

Anglophony in the Argentine Context from the Río de la Plata: Intercultural Configurations during the XIX and XXI Centuries

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Abstract

This paper is part of the research project “Anglophony in the Río de la Plata: intercultural spaces and expressions within the society”. It works with the concepts of intercultural philosophy, cultural configuration and considers the role of Anglophony and translation in the context of the province of Buenos Aires. Among the texts in its corpus are Cunninghame Graham’s: “La pulpería” (1900) and Hudson’s *Idle Days in Patagonia* (1893). These texts according to Graham-Yooll in *The Forgotten Colony* (1999), are the first manifestations of Anglo-Argentine or “Southamericana” literature (1999:205). They will be studied together with more recent expressions: the electronic publications, namely, *Buenos Aires Review* and *Tenso Diagonal*. We aim at comparing and contrasting the above-mentioned intercultural manifestations, analysing how they show

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anglophony, what role the translation process plays, and based on such analysis, defining the intercultural configuration wherein said manifestations originate.

Keywords: Anglophony, translation, intercultural configuration, literature.

Introduction

Anglophony has shaped the lives of the inhabitants of the Río de la Plata since the early nineteenth century. Immigrants or travellers from English-speaking countries, especially Ireland and Britain, journeyed to this place bringing their language and culture, and in many cases using their mother tongue as a means of expression, but incorporating aspects and themes typical of Argentina into their discourse.

This work is part of the research project “Anglophony in the Río de la Plata: Intercultural Spaces and Expressions in the Urban Fabric.” It will establish a comparison and contrast between a corpus of texts produced in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries considering the concepts of cultural configuration, intercultural philosophy, anglophony, and translation.

The corpus to be analysed consists of works from the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They are the short story "La Pulpería" (1900) by Robert Cunninghame Graham and *Idle Days in Patagonia* (1893) by William Henry Hudson. These texts will be contrasted with more recent expressions in electronic publications, such as "*The Buenos Aires Review*," a bilingual digital magazine, and "*Tenso Diagonal*," a trilingual digital magazine on theory, criticism, and creation about literatures, cultures, and border communities. Our purpose is to delve into the realm of cultural configurations shaped by the urban context in which we live and analyse the role these literary texts characterized by anglophony and anglicisms play, as well as the role of translation.

Theoretical framework

To approach the study of the aforementioned works, we will use the following theoretical methodologies: cultural configuration, intercultural philosophy, and translation. Before delving into these concepts, it is important to define the concept of anglophony. The RAE (Royal Spanish Academy) defines the adjective “anglophone” as referring to a person or country in which English is the native language, while anglicisms are defined as the use of English words or phrases present in different languages, in our case, Rioplatense Spanish. This defines the variety of Spanish spoken in the Rio de la Plata area in South America.

Cultural configuration

Alejandro Grimson defines the concept of cultural configuration in *Los Límites de la Cultura* (2015). According to Grimson, a cultural configuration can be defined as a space composed of the articulation of fields of possibility, a logic of interrelation among parts, and shared symbolic frameworks (verbal, auditory, and visual languages), power inequalities, and historicity (2015:172). Through this concept, the author aims to emphasize the heterogeneity and situational nature that result in a particular and unique reflection. In a cultural configuration, conflicts unfold in a language "capable" of being recognized by different actors.

Among the components of these configurations, we can mention fields of possibility, the first constitutive element, which includes possible, impossible, and hegemonic representations, practices, and institutions. The second constitutive element is the logic of interrelation among parts; according to Grimson (2015:173), this constitutive heterogeneity expresses pluralities. The third element is a shared symbolic framework: auditory, verbal, and visual languages that compete for mutual understanding or confrontation. In it, the principles of (di)vision of the world imply the existence of heterogeneity that enables or disables subject positions and enunciation places. The fourth and final constitutive element of cultural configurations relates to the space and shared frameworks that enable this interaction.

Intercultural philosophy

This philosophy, proposed by Raul Fonet Betancourt in “Teoría y praxis de la filosofía intercultural” (2010) and “Tareas y propuestas de la Filosofía intercultural” (2009), advocates for the reconstruction of a temporally pluralistic universality, built upon intercultural dialogue as a mechanism to enrich the world. Its working methodology is characterized by diversity both in terms of methodological perspectives and theoretical approaches, as well as in the forms of practical articulation with respective contextual realities (2009:7).

