, Josep Carner, Josep Farran i Mayoral, Joan Puig i Ferreter).11

**The turn at the turn of the century**

As will be seen in the annexed list, things begin to step up at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not only in terms of numbers (slowly at first) but also in terms of quality. Recall here the above mentioned «Biblioteca dels Grans Mestres». Furthermore, and importantly, most translators coming on the scene assert that their translations are direct, signaling a new and growing awareness in the practice of translation. In magazines of Modernista tendency —prevailing in literary circles during the first decade of the century— English-language works are still fairly few: some by authors already known, such as Poe, and some by others accomplished but newly arrived such as Kipling, Whitman and Ruskin. Separately, there appear also three books by the latter: *Fragments* and *Natura*, translation care of Cebrià Montoliu, and *Els lliris del jardí de la reina*, translated by his brother Manuel de Montoliu. Cebrià, who dropped the family’s aristocratic particle *de*, had a good grasp of English and was widely read in English-language literature. It was he also who introduced Catalonia, by way of his translations, to turn-of-the-century urban thought in English, in addition to penning works by Shakespeare, Emerson and Whitman in Catalan, not to mention his book *Walt Whitman: l’home i sa tasca* (1913). In 1920 he went to the United States, where he lived until his death in Albuquerque in 1923. He is an interesting case for many reasons, and unfortunately it has not been duly examined. His brother Manuel, well-known critic and philologist, translated works from several languages; from English: Wilde, Dickens and Hawthorne; and he wrote one of the most remarkable essays on translation to appear in Catalonia during the first decade of the century —a key to understanding the theoretical and practical shift that occurs in Catalan translation during the Modernista period.12

The Montoliu brothers would suffice to illustrate the move forward: with their solid grounding in both English and Catalan, they introduce new English-language authors and, furthermore, generate important theoretical reflection on translation, which had drawn little scholarly attention in Catalonia.

Another noteworthy translation appeared at the hand of Reus-born Miquel Ventura i Balanyà: Byron’s *Manfred*. Ventura worked as a professor in Madrid

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11. There are other translations, unpublished, listed in the works by Buffery (2007) and Pujol (2007).
12. These were presented at the Primer Congrés Internacional de la Llengua Catalana in 1906 under the title «Moviment assimilista de la literatura catalana en els temps moderns. Conveniencia de que’s fassin moltes traduccions i esment ab que cal fer-les» and published in 1908; they can be read in modern spelling in the anthology by Bacardí, Fontcuberta and Parcerisas (1998: 37-43). This anthology also includes the prologue by Cebrià Montoliu to his translation *La tragèdia de Macbeth* (1908), on pages 49-55. On the importance of translation in the shaping of the new literary Catalan in the early twentieth century and the role of the Montoliu brothers, see Malé (2007).
(and also for a time at Cornell University) and wrote a curious Catalan spelling guide based on etymology (known as the «H’s» guide or the «Micheliana»). Also worthy of note is the work of Rafael Patxot i Jubert, whose contribution lies in essays and who translated Lord Avebury, and also introduced, thanks to his anthology Prosadors nord-americans (1908), a number of authors who had not yet appeared in Catalan. Unfortunately, many texts were still coming out at that time without translators’ names.

During the early years of the twentieth century, despite a number of popular series devoted to the theater, English-language playwrights were only visible —and even then only barely— in the «Biblioteca De Tots Colors». There were, however, plays published in series that included all literary genres such as the «Biblioteca Popular de L’Avenç», as well as a series devoted solely to Shakespeare in spite of its title, «Biblioteca Popular dels Grans Mestres».

In any event, as mentioned earlier, it is clear that English-language writers in Catalan moved significantly onto the scene during the first decade of the century. English-language literature would nevertheless lag behind other European literatures —French, German, Russian— of stronger tradition in Catalonia. During the twenties, it would work its way up into second position, after French. By then much had changed. The reasons for the delay in the full-fledged entry of English-language literature onto the Catalan literary landscape have yet, it seems, to be examined thoroughly. Surely the reasons are many and elusive. It is not just that in the nineteenth-century educational system only French and classical languages were to be found, and so, strange though it seem today, it was normal that educated persons knew no English. And much more: the French influence was very strong in Hispanic literatures and culture, weighing heavy in the education of the intellectual elite who, furthermore, tended to absorb literature produced by other cultures through French. Nor was the influence of German culture of small import, often by way of France as well. It should also be kept in mind that important names in English-language literature had been translated into Spanish, especially nineteenth-century novelists. Further, it drew little interest from critics. Nor would there be, until the twentieth century, translators sufficiently steeped in English language and literature to meet the challenges of literary translation. Still, the major obstacle was surely that the Catalan literary market was ill-prepared to sustain a sufficiently diverse production of published translations.

