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TRANSLATION TODAY

Editor
P.P. Giridhar

Guest Editors
Dipti R. Pattanaik
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Translation Today is a biannual journal published by Central Institute of Indian Languages, Manasagangotri, Mysore. It is jointly brought out by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, and Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. A peer-reviewed journal, it proposes to contribute to and enrich the burgeoning discipline of Translation Studies by publishing research articles as well as actual translations from and into Indian languages. *Translation Today* will feature full-length articles about translation- and translator-related issues, squibs which throw up a problem or an analytical puzzle without necessarily providing a solution, review articles and reviews of translations and of books on translation, actual translations, Letters to the Editor, and an Index of Translators, Contributors and Authors. It could in the future add new sections like Translators' job market, Translation software market, and so on. The problems and puzzles arising out of translation in general, and translation from and into Indian languages in particular will receive greater attention here. However, the journal would not limit itself to dealing with issues involving Indian languages alone.

Translation Today

- seeks a spurt in translation activity.
- seeks excellence in the translated word.
- seeks to further the frontiers of Translation Studies.
- seeks to raise a strong awareness about translation, its possibilities and potentialities, its undoubted place in the history of ideas, and thus help catalyse a groundswell of well-founded ideas about translation among people.

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Guest Editorial

While composing *Kubalayaswa Carita* in Prakrit, Biswanath Kaviraj, the eminent poet and aesthetician in the court of fourteenth-century Odia king Gajapati Narasimha Dev IV, calls himself 'Astadasa-bhasa-barabilasini-bhujanga', that is 'a philanderer who cohabits with eighteen prostitutes like a serpent entering several holes'[1]. 'Prostitutes' here denotes the various languages with which the poet-aesthetician is capable of negotiating. This characterization is a left-handed compliment to his multilingualism and dexterity in composing verse-narratives in several languages. In fact, before composing the above-mentioned work in Prakrit, Kaviraj had fully established himself as an influential poet and aesthetician in Sanskrit. This flaunting of multilingualism, especially by an accomplished Sanskrit poet, must have sounded unusual to his contemporaries. It was not the norm in the Odisha of those times for court poets to write poetry in languages other than Sanskrit.

Language use reflected caste and class not only in Odisha but more or less in all of India in ancient and medieval times[2]. Although the society was multilingual through and through, the elite class of Brahmins used Sanskrit, the so-called "deba bhasa" (the language of the Gods), in intellectual, creative and aesthetic discourses. Jainism's use of Prakrit and Buddhism's use of Pali to disseminate their respective religious ideologies could not usurp the position of Sanskrit. Some of the Buddhist philosophers, such as Asvaghosa, who like Kaviraj were Sanskrit scholars, wrote in languages other than Sanskrit, but in order for their work to receive intellectual and aesthetic legitimacy approval had to come from the Sanskrit scholars, who largely monopolized power/knowledge.

This hierarchy was sustained for a long period of time against the obviously multilingual nature of Indian society. Both scholars and the common people used several spoken languages (access to Sanskrit, however, was denied to the latter) and a few had already developed literary languages apart from Sanskrit, such as Prakrit, Pali and Paishachi. Indeed, Prakrit had a fully codified

grammar by the time Kaviraj was writing. A facility in multiple languages was useful in trade, in missionary activities and in maintaining diplomatic relations with various principalities. Multilingualism was almost a necessary part of the daily life of the common folk. They had to negotiate with several languages through acts of translation, so much so that G.N. Devy calls the Indian consciousness, although in a different context, a "translating consciousness".[3]

This translating consciousness was in many ways necessary for survival in a multilingual society like India. The multilingual nature of the society and widespread translational activity, however, did not mean there existed an ideal republic of languages in which one language met another out of pure choice and desire, uncontaminated by equations of power and ideological interpellation. As was indicated earlier, for a long period of time Sanskrit dominated power/knowledge. This was possible because of the dominance in the secular and sacred domains of the Brahminical caste, whose members were conversant with the language. Since the nature of a hegemonic structure is to replicate itself, the Brahminical supremacy was maintained both by ideological and coercive apparatuses of the states during various periods. In this context, the emergence of Prakrit and Pali as alternative discourses of power/knowledge can be seen as self-assertion by competing castes in the social spectrum. Prakrit consolidated itself around the religious ideology of Jainism, while Pali did so around Buddhism, both of which challenged Brahminical orthodoxy. Although language loyalties did not incite violence to the extent witnessed in medieval Europe, an asymmetrical relationship governed Indian multilingualism and translatory practices. While access to certain languages was the privilege of the elites, translatory practices constituted challenges to hegemonic structures. Often, translation was a tool in the democratization of the episteme.[4]

From the above discussion, it should be clear that multilingualism and translatory practice have been a contested territory in which power and ideological equations governing caste,

ethnic, religious and political relationships have played a great part. But what baffles the contemporary historians of translation studies in India is that, despite the fact that relationships between languages have been a crucial social fact, there is an absolute dearth of theoretical reflections upon translatory practices in the Indian episteme. Since Sanskrit was a dominant language for quite some time it would be natural to expect that Sanskrit should have developed some theory and methodology of translation. But for several reasons[5] Sanskrit fell short of such an expectation. At least two reasons should be elaborated here. The first relates to the concept of 'untranslatability' and the second to the perception of translation as a subsidiary activity. Aestheticians like Rajasekhara – the Sanskrit aesthetician who was the most competent to develop a theory of translation – rigidly subscribed to the view that languages are culture-specific and themes and emotions that can be expressed in one language could not be replicated in another. His concept of 'harana' echoes the western notion of translation as 'betrayal' or 'plagiarism', and has a pejorative connotation. In fact, the Sanskrit term for translation – 'anubada', which means the reiteration of what is already known, accords a subsidiary importance to translation activity. Right from the second century C.E. Kumarujiva, the first translator of Buddhist texts into Chinese seems to have shaped the attitude that dominated the entire Indian episteme:

> …translation is just like chewing food that is to be fed to others. If one cannot chew the food oneself, one has to be given food that has been already chewed. Such food however is bound to be poorer in taste and flavour than the original.[6]

Clearly, both of these reasons are a product of the cultural elitism that was the hallmark of the dominant thinking of these times. Thus, although translational activity was rampant, there was hardly any endotropic translation into Sanskrit.[7] Translations were either done by outsiders, who took an interest in Indian culture and tried to appropriate knowledge that was available in Sanskrit, or by religious missionaries or tradesmen, who used it to disseminate religious ideas or for business purposes.[8]

During the Bhakti period in medieval India, when the saint-poets used vernaculars to bridge the gap between religious and spiritual texts and the common folk, many of them were subjected to various forms of violence, such as verbal disparagement and banishment from the elite community of intellectuals. These saint-poets took upon themselves the task of translating – often freely without a concern for verisimilitude, which was not the norm at that time – many poetic-religious texts into the local languages of the common people. Many vernacular literatures of India owe their origins to these translatory acts during the medieval period. These translations were reflections not only of the religious-aesthetic aspirations of certain sections of the society, but also expressions of caste, regional and other markers that consolidated group identities.

The rise of vernacular literatures effectively ended the dominance of Sanskrit in the discourses of power/knowledge. The vernacular literatures, in due course of time, developed their own grammars, dictionaries and aesthetic principles – sometimes closely following in the footsteps of Sanskrit and at other times charting out their own independent existence – but like Sanskrit, they remained absolutely unselfconscious about acts of translation and the dynamics of a multilingual society.

Such self-consciousness can be discerned only in the colonial and missionary translation activity in the 19th century.[9] Taming Indian multilingualism was a practical necessity for the missionaries and colonists. Translation, which had proliferated in the fertile ground of multilingualism, ironically was used to propagate the monocultural ideology of a colonial power structure in alliance with a proselytizing religion.

It is true that the colonialist/missionary agenda did not succeed completely. One fallout of that enterprise, however, was that iconic translations became a norm and fidelity to the source text, a principal value in translatory projects. Moreover, because of the colonial/missionary intervention the language-based discourses expanded their base from mere caste-loyalties into broader regional,

ethnic and more sophisticated identity formations.[10] More importantly, the self-consciousness regarding translation activity, which was hitherto absent in the Indian episteme, began to be registered.

The translational praxis of the Christian missionaries and the British colonialists converged in their hegemonic agenda[11]. Consequently, the elaborate theoretical framework of translation was imported from the so-called centre of knowledge, i.e. the west, and was imposed on the supposedly blank space of the Indian colonies. Predictably, such a theory was both ignorant of the literary and cultural history of India and lacked empathy for the task of comprehending the phenomena that the theories sought to map out. Although colonial forms of knowledge were inadequate in their ability to assess the entire range of translational history and the dynamics of language relationships in India, they can be credited with generating self-consciousness about translational activity.

One must hasten to add that such self-consciousness has not so far been able to provide a comprehensive theory of translation that is capable of historicizing, analyzing and providing suitable models for practice. Moreover, as can be felt from the above brief overview of translation practice in India, translation studies can be employed in order to construct an alternative historiography of a culture. Since translations are ideological enterprises, a set of translations could profitably be studied in order to unearth the ideological and power equations underpinning the culture of their origin. Tentative steps in these two directions – theorizing translation activity and analyzing the sociology of translation in India – have been taken of late. The international conference on 'Translation and Multilingualism" organized March 6-7, 2009, at the Department of English, BHU, in collaboration with CIIL, Mysore and Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi was a humble step in that direction. It was deliberately organized at an international level, so as to welcome theoretical inputs from experts in the field and test

them against Indian background. Such an exercise, it was presumed, would help the process of theory-building in India. The essays that follow were selected from among more than one hundred presentations at the conference. Vincent Rafael's previously published essay has been included because it resonates well with the theme of the volume.

Finally, this volume does not claim to answer all the questions regarding translation historiography or to provide a theory that can explain the politics of language in a multilingual society. The only hope is that the essays will sensitize the readers to the politics of language in India and elsewhere and to the role of translation in multilingual societies like India. It is also hoped that the essays, in addition to providing intellectual and socio-historical insights, will encourage a similar mapping out of translational territory in other cultural settings and contribute to the common pursuit of building an indigenous theory of translation.

Before concluding I would like to thank everyone who was associated with the Conference and putting together this volume including the paper presenters at the Conference and contributors to this volume. I especially remember with gratitude the support of Prof. Giridhar of CIIL, Mysore, my friend and former colleague Dr. Sanjay Kumar of the Department of English, BHU in organizing the Conference and Mr. Durbadal Bhattacharjee, Research Scholar at BHU and my co-editor Prof. Paul St-Pierre, former Professor of Translation Studies, Montreal University, Canada for putting together this special issue. I would also like to thank Prof. Vicente Rafael and Duke University Press for granting permission to include the essay by the author in this volume.

Dipti R. Pattanaik

Notes

1. Sudarshan Acharya, *Odia Kavya Kaushala* (Cuttack: Friends Publishers, 1983, 2002), 21

2. for the detailed analysis of the language relationships and translation scenario in ancient and medieval India see two essays by Debendra Dash and Diptiranjan Pattanaik, i.e. "Translation and Social Praxis in Ancient & Medieval india" in *In Translation* eds. Paul St. Pierre & Prafulla C. Kar.(Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007) and "Translating Medieval Orissa" in *Translation Today* vol.3, Nos. 1& 2, 2006(Mysore; CIIL)

3. G.N. Devy*, In Another Tongue: Essays on Indian Literature in English.* (Bangalore: Macmillan, India, 1993), 135.

4. For an elaborate analysis of such a phenomenon, at least in case of Odia language, see Dipti R. Pattanaik, "The power of Translation" in *Changing the Terms* eds. Sherry Simon & Paul St. Pierre (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000).

5. See for more details Dash & Pattanaik "Translation and Social Praxis in Ancient and Medieval India" in *In Translation* eds. Paul St. Pierre & Prafulla C.Kar (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007)

6. Cited in Edward L. Keenan, "Some Logical Problems in Translation" in *Meaning and Translation* eds.F. Guenthner and M. Guenthner-Reutter (London: Duckworth, 1978) 157.

7. Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*. (London: Penguin Books, 2005) 28-30

8. The case of Somadeva's *Kathasaritasagara* may be cited as one of the few exceptions. Somadeva rendered Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha* in original Paisachi into Sanskrit.
9. For greater details on missionary translation activity see Debendra K.Dash & Dipti R. Pattanaik "Missionary Position: The Irony of Translational Activism in Colonial Orissa", *TTR* Vol.XVIII no.2.(Montreal: McGill University, 2005)

10. ibid.

11. Although both the colonialist and missionary translation practices were hegemonic in their character there were several differences between them in terms of their ideology and modus operandi. Proselytization was the principal aim of the missionary translations. The western missionaries were mainly involved in that task. The modus operandi has more or less been discussed in great detail in the essay "Missionary Position…." cited above. However, the colonialist translation practice was much more insidious. Its mode of operation has varied along the changes in political situation encountered by the colonial power centers. Moreover, the co-opted natives, more than the members of the western ruling class, were participants in such a process. No significant account of the character of the colonial translation practice in India is available at present.

Translation and Multilingualism in Nineteenth-Century India: A View from Orissa

Paul St-Pierre

Abstract

Considered the founding father of modern Oriya literature, Phakir Mohan Senapati wrote the first short story and the first autobiography in that language, as well as the first social-realist novel in any Indian language. He was also a social activist and a colonial administrator, and as such he was a witness to and a participant in the events taking place in eastern India in the nineteenth century under the British Raj. Neither a nativist nor an unconditional admirer of all things British, Phakir Mohan Senapati acted throughout his life as a mediator, defending Oriya culture and language but at the same time promoting social change. His autobiography, the focus of my analysis here, provides a portrait of the multilingual nature of Oriya society in the nineteenth century, of the hierarchies involved in such a situation, and of the interaction of languages through translation.

India is a multilingual nation; the linguistic basis of its different states has led to the official, constitutional recognition of certain of its languages, creating a situation in which hierarchies and privilege exist, a situation in which other – unrecognized – languages jockey for position. The number of these 'other' languages in India is simply staggering; according to the 1961 census India was at that time home to some 1652; only a small percentage of these – less than 2 per cent – have received official recognition, whether in Schedule 8 of the Constitution or by bodies such as the Sahitya Akademi or the National Book Trust. This difference between 'official' and 'non official' languages, and 'semi official' languages, exists in other nations as well, including those which are monolingual or bilingual. The United States and France are states in which one language alone is given pride of place whether officially or unofficially; Canada and Belgium are examples

of constitutionally bilingual nations. In these monolingual and bilingual countries too, other, 'non official' languages exist alongside the official ones, most notably perhaps – because they pre-exist the languages of the colonizers – the multiple, and endangered, American Indian languages of the United States and Canada. In all of these countries too some sort of recognition is often sought for 'other' languages, for Spanish, for example, in the United States.

Whether a nation is multilingual, bilingual, or monolingual has consequences for translation. Canada is a country in which a great deal of translation takes place *because* of the official recognition accorded English and French and the obligation to translate all official documents into these two languages; the United States is a country in which relatively little translation takes place, despite the very large number of Spanish speakers, *because* of the status, albeit unofficial, accorded English alone. The multilingualism of India poses special problems for translation, and its constitutional distinction between national language (Hindi), associate language (English), and official languages (the twenty-two listed in the Eighth Schedule, with as few as one lakh speakers [Dogri] or as many as forty crore [Hindi]), also affects and tempers the amount and the type of translation carried out. Indeed, the very existence of an 'associate' language, for use primarily in the courts, implies non-translation.

The Indian linguistic situation, because of the large number of languages used, has certain particularities that distinguish India as a zone of translation from other parts of the world. One of these is the use of 'link languages', that is languages that are neither the source nor the target language but through which the source passes on its way to the target. Hindi and English are very often used as link languages, but other languages – such as Bengali and Marathi – can also take on this role. From the point of view purely of accuracy, the use of link languages can be deplored. After all, if between two languages there is loss, and gain as well, then between three there is the possibility of complete transformation, to the point of unrecognizability. Certainly, in an ideal world, competent translators

for all possible pairs of Indian languages, or at least of 'official' Indian languages, would exist. But this is in fact not yet the case. Are there translators from Konkani into Oriya, for example? If not, is it preferable that no translation exist rather than that done through Hindi or English or Bengali? And the problem is perhaps even greater for the translation from non-Indian languages into Indian languages. In the 1950s a translator in Cuttack undertook to translate all the Nobel Literature Prize laureates into Oriya. This was only possible through English, and his translations provided access in Oriya to some of the world's greatest literature.

Link languages continue to be used in translation in India, reflecting not only the complications of multilingualism but also the hierarchies – whether de facto or official – in such a situation. An example of this is the text from which I will be extensively quoting here, a text of signal importance in its testimony regarding the evolution of Orissan society in the nineteenth-century. This is a translation of Phakir Mohan Senapati's *Autobiography*. I will say more about the text later, but for the moment I wish to note that this translation is scheduled to serve as a basis for translations into other Indian languages. Once again, I would say that this is not an ideal situation, but the amount of work and care that have gone into this translation into English, as well as the problematic nature of the text itself, perhaps justifies its use as the basis for other translations; only 'perhaps', because despite my arguments justifying the use of link languages in translation I am also forced to accept the difficulties involved in such a practice.

Related to the use of link languages and the absence of competent translators for certain pairs of languages is the issue of the payment translators receive. It is difficult to develop a professional attitude towards translation if payment is so low – when it exists at all – that it does not permit the development of translation as a profession. There are certain people, of course, who would make the claim that translation, and the translation of literature in particular, should be based purely on love for the text and the desire to share it with others. I would not really want to argue against such

a motivation for translation, but we also need to recognize that love alone is not sufficient; skill is at least as important as love; and the development of translational skills requires a professional attitude towards the activity of translation. How can such an attitude be fostered? By a recognition of the *value* of translation – its *economic* value, its *literary* value, its *epistemological* value. Until translators are properly paid for their work, until there is a recognition that translations are not all equally acceptable (that is, that there is a recognizable difference between a translation which respects certain professional criteria and one that does not), until there is discussion around the theoretical and epistemological questions raised by translation and forums created for such discussion to take place – until these different aspects are given importance, translation is destined to remain a 'pre-professional' activity. The consequences of this will be that the *value* of translation will continue to go unrecognized and the quality of translations will depend on the skills of the particular individuals involved in the process. Transforming translation into a professional activity, on the other hand, requires that those involved in the activity of translation reflect on what it means to translate in a modern multilingual society, and for such reflection to take place forums. journals and conferences are a first, and useful, step.

I began by referring to the multilingual nature of India, to the recognition of certain languages and not others, and to the hierarchies and struggles that inform language politics in a multilingual setting. I want now to return to these themes and examine the way in which they play out in nineteenth-century Orissa, taking as my point of reference the autobiography – the first in Oriya – of Phakir Mohan Senapati.

• • •

Phakir Mohan Senapati was a man of many trades and multiple passions, who lived from 1843 to 1918 in the eastern coastal area of India now known as Orissa, which, during his lifetime, was divided between three separate administrative divisions: the Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta Presidencies. At different times in his life Phakir Mohan was, among other things, a school teacher; a lumber

merchant; an apprentice accountant in his family's sail-making business; a leader in bringing the first printing press to the city where he lived and the third in all of Orissa; a journalist; an administrator over a period of some twenty-five years of what were known as Feudatory or Princely States; a translator from Sanskrit into Oriya of the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Upanishads*; and after he had accomplished all of this, a writer of what are still considered some of the most important and most innovative texts of modern Oriya literature.

It was essentially once his administrative career ended, in 1896,[1] at the age of 53, that Phakir Mohan turned to writing fiction, although before this he had published numerous, often provocative, pieces in Bengali and Oriya newspapers and journals on a number of subjects. In one, for example, entitled "Changes in Women's Lives", he put forward the novel idea that women should wear some sort of garment under their saris, both to safeguard their modesty and to protect themselves from the cold. He notes that his argument was well received by the British colonial administrators, the 'sahibs', and that its satirical tone provoked laughter among his fellow clerks. This shows Phakir Mohan in two of his – interconnected – roles: that of social reformer, and that of social satirist, roles that he brought together in his writing, and in his fiction in particular. Prior to embarking on his career as an administrator Phakir Mohan also produced much needed textbooks in Oriya, for use in the schools which were developing during the period, including a book on arithmetic and one on grammar, a *History of India*, and the translation, from Bengali, of a collection of sketches of the lives of Western scientists by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the Bengal reformer and champion of improving the status of women in India. We will return to this aspect of his career and of his writing, as it directly relates to the multilingual, and hierarchical, nature of Indian society at the time.

Upon retirement from administrative service in 1896 Phakir Mohan concentrated his intellectual activities on writing, producing, in addition to a good deal of poetry – on subjects as varied as

Napoleon and Josephine, railroads, Cleopatra, the Russian-Japanese war, and the aims of the cooperative movement,[2] some twenty-two short stories and four novels – including the first social realist novel in any Indian language,[3] as well as his autobiography, which, as I have already mentioned, was the first such writing in Oriya. Many of these texts appeared in newspapers and magazines, and they retain the marks of their original place of publication, in particular in the language he used. Aiming his writings at a larger reading public than that which was usual for literary texts, Phakir Mohan developed a colloquial style of language that more closely mirrors oral speech and that even today sets his work off from the usually more formal, more highly sanskritized, texts of Oriya literature. Indeed, Phakir Mohan was so successful at reproducing scenes from everyday life in his works and at making them real for his readers that when the courtroom scene from *Six Acres and a Third*, his most famous novel, was serialized, people from the countryside of Orissa are said – although this is perhaps apocryphal – to have flocked to the courthouse in the city of Cuttack to catch a glimpse of the trial of the novel's protagonist, Ramachandra Mangaraj.[4]

The fictional works of Phakir Mohan are of great interest from a sociological and historical point of view, as they deal with many of the issues which became acute under colonial rule; among these, the loss of land due to the revenue system established by the British,[5] the deleterious effects of English education,[6] and the lack of importance accorded native Oriya culture and language.[7] Phakir Mohan deals with many of these same themes in his autobiography, and it is on this latter text that I will principally focus here.

• • •

Atmacarita [Self Account] – the title given Phakir Mohan's autobiography – was published in book form in 1927, nine years after Phakir Mohan's death. The text that was published had been edited – 'cleansed' would be a better word – by Phakir Mohan's son, Mohini Mohan, with references to what Phakir Mohan had himself called his 'scandalous' life either deleted or toned down. Phakir

Mohan wrote his autobiography in the last two years of his life and its serialization began in *Utkal Sahitya* during his lifetime. Two English translations of the text have been published – one by John V. Boulton, under the title *My Times and I*, and another, *Story of My Life*, by Jatindra K. Nayak and Prodeepta Das. Both of these are based on the bowdlerized version of the text. A third translation of Phakir Mohan's complete text, some forty per cent longer than the previous two, is presently being prepared for publication by Diptiranjan Pattanaik, Basanta K. Tripathy, and myself.

In Phakir Mohan's autobiography a constant theme is the need to enrich and defend the Oriya language; along with the desirability of extending education to women and to Oriyas living outside the larger cities and towns, the defense of his mother tongue is Phakir Mohan's principle concern. Indeed, the very justification for writing an autobiography – an enterprise that could be seen as an exercise in self-aggrandizement – is framed is such terms. Thus the "Brief Note" at the head of the text, written most likely by the son, but nevertheless reflecting the essence of the father's preoccupations, reads[8]:

> For the last four or five years a number of friends, as well as some educated young men whom I love and who are like sons to me, have been pressing me to put the story of my life on record. I have found it extremely difficult to ignore their requests. Autobiographies in Oriya are still rare, and my own life has been too ordinary to have much to offer that is worthy of one. What is more, to be truthful, I do not have the literary talent to sustain the interest of my readers. Nevertheless, there is at least one justification for my having begun such an important undertaking. I firmly believe that in the near future many auto-biographers will emerge in this sacred motherland of ours; I am simply their forerunner.

The reference here to "this sacred motherland of ours" is not a simple figure of style; rather, it points to Phakir Mohan's deep commitment to Utkal, to a reunited Orissa (which was to come about

only in 1936, when Orissa became the first province in British India to be constituted on a linguistic basis), and his active role in the struggle facing Oriya language and culture at the time.

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Let us begin this exploration of multilingual Orissa in the nineteenth-century with a quotation from Phakir Mohan’s most famous novel, *Chhamana Athaguntha* [Six Acres and a Third]. There, the narrator comments:

> With a sharp and pitiless pen, God has inscribed a strange fate for India: yesterday, the language of the court was Persian, today it is English. Only He knows which language will follow tomorrow. Whichever it may be, we know for certain that Sanskrit lies crushed beneath a rock for ever. English pundits say, ‘Sanskrit is a dead language’. We would go even further: ‘Sanskrit is a language of the half-dead’. (67-68)

These few lines demonstrate, on the part of the narrator, and also of the author, an acute historical awareness. Languages come and go, even those that presently seem invincible. Sanskrit, Persian, English were all languages of power, and of exclusion, within India, and the narrator underlines here the way in which the balance of power can shift. Although all three languages continue to co-exist within a geographical territory – here, Orissa – their hierarchical relations change. And what is true for the languages of power also holds true for the vernaculars, which also find their places within hierarchies, and these hierarchies also imply power. Within Orissa these vernaculars vying for prominence were primarily Oriya and Bengali, with Telugu also having a lesser role to play.

