

# Two sides of 'inculturation': A double bind

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## Response to Anthony Pym and Gayatri Spivak

In this paper, I respond to the presentations by Anthony Pym and Gayatri Spivak delivered at the Nida Research Seminar held at the College Board in New York City on September 14, 2012. Pym's paper was titled 'On Inculturation' and discussed the concept from the view of Pope John Paul II, in which he referred to 'inculturation' as 'the incarnation of the Gospel in autonomous cultures' and 'the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church' (1985, 11). Pym complicated this conception of inculturation by tracing the complex translation history and twentieth-century Persian reception of a popular novel *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*, believed to be written by James Morier and first published in English in 1823. Spivak's paper 'Gender and Translation in the Global Utopia' looked at contemporary scholarship on globalization and utopia, which often invoke concepts of gender and translation to point the way toward achieving economic and gender equality. Spivak then turned to third world women barely touched by the forces of globalization, the subaltern still outside of systems of equivalence, and lastly infants as they first experience language, before symbolic systems become ingrained, to check the validity of such utopian notions (see summaries provided).

I work in cultural studies and translation, so the focus upon concept of 'inculturation,' while not literally invoking that specific term, has been the central concern for this branch of the field since its inception in the early 1990s. Those who have taken the cultural turn in translation studies—Bassnett, Lefevere, Trive-

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from Vanderbilt University and has taught translation at universities in Holland, England, and the USA. Before joining the faculty at UMass, Gentzler was an administrator for the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. He is the author of *Translation and Identity in the Americas* (2008) and *Contemporary Translation Theories* (1993), which was updated and revised in 2001 and has been translated into Italian, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Arabic, and Persian. Gentzler coedited (with Maria Tymoczko) the anthology *Translation and Power* (2002). His research interests include translation theory, literary translation, and postcolonial theory. He serves as coeditor with Susan Bassnett of the Topics in Translation Series for *Multilingual Matters*, is a member of the Advisory Board of several journals, including *Cadernos de Tradução*, *Across*, *Metamorphoses*, *Journal of Chinese Translation Studies*, and *The Massachusetts Review*. Gentzler serves on *translation's* editorial board.

di, Simon, Cronin, and Venuti—have turned to cultural studies scholars—the Marxists, feminists, deconstructionists, and postcolonial scholars—to supplement descriptive theories and access tools to help not just describe translations, but also *explain* how and why translations gain inroads into various cultures. The goal is not to further categorize (no matter how large computer memories/inventories grow), but rather to enter into the complex contradictions and ambiguities of translation and to include *all* translational activities, no matter how minute, marginal, lesser-known, or different, including exceptions as well as the norms. This is why the advisory board to the new journal *translation* has such a diverse array of scholars, including philosophers, historians, linguists, comparatists, semioticians, anthropologists, theologians, liberation theologians, and first and third world scholars. To be frank, translation studies, with its emphasis on empirical studies, scientific discourses, universal norms, and computer generated corpora, does not go far enough nor has it provided scholars with the array of tools necessary to investigate translations in this complex, postmodern, post-structural, or as Stefano Arduini and Siri Nergaard phrase it in their introduction to the new journal, 'post-translation studies' age (2011, 8).

In his talk, I find that Anthony Pym is absolutely right in suggesting that the Nida Institute, as a major representative of Bible translation and the Protestant Church, has vested interests as they (re)enter the field of translation studies with its new journal *translation* at this time and place. I also suggest that Gayatri Spivak is absolutely right to play the gender and subaltern cards, showing how universalizing, globalizing discourses limit and marginalize alternative conceptions of both. Both scholars offer a productive critique of the field of translation studies.

This response will be divided into two parts, each discussing the two sides of 'inculturation':

1. A discussion of 'inculturation' in the sense that Anthony Pym uses the term, one derived from the Catholic Church. The prefix 'in' in this case refers 'to enter into,' 'to go in,' as in 'introduce,' 'induct,' 'inform,' 'inside.' Let me call this the visible side, or empirically discernible side of inculturation.