Built upon intercultural dialogue, it enables the expansion of the world, and as contextualized philosophizing, it allows for the discovery of the universal within a horizon of co-dignification that can affirm the normative conviction of intercultural dialogic encounter (2010:13). Theory and praxis are mutually reinforcing correlates, aiming to promote fruitful dialogue to contribute to philosophy's enhancement as knowledge that aids the improvement of realities (2010:20). This intercultural philosophy recognizes contexts as places that provide a space for the world, as they are cultural places with life practices that establish ways of arranging and nurturing the world (2010:22), enabling a map of the world. These world places appear as "centres of world documentation" where world accomplishments are tested, justified, accredited, and identified (2010:22). By considering contextual diversity and the possibility of cultural plurality, one could contemplate communication about possible universals shared within and from differences (2010), fostering the search for universality that grows from the curiosity to know what is shared with others or strangers, to recognize the common ground that identifies us as humans beyond the contextual community that documents us as such (2010:23).

Translation

Translation is a term that carries significant conceptual complexity, making it challenging to define. Its definition revolves around a constant dichotomy: process vs. product. Moreover, translation holds ethical-political importance tied to the construction, transformation, or disruption

(discontinuity, rupture) of relationships, involving moral obligations from both the sender and the receiver. The representation of translation yields sociocultural effects and serves as a tool through which individuals envision their connection with a specific national and international community. While initially regarded as a rhetorical and definitive means of conveying messages between cultures, today it is recognized as a discursive practice unveiling multiple signs of the versatility with which these cultures are constructed.

Edwin Gentzler, in his book *Translation and Identity in the Americas: New Directions in Translation Theory* (2008), notes that postcolonial and deconstructionist theories applied to the Americas are crucial tools for opening discussions not only about the history of national language policies but also about emerging concepts of identity that are undeniably intertwined with languages. According to Gentzler, the history of translation is the history of identity formation, deeply rooted in the psyche of millions (1). By analysing this new paradigm of thought in the realm of translation, one can grasp its significance for individuals in multilingual societies. Translation is not a secondary or marginal activity; instead, it is a liberating endeavour that stimulates innovation and integration as it aligns with diverse cultural narratives and linguistic independence.

Literary corpus

The academic-literary corpus is primarily comprised of texts identified by Graham-Yooll in "The Forgotten Colony" (1999) as part of the "Southamericana" literary movement. This author defines the movement as the texts produced by Anglo-Argentine writers, those who have a "no single culture, they are part of at least two, may be more." (1999:205) The texts to be analysed are Robert Cunninghame Graham's "La Pulpería" and William Henry Hudson's *Idle Days in Patagonia*.

Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham - "La Pulpería" (in *Thirteen Stories*, 1900)

Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham (1852-1936) was a Scottish politician, writer, journalist, and adventurer. He first visited Argentina at the age of 17, working on a ranch in the southern

province of Buenos Aires dedicated to cattle farming. He excelled as a rider, took an interest in the gaucho figure, fought against indigenous peoples, and was even forced to participate in a revolution. He used terms from the Rio de la Plata dialect variety that were challenging for Spanish-speaking audiences to comprehend. He never wrote novels, preferring instead to craft brief and descriptive narratives about the world around him, which can be seen as reflections of his travel experiences, according to Laurence Davies in his article "Cunninghame Graham's South American Sketches" (2018).

For this project, we focus on the tale "La Pulpería," part of the collection of texts included in the book "Thirteen Stories," published by Heinemann in 1900. This anthology comprises sketches, scenes from the countries he visited, and accounts of his travel memories. The Spanish publisher Renacimiento released a translation of the mentioned story collection in 2006 by Flores Espinoza. In their review of the work and the author, Robert Cunninghame Graham is described as a fascinating mystery, and his adventure tales are presented as possessing the "true Cervantine touch of a man who has seen what he narrates."

William Henry Hudson - *Idle Days in Patagonia* (1893)

William Henry Hudson (1841-1922), Argentina's most original naturalist, is one of the most notable English-language writers in our country. He was born on August 4, 1841, the fourth child of Daniel Hudson and Carolina Augusta Kimble, who arrived in the Rio de la Plata from the United States in 1833. At that time, they settled in the Quilmes district, which is now the Guillermo Enrique Hudson Provincial Historical Museum.