The first reference in the autobiography to multiple languages present within a specific geographical territory refers to the district of Midnapore, in what is now West Bengal. This, as is clear from the passage, was a predominantly Oriya-speaking area, facing a double onslaught: from the Bengali-speakers, on the one hand, who were attempting, largely for economic reasons, to replace

Oriya with Bengali, and from the English-educated, who now felt "awkward speaking Oriya", since their identification with English values had led them to feel self-conscious about their origins. By abolishing the Oriya-medium "chatasalis" and replacing them with Bengali-language schools, and by eliminating Oriya from the Court – in modern terms the civil service, Bengalis would also be able to eliminate Oriyas, and not just the language, from these positions and acquire them for themselves. In the following passage, Phakir Mohan recounts the changes in language use that have taken place over time in Midnapore, as well as the resistance to such change, creating a separation between the public and the private spaces of Oriya-speaking families:

> In around twenty-two hundred square miles of Midnapore's total area of five thousand two hundred settlements were exclusively Oriya. The inhabitants used only Oriya in their daily conversations, letters, calculations, documents of business transactions, and land records. Earlier, Oriya had also been used in the courts of Midnapore district, and clerks working there had been appointed in Balasore District Court. These practices have been discontinued to a great extent.
>
> Even now, however, the *Bhagabata* by Jagannath Das, the *Mahabharata* by Sarala Das, and the Oriya *Ramayana* are recited every evening in the houses of well-to-do people in the villages there. A lady from the zamindar family of Pataspur patronized the translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagabata* into Oriya verse-form, and it is now recited in certain places. Hundreds of Brahmins from the districts of Balasore and Cuttack and well-versed in pothis still earn their living reciting scriptures in various places. Such Brahmins are employed in the houses of zamindars and rich men. The English-educated Babus in the area now feel awkward speaking Oriya, but they have not been able to eliminate the national language from their households due to the resistance of their Kulalakshmis.

The abolition of the chatasalis in south Midnapore was painful and unfortunate, the result of underhanded manoeuvring. A Bengali was posted as Sub-Inspector of Schools in south Midnapore between 1865-1870, with the mission to set up schools in the area. He tried to establish Bengali vernacular schools but he failed in his attempt, as people were unwilling to have their children schooled in Bengali. As he had been specifically assigned the task of setting up schools, his job was at stake. Would it have been wise for him to inform his superiors of his failure and lose such a lucrative position?

Necessity is the mother of invention, and the Babu hit upon a plan. He visited every police station. With the help of the officer-in-charge, he summoned all the chatasali abadhans under the jurisdiction of the police station to appear on a specific date. He showed them a forged stamped document in English. "Look here," he said. "This is an order by the Collector of Midnapore district. All the chatasalis under this police station are being abolished and all the abadhans must return home within seven days of receiving this order. Warrants will be issued against those still present after that, and they will be punished with fines and jail terms." The Sub-Inspector made the rounds of different police stations, reading out the forged order.

How could weak-kneed fellows such as they were have summoned up the courage to resist? This was, after all, an order from the district Collector; moreover, it was being issued from the police station. They fled back to their homes, abandoning the chatasalis forever. Needless to say, it was then quite easy for the Sub-Inspector to set up Bengali vernacular schools. The elder brother of the above-mentioned Sub-Inspector was Headmaster of Balasore District School. I was very close to him, and he told me all of this to demonstrate how competent an administrator his brother was.

> Although the people of south Midnapore received their education in Bengali, Oriya continued to be used at home. Is it ever easy to abandon one's mother tongue? The Oriya *Bhagabata* by Jagannath Das and a few other Oriya books printed in Bengali script were read in every home.

The interplay between Oriya, Bengali, and English here is worth underlining. Gradually Oriya is being erased from the public space, replaced by Bengali. Although ideological factors may be at work here, the motive seems essentially economic: by insisting on the primacy of Bengali, Bengalis are certain to obtain most of the positions in education and at Court. Nevertheless, at least for the moment, Oriya remains strong within the households, largely through the influence of the women. It is they who resist attempts to eliminate Oriya, and it is a woman who sponsors the translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagabata* into Oriya. Oriya constitutes, indeed, the *mother* tongue. But it is the use made of the language of colonization, English, that is particularly worth noting in this multilingual situation. English is given a role to play in the charade invented by the Bengali Sub-Inspector of Schools and it is largely the power invested in that language, with the backing of the police officer, that enables Bengali vernacular schools to be set up.

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In the next passage to be quoted from the autobiography, what is particularly noteworthy is the change that is taking place in the value being accorded the language and the literature of Utkal [Orissa] in the face of the development of Bengali and the spread of English. This latter aspect – the invasion of English customs and of the language itself – is the object of many acerbic comments in Phakir Mohan's fiction; the former – the rapid development of Bengali – gives rise to both admiration, as an example to be followed, and combativeness, an aspect that will become clearer in the third passage I have selected. Phakir Mohan, who in a certain sense belongs both to the past and to the future of Orissa, sees the change that is taking place – the switch from Oriya to Persian, English, or

Bengali – as troubling, since he holds his language and culture, his Oriya identity, dear. But he also wishes to actively fight this change, not through some rearguard and conservative action, but by following the example being set and competing on equal terms. In the passage that follows, Phakir Mohan presents the context that will lead a group of concerned Oriyas, of which he is a leader, to establish the third printing press in Orissa:

> The growth and spread of the Bengali language began in 1857, after the Sepoy Mutiny. The lack of textbooks in the schools of Bengal and Orissa provinces was offset by the introduction of a variety of books by Mahatma Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, revered Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, and esteemed Akhyaya Kumar Dutta. Renowned persons like Prasanna Kumar Sarbadhikari, Babu Tarinicharan Chattopadhyay, and Pundit Loharam also wrote a number of books on arithmetic, algebra, geography, grammar, etc. These textbooks helped pupils in their intellectual development. Earlier, the language of the prescribed textbooks had been as flawed as their subject matter. The three parts of the *Nitikatha* and the *Hitopadesa* in Oriya, which had been in the syllabus from the beginning, were still there, with no additions; no other books had been added. The Bengali teachers and other Bengali Babus used to make very mean and vulgar remarks about the Oriya language; it was as if they were insulting our mother. As these comments were hurtful, they provoked anger against the slanderers. At that time it occurred to me that unless we enriched our mother tongue we would remain obscure to the outside world, and the possibility of improving the life of our community would remain only a dream. What are the ways in which a language can develop? Day in and day out I thought about this. My sole objective was to sacrifice everything so that my mother tongue could grow. I was between nineteen and twenty at the time, without education, strength, or money.
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> During those times, many books of various sizes, dealing with different subjects, were being published in Bengali every month. I used to buy some of

them and others I would borrow from the library of Babu Damodar Prasad Das, who lived in Sunhat village, near Balasore. Whether Damodar Babu read them or not, he would always buy the books and keep them for our benefit. Now I remember that most of the books published in those days contained vulgar language and that the contents were extremely offensive to moralists. It is a relief to know that the names of these books have been forgotten. Whatever few good books were published are still in circulation and will continue to shine in this world, as gems of Bengali literature.

Whenever there was a new Bengali book I would examine it closely, turning it over and over again for a long time, wondering when such a book would be brought out in the language of Utkal. Without even realizing it I would heave a deep sigh. At the time a single monthly magazine, *Bibidhartha Sangraha*, was published in Bengali. Nityananda, the son of my father's cousin, was a subscriber, and I was able to borrow the magazine from him and read it through three or four times. There were also two weekly magazines published in Bengali: *Som-Prakash* and *Education Gazette*. A renowned zamindar in Balasore was a subscriber to *Som-Prakash*; *Education Gazette* was available at the Zilla School. It took a great deal of persuasion and effort on my part to obtain a copy of it. At times I would worry whether such a weekly could be brought out in Oriya, but my mind would immediately answer in despair that that would be impossible. A committee of translators was set up in Calcutta with Government funds, and I heard that some learned men were translating English books into Bengali and winning prizes worth thousands of rupees. While going through these translations I felt as if my spirit was burning up with envy. This led me to wonder what prevented the Government from setting up a committee for translation in Utkal as well.

It is worth noting that Phakir Mohan's main point of reference for Orissa is what he sees happening in Bengal, where the proximity to colonial power has made possible something quite unimaginable – at least until that point in time – in Orissa. Spurred on by his own familiarity with Bengali and with Bengal, Phakir Mohan will take this as a model, to turn it against itself. In this passage he continues, identifying the causes for the turn away from Oriya by the higher social classes, seeing it as the result of their own self-interest (the clerks knew Persian, and could use this knowledge to retain their positions, while the Sanskrit pundits did not know Oriya, and thus encouraged its abandon), and contrasting this with the strength of the language in rural areas and popular practices:

> Constantly I would ask myself when educated and well-to-do people in Utkal would develop a love for their mother tongue. At the time English or Persian educated Babus considered it an insult or a sin to pick up an Oriya book or to speak Oriya correctly. The clerks spoke in half-Persian and half-Oriya, and their writings read like a strange dialogue between the two languages. They even recorded their household expenditures in Persian. Earlier Persian had been the language of the Court. In 1836 the Government put an end to the use of Persian and passed an order introducing the native languages in its place. This had no effect, however. The clerks had taken a lot of care and put in a great deal of effort to learn Persian, and it was a matter of pride for them to speak and write that language. They were not used to writing Oriya, with the result that the registers and books of the Court continued to be written in Persian for a long time, even though applications from outside were written in Oriya.
>
> Oriya was taught at Balasore Barabati School and at the Mission School. It is true that there was an order from the Government requiring the pupils of the Zilla School to read Oriya as a subject, but I never saw

them with Oriya books. When pupils asked their guardians for money to buy Oriya books, the answer they received was, “Haven’t you already learned enough Oriya from the abadhan? What more is there to learn from Oriya books? Go and learn English.” Artatrana Nanda, a man from Soro, was appointed to teach Sanskrit and Oriya at the Zilla School. Earlier, even the Sanskrit-educated pundits had hated reading or teaching Oriya. They could neither read hand-written Oriya nor write the language. To write letters home to their families, pundits would take someone’s help. They considered it acceptable for the pupils not to buy Oriya books. The pundits were content to confine their teaching to the *Upakramanika*, by Vidyasagar. Moreover, all the teachers in the school were Bengalis. What need was there to pay any attention to teaching Oriya? Rather, they felt it would be a relief if the provision regarding teaching Oriya in the schools was abolished. Students in the English school considered it undignified to speak Oriya and used Bengali mixed with English. Given such an inauspicious situation, Oriya was completely banished from the English schools.

With a heart full of devotion I repeatedly pay tribute to the sacred departed souls of esteemed Jagannath Das, the great poet Upendra Bhanja, Kabibara Abhimanyu, and Dinakrushna Das. These great men were the saviours of the literature of Utkal; the books they wrote laid the foundations of the Oriya language. The great names of these Mahatmas will continue to shine as long as Oriya exists.

The *Bhagabata* by Jagannath Das used to be read in every village in Utkal. In larger villages there were permanent Bhagabatgadis, which were worshipped. Earlier, the *Bhagabata* and the works of other poets were included in the syllabus of chatasalis. Deliberations on books of poetry were the principal source of intellectual pleasure at meetings held by zamindars in the countryside

and in the choupadhis of Khandayats. There were singers in Utkal whose occupation consisted in singing songs, following them with explanations. They would crisscross the Gadajat States explaining the meaning of the songs to the Kings. During the period of anarchy and civil war, a large number of books from the storehouse of Oriya literature were destroyed. In order to save their own lives, people had to hide in jungles and on mountaintops. How could they have preserved literary works? Yet, there were many books that they kept hidden in their hearts. These are still there and will remain there forever.

At that time my only objective in life was to enrich the Oriya language. Despite several other engagements I kept my mind focused on that. I wanted to publish Oriya books on a regular basis, as was being done in the case of Bengali. But who would write them? Could I myself? I had written occasionally for the Bengali magazine *Som-Prakash* and was filled with courage and enthusiasm, as the editor had assured me he would print any letters I sent him.

There was a dance troupe in our village that performed Krishna Lila. I asked them to sing some quatrains I had written and was happy to hear them sung by the children in the troupe. I started writing a few articles whenever I had the time. No matter if they were all rubbish, by doing this I was able to put together a book in prose, entitled *History of the Prince*. I showed it to my friends; they were happy to read it. So far so good, but how to get it printed?

There was only one printing press in Utkal, on which all hopes rested, called the Cuttack Mission Press. Enquiring about the cost of printing, I learned that a single quarto would cost thirty rupees. I calculated that it would cost three hundred rupees to print my book. My God! Where could a man like me get so much money? Until then I had never touched one hundred rupees at any one time. Whatever salary I received every month – twenty or twenty-five rupees – I had to hand over to my

> aunt, and I had to account for any delay in doing so. I was completely without hope of being able to have my book printed. Due to my negligence *History of the Prince* would not see the light of day. That did not keep me from writing, however, and I hoped that my example might inspire others to write and print books.
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> The ridicule of the Bengali Babus had become increasingly unbearable; I was thoroughly upset. At the request of the esteemed Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, I translated his biographical sketches from Bengali into Oriya and had it printed at the Calcutta Baptist Mission Press. For the scholarship examinations, this work was introduced as a textbook, in place of the *Hitopadesa*. Then I wrote two small books: a grammar book and a book on arithmetic. These too were included in the school syllabus. In the meantime Inkailu Raghunath Prasad Bhuyan, one of my classmates, wrote and published a small book called *Srenipatha*. It was also selected as a textbook for the scholarship examination in the lower classes. Still I was unhappy; what would we gain if Oriya books were read only by school children, I wondered. Our mother tongue would not develop unless common folk outside schools had access to it […]

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Phakir Mohan’s concerns were not simply limited to enriching Oriya language and literature by providing books for schools and “people in every house”; he also had to counter “the ridicule of the Bengali Babus”, and, even worse, the attempts by these same Babus to eliminate Oriya altogether. The third passage, relating to the multilingual nature of Orissa in the nineteenth-century, recounts events during a particularly significant period – the end of the 1860s, when arguments were produced justifying the elimination of Oriya. Far from presenting an idyllic view of multilingual India, in this episode of Bengali-Oriya relations the autobiography demonstrates a much harder and more cynical view of the way in which languages

interact. As Phakir Mohan himself sets the scene for the events that were to take place, I need not go into great detail about them here. But it should be noted that such ‘language wars’, as these events have been referred to, have taken place not only in Orissa but elsewhere as well. Phakir Mohan rushes to the defence of Oriya essentially on cultural grounds, yet he fully realizes that for his arguments to induce others to resist what can only be termed Bengali hegemony they have to be grounded in the self-interest of these groups. Thus, finally, it is because he is able to convince the clerks that their social and economic position is in jeopardy that he is able to rally them to defend their language:

> Pundit Sadasiva Nanda, an inhabitant of Soro in Balasore district, was working as the Oriya pundit at the Balasore Government School. He was assigned the task of teaching both Oriya and Sanskrit. When he reached the age of retirement, Nanda was replaced by Kantichandra Bhattacharya, a man from Bengal. Bhattacharya felt perhaps that it would not be difficult to teach Oriya. After studying hard for four to six months he was able to read textbooks printed in Oriya, but there was still one problem. Despite all his efforts he was unable to speak the language. In addition, he found it quite impossible to pronounce the Oriya sounds “Na” and “La”. By that time Bhattacharya had reached the age when people renounce the world and retreat into the forest. Has it ever been easy to pronounce an unfamiliar alphabet with a tongue that has already become old and dry? He pronounced “La” as “Da” and “Na” as “No”, saying, for example, “O badaka gano” instead of “O balaka gana”. This made the entire class burst into laughter. How could a pundit of his reputation accept such an insult?

Implicit in this account of the humiliation suffered by the Bengali pundit is the larger issue of the reversal of the existing hierarchy, in favor of Oriya. This becomes clear in the paragraph that follows, in which the reaction of the students themselves, in favor of the disappearance of Oriya from the curriculum, is also presented in

terms of their own particular interests. Phakir Mohan then proceeds to recount the steps taken to ensure the Bengali position, and his arguments against it. He continues:

> All means to an end are good. One day Bhattacharya went into the class and announced, "Boys! Oriya is not a separate language; it is just a distorted form of Bengali. There's no need to keep on studying Oriya." I do not know how the students reacted, but they must have been delighted and celebrated: "Long live the pundit! May he be happy here." This was because students in those days considered reading Oriya quite troublesome. At that time there was no obligation to read Oriya as the second language, as there is now; studying Oriya was purely optional. Under such circumstances the students suffered. Moreover, all the teachers, from top to bottom, were Bengalis. There was no one to argue in favour of Oriya. Such a context suited the pundit well.
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> It was not enough simply to state that Oriya was not a separate language; this needed to be supported with evidence. The pundit set about writing a book, the title of which was "Oriya Is Not a Separate Language." The book came out in print. The Bengali Headmaster sent a report to the Inspector Sahib, along with a copy of the book. R.L. Martin was then Inspector of Schools, headquartered at Midnapore. All the employees in his office were Bengalis. The report by the Headmaster, with the recommendation of the Bengali Deputy Inspector of Balasore district, reached the office of the Inspector. Very soon the Headmaster received an order from the office of the Inspector, the gist of which was that only Sanskrit and Bengali were to be taught at the Balasore Government School.
>
> At the time, not only in schools, but also in all Government offices, there was not a single Oriya officer of high rank. All the Bengalis were of the same opinion;

all of them were equally Oriya haters and slanderers. Now they rejoiced. Kanti Bhattacharya danced for joy, convinced he had left a lasting legacy in Orissa.

The proposal to abolish Oriya was carried out not only in English schools; it was extended to Government-aided schools as well. Mandal Babu, the Bengali zamindar, established an exclusively Bengali school in his zamindari in the countryside.

Not only in Balasore, but throughout Utkal, Bengali employees all agreed that Oriya should be abolished. Bengalis and Oriyas in Utkal were in heated conflict with each other. Now one of the parties gave way to mirth and enthusiasm, its goal in sight, while the other remained calm and docile. We felt as if a bolt out of the blue had suddenly struck us. The rejoicing and jeers of the enemy pierced our hearts like arrows. What had happened? Would our mother tongue remain forever unread? A meeting of the committee, which had become smaller and weaker, was held. Our thoughts focused only on how to save our mother tongue.

From early evening until late into the night we visited the houses of the headmen of the town. At a gathering of court clerks we asked them to find ways for us to defend ourselves. All of them replied in a chorus, "Babu! This is a Government affair. Whatever syllabus the Government prescribes our children have to abide by it. Why should we risk getting into trouble by speaking out against a Government order?" Hearing what the clerks had to say, the zamindars and businessmen in the town refused to listen to us. Many of them replied openly, "When the clerks don't dare oppose this, why should we get involved and end up paying fines?"

We were greatly indebted to Babu Gourishankar Ray, who was bringing out essays defending Oriya in *Utkal Dipika* every week. The inhabitants of Balasore, were able to read his inspiring words, rare in the whole of Utkal. We wrote on the topic in *Balasore*

Sambadabahika, which we had recently begun to publish from Balasore. Nor did we simply sit idly by; we spent every day and every moment trying to find a solution. One day we arranged a talk at a gathering of the clerks of the Court. The gist of what we had to say went as follows: Dear Sirs! The abolition of Oriya in schools and its replacement by Bengali is not based on a Government order; it is a conspiracy hatched by the Bengalis, and they have done this by misleading the Inspector Sahib. Very shortly they will abolish Oriya from the Court too; don't you see what is happening? The Bengalis have monopolized all the high paying jobs and clerkships. In Persian, you are as competent as the maulabis, but all your knowledge will be rendered useless if the Bengalis become clerks by abolishing the Persian language. With Oriya no longer being used, the relatives and families of the Bengalis will become the clerks. Most assuredly, all of you will be eliminated from your jobs. Moreover, your children and grandchildren will have no access to Government jobs in the future.

Our words caused a furore. All of the clerks shouted, "No, no! This cannot happen. Our children will read Oriya at school." They urged us to find ways to address the issue. We answered, "The solution is quite simple. We have to send an application to the Government requesting that Oriya be reintroduced into schools. Once that's done, no Bengalis will be able to become clerks." Everyone was now in a hurry, insisting, "Write the application at once."

Auspicious work should never be put off. After working day and night an application was readied and signed by about five hundred people. It was submitted to the Collector Sahib. All the British officers and missionaries in Balasore at the time were sympathetic to our cause, for different reasons. All of them pleaded in our favour.

> John Beames Sahib, the Collector of Balasore in those days, was regarded as a linguist in official circles. He forwarded our application to the Commissioner Sahib, with a favourable comment. Oriya was an ancient and separate language, he noted, and should be taught widely in Orissa. He had written a book in English on the subject and sent it to the Government.
>
> T. Ravenshaw, the great defender of Orissa, was Commissioner of Utkal. He sent the application to the Government, with his recommendation. An order was issued: “The Bengali language is to be abolished from all schools in Orissa, and schools may be opened in various places to promote the Oriya language.”

Through his appeals to the clerks’ fears that they might be dispossessed of their positions, Phakir Mohan is able to rally them to the cause of Oriya language and culture. In turn, he is able to use the attitudes of the British to garner support and in the end defeat the attempts by the Bengalis to dominate Orissan territory.

Immediately after the last sentence I have quoted above from the autobiography, the following, absolutely remarkable, exhortation falls from Phakir Mohan’s pen: “May God be merciful and allow the just British Government to rule Utkal forever.” This was written at a time when the independence of India was already being fought for; indeed, in 1898, Phakir Mohan himself had been a delegate to the Indian Congress meeting in Madras, and the Congress was, as he remarks, “the forum that was working to bring unity among educated, patriotic, freedom loving, worthy sons of the motherland”. If despite this, Phakir Mohan could express the wish that “the *just* British Government” should “rule Utkal *forever*” it is because his love for his language and culture went so deep. Phakir Mohan had no illusions about the rapacious nature of the colonial structures – passages from his fiction clearly demonstrate this, but he also had that greatness within him to be able to differentiate between these structures and those actions of the colonizers that had a beneficial effect. In this case the claim could be made that the

colonizers on Orissan territory at the time were at least as much the Bengalis as the British. In this episode of the 'linguistic wars' between Bengalis and Oriyas – which has left its traces even in the modern-day relations between these two groups – we are provided with a clear view of the hierarchies multilingualism inevitably implies, and the struggles it engenders.

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I have said nothing about the translational activities Phakir Mohan was involved in within this multilingual space, and it is impossible to present them here in any great detail. I would like to briefly mention two examples, however.

In the first of these, Phakir Mohan tells of correcting a translation from English into Oriya by an English missionary, and of a misunderstanding that occurs due to a lack of knowledge of Oriya and a mistrust of 'native' interpreters:

> The Sahib was confident of his command of Oriya. After struggling for many days, he translated a small English book into Oriya. When the translation was done, it was decided that I should make any necessary corrections, after which Bhikari Bhai, the head of the missionaries, would read it through from beginning to end. If approved, it would be printed. On receiving the manuscript, I began to make corrections. As far as I can remember, the first sentence of the book read as follows [this is a back translation from the Oriya]: "There are this kind of people in the world who do not believe is God in the world." I corrected this to read, "There are many people in the world who deny the existence ('astitwo') of God."
>
> After making my corrections, I went to Bhikari Bhai with the book. He was not used to hand-written manuscripts, and so I read it out to him. After the first sentence, he became angry and shouted, "What? What have you written, pundit? The 'bone' of God? Is God like

> some idol of idol-worshippers, made of wood and stone, that He can have bones?" I gaped at him in bewilderment. Bhikari Bhai was trying to convince me that God had no bones. I asked him in a quiet and polite tone, "Bhikari Bhai! Where have I mentioned bones?" He replied, "You have written: 'People who deny the 'asthi' of God.' Don't we know that 'asthi' means 'bones'?" So saying, he went out to the Sahib and blind with rage shouted, "Sahib brother! The pundit has defiled your work by mentioning unholy things." To the Sahib, Bhikari Bhai was a learned person, as he could haltingly read the gospels according to John, Luke, and Matthew in the printed Bible. Moreover, he was a Christian and therefore a person worthy of trust. What he was saying had to be true. I was an idol-worshipping evil Hindu and consequently should not be trusted. Without heeding my pleas, the Sahib started yelling at me. For a long time he would not talk to me properly. I never learned the fate of the manuscript he had authored.