2. A discussion of 'inculturation' in the *opposite* sense, in the dialectical sense that Gayatri Spivak might use the term. The prefix 'in' in this case refers to 'not,' 'the opposite of,' or 'a turning away from,' as in 'insensitive,' 'insubordinate,' 'improper,' or 'infamous.' I might call this the invisible side, or anti-empirical side of the term.

The double bind of inculturation involves the problem that all translators face: all want their translations to inculturate, i.e., to be published, read, accepted, and gain inroads into any given culture; but simultaneously all translations leave out aspects, conform to certain prevailing worldviews, and cover-up certain details, leading to distortion and loss. In Spivak's talk, she referred to this double bind as the contradictory instructions experienced by every translator: culture must be/cannot be exchanged.

### *Questions for Anthony Pym*

I begin with a set of questions for Anthony Pym:

Is inculturation in its positivistic sense always associated with imperialism? What about 'Protestant' translation as protest against the Catholic Church translational policies?

Or Christian translation in the days of the Roman empire? Liberation theologians in Latin America?

What are the connections between the complex translation process of the novel *Hajji Baba* and the situation in North Africa today? Connections to the fall of the Berlin Wall in the late-1980s? The end of Apartheid in South Africa?

You have set up Omid Azadibougar (2010) as a foil, especially his belief that translating modernity is a threat to Persian culture. How prevalent is Azadibougar's view, and is this a representative case?

You implicate Christian institutions as well as many translation studies scholars with those colonizing and imperial forces behind the spread of modernity. Does dialogue imply collusion? Does collaboration suggest co-option?

### *Response to Anthony Pym*

After his introductory example of the 1905 Persian translation of the novel *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* as it shifted from English into French and later Persian, with a variety of linguistic and social contortions, Anthony Pym asks the question of how does modernity move—raising pertinent questions about how the science, technology, and philosophy that lie behind modernity are modified through translation. Is modernity translated by those industrialized powers in the north for imperialistic/nationalistic reasons? Or is it desired by the non-industrialized south and imported for purposes of economic, social, and political equality? Why have the Persians/Iranians turned to modernity? At what costs? These are certainly relevant questions, especially in light of the many changes in governments in Middle East and North African countries as he speaks. Both the Pym and Spivak papers strike me as much concerned with who writes the 'master' history and what happens to alternative histories. What happens to Arabic cultures and laws? What happens to tribal cultures and systems of justice? What happens to indigenous religions? What happens to women? If the master history is written by white, heterosexual, Christian, male capitalists, who or what is excluded? What happens to alternative constructions of society/gender/race?

Pym's answer to the questions of the movement of modern ideas and models is incomplete and necessarily contradictory, invoking a combination of national interests and individual agency—efforts by individual authors/editors/translators, a mingling of tears, armies stationed abroad, access to technology and the media. In the case of *Hajji Baba*, it was invoked by the London publishing house and its commercial/national interests as well as a former major in the British military stationed in Calcutta who acted as an editor.

Pym uses the term 'inculturation' in a positivistic sense, as coined/adopted by Pope John Paul II in 1985, to refer to how the Catholic Church envisions the service of translation to their mission, making religious inroads into a culture: in-culturation; in-carnation, in-gestation, in-stallation. The choice is a perfect topic for this research seminar and well represents the first wave of those scholars who have taken the cultural turn: Which texts are selected for translation and by whom? How are they translated? What forms of collaboration exist between publishers and translators? Between governments and publishers?

How can a translator resist collusion? How do translated texts enter a new culture? Who buys them? Reads them? Reviews them? How do we measure the success of a translation? What are the broader cultural repercussions? These questions Pym raises in his talk well reflect the cultural turn in the field during the past two decades.