At the age of thirty-two, Hudson established himself in Great Britain and began his career as a writer. Hudson's most cherished works are the stories inspired by his American period: "Allá lejos y tiempo atrás" (Acantilado, 2004), and his novels "La tierra purpúrea" (Acantilado, 2004) and "Mansiones verdes" (Acantilado, 2006). As a naturalist and ornithologist, he left behind a substantial bibliography. Although he was Argentine, Hudson wrote twenty-four works in English that were translated into various languages such as Japanese, Spanish, and French.

From his early childhood years spent in the Argentine pampas, Hudson forged a special relationship with nature, especially with birds. When he had the opportunity to visit Patagonia in 1871, it appeared to him as a sublime space, which is reflected in the text at hand. Hudson writes “At last Patagonia! How often had I pictured in imagination, wishing with an intense longing to visit this solitary wilderness” (1893: 4). As Eva Lencina points out in her article "Ocio en un país imaginario. Identidad, alteridad y cuestiones genéricas en *Idle Days in Patagonia* (1893)" (2021), Hudson published this text based on notes and youthful memories from a journey he had undertaken in the late 1870s through territories adjacent to the Río Negro. The book consists of fourteen chapters and was illustrated by Alfred Hartley, published by Chapman & Hall in London in 1893. Decades later, it was translated into Spanish and reissued by various publishers.

These two texts from the nineteenth will be compared and contrasted with two digital publications from the twenty-first century presented below.

The Buenos Aires Review

It is a bilingual (English and Spanish) digital publication that showcases the finest and latest works from both emerging and established writers across the Americas. Among its offerings, one can discover texts of poetry, fiction, essays, cultural criticism, visual arts, and interviews. The cosmopolitan editorial team, which includes Heather Cleary, Jennifer Croft, Pola Oloixarac, Maxine Swann, Martín Felipe Castagnet, among others, is deeply interested in linguistic skills, dedicating a section titled "Translator's Notes" to translation projects.

Among the texts one can find there, we mention, by way of example, a fragment from the novel "Cardenio" by Carlos Gamerro, poems by Martín Gambarotta translated into English by Alexis Almeida, an interview with Junot Díaz conducted by Karen Cresci, with the intriguing title "We exist in a constant state of translation. We just don't like it." This is merely a glimpse of the content this publication offers.

Tenso Diagonal

This magazine is a trilingual electronic publication (Spanish, English, Portuguese) with an annual frequency. Its themes cover a wide spectrum of topics: theory, criticism, and creation about literatures, cultures, and border communities. It defines itself as a space that aims to contribute to the construction of social, humanistic, and artistic knowledge through the publication of works that pursue academic rigor and originality, aiming at reflection and pluralistic debate. Likewise, the magazine includes sections dedicated to opinion, document recovery, interviews, creative works related to literature and visual arts, and bibliographic reviews. It has a policy of open access to all the articles it contains.

The magazine contains the following sections: Manifesto (editorial/opinion), Usurped Territories (dossier), Zone of Cleavage (miscellaneous section), Centrifugal Dialogues (interviews and conversations), Exhumations (documentary recovery), Liminal Entropies (personal creations), and Transversal Notes (review and criticism). Both its editorial team and academic committee are composed of prestigious Latin American scholars.

Analysis

In this analysis, we aim to characterize the cultural configurations and the role that translation plays in the contexts in which the previously presented texts and publications are situated.

Publications from the 19th and 20th centuries

The first work to address is that of Cunningham Graham. The writer begins his narrative "La Pulpería" as follows:

“It may have been the Flor de Mayo, Rosa del Sur, or Tres de Junio, or again but have been known as the Pulperia upon the Huesos, or the

Esquina on the Napostá. But let its name have been what chance or the imagination of some Neapolitan or Basque had given it, I see it, and seeing it, dismounting, fastening my “redomon” to the palenque, enter, loosen my facón, feel if my pistol is in its place, and calling out “Carlón,” receive my measure of strong, heady red Spanish wine in a tin cup.” (p. 165).

The inclusion of Spanish terms and phrases, starting with the very title, imparts a distinct character to the narrative. The names bring us closer to this “pulpería” (a shop in which groceries, drinks and diverse articles can be bought, usually located in suburban rural areas) and to others as well. Terms like “facón” (a type of personal knife used for many kinds of rural activities) are included without translation, and there's also a cultural reference to a thick and strong red wine called “Carlón.”