In the second passage, Phakir Mohan translates – deliberately *mistranslating* this time, so as to *purposely* mislead – the request the subjects of the princely state of Dompara, where he is the Dewan, are making to the Sahib who has come to settle a dispute in which they are involved:

> His body completely covered in an English blanket the Sahib came out and stood in front of his tent, with only his eyes and face visible. The bench clerk and I stood beside him. The Sahib asked in Hindi, "Well, subjects! Do you agree that Phakir Mohan Babu, the Dewan, can act as mediator to settle your dispute with the King?" Four or five leading headmen cried out together, "Why have you bothered to come from Cuttack in the rain and the storm if the Dewan Babu is going to solve the problem?" Failing to make out what they were saying, the Sahib looked at me. I immediately told him, "They're saying that when the Dewan Babu is present to settle the dispute, why are you putting yourself through pain and

> suffering by coming from Cuttack in such rainy weather?"
>
> The Sahib responded, "Very good, very good! The Dewan Babu will do what is necessary. He's a competent man, and we trust him. Goodbye, subjects, goodbye!" Saying that, he hurried back into the tent and drew the curtain. The headmen looked at each other, wondering what had happened. What had the Sahib understood? The clerks were my friends and the orderlies my subordinates, and they drove the subjects away from the tent.

Mistrusted when he accurately translates, trusted when he deliberately mistranslates, Phakir Mohan embodies here the possibility that translation, and in particular translation in contexts of power and hierarchy, can constitute a form of betrayal, a possibility which in various countries of Europe led to the establishment of institutions – schools of oriental languages – to train their citizens as translators and interpreters and thereby avoid the necessity of having recourse to 'native' subjects. In both of the cases cited by Phakir Mohan in his autobiography translation is an occasion for misunderstanding; in both cases translation raises the question of what the parties involve actually 'share', of what actually is communicated, of the nature of their 'community'. As we have seen, these same questions arise, in all their complexity, in nineteenth-century multilingual Orissa.

Notes

1. In October 1899 he came out of retirement for a short stint of nine months as manager of the state of Kendrapara.

2. My thanks to Jagannath Prasad Das for drawing my attention to this.

3. An English translation of this novel has been published by University of California Press under the title *Six Acres and a Third*.

4. Thus John Boulton notes that Phakir Mohan's "[...] novels and stories were very popular, especially *Cha Mana Atha Guntha* [Six Acres and a Third]. When the account of Mangaraja's trial in this latter work began to appear in *Utkala Sahitya* some naive country folk came to Cuttack to attend the trial." (Boulton 1993, p. 237)
5. This is the central theme of *Six Acres and a Third*.

6. See, for example, Phakir Mohan's story "The Postmaster", in which the English-educated son comes to despise his adoring father as a symbol of all that is native and backward, going so far as to throw his ill father out of the house, after delivering "two English punches".

7. Consider the following tongue-in-cheek remarks by the narrator of *Six Acres and a Third* about how to describe his heroine's beauty: "According to classical literary techniques, all one has to do is find parallels between specific attributes of our heroine Champa and different fruits, such as bananas, jack-fruits, or mangoes, and common trees, leaves, and flowers. But such old-fashioned methods are no longer suitable; for our English-educated babus we now have to adopt an English style. Classical Indian poets compare the gait of a beautiful woman to that of an elephant. The babus frown on such a comparison; they would rather the heroine 'galloped like a horse'. The way English culture is rushing in like the first floods of the River Mahanadi, we suspect that our newly educated and civilized babus will soon appoint whip-cracking trainers to teach their gentle female companions to gallop."(*Six Acres and a Third*, 57)

8. All quotations from Phakir Mohan's *Autobiography* are from the as yet unpublished translation referred to in the previous paragraph.

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Translation, American English and the National Insecurities of Empire[1]

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Abstract

This essay inquires into the relationship between translation and empire in the United States. It argues that such a relationship cannot be understood apart from a critical appreciation of the Americanization, which is to say translation, of English from an imperial into a national language that required the re-organization of the nation's linguistic diversity into a hierarchy of languages resulting in the emergence of a monolingual hegemony. However, this American notion of translation as monolingual assimilation was always contested. More recently, we can see its limits in the context of the recent US occupation of Iraq. As an examination of the vexed position of Iraqi translators working for the US military shows, attempts to deploy American notions of translation in war have devolved instead into the circulation of what in fact remains untranslatable and so unassimilable to US imperialist projects.

Translation and Empire

Addressing a gathering of university presidents attending a conference at the State Department on January 5, 2006, then President George W. Bush spoke of the country's dire need for translators to shore up national security. He promised to spend $114 million to expand the teaching of so-called "critical languages" such as Arabic, Farsi, Chinese, and so forth at the university as well as K-12 levels as part of a new federal program called the National Security Language Initiative. The president then illustrated the importance of learning such languages in the following way:

> In order to convince people we care about them, we've got to understand their culture and show them we care about their culture. You know, when somebody comes to me and speaks Texan, I know they appreciate Texas culture. When somebody takes time to figure out how to speak Arabic, it means they're interested in somebody else's culture […]. We need intelligence officers who when somebody says something in Arabic or Farsi or Urdu, know what they're talking about. (Janofsky 2006)[2]

Bush's view on the learning of foreign languages, however crudely phrased, reflects certain ideas about translation and empire that have a long history. Since the Spanish conquest and religious conversion of the native peoples of the New World and the Pacific, various projects of translation have enabled as much as they have disabled the spread of Western empires. Spanish missionaries, for example, labored to Christianize native peoples in the Americas and the Pacific by preaching in the local languages while retaining Latin and Castilian as languages of ritual and rule. British philologists codified Indian languages to spread and consolidate imperial power and in a similar vein, French and Belgian missionaries and colonial administrators seized upon Swahili as an instrument for establishing knowledge of and control over Central Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[3]

In this essay, I want to focus on the United States to show not so much its similarities with and differences from earlier empires – though such comparisons are implicit throughout – but to delineate the historical specificity of a nationalist idea of translation in the making of an American empire. Can thinking about translation contribute to understanding the history of the US in relation to the spread of its power overseas? In particular, what role does American English as the national language of rule and allegiance have in shaping American ideas about the translation, and by extension, assimilation of foreign languages and their speakers? What are the limits of this American notion of translation as assimilation? At what point does such a connection fail? And what are the consequences of such a failure for thinking about America's imperial presence in the world?

To address these questions, let me return briefly to Bush's remarks above. In referring to his language as "Texan," Bush in fact indexes the centrality of English in mapping America's place in the world. Perhaps said half in jest, his reference to "Texan" as his native idiom, nonetheless, makes it seem as if it is also a kind of alien tongue analogous to Arabic, Farsi and Chinese. Like them, it would call for translation. But if Arabic, Urdu and Chinese are functionally equivalent to Texan, they could also be construed merely as dialectical variations of the universal lingua franca, which no doubt is imagined by Bush to be English. By placing them in a series as if they were all equally foreign, the President reduces their singularity. He evacuates foreign languages of their foreigness. From this perspective, learning one foreign language is no different from learning another in that they are all meant to refer to English. In this way, they come to be assimilated into a linguistic hierarchy, subsumed within the hegemony of an imperial lingua franca. The strangeness of "Arabic," "Farsi," etc., like that of "Texan" can be made to yield to a domesticating power that would render these languages wholly comprehensible to English speakers and available for conveying American meanings and intentions. As supplements to English, so-called "critical languages" are thought to be transparent and transportable instruments for the insinuation and imposition of America's will to power.[4]

The systematic instrumentalization of foreign languages to serve nationalist ends runs far and deep in American thinking. It is evident, for example, in the discourse of the Department of Defense. Recent documents such as the *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* describe knowledge of foreign languages as "an emerging core competency of our twenty-first century Total Force." The ability to translate is deemed "an essential war fighting skill," part of the "vital force capabilities for mission accomplishment." In this regard, critical languages," or what is sometimes referred to as "Global War on Terrorism languages" can only exist as part of a "critical weapons system." As a "war-fighting skill," translation is thus weaponized for the sake of projecting American power abroad while insuring security at home. Such sentiments circulate as

common sense in official circles regardless of political affiliations. Hence it is not surprising that Senator Daniel Akaka, a liberal Democrat and chair of the oversight committee on Homeland Security should state in a recent Congressional Hearing that "We know that proficiency in other languages is critical to ensuring our national security. The inability of law enforcement officers [and] intelligent officers […] to intercept information from [foreign] sources […] presents a threat to their mission and the well-being of our Nation."[5]

The current pre-occupation with foreign language proficiency has its roots in the Cold War. In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act in response to what it called an "educational emergency." In the midst of widespread anxieties about the threat posed by Soviet scientific advances such as the launching of the Sputnik satellite, the NDEA provided funding for the development of what Congress referred to as "those skills essential to national defense." Such skills included knowledge of what even then were already referred to as "critical languages." These were to be taught in area studies programs newly established in various universities and colleges. From the point of view of the State, the teaching of foreign languages was not about eroding the primacy of English. It was rather the reverse. Programs for the study of "critical languages" tended to be limited to graduate students and a smaller number of undergraduates. They were designed to create area studies experts whose knowledge of other cultures would help to shore up "our way of life" where, naturally, English held unchallenged supremacy.[6] We might paraphrase the logic of the law this way: By fostering the ability to translate, "we" make use of the foreigner's language in order to keep their native speakers in their proper place. In learning their language, "we" therefore do not wish to be any less "Americans," but in fact to be more so. For "we" do not speak a foreign language in order to be like them, that is, to assimilate into the culture of their native speakers. Instead, we do so because "we" want to protect ourselves from them and to insure that they remain safely within our reach whether inside or outside our borders.

From this brief historical sketch, we can glean the rough outlines of the State's interest in foreign languages – interests which, I hasten to add, did not always coincide with those of individual area studies scholars. To begin with, a nationalist imperative linked to an imperial project not surprisingly has governed the programmatic teaching of foreign languages. Translation can be useful to the extent that it responds to this imperative. It is possible then to begin to see an American notion of translation, at least as it is articulated from above and ratified, though unevenly, from below. Such a notion turns on at least four assumptions. First, there is the belief that language as such is merely an instrument of communication subservient to human control. It is thus considered to be no more than a malleable media for conveying human ideas and intentions, as if ideas and intentions could exist outside their material constitution in writing and speech. Second, that languages are inherently unequal in their ability to communicate, and as such, they can be arranged into a hierarchy, for example, "critical" over "less critical" languages, depending on their utility and reach. In the US context, American English as I mentioned earlier (and which I will return to later) has been deemed exceptionally suited above all other languages for conveying all things exceptionally American to the citizens of the country and to the rest of the world. Third, that given the exceptional qualities of American English as a kind of universal lingua franca, all other languages ought to be reducible to its terms and thereby assimilable into the national linguistic hierarchy. And fourth, that this process of reduction is precisely the task of translation. In times of emergency, translation is pressed to mobilize foreign languages as parts of a "complex weapons system" with which to secure America's borders even as it globalizes the nation's influence.

The US state thus sees the relative value of foreign languages in relation to their usefulness in the defense of the nation. Their translation is meant to inoculate American citizens from foreign threats. Through translation, foreign languages furnish the tools with which to understand and domesticate what is alien and unfamiliar. In this way, they are charged with the job of keeping

America at home in the world. In the official, and arguably popular imaginary, the foreign can only be recognized when it is subordinate to the domestic. It follows that the apprehension of alien tongues can only amount to their conversion into appendages of a common national speech, English.

Americanizing English

The relationship between the task of translation and the privileged place of English in the United States has a complex history. From its beginnings, the United States had always been a polyglot country.[7] While the majority of European settlers were English speaking, there had always been sizeable communities of non-Anglophones. By the late eighteenth century, over one fourth of the white population spoke a language other than English. In Pennsylvania alone, there were sufficiently large numbers of German speakers that Benjamin Franklin thought of publishing his first newspaper in that language, the *Philadelphische Zeitung* (1732) and another founding father, Benjamin Rush, even put forth the idea of establishing German-language colleges. Additionally, Dutch and French were spoken in various parts of the early Republic and so, too, were hundreds of Native American languages both in and outside the Union. There is also ample evidence to show that enslaved Africans in resisting their abject condition, continued to speak their native languages well into the nineteenth century, or in the case of Muslim Africans, knew Arabic, even as Americanized Africans developed a creolized version of English.[8] Continental expansion by way of purchase and war throughout the nineteenth century incorporated large numbers of non-Anglophone groups into the Union, such as French and Spanish speakers in the Northeast, South and Southwest, while the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848 was interpreted to mean that Mexicans who had chosen to stay in the newly annexed areas of the California and New Mexico territories retained the right to use Spanish in the public sphere. In the wake of the wars of 1898, the colonization of Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, of Hawai'i and Guam and other islands in the Pacific, and of the Philippines in Southeast Asia where as many as eighty languages are

spoken along with Spanish added to the linguistic complexity of the United States. In addition, waves of immigration from East, South and Southeast Asia, Eastern and Southern Europe, Scandinavia, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East through the last two hundred and fifty years have further intensified the nation's linguistic mix. Indeed, one can wander around large metropolitan areas like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago or Seattle today without having to hear or speak English. As the Canadian scholar Marc Shell once remarked, "if ever there were a polyglot place on the globe, other than Babel's spire, the US is it."[9]

It is important to note, however, that this history of linguistic diversity has unfolded alongside a history of insisting that the United States has always been, was meant to be, and must forever remain a monolingual nation. John Jay for example writes in the Federalist Papers, "Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people, a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion."[10] Conceived as Anglophone by Divine dispensation, "America" is understood here to be a unitary formation, where language, religion and kinship are seamlessly woven into each other. Still, in the aftermath of the American Revolution, the fact remained that "English" was the language of the British colonizer. It could not become the language of the new Republic without first being transformed, or better yet, translated, into a distinctly American idiom. Post-colonial figures such as John Adams, Noah Webster and Benjamin Franklin felt that British English bore all the hallmarks of the decadence of its native speakers. Unlike the English of Milton, Locke and Shakespeare, Americans thought that British English of the 1780s was in a state of serious decline. "Taste is corrupted by luxury," Webster intoned, "utility is a forgotten pleasure; genius is buried in dissipation or prostituted to exalt and to damn contending factions […]". (Webster 1789, 178) For post-colonial Americans then, there was a pressing need to "improve and perfect" English, to remake it into something wholly American. At stake was nothing less than the very survival and progress of the nation.

John Adams, for example, wrote optimistically about the prospects of this new American language. It would be destined to become, like Latin, "the language of the world," furnishing "universal connection and correspondence with all nations." (Cited in Crawford 1992, 26-27, 32.) Once Americanized, English would serve as the medium for imparting the exemplary nature of the nation abroad. It would also serve as the means for cultivating a democratic citizenry. According to Adams, the "refinement" and "improvement" of the English language was essential in a democracy where "eloquence will become the instrument for recommending men to their fellow-men, and the principle means of advancement through various ranks and offices." (Ibid.) In a society where aristocratic filiations no longer mattered, "eloquence," or a certain facility with the national language would be an important way of making and re-making reputations and delineating social distinctions.

Early American concerns with the transformation of English echoed in some ways long standing European attempts at reforming vernacular languages in the wake of the hegemony of Latin. As early as the momentous year of 1492, for example, the Spanish humanist, Antonio de Nebrija in the preface of his grammar of the Castilian language wrote that "language is the perfect instrument of empire." Looking back at Antiquity, Nebrija concluded that "language was always the companion of empire; therefore, it follows that together they begin, grow, and flourish and together they fall." Securing Castilian hegemony in the Iberian Peninsula and spreading it overseas would thus require the codification of the Castilian language. (Nebrija 1926)

In eighteenth century England, political, commercial and imperial expansion led to calls for linguistic reform with the view of establishing a "systematized doctrine of correctness." (Howe 2004, 15) Various attempts were made to standardize spelling and punctuation along with the codification of grammar in order to lend to English the uniformity necessary for governing all spheres of life.

In part, this search for linguistic regularity grew out of a widespread anxiety among English writers that their language had been on the decline from the standards of Latin and earlier English writing. Jonathan Swift complained in 1712 that "From the civil war to this present time I am apt to doubt whether the corruptions in our language have not at least equaled the refinements to it." And John Dryden remarked that the inadequacies of English in his time forced him to first think in Latin as way of arriving at the proper English expression. John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* warned that one of the dangers to forging contracts was the "doubtful and uncertain use of Words, or (which is the same) indetermined Ideas, which they are made to stand for." Thus, the need to "purify" English and guard against its "degeneration" from arbitrary foreign borrowings and idiomatic "barbarisms" was inseparable from securing the social contract on the basis of a commonly understood language of consent. So did Samuel Johnson regard his task in writing his dictionary as one of "refin[ing] our language to grammatical purity [and] clear[ing] it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations." The "purification" of English would allow the English themselves to "ascertain" and "perfect" its use. Such would lead, Joseph Priestly wrote, to the spread of "their powers and influence abroad, and their arts, sciences and liberty at home […]."[11] These projects of linguistic reform tied to the imperatives of both domestic order and imperial expansion clearly influenced American post-colonials such as Noah Webster in their efforts to, as he saw it, "redeem" English from the "degradations" of empire. (Webster 1862, xiii.)

For Noah Webster, the Revolution that overthrew British imperial authority should also continue with the overthrow of its linguistic standards. "As an independent nation," he wrote in 1789, "our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as in government. Great Britain whose children we are, and whose language we speak, should no longer be our standard, for the taste of her writers is already corrupted and her language on the decline […]." (Webster 1789, 21) Ridding "ourselves" of a corrupt state necessitated purifying its "corrupt" speech. Hence, while "we"

have abandoned the mother, we can retain the mother tongue only if it can be reformed and turned into "our" national language. The emergence of this revitalized American English, Webster speculated, would prove to be momentous. In the face of its inevitable advance "all other languages [spoken in the country] will waste away – and within a century and a half, North America will be peopled with hundreds of millions of men all speaking the same language [… . T]he consequence of this uniformity [of language] will be an intimacy of social intercourse hitherto unknown, and a boundless diffusion of knowledge." (Ibid. See also Webster 1862, xiii.)

Webster thus envisions the national language to be poised between overcoming its origins in the "corrupt" language of empire while laying the foundation for a kind of new empire over all other languages in the Republic. Once established, this "common tongue" promised to subsume linguistic differences into what Webster calls a "uniformity." At the same time, and for the same reason, American English would foster an "intimacy of social intercourse hitherto unknown." Its telecommunicative force, that is, its capacity to bring distances up close, would conjure a perfect union. But it would be one where poly-lingual realities would have to give way to a monolingual hegemony.

In his attempts to wean English from its British origins, Webster not surprisingly laid great stress in reforming by simplifying spelling in order to standardize a distinctly American pronunciation. His spellers and his dictionary (after meeting with initial resistance and ridicule) came to be widely used in schools and by the American public. Addressing the readers of his *Dictionary* as "my fellow citizens," Webster viewed his linguistic work to be part of "the common treasure of patriotic exertions." The United States emerges here as the rejection of a certain Europe, one "grown old in folly, corruption and tyranny […] where literature is declining and human nature debased." By developing a "purity of language," this "infant Empire," as Webster calls it, would come to "promote virtue and patriotism." (Webster 1862, xiv; Webster 1968, 14-15.) In a similar vein, he was also concerned with correcting what he

regarded as the "barbarisms" and "gross violations" that local idioms committed against English as evident in the "vicious pronunciation which had prevailed extensively among the common people of this country." (Webster 1862, xi) He urged Americans to "unite in destroying provincial and local distinctions, in resisting the stream of corruptions that is ever flowing from ignorance and pride, and in establishing one uniform standard of elegant pronunciation […]." It is in the interest of protecting the language from "disfigurement" that Webster put forth his orthographic reforms in what would become his remarkably popular spelling book.[12] "Nothing but the establishment of schools and some uniformity in the use of books can annihilate differences in speaking and preserve the purity of the American tongue," Webster wrote. (1789, 19)

Like Adams' interest in the popular acquisition of eloquence, Webster's fixation on elocution and "a sameness in pronunciation" grew out of a larger political concern: that the that local variants of English would inevitably, no matter how small "excite ridicule – [for] a habit of laughing at the singularities of strangers is followed by disrespect; and without respect, friendship is a name, and social intercourse a mere ceremony […]. Small causes such as a nickname or a vulgar tone in speaking have actually created a dissocial spirit between the inhabitants of a different state." Left to themselves, linguistic differences would proliferate and inflame "pride and prejudice," leading Webster to worry that without "uniformity" in speech, "our political harmony" would be at serious risk. (1789, 20)

It is possible to see in Webster's linguistic reforms a practice of translation working *within* the same language, or what some scholars have called intra-lingual translation.[13] We can think, for example, of such locutions as "in other words," "put differently," "that is to say," "for example," etc. as speech acts that indicate the working of translation within the same language. In Webster, intra-lingual translation is two-fold. The translation of the more mannered British speech into the more straightforward American idiom occurs alongside the attempt to contain or "annihilate," as Webster puts it,

dialectical variants of American English. The national language thus emerges from a kind of double translation. On the one hand, the original language is altered, its spellings "simplified" and "purified." On the other hand, what Webster referred to as the "shameful mutilations" wrought by local idioms are corrected and superseded. (1789, 103-122) American English as the language of "political harmony" and democratic civility requires as its condition of possibility the violent reworking of differences into sameness. The original in all its "corrupt," which is to stay stylistic profusion, is to be sublated, while local variants, which is to say all other competing translations, are to be suppressed. Out of this prescribed supersession and suppression, a "uniformity" of speech is thought to arise, one that would underwrite the national security of the Republic. Translation within the same language thereby brings about the promise of a lingua franca connecting citizens across geographical and social divides, allowing them mobility and advancement. But it also requires the "annihilation" of differences, effecting the systematic annexation of the mother tongue and her wayward children into the governing home of a single national speech.

I want to hypothesize that the Americanization, which is to say, translation, of English into a national language popularized by Webster in his spelling books and dictionary, served as an important model for dealing with foreign languages in the years to come. In the following section, I argue that the early post-colonial history of vernacularizing English offered a way to assimilate non-Anglophone languages into a linguistic hierarchy, thereby containing polylingualism within the borders of national monolingualism.

The Babel of Monolingualism

In the wake of Noah Webster's reforms, it is not difficult to detect in both liberal and conservative writers a recurring insistence on the unassailable link between American English and American nationality conceived as synonymous with American democracy. One is seen to be inconceivable without the other. A common

language ruling over all others is held to be the prerequisite for achieving a common life steeped in an egalitarian ethos. Non-Anglophones have long been expected by the nation and by the state – at least since the later nineteenth and twentieth century – to exchange their mother tongues for the national language in order to become full citizens. (Heath 1992) Equality under the law implied – though it did not legally mandate – the inequality of languages. Non-English speakers marked as foreigners are expected to publicly set aside their first language in acknowledgement of the ever-present demand to speak the lingua franca. The priority of the latter lay in the fact that it is the language of laws and rights. In this regard, it is useful to note that American English has never been declared the official language of the United States, though a number of states have written such a provision into their own constitution.[14] Rather, its hegemony is based precisely on the fact that it seemed to arise as a handmaiden of democracy, the lingua franca with which to claim equal protection under the law. Viewed as *the* obligatory common language, English is thus invested with an uncommon power that no other idiom has been able to match.

The systematic privileging of American English not surprisingly sustains a pattern of marginalizing the mother tongues of native peoples and non-Anglophone immigrants alike. At the best of times and places, such marginalization might give rise to a liberal tolerance for bilingualism, whereby the first language is seen as a way of bridging the speaker's transition to English. Within the context of this liberal view, the retention of the mother tongue is a means with which to soften the shocks of assimilation. Rather than an alternative, the native language is regarded like any other foreign language: as an instrument for consolidating the dominant place of English.[15] In times of crisis and war, however, the marginalization of non-Anglophone languages tend to give rise to urgent calls for either the rapid assimilation or expulsion of their speakers. For instance, we read in the annual report of the federal commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1887 a great animosity towards native languages commonly held by whites. In the interest of crushing Indian resistance and producing among them a "sameness of sentiment and

thought," the commissioner urged that "their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted." It was only through English that Native Americans, rendered irredeemably foreign in the eyes of white settlers, could be converted into real Americans, "acquir[ing] a knowledge of the Constitution and their rights and duties there under." For unlike Indian languages which were regarded as "utterly useless," English was seen as "the language of the greatest and most powerful, enterprising nationality beneath the sun (sic) […] which approaches nearer than any other nationality to the perfect protection of its people […]."[16] In the name of maintaining this "perfect protection," translation would not only substitute the first for a second language, but obliterate the former and presumably the very cultures that it sustained.