Of recent, translation studies has moved into the post-translation phase. Newer questions include: What are the cultural and institutional influences in a cultural beyond its reception? What are the influences in non-linguistic and literary fields? In art? Architecture? What are the social, political, and religious ramifications? Scholars working in this area include Sherry Simon, who in *Translating Montreal* (2006) looks at the repercussions of translation in cities such as Montreal, on creative writing, art, architecture, even urban design. In her newest book *Cities in Translation* (2011), she does much the same for Calcutta, Trieste, and Barcelona. In *Translation and Globalization* (2003), Michael Cronin discusses the impact of globalization on both majority and minority cultures. In *Representing Others: Translation, Ethnography, and the Museum* (2007), Kate Sturge discusses translation and ethnography and their influence on museums. In *The Translator as Writer* (2007), Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush focus upon the impact of translation on creative writing. Marxists and feminists have discovered translation, too, including Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, who in *Contingency, Hegemony, and Universality* (2000) suggest that dominate discourses need to be altered via translation in order to admit 'foreign' vocabulary into their lexicons (2000, 168).

This new wave of scholarship adds new dimensions to translation studies, which is why we founded the journal *translation*. One of my goals is to look more at the *pre-translation* studies culture that gives rise to translational activity, and the post-translation studies effects of the cultural environment on creative writing, art, architecture, politics, education, and social behavior. What we are finding is that translation is more than a footnote in cultural evolution, but instead a major determining factor in cultural construction. My guess is that without a translational framework, there could be no American Revolution, no liberation movements in Latin America, no communist revolutions in Southeast Asia, no fall of the Berlin Wall in Germany, no quiet revolution in Canada, no end of Apartheid in South Africa, and no Arab Spring. In *Cities in Translation* (2012), Simon gives the allusion that without the fertile translational culture in Trieste during the early twentieth century, there would be no Joyce, without the dynamic multilingual pre-translation environment of Calcutta, no Tagore, without bilingual Prague, no Kafka. Which comes first, the revolution then the translation, or the translation, then the revolution? Which is more powerful, the pen or the sword? Translation is viewed as the pre-condition, the environmental foundation upon which all cultural constructions—creative writing, translation, art, architecture, streets, bridges, schools, and churches—are founded. I have argued in my work that translation is not something that happens between languages, but is *constitutive* of those very languages and cultures (Gentzler 2008, 5).

The goal in this forum is to discuss the idea that translation is not a subdiscipline of linguistics or comparative literature or any individual language, nor is it a set discipline in and of itself, nor a communication problem in any given church or other institutional hierarchy. Rather I suggest translation is the cultural condition underlying all language, something ingrained in the psyche of individuals, constitutional of their very identities within a

culture—a basis upon which their language, worldview, and gender derives. Yes, it has been appropriated and used by any number of institutions of power—churches, governments, universities, private presses—for specific ideological purposes. Cultural studies scholars are getting very good at describing such manipulations at work. The question remains as to how this process distorts, what has been left out, and what are the cultural repercussions of those absences?

Thus Gayatri Spivak's conception of gender in translation—gender and identity formed via a translational processes from infancy as one acquires language—concepts both with and still without cultural connotations—all suggest a process of translation that might be closer to our conception of the new journal. Let me turn briefly to Spivak's presentation.

### *Questions for Gayatri Spivak*

I continue with a set of questions for Gayatri Spivak:

Speaking of utopias, I can see a leveling of the plain in terms of economics—equal pay for equal work, especially in light of multinational capitalism. But if gender is a social construction, then I would guess that gender is constructed differently than economic systems. What are the dangers of translating such differences into some sort of global definition of gender equivalence?

The question of agency arises—the probing, mediating processes of both gendering and translation. If gender is a no-place (u-topia), if access to the original in translation is impossible, then how can a feminist translator proceed and what 'liberties' are permitted?

When you talk about the intimacy of translation or love in translation, you are moving from linguistic decoding and recoding to giving yourself over to other psychological, emotional, and spiritual connections and interconnections. Could you envision thinking about the translation of spiritual discourse as interrelated to your work? Benjamin's Judaism? Nida's Christianity? Tagore's Buddhism?