References


Annex: List of translations

Tr.= translation
N.tr. = no translator’s name given
B.= Barcelona

a) Periodical publications\(^1\) and texts in books


— «En Ricard Pobre». In: *Prosadors nord-americans*, 92-105. [*The Way to Wealth*, previously translated and published as *Lo camí de la fortuna*].


**Hawthorne, Nathaniel.** «Un rajolí de la Bomba de la vila». In: *Prosadors nord-americans*, 118-129.


— «Colomb a Barcelona». In: *Prosadors nord-americans*, 11-16.

— «La vida rural a Anglaterra». In: *Prosadors nord-americans*, 106-117.


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13. Unless indicated otherwise, the magazines and newspapers are from Barcelona.
b) Separate books and opuscules


sa, 15 p. [Republished in B. in 1896 in «Biblioteca de Lo Teatro Regional» and in 1902 by Imprenta de F. Badia].


c) Series

«Biblioteca del Diari Català» (1879-1881)

Barcelona

1] Darwin, Charles (1879-1881). Viatje d’un naturalista al rededor del mon, fet a bordo del barco «Lo Lebrer» (The Beagle) desde 1831 á 1836. B.: Diari Català. The book was published in 46 press sheets, numbering a total of 368 pages, featuring only 17 of the work’s original 21 chapters since the newspaper was discontinued before its completion. The first sheet dates from 26 May 1879, the last between April and May 1881.


«Novelas Catalanas y Extrangeras» (serial supplement in La Renaixensa) (1892-1902)

Barcelona


«Biblioteca de Lo Teatro Regional» (1892?-1902?)

Barcelona


«Biblioteca de La Talia Catalana» (1898-1899)

Barcelona


Serial supplement in La Veu de Catalunya (1899-?)

Barcelona

Cronway, Hugh [pseudonym for John Frederick Fargus] (1899). De las tenebras a la llum. [N.tr.] From no. 21 (22-01-1899) to no. 89 (01-04-1899). 297 p.


Cronway, Hugh [pseudonym for John Frederick Fergus] (1899). *Las raixes de sort.* [N.tr.] From no. 172 (23-06-1899) to no. 185 (06-07-1899). 103 p. [Numbering of this and the previous narrative is continuous: from p. 1 to p. 128].


Harte, Bret (1899). *Miggles.* [N.tr.] From no. 333 (1-12-1899) to no. 355 (23-12-1899). 33 p. [This and the previous two narratives feature continuous numbering: from p. 1 to p. 136].


**Publicació Joventut (1901-1907)**

**Barcelona**

Ruskin, John (1903). *Natura.* [aplech d’estudis y descripcions de sas bellesas / triats d’entre las obras de John Ruskin ; traduhits del inglés y ordenats per Cebrià Montoliú]. Tr. and prologue by Cebrià Montoliu. 246 p.

Spencer, Herbert (1905). *L’home contra l’Estat [The man versus the state].* Prologue by Trinitat Monegal. [The cover and title page read «Traducció catalana» and, below, «Prologue by Trinitat Monegal»: nowhere is it clear that the translation is his]. 212 p.

**«Bibliotheca Foc Nou» (1905)**

**Reus**


**«Biblioteca Popular de l’Avenç» (1903-1915)**

**Barcelona**


«Biblioteca d’El Poble Català» (1906-1910)

**Barcelona**


«Biblioteca Popular dels Grans Mestres» (1907-1910)

**Barcelona**


«Biblioteca De Tots Colors» (1908-1913)

**Barcelona**

Poe, Edgar Allan (1908). *Cor delator* [monologue, excerpt from a narrative]. Adaptation by A. Albert Torrellas. 13 p. [Republished, perhaps the same year, in the same series].

Timmory, Gabriel (1909). *L’agricultor de Xicago* [comedy in two acts, adaptation of a short story by Mark Twain]. Tr. by Santiago Folch and Pere Rettmeyer. 67 p. [Republished in 1933 in the series «L’Escena Catalana»].