In a similar vein, Theodore Roosevelt wrote in 1917 about the danger of harboring immigrants who, by virtue of speaking a foreign language were most likely "paying allegiance to a foreign power." Riding the wave of anti-immigrant hysteria directed particularly at German speakers that swept the country amidst the First World War, Roosevelt explicitly links the question of language to national security: "We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language […]. It would be not merely a misfortune but a crime to perpetuate differences of language in this country." For Roosevelt, the "crime" of allowing linguistic diversity to prosper would result in opening up the country to foreign agents who in their comings and goings would transform America into a "huge polyglot boarding-house." Doing so would subvert the very idea of America as a "crucible [that] must melt all who are cast in it […] into one American mould." As "children of the crucible," Americans were the products of "the melting pot of life in this free land," where "all the men and women of all nations who come hither emerge as Americans and nothing else […]. Any force which attempts to retard that assimilative process is a force hostile to the highest interest of the country […]."[17] English of course would be the measure and means of assimilation. Being "American and nothing else […]" meant speaking English and nothing else. Roosevelt thus situates the monolingual citizen on the side of

national identity and security. But in doing so, he also places him or her in relation to the menacing presence of his or her shadowy other: the polyglot foreigner whose uncertain allegiance and rootless existence make it into a dangerous enemy.

In the context of this militant monolingualism, we sense how the work of translation was geared to go in only one direction: towards the transformation of the foreign into an aspect of the domestic, and thus of the plurality of native tongues into the imperious singularity of a national one. The imperative of assimilation underlay the substitution of languages so that translation was ordered towards not only the subordination of the original but to its outright abandonment. But there is something more. Roosevelt and those who follow in his wake – for example, the "100% American" nativists of the early twentieth century, the advocates of the Official English constitutional amendment of the 1980s, the proponents of English Only laws in the 1990s, all the way up to a broad range of Americans today who, anxious about "terrorists" and "immigrants," and often conflating the two, indignantly ask why they should have to be told by phone answering services and ATM machines to "press '1' for English" and "oprima dos por Espanol"[18] – all of them in their mania for monolingualism see translation as a kind of labor that only non-Anglophones should have to do. Since it is "they" who must assimilate, it is therefore "they," not "us," who must translate their native tongues into English. The reverse would be unthinkable. For as citizens of this country, aren't we already fully assimilated? Haven't we already successfully forgotten our polylingual origins? As such, aren't we entitled to think that we have arrived at a condition of complete monolingualism?

Indeed, because it is brought about by a process of translation – of repressing one's first language in favor of a second – monolingual citizenship is assumed to be a kind of achievement rather than a limitation. Among other things, this achievement brings with it a certain freedom, which is nothing less than the emancipation from the labor of translation. It is not surprising then that the recurrent of signs of linguistic difference are experienced by

those who think of themselves as assimilated, or perhaps on their way to being so, either as an occasion for racially tinged humor, or as a kind of "cultural assault." In either case, evidence of an enduring polylinguialism appear to English-only speakers as an unsettling return of what should have been repressed. The sight of Chinese or Hindi writing on billboards or the sound of Tagalog or Russian can only infringe on the latter's freedom from translation and the enjoyment that accrues to monolingual entitlement.

The popular appeal of American English from this perspective lies precisely in its capacity to grant American citizens the powerful illusion of freedom not only from their origins. Monolingualism as the successful substitution of one's first language for a second also affords the semblance of release from the demands of repressing one language in favor of another. Only those still dwelling in "polyglot boarding houses" of the nation are expected to toil in the fields and factories of translation. By contrast, fluency in English as the privileged proof of full citizenship – certainly in a cultural though not necessarily in a legal sense – means simply this: no further translation is necessary. The end of translation, assimilation, thus marks an end to translation. It is the cure to the curse of linguistic difference bedeviling humans since Babel's destruction.

Or is it?

The historical wishfulness for and of monolingual citizenship grows in part out of the remarkable tenacity of the myth of America as exceptional and exemplary in its capacity to melt differences into sameness.[19] This exceptionalist faith with its Christian genealogy arguably lies at the basis of American nationalism. It is worth noting, however, that the fable of the melting pot is often accompanied by its opposite image, the fragmentation and confusion of Babel. To cite just one example, the historian Arthur Schlesinger in response to the post-civil rights emergence of multicultural and multi-lingual polities wrote: "The national ideal had once been *e pluribus unum*. Are we now to belittle *unum* and

glorify *pluribus*? Will the center not hold? Or will the melting pot yield to the Tower of Babel?" (Cited in Shell 1993, 104) The linguist and one-time senator from California, S.I. Hayakawa used to put it more bluntly in his campaign mailers for a constitutional amendment to make English the official language: "Melting pot, yes. Tower of Babel, no." (Cited in Crawford 1992, 100) "Babel" here is another version of Roosevelt's "polyglot boarding-house," a country besieged by Webster's "dissocial spirit." It is the dystopic counterpoint to the monolingual melting pot where the confusion of tongues augurs national collapse.

It is perhaps worth recalling the story of Babel in the Book of Genesis. Coming after the Great Flood, it relates the fate of the descendents of yet another Noah who sought to build a Tower that would reach up to the heavens. It is instructive to note in this regard that the word "babel" has two meanings: one, the more common from the Hebrew *balal* means "to confuse." But the other, seen in the word's Akkadian root "*babilu*," means "gateway of God." "Babel" thus harbors two mutually opposed meanings: a state of confusion and a passage to unification. The very word encapsulates the allegory of exile from the state of perfect unity between words and things, between signs and their referents, thereby making translation into an unending task. Men's attempts to build a tower that would have led to the heavens was a way of saying that they did not need a messiah, or what in the New Testament would be pronounced as the Word of God; rather, that they themselves could save themselves since they already spoke one language. Seeking to punish their hubris, God decides to "confound their language" and scatter them about the face of the earth. Folk retellings and pictorial depictions of this story show the Tower itself laid to waste by God's wrath.[20]

In the American invocations of Babel, its double meaning is usually forgotten. Only its divine dispersion into a state of linguistic confusion is recalled, not its linguistic unity prior to God's punishment. It is the fallen Babel with its wild profusion of languages that is made to stand in stark contrast to the idealized

linguistic order of the United States. As Babel redeemed, the US is precisely where *unum* comes to rule over *pluribus.* Yet, the structural proximity of "Babel" to "America" suggests that the latter does not simply negate the former but in fact retraces its fate. "Babel" is the specter that haunts American English. It informs, in the strong sense of that word, the hierarchy of languages on which monolingual citizenship rests. For as we saw, the hegemony of English is an *effect* of translation, both intra-lingual, within English, and inter-lingual, between English and other languages. In this way, national monolingualism is itself divided, requiring even as it disavows the labor of translation. The universality of the lingua franca is thus radically contingent on the endurance and mutation of regional dialects and creole speech: Spanglish, and Taglish, Hawai'ian pidgin, black English, and rural and regional dialects of all sorts to name only a few. Similarly, American monolingualism is never quite free from the polylingualism of its non-Anglophone citizenry: native peoples of the continent and the islands, first generation immigrants from all over the world, Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico and Latin America spread out across the country, and so on. Demanding recognition and participation in the public sphere, some push for bilingual education and others for multi-lingual ballots. Many continue to inhabit mediascapes, from print to TV to radio, in their native languages, and expect to press something other than "1" for English on the phone or the ATM machine. We can see then how "America" is less the New World repudiation of "Babel" as it is its uncanny double. For Babel is not the catastrophic downfall of the city upon the hill, but in fact its condition of possibility. How so?

Recall that the allegory of Babel connotes the state of unregulated linguistic difference. To dwell in this state requires the constant labor of translation – constant insofar as no single act of translation can ever exhaust, much less reduce, the singularity of any particular language. "Babel" therefore reveals not only the necessity of translation but also its limits. The persistence of difference means that there is something about languages that resists assimilation and therefore translation into a single linguistic hierarchy, into a single

Tower, as it were, much less into Twin Towers. It is possible, for example, to translate Tagalog or Spanish poetry into English (or vice versa), but not without losing the rhythmic elements and myriad references of the original. To compensate for this loss, the translator must provide explanatory notes, thereby introducing an excess that was not there in the original. Subtracting while adding, translations always come up short even as they exceed the original. Thus the impossibility of definitive translations, given that there is no perfect equivalence of one language with another. Rather, there are only the uneven and imperfect approximations. In this way, each language remains to a significant degree untranslatable even as it calls out for more translation. It is as if in translating your Arabic into my Texan, and my Texan into your Arabic, we find ourselves mutually mis-translating, then trying again, only to add to our earlier mis-translations. And since my Texan and your Arabic are incommensurable, neither of them can be annexed to a single lingua franca. Instead, what we come to understand is that there is something that resists our understanding. What we end up translating is the sense that something in our speech remains untranslatable and yet remains the basis for any future translations.

This Babel of on-going translation amid what remains untranslatable is the "other" that is set against "America." Imagined as an egalitarian community based on a unifying language that as Webster wrote, "lays to waste" other idioms, America is usually conceived as the overcoming of Babel. As the "melting pot," it is that which, as we saw, was ordained to put an end to translation and the untranslatability of all originals. But this idealized vision of America requires that there be a Babel to vanquish and overcome, again and again. For without the specter of the untamed profusion of tongues, the New World myth of a monolingual America would make no ideological sense. At the same time, the very nature of Babel guarantees that there will never be such a thing as a perfectly monolingual country. To put it another way, Babel simultaneously makes and unmakes America as myth *and* as the reality that requires such a myth in order to make sense of itself in the world. To translate this further would strain the very limits of translation, but

let me try: there is America only if there is Babel. But this also means that there can be no America when there is Babel.

Nowhere is this strange intimacy and impossible possibility of Babel and America more apparent in recent years than in the US occupation of the country of Iraq where the very site of the biblical Babel lies, or Babylon as it more commonly referred to, along the Euphrates River near present-day Baghdad. It is there where the allegory of Babel is literalized even as the metaphorical towers of American exceptionalism are re-erected. In US-occupied Iraq, as I hope to show, translation is dislodged and dislocated from its subservience to assimilation. Rather than render language suppliant to the will of its speakers, translation in this modern day American Babel confounds both the identity and intentions of its users. Yielding neither a stable social nor linguistic order, translation instead brings about the on-going suspension of both. In the confused conditions of military occupation, the work of translation, as we shall see, is constantly arriving at its limits, overtaken by the return of that which remains untranslatable. How does this happen?

Untranslatability and War

Since the beginning of the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, a number of news accounts have appeared about the role, at once indispensable and troubling, of Arabic-speaking translators in the occupation. I want to set aside for the moment the role of American and Arab American translators and instead concentrate on Iraqi nationals serving as translators for the US military, though I suspect that my remarks about the latter will have some implications for understanding the role of the former.[21]

Translators are also called interpreters, which is why among the US soldiers they are popularly referred to as “terps.” Unlike the Americans they work for, interpreters are forced to hide their identities. They often cover their faces with ski masks and sun glasses as they venture outside the military bases and adopt American pseudonyms such as “Eric” or “Sally” so as to protect

themselves from being singled out for insurgent attacks. At the same time, their identity within the US military remains unsettled and unsettling inasmuch as their presence generates both relief and suspicion among soldiers. Some interpreters earn the military's trust and gratitude and a handful of the Iraqi nationals are granted asylum to move to the US. The small numbers who manage to acquire visas do so usually through the personal intercession of the particular American soldier they worked for rather than through any systematic US policy to resettle them. Once relocated in the US, they come to depend on the kindness of the soldier who brought them while often avoiding other Iraqis for fear of suffering reprisals.[22] Aliens in their new surroundings, they continue to be alienated from their own countrymen. Other translators who are killed, especially among the very small number of women, are treated with tender regard, often memorialized by US soldiers as "one of us."[23]

Still, doubts linger amid reports of some interpreters sending information to the insurgents. As one US soldier puts it, "These guys (i.e., interpreters) have guts to do what they do. And we'd be nowhere without them. We'd be lost. But you always have this fear that they might be leaking op-sec (operational security) stuff. You want to trust them but you're still reserved."[24] Given the inability of most American soldiers to speak Arabic, interpreters, as one report puts it, provide the "public face of the occupation."[25] Essential in conducting military operations, they nonetheless are thought to threaten them by leaking information. They mediate the vast gulf that separates American soldiers from the Iraqi people, often defusing conflict by being able to decipher, for example, documents that to Americans may look like plans for smuggling weapons but turn out to be in fact no more than sewing patterns.[26] Without them, soldiers "were as good as deaf and dumb on the battlefield," as one Marine told a Senate hearing.[27] Yet, despite their essential function in fighting insurgents, they are also feared as potential insurgents themselves. Moving between English and Arabic, translators allow largely monolingual Americans to communicate with Iraqis and for this reason are integrated into the ranks, given uniforms and salaries. But their loyalty is always suspect. Interpreters are the only ones

searched within the base, especially after every meal, forbidden to carry cell phones and cameras, send e-mail, play video games, and as of this writing, even swim in the pool.[28] They are subjected to incessant racial insults – "raghead," "jihad," "camel jockey" among others – at the same time that they are forced to go out of base with neither weapons nor armor to protect themselves.[29] Just by being who they are, translators thus find themselves stirring interest and sending out messages beyond what they had originally intended. Without meaning to, they generate meanings outside of their control. In this way, they come across as alien presences that seem to defy assimilation even as they are deemed indispensable to the assimilation of aliens. They are "foreign in a domestic sense," as much as they are domestic in a sense that remains enduringly foreign.[30]

It is precisely because they are of such great value to the US forces that translators are targeted by insurgents and reviled by most Iraqis. They are accused of being mercenaries, collaborating with the US to kill other Iraqis so that they face constant threats of being kidnapped and killed themselves. One Iraqi interpreter with the pseudonym "Roger" says, "If you look at our situation, it's really risky and kind of horrible. Outside the wire, everybody looks at us like we are back-stabbers, like we betrayed our country and our religion, and then inside the wire they look at us like we might be terrorists."[31] Interpreters thus come to literalize that old adage: "traduttore – tradditore," at times with tragic results. Stranded between languages and societies, translators are also exiled from both. Neither native nor foreign, they are both at the same time. Their uncanny identity triggers recurring crisis among all sides. It is as if their capacity for mediation endows them with a power to disturb and destabilize far out of proportion to their socially ascribed and officially sanctioned positions. But it is a power that also constitutes their profound vulnerability.

These and many other stories about interpreters give us a sense that within the context of the US Occupation of Iraq, translation works only too well. That is, it produces effects and

relations that are difficult if not impossible to curb. Faced with the translator, both Americans and Iraqis are gripped with the radical uncertainty about the interpreter's loyalty and identity. Translators come across as simultaneously faithful and unfaithful, or more precisely, faithful to their task by being unfaithful to their origins. Rather than promote understanding and hospitality, the work of translation seems to spawn misgivings and misrecognition. In dealing with an interpreter, one is addressed in one's own language – Arabic or English – by an other who also has access to an idiom and culture alien because unavailable to one. Faced with the need to depend on such an other, one responds with ever intensifying suspicions. Such suspicions are repeatedly manifested in racial insults, often escalating into violence and in some cases, murder, thereby stoking even more suspicions. Iraqis see in the translator one of their own used against them, a double agent who bears their native language now loaded like a weapon with alien demands. For the majority of US soldiers whose English only cut them off from rather than connect them with Iraqis, the indispensability of interpreters is also the source of the latter's duplicity, making them potential insurgents. From all sides, "terps" appear as enemies disguised as friends whose linguistic virtuosity masks their real selves and their true intentions.

The task of the translator is thus mired in a series of intractable and irresolvable contradictions. It begins with the fact that translation itself is a highly volatile act. As the displacement, replacement, transfer and transformation of the original into another language, translation is incapable of fixing meanings across languages. Rather, as with the story of Babel, it consists precisely in the proliferation and confusion of possible meanings and therefore in the impossibility of arriving at a single one. For this reason, it repeatedly brings into crisis the locus of address, the interpretation of signs, the agency of mediation, and the ethics of speech. Hence is it impossible for imperialists as well as those who are opposed to them to fully control much less recuperate its workings. The treachery and treason inherent in translation in a time of war are the insistent counter-points to the American notion of translation as

monolingual assimilation with its promise of democratic communication and the just exchange of meanings. In the body of the interpreter, translation reaches its limits. As we've seen, "terps" as the uncanny doubles of US soldiers and Iraqi insurgents, are productive neither of meaning nor domination, but only the circulation of what remains untranslatable. It would seem then that in the war on terror, translation is at permanent war with itself.

Translation *at* war and *as* war: how do we understand this? I want to conclude with a brief response to this question. If translation is like war, is it possible that war is also like translation? It is possible I think if we consider that the time of war is like the movement of translation. There is a sense that both lead not to the privileging of order and meaning but to emergence of what I've been calling the untranslatable. "Wartime" spreads what Nietzsche called in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war, "an all consuming fever" that creates a crisis in historical thinking. So much of the way we think about history, certainly in the Westernized parts of our planet since the Enlightenment, is predicated on a notion of time as the succession of events leading towards increasingly more progressive ends. Wartime decimates that mode of thinking. Instead, it creates mass disorientation at odds with the temporal rhythms of progress and civilization. In this way, wartime is what Sam Weber refers to as "pure movement." It is a "whirlwind […] that sweeps everything up in its path and yet goes nowhere. As a movement, the whirlwind of war marks time, as it were, inscribing it in a destructive circularity that is both centripetal and centrifugal, wrenching things and people out of their accustomed places, displacing them and with them, all [sense] of place as well […]. Wartime thus wrecks havoc with traditional conceptions of space and time and with the order they make possible." (Weber 1997, 92.)

It is precisely the disordering effect of war on our notions of space and time that brings it in association with translation that, as we saw, scatters meaning, displaces origins, and exposes the radical undecidability of references, names and addressees. Put differently, translation in wartime intensifies the experience of untranslatability

and thus defies the demands of imperial assimilation. It is arguably this stark exposure of translation's limits that we see, for example, in the uncanny body of the Iraqi interpreter. Such a body, now ineradicably part of our own national-imperial body politic, generates the sense of severe disorientation, sending back to us a Babel-like scattering of discourses and opinions about the war. Just as civilizational time engenders the permanent possibility of wartime, the time that is out of joint and out of whack, so the time of translation is haunted by untranslatability, the feverish circulation of misrecognition and uncertainty from which we can find neither safety nor security, national or otherwise.

Notes

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2. For more details on the National Security Language Initiative, see http://exchanges.state.gov/NSLI/; http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/58733.htm; http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/01/01052006.html. It is unclear, however, as to how much of the funding for this program has actually been released as of the date of this writing. I am grateful to Mary Pratt for referring me to this story on Bush's language initiative.

3. For the Spanish empire, see for example MacCormack 1991 and Rafael 1993. For the British empire, see Cohn 1987; and for Central Africa, see Fabian 1986.

4. The logocentrism that frames this American notion of translation predicated on the re-organization of foreign languages into a hierarchical relationship to American speech is comparable to that of

sixteenth century Spanish missionary ideas about translation that regarded all languages as gifts from God. They were thus available for the conversion of their native speakers, a process that among other things entailed the translation of native speech into vessels for carrying and conveying Christ, the Word of God. All words at all times and all places were then mere derivatives of the Divine lingua franca. For an extended discussion of this Spanish history of colonial translation, see Rafael 1993, especially chapter 1.

5. United States, "Lost in Translation: A Review of the Federal Government's Efforts to Develop a Foreign Language Strategy," Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2007, pp.2; 40. See also United States, Department of Defense, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap,* January, 2005 available at http://www.defense.gov/news/Mar2005/d20050330roadmap.pdf

6. For the text of the National Defense Education Act, see the appendix in Clowse 1981 (162-165). See also Bigelow and Legters 1964. For critical examinations of area studies in the wake of the Cold War, see Miyoshi and Harootunian 2002, and Rafael 1994.

7. See Shell 1993; Lepore 2002, 27-29; Dodd 1993; Heath 1992; Sagarin and Kelly 1985; Fishman 1966.

8. See Gomez 1998, 170-184; Lepore 2002, 120-121; Dillard 1973.

9. Shell 1993, 105. The contemporary hegemony of English notwithstanding, the persistence of linguistic diversity in the United States remains impressive. See for example the Modern Language Association Language Map, http://www.mla.org/map_main.

10. In Hamilton *et al* 1966, 6.

11. For an insightful discussion of eighteenth century projects for reforming English, see Howe 2004, 13-27. The quotations above are taken from these pages.

12. Webster 1968, 6-7. First published in 1783, Webster's blue-backed spellers sold close to ten million copies by 1823 and was the most commonly used book for teaching American children how to read clear

up the latter nineteenth century. Frederick Douglass credits Webster's spellers with helping him to gain fluency in the national language. Indeed, sales of the books experienced one of its most dramatic spikes shortly after the Civil War when freedmen sought it out in order to acquire the literacy that had been forbidden to them as slaves. See Lepore 2002, 6, 125-126.

13. See, for example, Derrida 1997 and 2001. See also Emad 1993. Indeed, much of Heidegger's writings exemplify the inescapable task of translating within the same language. For a brilliant ethnographic study of the poetics and politics of intra-lingual translation in the context of Javanese, see Siegel 1986.

14. For the texts of various "official English" amendments to state constitutions, see "State Official Language Statutes and Constitutional Amendments," in Crawford 1992, 132-35.

15. Sagarin and Kelly 1992, 42; Solarz 1992; "The English Plus Alternative," in Crawford 1992, 151-53; "Native American Language Act," in Crawford 1992, 155-57. Indeed, the Native American Language Act of 1990 which provides official encouragement, though not funding, for the learning and preservation of Native languages, including Hawai'ian, designates these languages as "foreign," so that studying them allows students to fulfill credits towards the satisfaction of a foreign language requirement.

16. Atkins 1887, v. II, 18-19. For the vicissitudes of Indian language policies under the US government, Reyhner 1992.

17. Roosevelt 1926, 35, 45-46. I also cite the shorter version that appears in Crawford 1992, 84-85. See also "The Children of the Crucible," *Outlook,* September 19, 1917, 80.

18. See for example Lizze 2007, 48. For accounts of nativist insistence on English as a touchstone of assimilation, see Higham 1955, Kellor 1916.

19. For a genealogy of American "exceptionalism," see Rogers 1998. See also Elliott 2006, 184-218.

20. Samuel Weber has discussed in detail the complications of the word "Babel" in Weber 2005. For an important explication of Babel, see Derrida 2002.

21. See for example the case of Captain James Yee, who had converted to Islam and, fluent in Arabic, was assigned to serve as a chaplain to detainees in Guantanamo. In 2003, he was arrested on charges of espionage, though he was convicted of much lesser charges a few years later. Yee's example is discussed in Mary Louise Pratt's remarkably insightful essay, "Harm's Way: Language and the Contemporary Arts of War" (Pratt 2009).

22. Deborah Amos, "Iraqi Interpreters Grateful for US Troops' Support," *National Public Radio,* October 17, 2007; Joseph B. Frazier, "Oregon Guardsman Returns the Favor for his Iraqi Interpreter," *Associated Press,* in *Seattle Post-Intelligencer,* December 24, 2007; Michael Breen, "The Debt We Owe Iraqi Interpreters," *Christian Science Monitor,* December 8, 2008.

23. John Koopman, "Interpreter's Death Rattles Troops," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 1, 2004; Moni Basu, "Iraqi Interpreters Risk their Lives to aid GI's," *Cox News Services,* November 2, 2005; Howard LaFranci, "Remembering Allan: A tribute to Jim Carroll's Interpreter," *Christian Science Monitor,* March 6, 2006; .

24. Charles Levinson, "Iraq's 'Terps' Face Suspicions on Both Sides," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 17, 2006, also available at http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0417/p01s01-woiq.html; Nick Wadhams, "Iraqi Interpreters Face Death Threats from Countrymen, Alienation from U.S. Troops," *Associated Press,* January 23, 2006.

25. Levinson, "Iraq's 'Terps" Face Suspicions on Both Sides." See also Ann Scott Tyson, "Always in Hiding, an Iraqi Interpreter's Anguished Life," *Christian Science Monitor,* September 15, 2004.

26. John M. Glionna and Ashraf Khalil, "'Combat Linguists' Battle on Two Fronts," *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 2005; Matthew D. LaPlante, "Speaking the Language; A Vital Skill; Interpreters in high demand in Iraq," *The Salt Lake Tribune,* October 13, 2005; C. Mark Brinkley, "Translators' Fears Disrupt Vital Lines of Communication," *Army Times,* December 8, 2004

27. Amos, "Iraqi Interpreters Grateful for US Troops' Support"

28. Ibid.

29. David Washburn, "Dangerous Work of Contractors in Iraq," *San Diego Union-Tribune,* Nov. 22, 2006.

30. The term "foreign [to the United States] in a domestic sense" comes of course from the concurring opinion of Supreme Court Justice Edward Douglas White describing the "unincorporated territories" held by the United States in the wake of the wars of 1898 – the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam – in *Downes v. Bidwell*, one in a series of decisions collectively known as the Insular Cases of 1901. See Burnett and Marshall 2001, especially 1-17. For a sustained inquiry into this notion of foreignness that at once conjures and troubles the domestic, see Kaplan 2002. My own attempt to specify foreignness as the recurrence of untranslatability amid the imperative to translate can be found in Rafael 2005.