The question of history keeps arising—always historicize—undermining conceptions of utopias, gender, and translation. How does one go about unpacking those layers of hidden, encrypted, erroneous terms and concepts embedded in constructions of gender, in translation histories? Would the methodology be Derridian/Marxist/Foucauldian? What can be learned from the effort?

### *Response to Gayatri Spivak*

I don't have much to say about utopia, but as a preface to this section, let me say that as a graduate student in Berlin in the 1980s, before the fall of the Wall, I did become interested in a group of writers from Leipzig, Germany, who were all working in and around a series of seminars presented by Ernst Bloch, author of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (1954-59), and one of the leading utopian East German intellectuals of the period. I translated a number of the writers who attended those lectures and were infused with the communist hopes

in the early years of the East German experiment. Writers I translated included Volker Braun, Sarah and Reiner Kirsch, Helga Novak, and Elke Erb. There was hope in those days for building an ideal, non-capitalist state, with liberty and equality for workers and peasants, for women, children, students, and old folks. There was great skepticism at the time of all the industrial and technological 'advances' of the capitalist state. I assume that when Spivak refers to Utopian studies, she is referring to a Marxist, economic equality, fair wages and rights for workers and both genders, especially when applied to global markets. East Germany led the way at the time in terms of women's rights—equal pay, equal job opportunity, equal education, free or very low-cost day-care—and many women thrived, becoming doctors, lawyers, scientists, and creative writers.

But while Bloch's ideas, and the ideas of many from the Frankfurt School underlie much of my thinking about translation, in this contribution, I am less interested in such larger global generalizations, hopes, and aspirations, and I am more interested in micro-effects of translation in real world situations. I agree with Gayatri Spivak about Utopian studies' false promises. Yet the field of translation studies seems to have moved from the national to the global, and the generalizations about translation are getting broader and broader: Toury's 'universal' laws applied to non-European cultures, Venuti's theories about translation in the United States applied in China; German functional theories applied to South Africa; and gender theories in the West applied in Southeast Asia. I am more interested in micro-impact of translation in smaller geographical places and spaces: minorities within a nation; cities rather than nations; neighborhoods in cities, families in neighborhoods, and individuals within families. Thus, for example, Gayatri Spivak's translations of Mahasweta Devi and those stories about tribal groups and half-castes in the Bangla region of the Indian Northeast, as well as her open and intimate translation strategies interest me greatly.

As concepts of gender are abstract, so too are translation theories, often overly general, positing reified concepts of language, culture, and even of gender. They often focus on quite obvious and overt messages and linguistic features, ignoring the minutia, covert meanings, and double entendres. Critics of course, are much worse, often characterizing such play of language as awkward translations, or worse, as errors or mistakes. The problem is that the receiving language discourse—be it literary or non-literary—has its norms, conventions, fluencies, and expectations. That which does not fit, called by Venuti the 'remainder,' usually gets left out (1995, 216). Here I suggest the second meaning of 'inculturation' might be useful: the prefix 'in' in this case meaning 'not' or the 'opposite of' as in 'in-correct,' 'in-cognito,' or 'in-coherent.' The lexical variation in the English prefix leads to terms such as 'il-literate,' 'il-legible,' 'im-perfect,' or 'im-proper.' Gayatri Spivak, perhaps more than any other scholar, has addressed the issues of such misfirings, precisely those imperfect and improper translations. Two terms that she employs (not uncoincidentally derived from comparative literature studies) to deal with such cases are 'catachresis' and 'metalepsis.'