The author provides a perfect depiction of the pulpería, as can be seen in the following quote:

“Outside, the tracks led through the biscacheras, all converging after the fashion of the rails at a junction; at the palenque before the door stood horses tied by strong raw-hide cabrestos, hanging their heads in the fierce sun, shifting from leg to leg, whilst their companions, hobbled, plunged about, rearing themselves on their hind-legs to jump like kangaroos.” (p. 167).

Hudson and Cunninghame Graham are closely connected not only through their works, but also through their mutual admiration. *Idle Days in Patagonia* was published in 1893, when Hudson was already residing in Great Britain. Through its symbolic narrative, the book portrays Patagonia as a place of mystery and enchantment for an English-speaking audience. Narrated in the first person, the text invites the reader to accompany the narrator on that adventurous journey:

“The wind had blown a gale all night, and I had been hourly expecting, that the tumbling, storm-vexed old steamer in which I had taken passage to the Rio Negro would turn over once for all and settle down beneath

that tremendous tumult of waters.” (p. 1).

The story about an iconic place in Argentina stands as the representation of a plausible space; however, the symbolic plots are only shared by the English-speaking world in which Hudson resides at that moment.

This text becomes known to Spanish-speaking audiences much later than the publication of the original English version. The text appears in a Spanish translation (which does not list the translator's name) only in the year 2006, published in digital format by the Virtual Universal Library. Subsequently, in 2007, it was translated by J. Hubert for Ediciones Continente, and there have been more recent versions like the one from Carminalucis publishing house in Buenos Aires, in 2022.

"La Pulpería," and *Idle Days in Patagonia* are works originally written and published in English, with their translations emerging many years after their release. This leads us to think that they were created for an English-speaking or bilingual audience. The cultural configuration proposed by these texts can be said to present a practical and possible representation of the Patagonian and Pampas territories, in the case of Cunninghame Graham's narrative. If we analyse the logic of interrelation among the parts, the heterogeneity is clear: Argentine author's, Hudson, and the foreigner, Cunninghame Graham's writing about the same territory, Patagonia and the Pampas. While Hudson writes, in his native language, English, Cunninghame Graham uses code switching. It's worth noting that despite being born in Argentina, Hudson was residing in Great Britain when he wrote this narrative. The symbolic plot shared by these narratives is facilitated by a language recognized by different authors, English, and by the visual language that illustrates two of the texts. However, the inclusion of Spanish words and expressions allows the work of Cunninghame Graham to also visualize Argentina through the use of language. This frequent code-switching in the narratives shows features of an Argentine identity that materializes in language. In Cunninghame Graham's particular case, he not only describes the customs of a 19th-century pulpería but also includes elements that allow the reader to understand the historical context and the political conflict between the supporters of Rosas and Urquiza. Throughout his narrative, this author acknowledges the accomplishments of the world, conveys cultural experiences, marking

not only differences but seeking the intertwined aspects shared with the other, the stranger. Beyond the contextual community to which one belongs, intercultural dialogue is promoted, which generates ways of knowing and recognizing our world while enabling communication about possible shared universals. Lastly, the space in which these texts emerge is initially Great Britain, which, as already mentioned, would later be translated, and read in other parts of the world, in addition to the place that inspired them.

21st Century publications

In the selected 21st-century publications, it can be observed that cultural configurations and the role of translation have changed compared to what was analysed with works from the 19th and 20th centuries. In these new publications, the aim is to reach a broader audience and thereby make the works even more visible and accessible. Consequently, translations are carried out simultaneously or shortly after the original publication. We deduce, then, that translation plays a fundamental role in achieving this purpose.

For example, when accessing *The Buenos Aires Review* website, one can choose to access the Spanish or English version. In this digital publication, when a translated text is presented, the translator's name is mentioned, and there's a special section called "Translator's Notes" that gives special attention to the art of translation.

In the case of the trilingual publication *Tenso Diagonal*, one can opt to navigate the website in any of the three languages (Spanish, English, or Portuguese). However, the language of the texts cannot be chosen; only the abstracts are published in all three languages. Most of the contents are in Spanish or Portuguese. English appears in abstracts of academic works, for instance, "El discurso fantástico como instrumento subversivo en dos cuentos de Francisco Tario: 'El mico' y 'Entre tus dedos helados'" by Mariana Moreira, or in the poems of Sami Miranda translated by Virginia Frade (Volume twelve of the publication).