31. Levinson, "Iraq's 'Terps' Face Suspicions on Both Sides."

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Francophone Dynamics in a Translated Canada: From the Margins to the Centre and Back

Denise Merkle

Abstract

This paper examines French Acadian literature's at times conflicted relationship with the target language, English, the other official language of New Brunswick. A broad survey of Acadian literature since 1960 is punctuated with brief discussions of selected works in their socio-political context of production. Translations of these works can be placed variously on a continuum that ranges from extremes of vertical to horizontal translation. At one extreme, vertical translation homogenises a fractured identity into the dominant language through annexation. Alternatively, at the foreignising extreme, a translator may opt for a horizontal, minoritising, translation strategy in an effort to decentre the traditional power relationship between the two cultures. This paper gives an overview introduction to these strategies used to translate Acadian literature.

Introduction

Along with its reputation as a bilingual country, Canada is known throughout the world as a country of immigration and immigrants, and with (im)migration comes cultural and linguistic diversity. While today's multilingualism in such cities as Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver is impressively diverse, it must not be forgotten that Canada has a long history of multilingualism. The first French explorers exchanged with First Nations communities who spoke Iroquois, Huron and Cree, among other languages. The extent to which Canada's First Nations communities have been marginalised is generating mounting national and international concern. This paper will concentrate on another group that has been marginalised in Canada, although to a lesser extent than Canada's First Nations peoples: Canada's Acadian population.

Canadian Francophone populations residing outside Québec have been marginalised not only by the majority Anglophone population, but also by Québécois. Marginalisation has resulted from their minority status in New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, among other provinces and territories, as well as from their geographical, and at times cultural, distance from Québec. Minority status results in frequent contact, and often friction, between the dominant and dominated languages and cultures (French versus English; varieties of Canadian French versus Québec French). Minority Francophones certainly feel the effects of frequent, if not constant, linguistic and cultural contact through linguistic and cultural hybridisation. Whereas in the past hybridisation was frowned upon and associated with assimilation, if not criticised outright, linguistic and cultural hybridisation has become fashionable of late thanks to the work of a number of postcolonial researchers, including Mary Louise Pratt (2007), Sherry Simon (1999) and Homi Bhabha (1994). Take as a case in point Acadians living in New Brunswick and to a lesser extent Nova Scotia, who now find themselves in a climate where their language varieties (Acadian French[1] and *Chiac*[2]) are valued in some circles as testimonials to their marginalised status and their search for a unique linguistic and cultural identity (Leclerc 2005). The value attributed to minor literatures[3] and hybridisation has generated interest among members of dominant groups. Yet, in Canada, members of the dominant population are often unilingual or bilingual, even multilingual, without, however, French being one of their languages. Translation into and out of French therefore becomes a necessity, if one wishes to communicate with Canadian francophone communities (should, it must be underlined, the francophone communities accept the invitation[4]).

In the aim of providing a glimpse into the heavy weight of a fragile identity on the psyche of a minority population, this paper will examine a number of translation strategies (including editorial decisions) adopted by Canadian Anglophone translators who have taken up the challenge of translating Acadian literature into English. Some of the strategies do not reproduce the original's hybridisation, rather transforming the texts into "standard" Canadian English, whereas other innovative strategies attempt to create a hybrid form

of English, thereby marginalising the target text. Should translation (process) by the dominant majority be accepted by the minority group, the product usually falls into one of two broad categories: vertical or horizontal translation (Merkle and Klimkiewicz 2008: 1-7). We shall consider the socio-cultural implications of efforts to move marginal literature to the centre through vertical translation into the "standard" dominant language versus efforts to decentre the target culture by transforming the target text through minoritising hybridisation of the dominant language. When a fractured identity is homogenised by the dominant language through the annexation of vertical translation, the "schizophrenic" angst felt by the translated people is invariably lost in translation. Cultural and linguistic differences have been overlooked. Put in other terms, Henri Meschonnic and Anthony Pym (2003) put the phenomenon in other terms and explain that "*annexation* is [...] an illusion of the natural, [...] as if the source-language text were written in the target language, overlooking the differences in culture [...] and in linguistic structure" (341). Alternatively, a translator may opt for a horizontal, minoritising, translation strategy, in an effort to decentre the traditional power relationship (Meschonnic 1973: 305-454) between the two cultures. The aim of a minoritising strategy is to unsettle a smug conceit shared by members of the dominant culture, thereby, shaking the latter's sense of immutable wholeness and giving it insights into the difficult existence of minority cultures. Meschonnic and Pym (2003) add that "[*d*]*ecentring* is a textual relation between two texts in two language-cultures, [which extends] right to the linguistic structure of the language-system, this linguistic structure becoming value within the system of the text" (341).

Four canonical Acadian literary figures, who use language to special effect thereby demonstrating the linguistic varieties (i.e., multilingualism) within *Acadie*, will be the object of more detailed study after an initial contextualising discussion of Acadian poetry and translation. Whereas the first two poems that we will look at have not been translated, the works that are the object of detailed study have been. It is a pure coincidence that the four writers whose works have been translated are from Southeast New Brunswick with greater Moncton[5] the region's epicentre, a region where French and

English are in constant contact: Antonine Maillet (Bouctouche), Raymond (Guy) LeBlanc (St-Anselme, now part of Dieppe), Gérald Leblanc (Bouctouche) and France Daigle (Dieppe).

Language Rights in New Brunswick

In New Brunswick in the late sixties, Acadian youth contested the position of traditional Acadian elites who preferred to accommodate Anglophones, by among other things, not resisting assimilation (See Musée acadien, on line). Rather, young people chose to confront and denounce the conservatism and lack of transparency of these elites, and to create such cultural institutions as the publishing house, Les Éditions d'Acadie, in 1972.[6] In the political arena, New Brunswick Premier Louis J. Robichaud was actively promoting a bilingual New Brunswick. Robichaud was the first Acadian premier of the province, elected to the office in 1960. His Liberal government established the only French-language university in New Brunswick in 1963, the Université de Moncton, located in the city of Moncton. As well, in 1963, Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, concerned by the socio-cultural distance separating the country's English and French populations, had a royal commission created to examine bilingualism and biculturalism in the country. In 1967, the Laurendeau-Dunton commission recommended that the federal government pass an official languages law and that Canada's capital city, Ottawa, as well as the provinces of Ontario and New Brunswick, become officially bilingual. Only New Brunswick, under the direction of Robichaud, took up the challenge, enacting the Official Languages of New Brunswick Act in 1969, while having to deal with Loyalists who feared that bilingualism would undermine traditional monarchist values and reduce the power of the Anglophone majority.[7]

Given that 40 per cent of the population of Moncton was French-speaking,[8] it would have been reasonable to assume that French-language services were offered to the Francophone residents of the city; however, such was not the case in the 1960s. In response, students and other activists demonstrated in 1968 to defend their language and cultural rights and to turn back the tide of assimilation.

Québec's Quiet Revolution had spread to Acadie. Thanks to Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault, the events of 1968 were documented in the film, *L'Acadie, l'Acadie ?!?*. Repeated requests from Francophone groups finally prompted Moncton city council to start looking into the issue of French language services after 1968. Yet equality was still a dream in 1972. In January of that year, when *l'Acadie, l'Acadie ?!?* was aired on Radio-Canada, tensions between the language groups were revived, sparking renewed unrest. Despite Moncton Mayor Jones's vocal intolerance and refusal to offer translation services, a majority of Acadians did not quietly submit to self-translation into English. They understood that Jones's position on translation was grounded in his desire to see Acadians quietly assimilate into the dominant English culture through self-translation. They also knew that the key to improved communication between the two language groups was increased bilingualism on the part of Anglophones. The equality of the province's two linguistic communities was voted into law by the Hatfield government in 1981, and Law 88 entrenched into the Canadian Constitution in 1993 at the request of New Brunswick's Frank McKenna, after the latter bowed to pressure from the Acadian community (see Musée acadien, on line).

"A Cry to Fend off Death"[9]: Resistance Through Untranslated Poetry

Nationalist poetry[10] written by Acadians during the 1960s and especially during the 1970s clearly articulated the concerns that the students voiced to Moncton city councillors in 1968. A number of important collections of poetry was published in the 1970s, the most notable of which is arguably Raymond Guy LeBlanc's *Cri de terre* (1972), the newly founded publisher Les Éditions d'Acadie's first publication. Two additional collections of poetry that exemplified Acadian nationalism[11] were also published by Les Éditions d'Acadie in the early 1970s: Guy Arsenault's *Acadie Rock* (1973) and Herménégilde Chiasson's *Mourir à Scoudouc* (1974). These poets contributed actively to the Acadian Renaissance (Boudreau 1990: xix). Like their Québec counterparts, for example Jacques Godbout, they decried one-sided bilingualism that more

often than not resulted in identity disintegration and, eventually, assimilation.

In “La poésie acadienne : entre esthétique de l’hybridité et intraduisibilité” [Acadian Poetry: between an aesthetics of hybridity and untranslatibility], Jean-Guy Mboudjeke examines the anguish expressed by Acadian poets in and through their bilingual verse. While he refers to this verse as hybrid because of the cohabitation of two languages, generally speaking the distinction is made between hybrid languages that result from interlinguistic interference (e.g., Chiac or Joual) and bilingual verse that plays aesthetically with plurilingualism. Mboudjeke examines poetry that combines dominated and dominant languages in such as way that the verse cannot be translated into English without sacrificing to a large extent the expression of sociolinguistic angst. Many Francophone Acadians wished to be able to live an existence that was closer to the monocultural and unilingual reality that their forefathers and foremothers had lived and that the vast majority of their Anglophone compatriots were living. Doing so would have freed them from having to translate themselves constantly. Mboudjeke explores the demoralizing and alarming impact of assimilation on the Acadian psyche in the 1970s, as well as the perceived danger of a hybrid language, nonetheless appreciated for its aesthetic qualities. He takes as a case in point Jean Fraterne’s bilingual, rather than linguistically hybrid, poem, “Voilà mon pays”,[12] which describes the sociolinguistic, bilingual, reality with which Acadians were forced to deal on a daily basis. At the outset, the poet refers optimistically to the spirit of bilingualism that was intended to unite Canada’s two charter language groups and put them on an equal socio-linguistic footing (Fraterne, in Mboudjeke 2008: 89):

> Deux langues, un coeur,
> Two languages, one heart [literal translation of preceding line],
> Voilà mon pays [This is my country[13]]
> Bilinguisme et biculturalisme
> Bilingualism and biculturalism [literal translation of preceding line]

However, hard reality quickly rids the poet of his idealistic illusions. Only Francophones are bilingual; they speak in English to the Anglophone majority at work and in social settings. French in the end is very rarely used:

> On parle uniquement en anglais. [People speak in English only.]
> Tout se passe en anglais ! [Everything takes place in English!]
> Est-ce que je me suis trompé ? [Was I mistaken?]
> Ma langue s'en va en fumée ! [My language is going up in smoke!]
> Oops ! Correction ! One language, no heart,
> Voilà mon pays ! [That's my country!]

Fraterne's bilingual poem is an example, at least to some extent, of self-translation. Should it be translated exclusively into English, it would become a unilingual poem written in the dominant language and, as such, would give the illusion that "the source-language text [was] written in the target language, overlooking the differences in culture [...] and in linguistic structure" (Meschonnic and Pym 2003: 341).

In his bilingual prose poem "Jaune",[14] Herménégilde Chiasson explores the source of the socio-linguistic problem, and lays it squarely on the shoulders of patronizing Anglophones and those Acadians who submit body prostrate to the unilingualist position of the dominant culture (in Mboudjeke 2008: 91):

> PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE please kill us […] please treat us like shit please, le premier mot que nous apprenons à leur dire et le dernier que nous leur dirons please [the first word that we learn to say to them and the last one that we will say is please]. Please, make us a beautiful ghetto, not in a territory, no, no, right in us, […]. Nous fondons comme une roche à la chaleur de l'indifférence de la tolérance de la diplomatie du bilinguisme […] de l'aplatventrisme chronique […][We

> melt like a rock from the heat of indifference of the tolerance of the diplomacy of bilingualism […] of chronic servility].

As our glosses clearly show, the French words of Chiasson's poem can be translated. However, again, the cost of a unilingual English translation would be high, for the result would be an example of annexation. Yet, while both Fraterne's and Chiasson's poems are bilingual and invite a reflection on the translation of bilingual texts, they are not true examples of a hybrid language such as Chiac (see sections on LeBlanc and Daigle).

It is, nevertheless, clear that literary creations written to express feelings of linguistic tensions resulting from bilingualism can pose challenging transfer problems when it comes to translating them for members of another language group. As Mboudjeke convincingly argues, the compromised "translatability" of Fraterne's and Chiasson's poetry into English, the language of the dominant, threatening group, represents an inherent danger. When translating a bilingual text into the dominant language that is one of its constituent elements, the socio-linguistic tensions between dominant and dominated language groups are more often than not attenuated in translation. It is interesting to note that a bilingual New Brunswicker residing in Fredericton and a poet in his own right, Fred Cogswell, published translations of Acadian poetry in literary journals such as *Canadian Literature* in the 1970s,[15] and he seemingly deliberately chose to concentrate on poems written in "standard" Acadian French and to translate them into standard English. It is noteworthy that the bilingual poems referred to above are not on the list of the works that he translated.

Antonine Maillet

Since the late 1980s, Antonine Maillet has successfully translated a number of theatre plays, especially those of William Shakespeare.[16] Nevertheless she is primarily known for her accomplishments as a novelist and a playwright. *Les Crasseux* (1968) is the first play that she wrote in Acadian, and *La*

Sagouine (1971), also written in Acadian, brought her international acclaim. Her novel *Pélagie-la-Charette* (1979) earned her the prestigious Prix Goncourt.

From the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, Québécois and Acadians have fought not only for the right to express themselves in the public arena, but also to express themselves in their own language. Maillet chose to write in a distinctively Acadian voice and managed to give a literary form to an oral literature with ties to the seventeenth century in her desire to have acknowledged the nobility of old or outdated words that were little used and understood (Courchene 1992: 69). Evelyn Dumas describes the importance of Maillet's use of the Acadian language in her article "Language can be the best revenge", published in Montréal's *The Gazette* on 13 February 1982:

> As in [Antonine Maillet's] previous books set in Acadia, the main character […] is language. […] One would be tempted to call it [Acadian] archaic, were it not that in France, the French find Maillet's literary Acadian easier to understand than Michel Tremblay's Québécois. […] No wonder such an unexpected explosion in French literature has the power to make other French-speaking communities sit up and take notice of a people long forced into silence.

Maillet's work displays to full effect Acadian traditions through her rich vocabulary and picturesque expressions used by Francophones from the Atlantic provinces.[17] The "fanatical defender" (Maillet 1999: 52) of Acadian French found her inspiration in the writings of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century canonical writers, such as, Rabelais, Perrault and Molière. During an interview with Margaret Courchene, Maillet expressed her hope that her use of language would put vernacular "Acadian" French into the realm of art (Courchene 1992: 69). The Acadian woman of letters would soon identify the horizon of expectation of her readers who had a growing interest in the use of all levels of language, including

popular varieties of Canadian French, that a reader of Perrault or Molière could understand, but also a speaker of rural Acadian, whose French is reminiscent of Rabelais's, as Maillet's dissertation had concluded.[18] Maillet rejected limiting her language to the purist, standard French approved by the French "Académie", thereby, affirming that Acadie's renaissance was to discover that Acadians were a people who had its own language (*Ibid.*: 68), an affirmation that echoed Québec's sovereigntist discourse.[19]

According to Annie Brisset, 1968 inaugurated the use of a Québec sociolect as a language of English-French translation in Québec (Brisset 1990: 34). Luis de Céspedes translated *La Sagouine* from Acadian French into English in 1979 and made every effort to use a register equivalent to the source-text sociolect by resorting to regional and popular varieties of Canadian English. He made a sincere effort to reproduce the popular and rural oral style ("sayin", "hit'm") and the humoristic tone of the original. When the same pronunciation or syntax cannot be reproduced, the translator compensated elsewhere in the sentence. For example, the pronunciation of "*coument* [*comment*]" (1971: 95) is rendered by "fer" (1979: 111) and "*<u>Coument</u> mort qu'il était lors de sa première mort,ça...*" (1971: 95) by "How dead he was when he died <u>fer</u> the first time, well" (1979: 111). The translator thus attempted to reproduce the source text's sociolect, as well as sociocultural details such as poverty ("*il puait toute sa vie*" (1971: 96) /"he'd been stinkin all his life" (1979: 112)) and Catholicism ("*asseyait de se désentortiller les doigts de son chapelet*" (1971: 96)/"tryin to free his fingers fr'm his rosary" (1979: 112)), so that Anglophones who read the translation would come as close as possible to understanding the message of the original. However, what was lost, at least to some degree, in the translation was the savoury language (old verb forms such as "*avont* [*avaient*]" and pronunciation such as "*cimetchére*" (1971: 95) [*cimetière*]). Nevertheless, the themes of Acadian poverty, the importance of family lineage (Antoine à Calixte), and the conflict between those who dominate (the Acadian elite, Anglophones) and the

dominated (e.g., the washerwoman la Sagouine) are clearly understood in de Céspedes's English translation. It is fair to say that his effort to reproduce the Acadian sociolect was relatively successful, and that the translation was not aseptic. While this translation cannot be considered successful "[*d*]*ecentring*" because "the linguistic structure of the [source] language-system" does not become "value within the system of the text" (Meschonnic and Pym 2003: 341), neither is it "annexation" (idid.) in that cultural difference has been successfully transferred.

Raymond Guy LeBlanc

Raymond (Guy) LeBlanc's *Cri de Terre* (1972, revised editions 1986, 1992) was Les Éditions d'Acadie's first publication. His poetry announced a literature of revolt in search of a country.[20] He feared that if Acadians did not soon wake up to the dangers of assimilation, they would disappear (see Jacquot, n.d.). A social activist, he was conscious of his role as one of a group of Acadian intellectuals who wished to become embodied agents for social change (Belliveau 1992: 76-77). Jean-Paul Hautecoeur explains that young left-wing Acadians of the 1970s demanded not only the right to speak, but also the right to linguistic and social self-determination (in Belliveau 1992: 77).

LeBlanc's poem "Je suis Acadien" was first published in 1972 in *Cri de terre*, an example of militant poetry (see Arcand *et al*, 1972). The poem presents the power relationship between dominant Anglophones and dominated Francophones. His view of language contact is diglossic, the product of a conflictual relationship between French and English, which results in the fragmentation of the bilingual individual's identity. Fred Cogswell and Jo-Anne Elder translated the poem and included it in *Unfinished Dreams* (1990). An essay signed by Université de Moncton Professor Raoul Boudreau introduces the collection of poetry in translation.

LeBlanc's anger is visceral in "Je suis Acadien", a linguistically hybrid poem, although a far cry from the hybridity of twenty-first-century Chiac. The first two lines vehemently denounce the insinuation of English into the most emotional areas of personal expression: "*Je jure en anglais tous mes goddams de bâtard/Et souvent les fuck it me remontent à la gorge*" (LeBlanc 1992 [1972]: 65) translated as "I curse in English every mongrel *goddamn* in the book/And *fuck-its* often stick in my throat (Cogswell and Elder 1990: 121. Note that the translators italicised words in their translation that were written in English in the original.). LeBlanc concludes his poem in anguish:

> Je suis acadien [I am Acadian]
> Ce qui signifie [Which means]
> Multiplié fourré dispersé acheté aliéné vendu révolté [Stuffed dispersed bought alienated sold out rebellious./A here there and everywhere]
> Homme déchiré vers l'avenir [Man torn open towards the future]
> (LeBlanc *op. cit.*/Cogswell and Elder *op. cit.*)

This passionate and powerful poem evokes the existential agony of an Acadian who feels that he has no country, no language, and who imitates Anglophone upstarts, while waiting for them to bury him and his people. The poem is raw, the poet's nerves are exposed. LeBlanc uses English swear words, a productive linguistic phenomenon in Southeast New Brunswick that is marked by the dominant language's swear words being inserted into the minority language: "*goddams de bâtard*", "*fuck it*" and the invocation of the Lord in English, "*Jesus Christ*" (Kasparian and Gérin 2005: 130). The English words are not set off from the French words in LeBlanc's poem; rather they are integrated into the Acadian expressivity of Southeast New Brunswick: this is an example of the local language called *Chiac*.

The translation reproduces very closely the meaning of the original, while transferring certain English words from the original poem to the translation. These English words have been marked by italics in translation (as noted above), the strategy

retained by the translators. However, the swear words and other English words incorporated into *Chiac* have a different emotional charge than when the same words are used by Anglophones. The translators' compensation strategy of putting the "foreign Chiac" words in italics: "*goddamn, fuck-its, christs, windshield, medium-rare, tabernacles, hosties, Chrysler, guy, runs me over, cross the street*" risks simply confusing unilingual English readers, who would ask themselves why the words are in italics. In fact, the only French word in the list is "*hosties*" [consecrated bread/wafer, host]. The word "*tabernacle*" exists in English, although it is rarely used in the plural. Moreover, many Anglophones are not aware that "*tabernacles*" and "*hosties*" are Québec swear words. In short, the emotional charge of the original poem has been diluted in English. The profound disillusionment and anxiety felt by the poem's "I" is less visceral in English.

Yet, it must be acknowledged that the translators are faced with a formidable sociolinguistic constraint, which is that of the poem's linguistic hybridisation. And this constraint is very difficult to overcome. It would be necessary to reproduce the same tension between a dominant colonial culture and a dominated colonised culture, but in a language comprehensible to unilingual Anglophones (or to those who do not master French). However, in Canada the receiving culture is the dominant culture, which is, at present, experiencing a colonial relationship primarily with countries that are also English-speaking. So reproducing the same socio-linguistic tensions would be very difficult, if not impossible to recreate. Consequently, the translation has, despite the best intentions of the translators, been centred.[21] Because the source text has moved from a two-language culture to a primarily unilingual system (or to one in which "French" is largely absent) through translation, the hybrid structure of the source-language system does not become a value that "decentres" (Meschonnic and Pym 2003: 341); the source system is not appreciated by the reader of the translation as fundamentally different.

Gérald Leblanc

Gérald Leblanc was one of the most prolific Acadian writers whose works, especially his poetry, have been published in Acadie, Québec, France, Belgium and Mexico. He dedicated his first collection of poems, *Comme un otage au quotidien*, to Raymond LeBlanc. Equal parts Acadian and North American, Leblanc explored the roots of his Acadian identity from many directions. The growing interest in his poetry puts him at the top of the list, along with Herménégilde Chiasson, of modern Acadian poets. A literary activist, he worked on all fronts to stimulate and make known the new voices of Acadian culture. He also wrote lyrics for the Acadian musical group 1755.[22] *Moncton Mantra* (1997), his only novel, was translated by Jo-Anne Elder in 2001.

In *Moncton Mantra*, the narrator expresses himself in standard "Canadian" French that is relatively free of English influence. Whereas the novel defends *Chiac* and the author sings the praises of the hybrid language in it as he does elsewhere, Leblanc rarely uses it. Chantal Richard explains that despite his stated desire to mix standard French with old Acadian French peppered with English, Leblanc ends up choosing standard French (Richard 1998: 33). In fact, although he inserts *québécismes* in his novel, in one passage he seems to defend standard French to the point of excluding any and all English interference, transforming English into "foreign sounds" (1997:48). In short, the translation of this novel provides relatively few translation difficulties (from a sociolinguistic point of view). Generally, the translated passages communicate well, though not literally, the meaning of the original passages. For example, when referring to English as "*un bruit autre* [an other/different noise]" (Leblanc 1997: 48), the translation becomes "foreign sounds" (Leblanc 2001: 41). The language level is formal in both the original and its translation. Nevertheless, the source text is not without translation problems that are more difficult to solve, and the success of the translation is inconsistent. For example, "*J'entendis: 'Teint naque sein, çâ vient de quel coin dzu Québèèèèèc? Dzu bâs dzu Fleuve?*" (Leblanc 1997: 97) is rendered

well by the adaptation: "That wasn't exactly what I heard, of course, because his accent was very strong" (Leblanc 2001: 95). The adaptation of the next example is less successful, but acceptable: "*Chez nous, on a de la neige le treize. Ici, vous avez de la naÿze le traÿze. Tu sais, une variante sur la même toune. C'est un accent* (Leblanc 1997)" translated by: "Down home, we get snow on the fifteenth, here it snows hard in the middle of the month. Six of one, a half dozen of another, whatever accent you have. Variations on a tune" (Leblanc 2001). The reader could ask herself whether "six of one, a half dozen of another" was necessary. Furthermore, the savoury Québécois accent ("*aÿ*") has been lost; Québec and Acadian vernacular, for example: "*icitte* [ici], *deboute* [debout], *itou* [aussi]", simply disappear in translation. Yet again, the translator is faced with a linguistic constraint; instead of opting for a strategy that would introduce new discursive models into the target system in order to destabilise its complacency, the translator, while not retaining a strategy of annexation does not make a concerted effort to decentre. Furthermore, the editor chose a book cover illustration that served to reproduce Anglophone stereotypes of Acadie, thereby betraying the purpose of Leblanc's book that was to move beyond representations of a rural and maritime Acadie that had to some extent been perpetuated by Maillet's fiction. Leblanc's urban Acadie is in no way conveyed by the book's cover of a young man wearing a peacoat jacket, a gold star (our Lady of Assomption) on his cap, with as a backdrop an isolated house on the beach at Cap Pelé or Shédiac (Leclerc 2005).