'Catachresis' is a Greek rhetorical term which literally translates to 'abuse.' In literary studies it has come to mean the *misapplication* of a word because of a *misapprehension* of its meaning, and is most often used in terms of a mixed metaphor. It also refers to the use of an existing word when there is *no name* for that word in the receiving language. Spivak uses the term in both senses, more often than not referring to political concepts such as na-

tion, democracy, sovereignty, citizenship, or secularism, which are invariably terms coined in colonial periods by imperialistic powers and are catachrestic in that they are misapplied in postcolonial situations, especially when questions of national autonomy, national language, language policy, and citizenship are being negotiated (Spivak 1993a, 13). In the reverse, for example, *'lo real maravilloso'*, translated into 'magic realism' in the North is a catachrestic term, a rewriting of a unique Latin American movement into Anglo-American English and its literary, social, and religious hidden imperialistic agendas (ibid.). In *Siting Translation* (1992), Tejaswini Niranjana has pointed out how British translators of Indian texts, reducing Hindu religious terms in a catachrestic fashion to Christian concepts and terms.

Spivak's translations of Mahasweta Devi (1995), an Indian woman in a new, 'decolonized nation' with many anxieties about the definitions of nation and citizenship and about the rights being foisted upon her, who turned to creative writing and political activism, well illustrate translation strategies that attempt to highlight exactly those cultural misfirings. The words with which we describe the problem are inadequate—'inculturation' in the Christian sense—to Devi's described situation. And when we add layers of subalternity and gender inequality to the already colonial/postcolonial improprieties, the case gets increasingly complicated, layered, and difficult to analyze. Indeed, Gayatri Spivak suggests that no terminology is adequate, that there are no models for representation, or, for that matter, translation (1993b, 49). Even feminist terminology and concepts, as derived in the West, are inadequate. My point here is that the women Devi describes in her fiction are *singular* women in *specific* situations. Definitions of the global or utopian do not apply. While Devi's characters' lives *are* touched by agents of globalization, including government men, business officials, landowners, and outside contractors, their actions and reactions to such forces are highly unique. Devi's point, and I think Spivak's as well, is to illustrate how estranging the utopias of modernization and globalization are in such particular instances of women's lives, how the terms of 'science', 'democracy', or 'individual rights' as goals aspired to in Western utopian constructions, are misnomers, invasive in their own way. The 'cure' is also a 'poison.' The 'solution' is already a 'dissolution.'

Catachresis works well on the synchronic level to help describe misfirings across a lateral border. But how does one diachronically describe such misfiring historically? Here I have found Spivak's concept 'metalepsis' useful (see Gentzler 2008, 183-4). 'Metalepsis' is a Greek rhetorical figure that refers to the substitution of one figure of speech for another, as in the translation of one metaphor for another, often with questionable accuracy. Cultural privileging of certain terms, concepts, modes of expression play a role. Western humanists invariably select and translate texts that conform to and support their worldview, vision, and forms, often utilizing tropes that continue to minimize the ideas and forms of expressions of women, minorities, gays, or tribal groups. In Western civilization, these tropes have been built one upon over time to the point that certain beliefs have become universalized and globalized. When Spivak uses the term 'metalepsis', she often is pointing out that an 'effect' (often some sort of belief of a universally superior idea or being) is being substituted for a 'cause' (often some sort of racial/gender/economic discrimination). In many cases the minority assimilates to the dominant culture or belief system and begins to accept, socially and mentally, the philosophical, literary, or religious explanation for the condition, thereby

reifying the ideological construct and losing sight of the complex causes. Those who study the Spanish or British colonization of the Americas, or the European colonization of Asia and Africa, are well aware of such colonizing processes; nevertheless it becomes very difficult to unpack such historical processes at work. To do so, I suggest that the oppositional meaning of 'inculturation' could be helpful—an undoing of the acculturative processes in order to reveal discriminatory translational practices at work.