We wonder what kind of cultural configuration these digital publications present. In the case of *The Buenos Aires Review*, it' is a platform that shows various possible texts from contemporary

authors. They express themselves with a logic of heterogeneous interaction that provides access to different audiences: English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, or bilingual. The symbolic plot is evident in the two languages that constitute the publication. It can be concluded that this facilitates a smooth interaction through shared spaces and plots, and it's open to users with competencies in both languages. It can be noted that this publication is entirely intercultural, not only in its content but also in its expression, and it's built on intercultural dialogue, allowing for the enrichment of the world, as interculturality considers that different places in the world become centres of world documentation.

Regarding *Tenso Diagonal* this publication displays a field of possibilities that shows diverse potential texts from contemporary academics. This writing includes a section named "Entropías Liminares" for works of fiction. It expresses an interaction logic that is not entirely heterogeneous. It is a trilingual publication, in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. However, access to general information about the publication and some of its contents is available only in one of these languages. Translations of their articles or fiction narratives are not found; only abstracts of some are available in two languages.

Conclusions

Formulating a definition of cultural configuration that encompasses the texts presented in the corpus is not an easy task. On one hand, those published in the 19th century, "La Pulpería" and *Idle Days in Patagonia*, present a similar cultural configuration in terms of the heterogeneity of elements in the field of possibility and the logic of interaction. However, there are differences concerning the symbolic plot. Hudson, for instance, uses the English language throughout his narrative, with the obvious inclusion of place names and locations in Spanish. On the other hand, Cunninghame Graham imparts a more authentic touch to his discourse by including proper names, words, phrases, and idioms from the gaucho culture in their original language. While this code-switching adds difficulty for the English-speaking reader, for whom the text is intended, it also makes it more genuine. This approach manifests an identity that enriches not only the narrative but also its representation of the Argentine territory.

The 21st-century digital publications represent a different type of cultural configuration. In the case of *The Buenos Aires Review*, it can be described as an intercultural configuration. Its field of possibility comprises various possible texts from contemporary authors, and they express themselves with a logic of heterogeneous interaction that enables access to different audiences: English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, or bilingual. The entire symbolic plot is evident in the two languages that constitute the publication. Therefore, it can be said that this digital publication facilitates a seamless interaction through shared spaces and plots and is open to users proficient in both languages.

The similar yet heterogeneous contexts presented by Hudson and Cunninghame Graham reflect their unique way of situating themselves in the world. Together with the contribution of *The Buenos Aires Review*, they show that the task of intercultural philosophy is to reconstruct dialogue from a pluralistic universality that allows for the enlargement of the world. The consideration of contextual diversity enables us to open to the possibility of discovering shared universals from differences, marking the path of philosophy from a pluralistic orientation that allows for a more universal and fruitful worldview and experience.

On the other hand, there is also a difference in terms of the role of translation. In the 19th century, it seems that translation of the type of works analysed was not a considered variable, so they were only published in their original language, limiting the reach of the work to a specific audience. This is the case for the works of Cunninghame Graham and Hudson, which were translated and published in other languages many years after their original publication. It is only in the 20th century, particularly in the second half, that translation becomes a kind of bridge, a link between cultures, which allows many audiences to access those works. This is clearly reflected in the 21st-century digital publication, *The Buenos Aires Review*, which simultaneously publishes works in their original language and their translation into Spanish or English (as appropriate) to reach the widest possible readership.

In conclusion, there is much more to explore regarding the roles that languages and translation play in these intercultural contexts. The 19th century, illustrated here by Hudson's text, depicts

translation as an essential tool for accessing it. Cunninghame Graham's text, on the other hand, with its distinct characteristics, unveils the Argentine reality it depicts using code-switching and, of course, requires translation to reach a Spanish-speaking audience. Contrary to our expectations, we notice that one of the selected 21st-century digital publications does not fully employ translation to facilitate the reading of their diverse corpus of texts.

Hence, we uphold the significance of adopting the new paradigm of thought in the field of translation, especially in multilingual societies, which views translation as a liberating activity that stimulates innovation and integration. It is in these intercultural configurations that construct maps of the world where realizations of the world are tested, justified, accredited, and identified, making a new way of thinking about translation indispensable.

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