France Daigle

France Daigle is the author of numerous novels. She narrates in standard French; however, some of her characters speak a local vernacular, *Chiac*, the third language, according to some linguists, of Southeast New Brunswick, after English and French. Compared to Daigle's *Un fin passage* (2001), the use of *Chiac*, has increased dramatically in *Petites difficultés d'existence* (2002), in part, because the novel takes place explicitly in Moncton, where English and French are in constant contact. Erasing Moncton and its local speech

is not an option in this novel. Rather the couple, Terry and Carmen, speak in *Chiac*. This is the sole literary work considered in the context of this study that deals explicitly with a hybrid language. Translating it presents different challenges from those presented by the translation of Fraterne's and Chiasson's bilingual poems for, in *Chiac*, the linguistic structures of French have been modified as a result of repeated contact with English. Marie-Ève Perrot (1995) explains that C*hiac* has a French matrix and a vocabulary that is peppered with English. However, the degree of Anglicisation is variable, and often depends on the communication situation of the speaker.

Robert Majzels' English translation, *Life's Little Difficulties* (2004), reproduces with great delicacy the main characters' – Carmen and especially Terry – voyage of self-discovery through language. Majzels managed to make real for the English reader the emotional reaction of a young Acadian couple to the dangers of assimilation. Moreover, he innovated on a translation strategy level. Traditionally, translators negotiate between two "national" languages for example Antonine Maillet's "Rabelaisian French" could be likened to "Shakespearean English" (Merkle 2000). However, Majzels was presented with a localised linguistic phenomenon, for Daigle creatively has her characters speak a hybrid language that has no socio-cultural equivalent in English Canada (i.e., the same degree of interlinguistic penetration between French the dominant language and English the dominated language). In an effort to compensate, Majzels invented a sort of English *Chiac* (Leclerc 2008) that, while more timid than its Acadian counterpart, nevertheless represents a laudable minoritising initiative (Venuti 1998) that serves to decentre the translation, at least to some extent, in the target culture. For example, the following excerpt is taken from Majzels' translation of Daigle's *Chiac*: "On purpose? Moi?", "Reliure à pince. I know. That's what's si great. Toutes ces choses we didn't know the names for" (Daigle 2004: 136). In this short example, the following words are French: "*moi*" [me], "*reliure à pince*" [clip binder], "*si*" [so], "*toutes ces choses*"]all those things]. However, it cannot be taken for granted that a Canadian Anglophone will understand them. As such, the linguistic structure of the source text (especially "*reliure à pince*" [lit. binder with clip]) has

penetrated, even if modestly, the language system of the target text. Anglophones who do not immediately understand what they are reading will, at the very least, be shaken from their habitual linguistic complacency. This is a successful attempt at "[*d*]*ecentring*" (Meschonnic and Pym 2003: 341), despite Majzels' timid use of hybridity in the translation.

Multilingualism and translation: From the margins to the centre ... and back ... through minoritising translation

Since the 1970s, Acadians have been actively and visibly seeking greater recognition for their linguistic and cultural otherness in the aim of ensuring their long-term survival as a francophone nation. They have given themselves a unique polyphonous voice – old Acadian, Chiac, standard Canadian French, English –, and express themselves publicly in this voice both on the political and on the cultural scene. Some choose to express themselves in standard Canadian French, whereas others opt for the local varieties of Chiac and Acadian French. Those who choose a local variety seek to set themselves apart from the other francophone groups of Canada, especially, the Québécois, as well as from the French. We have seen examples of these linguistic varieties in the source texts examined in the context of this study.

The first Acadian writer to stand out internationally and to interact with an international audience was Antonine Maillet, who minimises the use of English in her writings. The other writers in translation also enjoy a certain degree of international acclaim, and their recourse to English, or Chiac for that matter, varies. On the one hand, Raymond LeBlanc communicates the dangerous omnipresence of English on Acadian territory in his poems that occasionally integrate English words. On the other hand, while singing the praises of Chiac in some of his writings, Gérald Leblanc in fact makes very little use of it. For her part, France Daigle narrates in standard French and her recurring characters, Carmen and Terry, speak in Chiac in her more recent novels. However, as new parents, Carmen and Terry question their use of the hybrid language, out of concern

for their children's cultural and linguistic survival. The way linguistic hybridity is dealt with in these Acadian literary works seem to betray a conflicted attitude towards hybrid varieties of French.

So how have the translators working into English dealt with the soul searching, both linguistic and identitary, that is so integral a part of the Acadian literary products we have considered here? First, it must be recalled that the translators are (to varying degrees multicultural) Canadians and produce numerous literary translations. They translate out of a love of literature and a commitment to the charter ideals (bilingualism and biculturalism) of their multicultural country. Their translation products testify to their attempt to maximise linguistic and cultural transfer, while negotiating the linguistic constraints that mark the transfer from the linguistic varieties of the source minority culture to the linguistic varieties of the target majority culture. As we have seen, the difficulties related to linguistic transfer are formidable, however no less so than the difficulties encountered by a minority people who must fight the homogeneous effects of globalisation expressed through English that is also and usually the dominant language with which they must grapple on a daily basis. While it is perhaps possible to identify weaknesses in the translations, literary translators are often the first to acknowledge that a literary text can grow through retranslation. Nevertheless, we can affirm that J.-A. Elder (*Moncton Mantra*) and R. Majzels (*Life's Little Difficulties*) generally avoided ethnographic and assimilating translation strategies (Leclerc 2005: 178) and that the translations produced by L. de Céspedes (*La Sagouine*) and F. Cogswell/J.-A. Elder ("I am Acadian") attest to the best of intercultural and transcultural intentions through translation, in addition to literary sensitivity. Whether the English translation is perfect or not, highly successful or not,[23] in all cases the translators appreciate the cultural other's alterity and, as a result, at the very least attempt to introduce the dominant culture to the very difficult existence with which Acadians, like Canada's other minor francophone communities, must deal on a daily basis to ensure their linguistic and cultural survival. The fact remains that the only clear effort at horizontal translation between two "equal" minor cultures was made by Majzels, for the other translations, likely

unintentionally, reproduce more traditional vertical power relations (Merkle and Klimkiewicz 2008).[24]

To sum up, the study of selected passages of a few translated Acadian works has given us insights into the heavy weight of a fragile identity on the psyche of a minority population. The clearest example of the schizophrenic angst of a fractured identity being diluted in translation is LeBlanc's "I am Acadian". By contrast, Majzels' choice of a minoritising translation strategy may certainly contribute to decentring dominant culture complacency, provided, of course, that the hybrid translation is read.

Notes

1. For a discussion of Acadian French, see below the section on Antonine Maillet.

2. M.-È. Perrot (1995) explains that C*hiac* has a French matrix and a vocabulary that is peppered with English. However, the degree of Anglicisation is variable, and often depends on the communication situation of the speaker.

3. See Deleuze and Guattari (1975), and F. Paré (1994 and 2003).

4. On the reasons for refusal of translation on the part of minor cultures, see R. Meylaerts, forthcoming.

5. Dieppe, Moncton and Riverview make up Greater Moncton. Bouctouche is a 30-minute northbound drive from Moncton along the coast of the Northumberland Strait.

6. Les Éditions d'Acadie would go bankrupt in 2000.

7. For more information, see Durand, 2.1, "Milieu politique".

8. Figure cited by students during their presentation to his Worship Jones in Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault's *L'Acadie, l'Acadie ?!?*.

9. Raoul Boudreau, 1990: xix.

10. For information on Acadian as well as other Canadian literature in translation see: Stratford and Newman (1975), White (2008), White *et al* (forthcoming).

11. The Parti acadien existed between 1972 and 1982 and was founded in Northeast New Brunswick (la Péninsule acadienne), a region that was noticeably poorer than the “golden triangle” of southern New Brunswick (Fredericton, St. John, Moncton). Its first leader was Euclide Chiasson. The party’s goal was to create an autonomous Acadian province.

12. First published in Runte *et al* 1979: 111.

13. Unless otherwise stated, the translations are ours.

14. First published in Chiasson 1974: 44.

15. The following is a partial list of Acadian poetry first translated by Fred Cogswell in the 1970s and published in *Canadian Literature* (1976, numbers 68-69), sometimes under different names: Guy Arsenault: “To Celebrate September”, “The Wharf”; Herménégilde Chiasson: “Between the Season of Extravagant Love and the Season of Raspberries”, “All the King’s Horses”; Ronald Després: “Hymn to Spring”, “I Loved You”, “I Thought of You All Day”; Léonard Forest: “And I Dreamed of a Great Black Sun”; Raymond Guy LeBlanc: “Winter”, “Land-cry”.

16. See Merkle 2000 and 2008.

17. For a discussion of Maillet’s literary language and problems of translation, see Stratford (1986).

18. *Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie,* Québec, Presses de l’Université Laval, 1971.

19. Whereas a growing number of Acadian writers make use of a hybrid language, Moncton’s *Chiac*, in their writings (J. Babineau, G. Leblanc, F. Daigle), Maillet writes in French and in Acadian.

20. In addition, other Acadian poets have voiced the need for revolt: G. Arsenault’s *Acadie Rock* (1973), H. Chiasson’s *Mourir à*

Scoudouc (1974), C. Duguay's *Les Stigmates du silence* (1975), U. Landry's *Tabous aux épines de sang* (1977), among others.

21. A non linguistic solution would be to publish a bilingual edition and to annotate carefully and completely both the original poem and the facing translation.

22. The year 1755 is highly significant in Acadian history, for it is the year that marks the Grand Dérangement, which in reality occurred for the most part from 1750-1756.

23. See Koustas (2008: 396): "Lee Skallerup: In response to the idea of 'policing' the translations of our literature, I would strongly disagree. Certainly the French translation of *Barney's Version* done in France was horrible from a Québécois perspective, but it was perfect, so to speak, for the audience in France. […] We have to be careful about this idea of limiting and controlling how our literature is distributed. […] one can venture that the massive success of *Le Monde de Barney* played a significant role in the publisher's decision to commission a new, *chez eux*, translation of the novel".

24. Teresa Tomaszkiewicz has guided the voyage of discovery of Acadian and other minor Canadian francophone literature in Poland, a country that enjoys minority status within the European Union. Her masters' students at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań have translated a number of works into Polish. Teresa Tomaszkiewicz, Aurelia Klimkiewicz and Alicja Żuchelkowska have edited and recently published (2009) the first anthology of minor Canadian francophone literature in Polish translation (*Antologia współczesnej literatury Kanady frankofońskiej* published by Oficyna Wydawnicza Leksem, Łask).

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Translation as a Genre: The Status and Mapping of the Discipline

Aurelia Klimkiewicz

"Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as a process."

(Bakhtin 1981: 7)

Abstract

In this article, we discuss two genres representing two types of signifying practices and "language games": literature and translation as different text-forms. While literature is a place of innovation, contestation, and transgression, translation represents a static and repetitive activity that reinforces the established order and structures. Using a Bakhtinian definition of genre and Simeoni's concept of habitus in translation, we explain how the two genres work and how translation could become a more generative and productive form of interaction, challenging society and its expectations.

Definition of genre

The concept of genre is rooted in M. M. Bakhtin's work on speech genres, defined as stable types of individual utterances imposed by language in any communication, oral or written. Genre is, in that sense, a social convention established by tradition and the repetition of the same patterns of speech and writing, thus shaped within a specific social situation and according to the formal properties of language. But, as stated by Bakhtin, the utterance – understood as a unit of communication – is more than a statement or response: it is an anticipation of a real or potential listener, an opening to future, forthcoming utterances. In his essay "Epic and novel," Bakhin points out that genre is also a generative practice, not a timeless pattern of narration but rather a historical activity situated in time and space. Genre is not only a recognition of the recurrent

situation but also a renewal, interrogation, and contestation of the existing forms and meanings, able to incorporate new voices and open new paths and channels of communication. Every new utterance introduces a dialogical relation to preceding utterances by giving a response to recurring situations (agreement, disagreement, negation, interrogation, judgment, etc.). This multiplicity of meanings is not only the constituent feature of the utterance but it also represents a powerful force for renewal of a genre. Moreover, there is no meaning without genre identification as the linguistic code itself is insufficient to convey it properly. In fact, according to Stanley Fish, the existence of the genre is validated once it is misinterpreted or mistakenly recognized. For instance, in the French movie by Bertrand Tavernier *La fille de d'Artagnan*, inspired by Alexandre Dumas's novel *Les trois mousquetaires (The Three Musketeers)*, the plot's turning point is when the heroine Eloïse mistakes a simple laundry list for an encoded message about a conspiracy against the king. She misinterprets the meaning because she misinterprets the genre, which leads her to respond to the message in a completely inappropriate manner. Thus, the meaning is grounded in the genre, and there is no correct understanding of the meaning without proper genre identification. In fiction, this kind of mistake can be very productive in organizing the plot and achieving a specific esthetic effect – comical, deceptive, or misleading. However, in real life, in a professional exchange, a diplomatic encounter or in scientific communication, this type of misinterpretation can provoke rather difficult or even critical situations.

In his historical survey of genre evolution, Bakhtin distinguishes two main categories of genres: ancient, fixed, and already more or less dead genres, transmitted from the ancient world (epic, tragedy), and new, emerging, and developing forms, one of them being the novel. Bakhtin stipulates that the novel is the only genre able to cope with the present because of its capacity to incorporate and transform other genres as well as to connect with the "openended present" (Bakhtin 1981:7): "In the process of becoming the dominant genre, the novel sparks the renovation of all other genres, it infects them with its spirit of process and

inconclusiveness." (*Ibid.*). Thus, it plays a double role: one of its own intrinsic renewal because it achieves a self-consciousness (*Ibid.*: 6), and the other, of a new genre production. The emergence of the novel and its subsequent evolution are linked to the appearance of a new creative consciousness of the polyglot world at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Renaissance, not a world imprisoned in *monoglossia* – a perfect and neutral harmony of voices where one language is deaf to the other, but rather a world of linguistic contacts and cultural exchanges (*Ibid.*: 12), a world inhabited by conflicts, contradictions, oppositions, tensions, and constantly exposed to the difference. In fact, the cultural landscape that brought the novel into modern times was diversified not only because of a sudden 'appearance' of the foreign presence, but also because of the popular tradition of laughter, which undermined the official culture of seriousness, order, and stability. The consciousness of the European elite was shaped and shaken at the same time on different levels by the rediscovery of Europe's own past back to Antiquity, by the sudden recognition of other cultures and languages from the continent and beyond, as well as by the inner conflicts and tensions present in every society, the major one, as mentioned, being the unofficial popular oral tradition with its own order, temporality, and language.

If the novel is a predominant genre in the West, then Dostoevsky is the master of this genre because of his ability to incorporate many voices, accents, and forms of verbal hybridization, the ability to open one word to another and one language to another in order to break any unifying form or structure into pieces. While German hermeneut Hans-Georg Gadamer considers genre as being a part of tradition, the fusion of the past and the future – hence stressing the intersubjective character of genre that conveys norms, values, and meanings, Bakthin insists more on the tensions between individuality and society, creativity and norm, monological and dialogical consciousness, self-sufficiency and openness, tensions that emphasize on rupture and discontinuity rather than on continuous and fluid transmission[1]. The main role of genre is then to reconcile these opposing forces: on the one hand, stability and

permanence of well established forms of speech and writing, and on the other hand, their renewal and elasticity. To achieve this reconciliation, as the French linguist François Rastier points out, genre, being a semiotic space of intersubjectivity, has to be mediated by the symbolic order. The individual articulation and production of meaning is, in that sense, regulated by social practice and imposed norms which control and maintain all levels of social and individual interactions. Those who do not belong entirely to the society – young children without full mastery of language or marginal people – can only use idiosyncratic forms of speech, out-of-genre frameworks providing an intelligible connection to other people in any context of communication, from more authoritative (obedience) to more dialogic (face-to-face interaction) contexts.

Another French linguist, Dominique Maingueneau, considers genre as a macro-act of language, having a global illocutionary value (1990: 11-12), while literature is a meta-genre that includes all the literary discourses. This meta-category clearly indicates the border between life and art in order to guide the receptor in his/her 'meaning-making'. Of course, it is possible to play with this border and invite the receptor to make the necessary adjustments. Modern literature, theatre, opera, exhibitions, installations, and other artistic manifestations are in fact spaces of real interaction between all the protagonists of the esthetic event. Once the hierarchy between author, actor/character, and the public is abolished, a new intersubjective space is created to reorganize the interaction. In every case, there is a mutually understood tacit contract between the producer of the event and the public, a contract which is, of course, valid only during the esthetic representation. But both spaces – reality and art – are strongly interconnected and interwoven because they maintain an ongoing dialogue: art is always rooted in real existence, and life can be inspired by imagination. This idea is also discussed by Bakhin in his text "Problem of oral genres" when he introduces the discussion about genre transformation and inter-genre influences. The distinction made by Bakthin between simple genres (free, ordinary, everyday, verbal activity, e.g. joke, conversation, or song) and complex genres (more rigid, higher and extra-temporal discourse of science, arts, or

religion) brings the idea that real life is constantly nourished by esthetic creation, abstract thinking, and scientific research. In fact, reading a book or watching a movie can have a concrete impact on someone's existence. But not without reason, Bakhtin insists on the ordinary, less formalized, and more spontaneous genres practiced in everyday interactions, because, according to him, they constantly challenge what is permanent and crystallized. Thus, a simple genre can confirm, confront, subvert, or transform a complex genre according to its specificity and position occupied in the more complex genre. A similar simple genre incorporated into a complex genre confirms its validity (e.g. a joke or an anecdote witnessed in real life incorporated into the comical genre), while atypical elements or ideas provoke a transformation or reorganization of the hosting basic genre (e.g. prose incorporated into a poem). However, the novel, according to Bakhtin, has a unique status: it is a poly-genre without having any specific generic canon, representing a mobile space able to accommodate a diversity of elements, motifs, and chronotopes that bring forward its own evolution.

After having discussed the interconnection between simple and complex genres, between existence and the realm of thinking and artistic creation, how should one define the relationship between a genre and a single literary work? What kind of interactions do both involve? Even if genre is a matrix for literary practice, even if it imposes rules and patterns on the writer, genre is incapable of generating all the contracts with potential and anticipated receptors. In fact, reciprocity is established between the genre and the text because the latter can impose its own contract on the reader; it can establish new textual strategies, of which three examples are given by Maingueneau (1990: 122):

1. texts situated on the margin of the genre;
2. texts playing with the genre, incorporating other genres (irony, parody, distortion etc.);
3. texts pretending to establish a new contract with the reader, escaping the *diktat* of a specific genre.

As he points out, genre cannot be considered as a simple text mould that produces faithful copies, but rather as the relationship between a single text and its genre. In that sense, the text, fully respecting the genre, can be innovative and original, or the text promoting its self-autonomy can be mediocre. It is therefore important to establish what kind of connection or dynamic the text introduces to the genre itself (*Ibid.*: 122-123).

Usually, a given genre reduces and regulates the transgressions to its own norms, which are eventually introduced by a text (*Ibid.*: 134). But tradition and literary institutions also play a crucial role. In the case of an existing but unclassified text, it is the tradition that regulates its status, and in the case of innovative esthetics, it is the institution that will accept or reject the text as a valid literary contribution. On the other hand, the norm being applied by social agents, such as literary critics or receptors, can be challenged or even changed once the new category is introduced as a valid artistic practice (e.g. the Nouveau Roman in the 1960s).

In our modern society, genre undergoes a constant change because of technology: the electronic medium has become a new way of production and reproduction, distribution, reception, and communication, in literature, visual arts, and other fields. According to Régine Robin, this technological tool makes possible an experimental postmodern writing in search of more fragmented and free ways toward artistic creation:

> Tout le mouvement moderniste puis postmoderne et expérimental de la littérature a tendu vers la dislocation des formes traditionnelles, vers la discontinuité, la fragmentation, la ruine du sens, la dé-linéarité, la dé-séquentialité, la destruction de la totalité, voire de la totalisation. Il a rencontré les pratiques formulaïques du roman populaire, celles du journalisme et du cinéma, de même que l'esthétique du montage et du collage. […]Les possibilités de la machine n'ont fait que généraliser, à la fois dans le quotidien de notre environnement et dans les possibilités littéraires, ce mouvement. (2004: 15)

Moving from a social space governed by norms and rules to an unlimited virtual and extremely mobile and heterogeneous cultural and linguistic community of technology users raises legal and ethical issues in arts, research, pedagogy, economy, and global communication in general. Nonetheless, it represents, at the same time, an alternative and highly challenging space of interaction and creativity in which translation is omnipresent but very often invisible to most Web users.

Genre in translation or translation as a genre

While genre is a very important element in literary studies, it is of a much lesser importance in translation. First, translation studies is a recent academic field situated at the crossroad of various disciplines and dealing with highly theoretical issues as well as with purely pragmatic constraints. Second, new domains and professional realities are constantly changing the discipline's configuration and challenging the existing knowledge and methodologies. Thus, there is no one and unique representation of translation as a discipline because of its complex and mobile character. Third, translation is generally invisible because of its inferior status as a social and professional activity compared to literary production, which is highly valorized.

From the pedagogical, practical, and research points of view, translation is thought, practiced, and discussed according to three main fields: pragmatic translation (circulation of knowledge and information), literary translation (enriching the world of literature), and the translation of philosophy and social science (transmission of different traditions of humanist knowledge)[2]. Pragmatic translation is governed by a communication model[3]: transparency and efficiency are to be achieved by adaptation, clarification, or even modification in order to facilitate readability and information delivery. The translator has to be familiar with the specific area of scientific or highly specialized knowledge as well as with the related concepts and terminology in both the original and the target languages. However, the model of translation is the same

for every field, one that achieves the most efficient communication in terms of economy of time and effort. By contrast, in the Western tradition, literary translation can be achieved through at least the following two conflicting methods: either foreignization (translation reproducing formal specificities of the original text) – according to Venuti's terminology, or domestication (ethnocentric or even narcissistic translation focusing on the target receptor). The tension between the two models indicates how difficult it is to incorporate the Other/the Foreigner in the translated text, how problematic is the experience of distance and difference, which can be either visible or completely hidden to the new reader. As for the translation of philosophy and social science, this genre is a special case as it occupies an ambivalent position situated on the border between pragmatic and literary translation. In some cases, the literary aspect of the text has to be carefully transferred into the target language in order to respect not only the meaning of the original, but also the meaning-making performed by the author. The translator's task is an even greater challenge when translating a philosopher or a thinker: every text and its author belong to a specific philosophical or scientific tradition, and translation should aim at having a dialogical impact, or otherwise, should stimulate a dialogue between both culturally situated knowledge and different schools of thought and traditions.

Now, if we consider translation as a meta-genre, a meta-category including any type of interlinguistic transfer, and take into consideration the three previously discussed major translation genres, how should one organize the division of genre on a lower level? What sub-genres should be identified and how should they be classified? To answer these questions, we have to take into account the following:

1. pragmatic translation includes many fields of knowledge such as medical, pharmaceutical, technical, and scientific among others;
2. literary translation includes two main categories: poetry and prose (short story and novel);

3. the translation of philosophy and social science includes different fields of knowledge, for example, logic, hermeneutics, psychology, and psychoanalysis (the most emblematic cases are those of Heidegger and Derrida because the linguistic aspect of their works is central to their philosophical systems).

But this static and vertical model (genre/sub-genre) is far from being efficient at adequately covering the complexity and variety of the existing translation practices. The main issue is the lack of a proper way to classify mixed, hybrid, or "impure" forms of translating and to solve the problem of a multilingual text or communication. For instance, advertisement is a form of communication but it is also an artistic creation; drama translation has to focus on the orality of the written text to be performed on stage; audio-visual translation deals with visual, oral, textual, and technical aspects that have to be taken into consideration. The binary classification between oral and written, literary and pragmatic, and human and automatic translation, appears in fact anachronistic and out of date: it tends to minimize or oversimplify the complexity of the interlinguistic transfer which can manifest itself in different contexts and activities, and can consequently raise a broad range of questions or problems such as: who should teach pragmatic translation (scholars or practitioners)? and literary translation (scholars, writers, literary critics or any translator)? How should one situate the growing field of interpretation studies (IS) within translation studies (TS)? As a part of the latter or rather as a completely independent field of knowledge and scientific investigation? Another problematic aspect has important ethical ramifications: is it necessary to elaborate an independent general ethics in translation that would bridge, for instance, translation and the specialized field, knowledge and the public, or rather to call for an applied ethics to solve isolated problems in a specific situation, and remain submitted to a particular genre and field? Language issues also resist to binary logic once the original text is written in more than one language, or is clearly addressed to the multilingual reader. A bilingual translator trained to work in only two languages

(passive/active or foreign language/mother tongue) would undoubtedly fail at the task of properly translating a multilingual original text.