Here the historical work of the translation studies scholar might be analogous to that of the psychotherapist: the goal is to strip away those decades of repression, avoidance, assimilation, acceptance, and rationalization, thereby reversing rational and positivistic translational forms and meanings to better access those past formative moments in which early memories and associations, insights and impressions became repressed. I have turned to Jean Laplanche and have suggested that his use of concepts such as 'de-translation' and 'dismantling' may help. In 'Psychoanalysis, Time, and Translation' (1992), Laplanche writes, 'In so far as the analytic method can be understood by the analogy with the process of translation, interpretation in terms of the past (infantile, archaic) is not a translation but a de-translation, a dismantling, a reversal of translation' (170). The goal is less an uncovering of the true or originary meaning of a source text; rather it is an historical attempt to reveal the metaleptical historical processes at work and allow openings in the gaps and silences for alternative viewpoints and modes of expression. In Gayatri Spivak's words today, the goal involves a reading of globalization that looks less at signs as unities and universals, and instead at the 'sea of traces' that suggest that there once was something else there, excesses that have not been acculturated/assimilated into a world of meaning.





## Conclusion

I find it very important for translation studies to focus on both aspects of ‘inculturation’: its visible side in the sense that the Catholic Church uses it, creating inroads into a culture; and its invisible side in the sense of ‘ill-culturation’—looking at that which does not fit and why—that which gets left out in a translation. Translation studies scholars have done a pretty good job of analyzing that which has been translated—the glass half full. But it has not done a very good job looking at what gets left out in translation—the glass half empty. My sense is that many translation studies scholars tend to over-focus on the former, thinking that that remainder is minimal. My sense is that the remainder, thanks to investigations on gender by scholars such as Gayatri Spivak, may be larger than we think.

I am also very attracted to Gayatri Spivak’s work on how the abstract concept of ‘gender’ is constructed, and in which, I would argue, translation plays a role. At the end of her talk, her turn to the metapsychological processes by which a child gains access to language well illustrates my point. As humans, from infancy on, begin to discover the world out there, a never ending process of weaving back and forth goes on in the mind. An increased focus on that activity may not just better reveal how the self is gendered, but how many abstract concepts which colonize and discriminate are formed through those very translational processes.

In translation studies, such metapsychological processes and gender construction have best been investigated by Canadian feminist scholars such as Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, Barbara Godard, and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood. These scholars pick up on the ethics of translation as posited by Berman, Benjamin, Venuti, and others advocating difference in translation. You know them well. Today I would like to draw attention to Carolyn Shread’s work (2007, 2012), which is based on the insights of Bracha Ettinger, an Israeli artist, psychoanalyst, and feminist theorist. Ettinger posits the concept of the ‘matrix’, a feminine Symbol based on prenatal mother-infant relations, as a supplement to the missing Symbol in Freudian/Lacanian analysis. For Ettinger and Shread, the matrixial, mother-infant relations allow exchanges that precede and destabilize later phallic symbolic systems (Shread 2007, 219). The communication, exchanges, and translation process in the womb changes the space from an empty, passive receptacle to an active communicative space that is constantly reforming via translational processes. New categories emerge: not inculturating or rejecting, but being in a state of next to; being in the proximity of another without understanding; gaining trust, empathy, and love without a sign system; and communicating without ownership or possessing (Ettinger 1994, 42). Rather than using a definition based on ‘metaphor’ or ‘metonymy’, Ettinger and Shread call this form of translation ‘metramorphosis’. In this case ‘metra’ refers to ‘mater’ or ‘mother’ and ‘morphosis’ refers to ‘Morpheus’, the Greek god of sleep and dreams. I find it similar to a pre-ethical, pre-gender, pre-Symbolic order position that Gayatri Spivak articulates in her talk in this forum. In this model, translation is seen as generative—forming new entities and identities—rather than one of replacement or supplanting with an inferior version of a (white/male/phallic) original. Translation is seen instead as a mutually transforming process where the translation and the original meet creatively, recognizing and accepting a shared heritage, yet open to relations of difference and multiple meanings. Joyce in Trieste; Brossard in Montreal; Kafka in Prague. The space itself is a very intimate one, which would also underscore Gayatri’s call for the translator to facilitate love in translation, to bring

about new relations with the other, and to allow the foreign to surface from the inside, changing not only culture, but the individual creating self (Spivak 1993c, 181). We might refer to these relations as proximity without possession, a focus on which might lead to a new productive pre- and post-translation studies phase for the field.

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