Considering the practice and pedagogy of translation according to a genre distinction brings another element into the discussion: the translating habitus, understood as the "(culturally) pre-structured and structuring agent mediating cultural artefacts in the course of transfer'' (Simeoni 1998: 1). Daniel Simeoni points out that the problem in translation is not necessarily linked to the professional habitus (translatorial habitus), but rather to the translation's status in the field, because it is not considered as a writing practice, one that is solely reserved to writers, but rather as a reading activity (*Ibid.*: 19). Were translation considered as a form of writing, then, as Simeoni argues, it would have been structured as an independent field, as is the case with literature. Instead, diverse translation practices are relegated to a particular field of knowledge (literature, economy, law, medicine etc.) and are submitted to their own constraints, and, by extension, to their ethics. In that case, translators are governed by different social habituses and not by a specific independent translatorial habitus. This means that a professional competence in translation is associated to the field and genre specificity: the higher factual knowledge in a field, the lesser freedom of movement from field to field. By analogy, the higher status of the genre (e.g. poetry), the lower status of the translator (consider, for example, the popular belief that it is impossible to translate poetry).

Proposing translation as a different and independent text-form or genre, or as an independent field of professional activity, as suggested by Simeoni, implies deconstructing the static image of translation as an activity focused on a more or less mechanical repetition[4] and the subservient respect of the established order (social and professional). To conceive translation as a fully independent genre means considering it as having its own rules, agents, and habitus, and consequently as being a place of innovation, contestation, and transgression, in which critical thinking is also

involved. While literature exemplifies a free exploration of imagination and creativity, translation connects with the foreign culture invigorating the target context and imposing a necessary distance to better understand our own identity and sense of belonging to a specific culture. Both of them, literature and translation, are generative and productive forms of interaction, having the power to challenge the current expectations and social norms. The translation activity has, in general, an impact that greatly surpasses the information exchange limited to some specific field of knowledge, intellectual activity or artistic creation: "[…] translations, rather than being a secondary and derivative genre, […][are] instead one of the *primary* literary tools that larger social institutions – educational systems, art councils, publishing firms, and even governments – have at their disposal to 'manipulate' a given society in order to 'construct' the kind of 'culture' desired" (Bassnet 1998: x). In today's world, translation plays an even more important role not only as a situated practice in a specific target culture, but also as a global way of constructing different communication conventions, especially to accommodate a multilingual interaction and, by extension, to build a transnational culture able to host a growing number of contacts, including even the smallest entity. More importantly, translation should not only serve as a tool to provide new information and knowledge all around the world, but it should also promote and defend a linguistic and cultural diversity to avoid, as Trivedi puts it "a wholly translated, monolingual, monocultural, monolithic world" (Trivedi 2007: 6).

Notes

1. The two hermeneutic perspectives of Gadamer and Bakhtin should be understood in terms of the different cultural and socio-political contexts they belong to. If Gadamer belongs to the continuity of the German hermeneutic tradition of Dilthey, Schleiermacher, and Heidegger, Bakhtin's system of thought is, on the contrary, situated in the critical and historical moment of a newborn Soviet state. The concept of discontinuity acquires here a double status: philosophical and existential. Gadamer writes: "Our own past and that other past toward which our historical consciousness is

directed help to shape this moving horizon out of which human life always lives and which determines it as heritage and tradition." (Gadamer 303).

2. For a more detailed discussion about Holmes's initial "map" of translation studies, see Toury (1995: 10).

3. This communication model is deeply grounded in Anglo-Saxon culture and English language but tends to be perceived, accepted, and adopted without any critical distance as a universal model no matter the languages and contexts in contact. For a critical perspective in linguistics, see Wierzbicka (2006a, 2006b, and 1999), and in scientific communication, see van Djick (2003).

4. Translation tools and technology, e.g. a translation memory (TM) system that can store segments previously translated, perfectly portrays the idea of translation as a merely mechanical process.

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Translation and Multilingualism

Smita Agarwal

Abstract

My paper looks at translation and the major concerns of translation theory from the standpoint of a contemporary practitioner creatively involved with languages and culture. I first broach the contentious issue of "mother" vs. "other" tongue and illustrate my own unique multilingual situation and quite unintentional plurilingual education. I also investigate the question of language hegemony and ask if there is, at all, a language of privilege and power for a multilingual person who has acquired languages aurally, from listening and music, without having acquired them in a studied, formal, academic manner. The third part of my paper takes up translation, intertextuality and transcreation with reference to a Bhojpuri folk song and my own published poem in English, "My Bindi". I conclude by discussing my published Hindi translation of Sylvia Plath's "Mirror", which I have termed "aural translation".

My mother never fails to embarrass me no end by narrating an incident regarding my preoccupation and special relationship with languages. According to her, when I was five, I was helping her clean a cupboard one afternoon. The task involved removing articles, dusting them, and putting them back in the cupboard. After a short while my interest and inclination waned, and I stood in front of her and said in English, "Mummy, my elephant is paining …". Upon her cautious enquiry as to what "my elephant" was, I am supposed to have waved my hands and said in Hindi, "*Oh, ho! mera toh haath hi darad kar rahaa hai*." No translator worth her salt would covet the ease with which I had negotiated from *haath hi* to *haathi* to elephant. Unable to distinguish the niceties of idiomatic expression, the child had accomplished one of her first feats of literal translation.

I seriously wonder whether I have a mother tongue. The situation for me regarding languages was as promiscuous as the person from India who works in Brazil, marries a Brazilian, and produces a child in Brazil, then divorces and goes to Australia, marries an Australian, and produces a child there, then again divorces, relocates, and reproduces … . What is the relevance and the hold of the mother tongue in such a situation? As far as I can recollect, several languages fell upon my ear simultaneously. My grandparents spoke to me in Garhwali and Hindi; my parents spoke to me in Hindi and English; the servants, particularly my ayah, spoke to me in Dehati; I rattled off film songs in Hindi. The first languages to tickle my eardrums were Garhwali, Hindi, English, and Dehati. All came to me at one and the same time. There is no question of any one of them having come first or taken precedence over another.

Then, like all children, I was sent to school. While there the nuns had their way and I learnt and spoke in English, but as soon as I ran out the school gate I was back with all my other languages, including Dehati with the rickshawalla and the chaprasi and my best friend Rameshva, who taught me how to fly a kite.

According to another myth propagated by my mother, by the time I was four my mother, who was herself a singer, had discovered that I had a melodious voice. Thus began my oral-aural education, with Vividh Bharati, Lata Mangeshkar, and "*eichak daana beechak daana daney upar daana*". By the time I was eight I had learnt colloquial Urdu, from Bollywood and the radio, because I could sing with ease songs from *Mughaleazam*, such as "*Khuda nigebaan ho tumhaara*, *dharaktey dil ka payaam lelo*, *utho hamaara salaam lelo* …" . Soon I was transliterating into English popular film songs for uncles and cousins whose Hindi was weak but who desired the lyrics. My formal education in music began and I was singing Meera bhajans in Rajasthani, folk songs in Bhojpuri and Garhwali, *badaa khayal* and *chota khayaal* in dialect and vernacular, Faiz and Ghalib in Urdu, the Beatles, Abba and the Carpenters in English … . Tell me, can a single language stake a claim over one as promiscuous as I?

The point I am trying to make is that I have grown up in a multilingual environment. Apart from my formal school education in English I have also been educated in non-formal ways, thus acquiring, quite unintentionally, a plurilingual education. Legally you may say my mother tongue is Garhwali, or, perhaps, Hindi, but I am comfortable and at home with many other Indian languages and dialects. These make me multilingual and empower me in ways that amaze me. Hence, I am not conflicted about "mother" and "other" tongues since I learned several languages simultaneously.

Given my peculiar situation with languages, can there be a question of language hegemony for me? Is there at all a language of privilege and power for me, or am I shrewd enough to tweak the situation in my favour as and when required? It is not the languages I know that control me but I them. Assessing the situation, I bring into play the language most suited to the occasion.

Now let me try to focus on how I think my brain works with languages when I create a poem, in this case "My Bindi" (Agarwal 2009):

My Bindi
All said and done, at fifty,
dear bindi, you brighten up
the day …

Each morning, I've something
to look forward to in the mirror,
and a game to play …
Which one of you
shall I use today?

A full-stop of red
to keep the ardent lover at bay?
An asterisk of gold
for the one I wish to amuse?
The black exclamation mark
for those curious to learn
how I juggle

fidelity with occasional flings?

Mark of the Hindu; fashion-statement
ever since Madonna took to you;
symbol of wedlock or mere
facial embellishment, dumb bindi,
eloquent in your shapes …

My morse code of dots and dashes,
bindi, that flashes
the one I wish to invite …

The idea of the poem in English germinated from a Bhojpuri folk song I often sing: "*Surajmukh naa jaibey, naa jaibey, hai Rama/Ki mori bindiya ke rang udaa jaaye …*". Hence, the English poem becomes an example of intertextuality across languages, perhaps the kind Harivansha Rai Bachchan experienced while translating Omar Khayyam from English into Hindi and creating his own *Madhushala* in Hindi (for an excellent discussion of this see *Colonial Transactions* by Harish Trivedi, 44-70). This crossfertilization of languages in my mind I find particularly profitable in writing poetry.

Surajmukh … (A Bhojpuri folk song)
Surajmukh naa jaibey, naa jaibey, hai Rama
Ki mori bindiya key rang udaa jaaey.

Laakh takey ki mori bindiya
Woh toh nandi ka jiyaa lalchavey
Ki ho mori bindiya key rang udaa jaaye

Bindiya peher may niksi anganvaa
Woh toh devraa najariya lagaave
Ki ho mori bindiya key rang udaa jaaye

Bindiya mori piya us bhaave
Woh toh hamraa se kahiyo naa jaaey
Ki ho mori bindiya ke rang udaa jaaey …

Is the poem an intercultural translation beyond word for word? Is it something beyond translation, a creative translation, a creative adaptation, a transcreation? Yes, insofar as a successful transcreation adapts attributes in a culturally relevant manner in an attempt to reach the target audience at an emotional and intellectual level. Successful transcreation is based on the thorough knowledge of the local environment, culture, and details specific to that culture and country. The poem may be considered a successful transcreation of ideas. Like the Bhojpuri voice, the English one too is subversive, wicked, amorous, and carefree, but that is where the comparison stops, mainly due to differences in culture. The protagonist of the Bhojpuri poem remains bashful and within the ambit of family and tradition, whereas the speaking voice of the English poem achieves a far greater freedom. However, despite all this agonizing about intertextuality and transcreation, “My Bindi” is an original poem in English because it remains accessible to readers in English not at all aware of Bhojpuri culture or Indian traditions of marriage.

Mirror
I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful—
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

(Plath 1981)

Sylvia Plath's "Mirror" is a poem close to my heart and for a long while I wished to make it mine in Hindi. I envied Plath's talent and ability displayed in the poem; I badly wanted to be able to write something like it. When the opportunity of translating the poem came my way, I pounced on it readily, perhaps feeling that in this manner I would be able to make the poem mine. We often talk of translation as if it is a matter of being faultlessly correct and of exquisite technique. A good translation certainly is these things, but there is so much more to it. Ted Hughes, in his notes to the poems of Sylvia Plath mentions that Plath was a conscious artist and most of her well-known poems have a sense of drama because she deliberately wrote as if the poem was a performance. She wrote with the reader in mind; she wrote for an audience; and, as she herself mentions in one of her letters, the "aural" element of the poem, the way it is heard by the reader, was important to her. I decided to let this be my guide while translating. The dramatic qualities of "Mirror" had to be preserved, hence the tone (deadpan, ironic) and the rhythm had to be translated together with the sense meaning. I would not be reading the poem as words on a page; instead, I would be listening to it as a system of sounds and meaning, exactly the way I learn a song from my music teacher.

"I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions": "*Mai rupehla aur sateek. Meri koi purvadharnayein*".[1] The word "preconceptions" became a sort of auditory icon that brought me to "*purvadharnayein*". In this translation, I related the sound and semantic elements in my mind, rather than riffling through the pages of a dictionary or thesaurus. In addition to this I turned to the rhythm of the poem embedded in every line. "I am silver and exact", seven syllables in English, became "*Mai rupehla aur sateek*", seven syllables in Hindi. Similarly, "unmisted by love or dislike", eight syllables, became "*prem ya aruchi se aprabhavit*", eight syllables in Hindi. As well there are some intuitive interlanguage alliterations, like "preconceptions" and "*poorvadharnayein*", "cruel" and "*kroor*", "meditate" and "*manan*", "drowned" "*duboo*", "young" "*yuvati*". Remember, as I said earlier, this is translation by sound, so I do not

underestimate the importance of alliteration between languages. Lastly, the diction of Plath's "Mirror" is colloquial, following the easy patterns of conversation. I have tried to retain that conversational ease in "*Darpan",* but I am afraid my Hindi in the poem is not that of everyday chatter. The diction in "*Darpan*" is *klisht* – as far as the Hindi is concerned. Words like *poorvadharnayein*, *aprabhavit*, *mithyavadiyon*, *pratibimbhit, puruskrit*, are not words used in everyday conversation. Besides this, words from Urdu further the promiscuity displayed in this translation: "*Jyadatar*", "*lambe arseh*", "*asliyat*", "*shama"*, "*imandari"*, "*chehra"*, etc., rub shoulders with Hindi words.

This translation of "Mirror" from English into Hindi relied on the sound value of the rhythmic word. I feel that the rhythmic word has a subtlety that is complex, flexible, and suggestive of infinite possibilities that makes the act of translation less bookish and more spontaneous. Its powers soar beyond the laws of mechanical construction. In the heat of translation, the intellectual sense of the word hums like an undertone in my mind. I almost, but not quite, forget it, and this enables me to come up with the appropriate word in the target language in an instinctive, spontaneous, and unforced manner. Here it may be fruitful for us to cogitate on the essentially primitive nature of language, where sound conveys sense: for example, *Rhimjhim*, *umad-ghumad*, pitter-patter, fizzle. This indefinable quality or property in sound to raise certain vibrations in the mind, this suggestive force of language, its sensational concreteness, is an area that needs to be given greater emphasis in the translation of the rhythmic word. For it helps in distilling not only the intellectual value of the word, not only its emotional power, but also its essence or the spirit of the word, and this is most necessary in the translation of poetry.[2]

To conclude I will address the process of decolonization and standardization and its impact on translational activity, by casting an anxious glance at contemporary popular culture ruled by Bollywood. What impact is this culture going to have on literary and academic translational activity? Will we succumb to the infection of the adulteration of languages, or will we have recourse to isolating

ourselves in a bubble-wrapped chamber? These are the vexing issues that translators of literary works have to sort out.

When I travel to Khajuraho and my local guide explains erotic sculpture to me in Indian English as, "Lady feeling, man exciting, yoga happening …", I have no problem understanding the man and secretly commend him for the polish with which he has managed to deal with a difficult subject. My blue-blooded English friend by my side, on the other hand, is totally confused and has to turn to me regarding what the guide has just said. Similarly, Bollywood is creating a brand new form of Bhojpuri by penning lyrics such as "*Chaati se lagaava laao dear/ Ab th aajaa near ...*".

Since we are a multiethnic, multilingual, plural society we are naturally empowered as far as translational activity is concerned. Our oral tradition provides us with the power to negotiate languages instinctively and intuitively, without much theoretical agonizing. This is the area we need to concentrate on. Should we regard translation as a formal, hyperconscious activity, based on theories of language, psychology etc., or, should we, without being overly concerned about the purity of language, breathe freely, go with the flow, and allow indigenous cultures and languages to come together creatively? We already see this happening all around us in spoken and written language with FM radio, text messages, and Bollywood songs, such as "*Dil mein mere hai dard-e-*disco", "*Yeh* lazy *lamhe* …", "*Yeh dil maange* more …", " White white face *dekhe/ Dilva* beating fast/ *Sasura* chance *maare re/ Dil* dance *maare re* …". In dialect, we listen to "*Chaati se lagaava laao* dear/ *Ab th aajaa* near …". This unselfconscious translational activity blurs boundaries, subsumes hierarchies, and seems to be the way of the future. In our classrooms, meaning becomes clearer when English idioms are translated into Hindi, not semantically, but as parallel ideas. Shakespeare's quibbles and wordplay may be illustrated, for example, by parallels from Kabir like, "*Man ka manka pherle*, *main turat milaa doon tohe …".*

Day after day, the layperson is getting adept at blending regional languages and dialects with English, producing an English comprehensible to an Indian but utterly incomprehensible to a non-native English speaker. It is a trend we in our ivory towers of academia cannot ignore. Should we be purists and shy away from unselfconscious spontaneity or should we allow this infection to impact us in a controlled manner? As translators of literary texts, our prime aim is to be true to the work in hand and not allow it to be diluted, yet our precaution and caution may deaden the spirit of our endeavour. For, languages are alive and organic and so full of the life force that if stifled they will send out alternative branches, shoots, aerial roots, prop roots, and give birth to a new version of themselves.

Note

1. See *Plath Profiles*, Vol. 1, 2008, 198. http://www.iun.edu/~plath/vol1/agarwal.pdf

2. Sri Aurobindo was a firm believer in this, and he expanded upon this idea in several of his essays on poetry and translation.

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Indian Literature, Multiculturalism and Translation

Guru Charan Behera

Abstract

Translation plays a significant role, explicit or implicit, deliberate or spontaneous in the interlingual, intercultural communication between the people of India, as well in the construction of multilingual, multicultural Indian Literature. It negotiates the power relations between various cultural formations and different linguistic mediums as a means of communication and as a language of translation, contributing to the egalitarian process by countering the hierarchical relationships between languages and cultures, reclaiming disappearing texts and cultures, and releasing knowledge from the control of a few. The paper addresses these complex interconnected issues of Indian Literature, multiculturalism and translation.

India as a Multicultural Space

India is a multicultural space accommodating many races, castes, languages, religions and cultures. These exist paradoxically as distinct and, at the same time, interconnected, even overlapping, identities, at multiple levels. India can be described as a nation of nations, a land of many Indias, variously imagined by these communities/collectivities through various cultural forms and expressions. Out of this scenario emerge multilingual forms of Indian literature, and in this translation plays a role that can be explicit or implicit, deliberate or spontaneous. The aim of this paper is to discuss how translation participates in these complex interrelations and negotiates the power relationships between these various socio-cultural forces and different linguistic mediums, such as the choice of *bhashas* vis-a-vis English as the language of translation.

Indian Literature

Indian literature is an expression of the vital plurality and productive diversity of our nation. Community-states in India have no well-defined boundaries; they cross each other's frontiers. In many cases, languages are not confined to the geographical boundaries of particular states; languages contain many variations and dialects and share a number of features. States have a mixed population speaking different languages. When members of these communities communicate with each other, they often have to speak different mixed varieties of languages, so people inside their state as well as outside are constantly engaged in translation. India, thus, is a land of "translating consciousness" (Devy 1993: 135).

A literary trend in a particular language can go beyond the boundaries of the given language to establish historical, thematic, and stylistic correspondence with literatures in other Indian languages. The Bhakti Poetry movement at one time spread across the regional and linguistic barriers of the country. There are writers who speak and write in many languages and readers who understand and enjoy literatures in more than one language. In a single text there can be multilingual situations, or polyphony, or the use of many languages. In the plays of Kalidas Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Magadhi were used with ease and naturalness and the audience could understand and enjoy the linguistic shifts within a single work. Literary creations have been appropriated and transformed into new incarnations in geographically and temporarily distant spaces. Texts have been transcreated, translated, adapted, imitated, and sometimes, interpreted and circulated in new literary constructs. Following the decline of Sanskrit as the central language of creative expression the languages of various regions of India emerged as the mediums of knowledge, and literature. Knowledge that until then had been confined to a few individuals was liberated, to be made available to common people. Translation played a significant role in the diversification and dissemination of knowledge and also in the evolution and enrichment of Indian languages and literatures. A number of Sanskrit texts were translated into regional languages, and

took different interpretations and forms. The linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of Indian society as both a reality and the norm was recognized and established. Translation helps expose Indian writers writing in one language to the styles, techniques and experimentations in the literatures of other languages, so that they can use these creatively in their own writings. New trends in literature have been facilitated by translation activities.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism implies a multiplicity of contesting cultural voices that are allowed to articulate the imagined community of the nation on their own terms. As such, it should be seen as a contestation of mono-culturalism, the impulse to impose one cultural order on all sections of society. Multicultural India thus cannot be reduced to a single ideological concept; instead, when the sharply contrasting cultural constructs of the national imaginary are set in dialogic relation there occurs an infinitely complicated *aporia* that cannot be resolved in the name of ideological consistency or logical unity (Derrida 1982: 43-44). It must be accepted that Indian identity is a ceaseless play, a coming together and moving apart, of different cultures.

Multiculturalism inhabits a plane space, not a hierarchical space. This can be explained in the light of postmodern theory. Postmodern theory, in theorizing plane space, attacks foundational theory, or essentialist philosophy, that supports mono-culturalism. Francois Lyotard defines, postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarrative" that displaces the discourse of metanarrative or grand narrative and argues for a cultural space that is populated by little narratives (1993: 3). These narratives are governed by their own constituting rules and are not dependent on extra-narrational foundational rules for articulation. Such discursive forms are not arranged in a hierarchical order; they are allowed to flourish alongside of each other, on a plane space of cultural autonomy. Another term Lyotard has used is *differend*, which denotes "a case of conflict between two parties that can not be resolved for lack of a

rule of judgment applicable to both arguments" (1988: xi). This is closer to what Derrida implies by *aporia*, disallowing the formation of a master narrative and blocking the cultural process of marginalization.

To describe postmodern multicultural space Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari develop the concept of *rhizome*. A rhizome is any plant (like grass) whose root system spreads horizontally on the ground; as the plant grows outward and across it can grow to cover the whole land mass. It is a figure of non-hierarchical, structureless, open system. It is apposed to the *aborescent*, the tree, which suggests the image of a root that grounds textual (and cultural) complexes in a foundational matrix in order to uphold a unified, centered and hierarchical system that characterizes the narratives of modernity.

Multiculturalism has two implications. First, it presents culture as a site of contestation and competition, in which the periphery is engaged in conflict with the centre, setting off the free play of various elements. American critic Wahneema Lubiano, in her essay "Like Being Mugged by a Metaphor: Multiculturalism and State Narratives," calls this phenomenon radical multiculturalism, in which contestation is the driving force. Second, there is historical multiculturalism, which aims at recovering lost historical, cultural voices, as discussed by Ronald Takaki, in his book *A Different Mirror* (1993). The continuous deployment of the force of translation will resist the structure of domination and marginalization, foreground little narratives, and retrieve the lost historical cultural voices; it thus can serve the purposes of both types of multiculturalism. Though multiculturalism conceives cultures as autonomous, it opens up a space for constant "negotiation" between them and even facilitates the process of hybridization. Between cultural forms there is the clearing in which interpenetration takes place. Translation operates in this clearing, in the "in-between" space, as an aid to and product of this negotiation process.

Translation

Translation is an egalitarian process that engineers the plane space. It frees the knowledge system from the possession of a few individuals, transfers the text into different domains, and gives it new linguistic and cultural incarnations. Translation is not concerned with the transfer of meaning; it transforms a text, and, in the process, may transform the meaning, which the target language culture often influences and determines. Derrida calls translation "a regulated transformation" (1981: 20). Walter Benjamin, in his "The Task of the Translator", argues that instead of simply transporting the meaning of the original, a translation must "lovingly and in detail, incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are parts of a vessel" (1969: 78).These fragments are not expected to be identical to each other. The original presents itself as univocal, complete, identical to itself; but it is translation which brings out the multiple possibilities of the original that can be transformed into various cultural forms and expressions. For Benjamin a translation represents the "afterlife" of the work, which Tejaswini Niranjana interprets as "the continued life of the text rather than afterlife to follow its death" (1992: 134). In translation the original finds new life, grows, matures, is supplemented. If one aspect of multiculturalism is the reclamation of disappearing cultures, translation serves its purpose by retrieving a text and ensuring its "continued life". For instance, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, translated into a number of languages, have been transformed and converted into target language cultural texts and live their "afterlife". Another point to be noted here is that translation is an attempt to bring the languages engaged in the process of translation to the same level, thus countering the hierarchical relationship between them, such as between Sanskrit and *bhashas*, English and *bhashas*, or between different *bhashas*.

Translation in India

In India English has become the dominant mode of translation. Indian writers vie with each other to get their works translated into English, both as a status symbol and in their

eagerness to reach out to western audiences. Many translators also use English in imitation of standard British English, to be understood and appreciated by western readers, ignoring the presence in India of a sizeable number of English knowing readers, who could form the target audience. As a result, these translations tend to gloss over, even exclude, many local peculiarities and cultural specificities of the *bhasha* text. This is a neocolonial tendency, a replication of the past colonial hegemony. The result is not a real representation of Indian culture; oftentimes, it turns out to be a distorted representation. In this context it can be pointed out that there is no need to ignore various cultural features of Indian society or gloss over Indian cultural terms and expressions; they can be used creatively to enrich the English language and widen the multicultural scope of Indian English.

Even A.K. Ramanujan has given an English rendering of place names. In *Speaking of Shiva* Basavanna's *Kudala Sangam* becomes, 'Lord of the Meeting Rivers', Mahavinayaka's *Mallikarjuna* becomes 'Lord White as Jasmine', Allama Prabhu's *Guheswar,* 'Lord of the Caves'. Ramanujan's explanation in this regard is significant:

> I have [...] taken the liberty of translating literally into English the name of Siva here, Chennamallikarjunna. For such names carry aspect and attributes of Siva. Further, such proper nouns, if as they are in the English translation, are inert and cannot participate in the poems as they do in the originals. (1973: 193)

But the names of gods in one language cannot be expressed in another language in summary forms, as they form an integral part of the source language culture. Indeed, in his translation of U.R.Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* Ramanujan has used many Indian expressions and Indianized English expressions.

In the English translation of Oriya novelist Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*, Bikram Keshari Das has edited out many descriptions of cultural forms of the Paraja tribe, such as tribal songs, dances and rituals. As a result, the translation does not

adequately represent the original and its culture. This kind of translation into English, more precisely into standard British English, has the danger of ignoring the linguistic, literary, and cultural significances of the source language text, equating language with nation and equating English with India, relegating the solid presence of multilingualism and multiculturalism to the background. The nation might turn out to be an English-educated metropolitan construct. To counter this, the type of English we need as a language of translation is one that incorporates Indian linguistic and cultural expressions and reorients English forms to construct an Indian idiom. It should be restructured English that goes beyond the boundaries of domination, even to prevent it, to a certain extent, from being a language of the urban middle class. Indian English can become a language of various forms.

In representing and translating typical Indian situations and expressions Raja Rao in his novel *Kanthapura* (1938) has made pioneering efforts. In his foreword to *Kanthapura* Rao states:

> One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own […]. We are instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. […] The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into making of theirs.(5-6)

In the novel he has Indianized some English words: 'younglings', 'feedless', 'milkless', 'clothless' (18), 'vengefulness' (76), 'sobless' (91), 'clayey' (92), 'unmuddled' (95), 'seeable' (127), 'tongued' (134). Some very unusual transferred epithets translate typically Indian situations and idioms: 'gaping sacks' (25), 'sobbing lantern', 'frothing milk-pot' (32), 'pungent tamarind', 'suffocating chillies', 'lolling bells and muffled bells' (45), 'bellied boulders', 'dallying drain' (87) 'winkless night', 'wakeful night' (125), 'thunderless rain' (143). Many Indian words are retained in the text, without any attempt to translate them into English equivalents: 'patwari' (9), 'sari' (13), 'vidwan' (15), 'annas',

'banya' (24), 'charka' (250), 'taluk' (27), 'khir', 'dal' (28), 'chutney' (29), 'pheni' (32), 'happalam' (42), 'ragi', 'kumkum' (45), 'prayaschita' (46), 'dhoti' (56), 'mandap' (67), 'panchayat' (77), 'laddu' (85), 'vakils' (92), 'maidan bazzar' (93), 'cummerbund' (119).

In the sentence "Nobody who has eyes to see and ears to hear will believe in such a crow-and-sparrow story" Rao prefers "crow-and-sparrow" to its English equivalent "cock and bull story". Translated expressions like "Our granary is empty as a mourning house" (25), "I swear he would have done had not the stream run the way it did" (27), "….let your family creepers link each other" (29), "….the youngest is always the holy bull" (39), "Our hearts are squeezed like a wet cloth" (175) point to typical Indian usages, idioms, rhetoric and belief systems.

He has also tried to bring English closer to the syntactic structure of Indian language with the inversion of verb and subject in the sentences like "Kanthapura […] high on the ghat is it […] up the Malabar coast is it […] (7), "Kenchamma […] Great and bounteous is she; never has she failed us in our grief' (8), "And he can sing too, can Jayaramachar" (16), "I tell you he was not a bad man, was Bhatta" (32), "Then he goes, Moorthy, to Pandit Venkateshia" (26).

Salman Rushdie's position is similar to Raja Rao's:

> English, no longer an English language, grows from many roots, and those whom it once colonized are carving out *large* territories within the language for themselves (*London Times*, July 3, 1982).

In this article Rushdie refers, with admiration, to G.V. Desani, who showed "how English could be bent and kneaded until it spoke in an authentically Indian voice". In *Midnight's Children*, while words like 'writery', 'looker-after' 'writing-shifting' are Indian derivations of English words, 'chutnification' is an example of English derivation of Indian words. Many such hybrid expressions used in the novel demonstrate the strength and creativity of India. His use of the term 'Dung Goddess' for Lotus-seated

Goddess Lakshmi, however, does not seem appropriate, for it is not from dung but from mud or swamp or slush that lotuses grow.

Another way to reverse this one-way traffic, or check this lopsided development of translation praxis is for English texts to be translated into *bhashas* in large number. There should be extensive translation of *bhasha* texts into other *bhashas* to help construct an interrelated multicultural space. This could be possible by liberating ourselves from the metropolitan notion of a unified space, governed by English or any regional language. Those translated are likely to subjugate the rest that remain untranslated and the rest of local knowledge. To counter the asymmetrical relations of power between various languages and texts in India more and more interlingual translation should be carried out.

Hence, apart from the development and sharpening of Indian English as the language of translation, the promotion of extensive heterographic translation – the translation between various languages, *bhashas* and English and between *bhashas* – is perhaps one way to achieve linguistic decentralization in a multilingual nation like India and engineer the plane space of multiculturalism. Translations as a channel of communication between linguistic communities help construct an interlingual and intertextual space for *bhashas* and their literatures to inhabit and to use for their mutual enrichment. Translation also helps to expand the interconnections between *bhasha* literatures and to contribute to the mosaic of Indian Literature.

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Ghana-*da*'s *Duck*, or a Translator's Travails

Amlan Das Gupta

Abstract

The paper arises out of my experience of attempting to translate some of Premendra Mitra's celebrated stories about Ghanashyam Das, better known as Ghana-da, a teller of exciting and fantastic stories to a group of young and often critical house-mates. Written between the mid-1940s and the mid-1980s, the stories were extremely popular, and drew a readership that cut across age and gender. The paper seeks to consider Mitra's masterly command of fact, in particular scientific and geographical knowledge, and the way that this is integrated in fictional narrative structures that are often exotic and hyperbolic. I attempt to raise questions that relate to the pedagogic intentions of Bengali juvenile fiction, and the questions of audience expectation and response.

I propose in this brief essay to discuss a short story by Premendra Mitra called *Duck* (*Haansh*). It is one of the stories that Mitra wrote about his fictional raconteur, Ghana-*da*, who lives in a boarding house somewhere in Kolkata and is occasionally persuaded by his younger housemates to tell them stories about his adventures. As the unnamed narrator of the Ghana-*da* stories tells us in the first story of the series, "We've accepted that there's no place in the world that he hasn't been to in the last two hundred years and no event that he hasn't had something to do with." A few years ago I tried my hand at translating some of these stories and the results appeared in a volume entitled *Mosquito and Other Stories*, published by Penguin in 2004. I understand that recently the stories have been reissued in the Penguin Modern Classics series.

For those unfamiliar with the stories, the first of the Ghana-*da* stories appeared in 1945, in a Puja annual collection named

Alpana. The story was *Mosha* (*Mosquito*), which initiated the legend of Ghana-*da* and the boarding house – the *mess-bari* – at 72 Banamali Naskar Lane. The familiar setting took some time to develop though: in the earliest stories, the address is not mentioned, and we hear of the other residents. Within a few years, however, the house and its dwellers had become firmly established: in the stories themselves as well as in the world of Bengali fiction. The main speaker is Ghana-*da* himself, and his audience is made up of four young men who oscillate between amused contempt and reluctant admiration for the raconteur.

At the time when these stories started to appear, Premendra Mitra – poet, novelist, essayist, short-story writer and filmmaker – was already a major figure in the cultural life of Bengal. Born in 1904, he was already established as a writer of note when his early novel *Pank* was serialized between 1925 and 1926. Though written for young people, the Ghana-*da* stories were popular with all kinds of readers from the beginning. Their combination of science, travel, adventure and imagination made them unique in Bengali fiction. They are thought of as fantasies, but fantasy is a dangerous word to use about the Ghana-*da* stories. In spite of Ghana-*da* becoming synonymous with tall tales, there is little in the stories that does not either stand up to the light of reason and fact, or draw on sharply topical interests. My interest in the present story – *Haansh* – is essentially for this reason.

If I could be permitted a personal confession, I should admit that I was as dubious as most of my friends about the success of this venture. The stories were, I feared, too fantastic, too outrageous in their flights of imagination, to withstand transference into another language, and at that a language whose idioms and habits of thought were so alien. One of the major problems of translating childhood favourites, I think, is that of *affect*: the result of one's labours seem all the more poor because of a particular function of memory, the difficulty of having to dissociate such works from a web of emotion and excitement experienced in the past. *Pace* Benjamin, I hasten to say that what I am saying is not a restriction upon the act of

translation in itself, or even a denial that the translation can stem only out of the afterlife of the work, but to try to understand a problem of choice: the need one feels to translate works in a language in which one normally thinks and feels into one which will make it available to a different set of readers. It is also important to assert that the intended reader of the translation is not one who has access to the source, and so presumably she will not be troubled by the translator's hesitations. Inasmuch as the afterlife of a work may also be an afterlife of affect, in which the desire to translate has to contend with the sense of deeper cultural mooring, the project becomes more difficult than anticipated.

Translating Ghana-*da* was instructive in a number of respects. For one, the process of rendering the stories into English was smoother than I had anticipated, or at any rate, intermittently so; for if trying to convey the peculiar character of boarding house life in post-war Kolkata had its inevitable problems, the substance of Ghana-*da*'s own narrations were decidedly simpler. It might be easier to explain this with a brief examination of one of the stories, and *Haansh* is as good an example as any other. In fact what I am trying to convey is a general feature of the stories in general. *Duck* begins with a new resident in the boarding house, Bapi Dutta, clearly a misfit in the close community. He is crude and insensitive, and clearly lacking in the reluctant appreciation of Ghana-*da*'s talents that the inner group of residents share. It is a Friday night and a great meal is in progress, to satisfy those members of the mess – like Bapi Dutta – who go home for the weekends. The main course is duck curry, and Bapi speaks knowledgeably about the excellence of the fowls they are savouring. It soon transpires, however, that the ducks that figure on the table are actually the very ones that Bapi had bought to take home – and it was at Ghana-*da*'s orders that the ducks had been cut up and cooked. Bapi, like the great oaf that he is, goes charging up to Ghana-*da*'s room to confront him, but instead of denying the charge Ghana-*da* simply says that this makes 1232 ducks that he has cut up; at which Bapi, confused, but still angry, demands a further explanation.

The story that Ghana-*da* reluctantly is made to tell, is one which is thrilling and fantastic. It starts with Ghana-*da* crossing the high Himalayan snowline in the dead of winter on one of his customary adventures. The locale here is in part one of the current routes to Mansarovar and Mt Kailas: past the checkpost at Lipulekh to Taklakot, and thence, as Ghana-*da* nonchalantly describes it, a casual stroll over the Gurla pass towards the frozen snowfields leading to Kailas. Ghana-*da* reels off the local names of Himalayan fauna, and while the regulars try to turn their chuckles into coughs Bapi is entirely under the spell of the tale. Briefly then, Ghana-*da* describes how he is stuck in a raging blizzard, when he hears a voice calling out to him in Finnish (which is one of the innumerable languages that the narrator knows well) and then in French and English. The ghostly voice leads to the discovery of the body of Dr Callio, a well known explorer and scientist, known to have perished in these parts. The ghostly voice still calls out, and Ghana-*da* sadly meditates on the sad fate of the scholar.

The story suddenly shifts to the camp of von Bruhl, apparently an adventurer, some fifty miles away from Gurla Pass, where a dokpa – and Ghana-*da* rather condescendingly explains that the word locally means 'shepherd' – arrives in a half-dead state. After recovering, he finds employment with von Bruhl. He claims to know the region very well, having accompanied the great traveller Sven Hedin in his explorations of the region. Von Bruhl appears suspicious, but keeps the man on. Soon however the new recruit is discovered spying in von Bruhl's tent, and there is a struggle in which the German goes flying into the tent. Not surprisingly, the dokpa turns out to be Ghana-*da* in disguise, and he tells von Bruhl that he too is looking for some 'water'. Further recognitions ensue: von Bruhl is none but the arch villain Muller, who in turn recognizes in the dokpa his old adversary Ghanashyam Das. Dr Callio was scouring the region for a lake of 'heavy' water – otherwise known as deuterium – used in nuclear research. A natural source apart from revolutionizing science would naturally be a source of immense wealth. Muller had befriended the scientist, stolen his map and left him to die. Ghana-*da* manages to escape with the map hotly pursued

by the recovered Muller. Ghana-*da*'s gun has only one bullet and after a long journey, when he is about to drop down, he finds a way of saving the map. He manages ingeniously to seize a duck – by shooting a wolf with his single bullet the moment it seized the duck – and inserting the map in a small container into its gullet. The bird flies off to the warmer climes of India. Muller catches up with Ghana-*da* – now unarmed – but the latter saves himself by throwing the carcass of the wolf at Muller, who tumbles into a glacier to meet a fitting death. Ever since Ghana-*da* has been seizing every duck he can find and trying to locate the map.

That leaves unexplained the ghostly voice. When Bapi Dutta, now entirely converted into fawning admiration, mentions the providential appearance of Dr Callio's ghost, Ghana-*da* explains that it was just a tape recording mechanism that Dr Callio had devised before dying to keep his voice playing for some more time. The story ends with the narrator describing Bapi Dutta's conversion into disciplehood, and to the fact that they're *sick* of eating duck.

It is no wonder that this heady combination of Himalayan adventure, science fiction and international skulduggery would have exercised a mesmerising attraction on readers young and old. But above all there was the brilliance and wit of the narrative itself, which turned apparently disparate elements into a gripping whole. The extravagance of the stories with their international settings – the locales vary from the South Pole to the Sahara Desert – are complemented by the reclusive and slightly absurd figure of the teller, living in his little attic on the third storey, consuming in vast quantities the delicacies offered by the roadside eateries of the city, and smoking borrowed cigarettes. But Ghana-*da* outfoxes everybody, including the readers: even as the narrator's young interlocutors try to catch him out by laying traps, it seems that Ghana-*da* is one step ahead of them, revealing unexpected reserves of knowledge and pragmatic intelligence.

The unexpected facility that I found in translating these stories resulted I think from the fact that they are in an important

sense mimetic, incorporating at a fundamental level a wide and highly researched wealth of fact. The Ghana-*da* stories were an important factor in the reading habits of the young until the mid 70s or even early 80s, and in them one picked up a wealth of arcane lore ranging from the reproductive habits of slugworms to black holes. The apparent inconsequentiality of this realm of fact, its lack of any overt pedagogic intent, and its steadfast avoidance of any moral posturing, was what must have appealed to me as a young reader, and to many others for three generations. Fact, I found, translates well even in fantasy and fiction: and if there was one characteristic of the Ghana-*da* stories, it was the reliability of their sources. Looking back now one realises exactly how up to date the stories were. The famous *Hat* (*Tupi*) was written apparently in the few months that elapsed between the abortive Swiss attempt to climb Mt Everest in late 1952 and the success of Hillary and Tenzing in the summer of 1953. In the story the Swiss have come back, but the mountain is still unclimbed. The story displays an amazing wealth of detail about routes and terrain, information that was still very new to the mountaineering fraternity. Mitra must have closely studied the despatches in the international press, not to speak of more specialized journals. But the stories wear their learning lightly and with grace: if rendering the facts of the matter are relatively simple, the same cannot be claimed of the style and narrative structure.

Translations as we know age faster than their originals, and it may well be – and we certainly hope this will be the case – that Mitra will find better interpreters in the future. But I guess that a future translator of the stories will find that the task is both easier and more difficult than one might initially think. In some sense, I guess, the stories incorporate a level of translation in themselves, in that the facts that they so masterfully conceal in their elegant fancy are themselves culled from a variety of sources. The skill of the writer was in making them so much a part of the process of growing up in Bengal for many decades. Of course, the stories did much more than merely render fact palatable and enjoyable. Mitra, as many people know, was himself a deeply committed writer, and thought that true writing came from the recognition of "the

enormous responsibility of living". So if Mitra avoided didacticism and moral posturing, which many of his contemporaries were not able to do, he also made us aware of certain kinds of ethical choices and positions. Such choices may be less popular today, in an age of aggressive global capitalism and systematic destruction of natural resources. Perhaps thus even a translation has some role to play in trying to recover a voice of sanity and reason.

Translating Buddhist Terminology: Ethnocentrism, Multiculturalism and Interculturalism

Nicole Martínez-Melis

Abstract

The translation of Buddhist terminology has had to be rethought in the light of the practice of Buddhism in the West as a living tradition. This new area of research has already made a contribution to translation studies. In this article, the TRAFIL research group (Translating remote philosophies to facilitate understanding) in the Departament de Traducció i d'Interpretació de l'Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona presents the results of some preliminary studies aimed at building a multilingual terminology data bank (MarpaTerm) designed as an aid to translating Tibetan Buddhist texts into Spanish and Catalan.

Buddhism is currently on the increase in the West, far from its native soil (Midal 2006; Gira 1989), leading to significantly more translations of texts about this spiritual tradition. This opens up a field of research within Translation Studies: the problem of the translation of terminology. Given that Buddhism cannot be understood through traditional dichotomies such as 'philosophy' versus 'religion', 'faith' versus 'reason', or 'theism' versus 'atheism', it propels us into conceptual frameworks different from all those to which we are accustomed.

A Terminology Database

In this context, we are now presenting the preliminary work on developing the MarpaTerm database,[1] which is intended to begin a standardisation process for Buddhist terminology in Spanish and Catalan, particularly as regards the Tibetan tradition. The goal is to allow effective communication that preserves the authenticity of

Buddhism in the target culture.

In the MarpaTerm database, Tibetan is the source language and Spanish and Catalan are the target languages, since no bilingual dictionary covers these language combinations. Our work is prescriptive, and seeks to put forward a rationalised terminology for Tibetan Buddhism in Spanish and Catalan. It is also descriptive, in that it indicates synonyms gathered from publications in Spanish and Catalan, as well as the most widely used terms in French and English,[2] and the Sanskrit term when available. In some lexicographical works, each entry is associated with one *term* and describes all the meanings associated with it, but in this database each record is associated with a single *concept*, and there can be different records for one term since it could refer to different concepts. A record consists of:

1) the term(s) in Tibetan associated with a specific concept – in the Tibetan alphabet and in Wylie transliteration[3] – along with a simplified phonetic transcription and a lexical translation;
2) the term(s) in Spanish[4] accompanied by a definition and optionally a note, and in some cases a definition in context along with its source, the hypernym, the hyponyms, the related terms, the translation technique that was applied, and a usage note;
3) the term(s) in Catalan, French, English and Sanskrit – in Romanised transliteration, accompanied by a lexical translation. Sanskrit[5] has been included for three reasons. First, most of the Tibetan terminology was originally translated from Sanskrit. Second, the Buddhist terms most commonly used in the West are loans from Sanskrit. Finally, Sanskrit sometimes provides a translation solution, in that it does not always express the concept in the same way as Tibetan.

Translation Methodology Options

Buddhism has influenced numerous cultures throughout its history, and its expansion, and thus its translation, has not impeded the continuity of values, which have remained intact despite the cultural diversity with which it has been in contact (Aguilar 1997). This is why we believe the best way to facilitate transmission and understanding of Buddhism in the West is, on the one hand, to bear in mind its adaptability, and, on the other, to apply concepts from social and cultural anthropology to the translation of its terminology, avoiding any ethnocentrism or multiculturalism and instead using a transcultural approach, as explained below.

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to interpret the world and other cultures from a unique viewpoint, made up of the observer's ideas and value judgements (Beltrán 2005). This prejudiced attitude, which involves over-valuing one's own culture – seen as superior to all others – and therefore a negation of the other culture, does not allow for cultural interchange. In translating this terminology, the ethnocentric tendency shows itself in a methodological option that we call assimilation,[6] which consists of appropriating an original concept and erasing its specific qualities by applying a target-language term that refers to a different concept. Examples of this option, which is typical of the oldest translations, can be found in the *Dictionnaire thibétain - latin – français*, prepared by the French Catholic mission in Tibet in the 19th century. The French missionaries translate *sdig pa*, which means 'that which degrades', as '*peccatum, culpa, vitium*; *péché, faute, vice* [sin, fault, vice], without considering the philosophical and religious system to which this term belongs. Ethnocentrism is also present in the first Western translation of the famous *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, from 1927, in which Evans-Wentz uses terminology from Christianity and the writings of the Theosophical Society (Prats 1996), which, along with other late 19th-century esoteric movements, tried to appropriate Buddhism. Against all expectations this tendency still exists today, and can be found even in the terminology normally used by Western

Buddhists. For example, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one of the meanings of 'blessing' is 'God's favour and protection'; yet this is used to translate *byin rlab* (Sanskrit, *adhiṣṭāna*), which clearly refers to a different concept, as explained by the Dalai Lama (2003):

> Blessing must arise from within your own mind. It is not something that comes from outside […]. The Tibetan word for blessing can be broken into two parts – *byin* means 'magnificent potential,' and *rlab* means 'to transform.' So *byin rlab* means transforming into magnificent potential.

The same is the case for *smon lam* (Sanskrit, *praṇidhāna*), which is usually translated as 'prayer', even though it is 'not a request to an external deity, but a method of purifying and directing the mind' (Fremantle andTrungpa 1976).

As for multiculturalism, we use it here in the sense of recognising the existence of cultural diversity associated with a certain tendency to maintain the separateness of cultures (Beltrán 2005). In other words, differences are acknowledged but remain clearly delimited, such that once again cultural interchange is impossible. In translation, multiculturalism is revealed in a methodological option that we call differentiation,[7] which involves making excessive use of loan words with their original spelling, and of calques. In other words, it involves using these two techniques in situations where they are not essential. For example, the translator does not translate the term when an equivalent exists in the target language, or, if there is no equivalent, translates literally, ignoring the constraints of the target language. This approach, which emphasises exoticism, is generally used in academic works and does not facilitate understanding of the original concepts: it keeps them in another culture, as if there were an insurmountable gap between the cultures. Let us consider three examples of loan terms from Sanskrit, in wide use among specialists, that we have taken from a published thesis (Pezzali 1968). In some cases, the term *bodhi* is not translated

and the author treats it as a feminine noun in French, as in the original language.[8] Indeed, she speaks of 'la *bodhi*', even though a masculine form would be more appropriate since the word refers to 'Awakening,' which is a masculine noun in French. She also does not translate the term *śūnyatā* ('la manière d'être des choses (*tathatā*) est la *śūnyatā*', p. 119), though the corresponding word in French is 'vacuité' ('emptiness). The author does not translate the *dharma* either, leaving the term in Sanskrit without applying a plural ending ('La perfection du savoir est l'essence de tous les *dharma*', p. 147), even though it can be translated into French as 'phénomènes' ('phenomena') in this context, which refers to exactly the same concept. In this last example, the decision to use a loan word – which is unnecessary since there is an equivalent in the target language – and the omission of the plural ending can only cause confusion, given that the term *dharma* has multiple meanings in the context of Buddhism.[9]

Interculturalism is characterised by exchanges and communication between cultures: an interchange with no hierarchy and no desire to dominate. This is a dynamic that allows the emergence of transculturalism.[10] The goal of the transcultural approach is to go beyond cultural concerns and seek balance through universal understanding, and, in a way, to create new cultural realities (Mancini 1999). In translating terminology, this approach comes about through a methodological option that we call transculturation,[11] i.e. a rational give-and-take between concepts and terms in the two languages/cultures in contact, allowing decisions on a case-by-case basis about which translation technique – from equivalence to loan terms – is most appropriate. The point is to strike a balance in order to convey a message that contains the essence of the original, and create something new, in our case Buddhism in two Romance languages: Spanish and Catalan.

Thus, neither the methodological option of *appropriation*, used mainly by the earliest translators – who might not have known the subject well enough – nor the methodological option of

differentiation, traditionally used in academic research – which is usually restricted to scholarly knowledge – is useful when translating Buddhism as a living spiritual tradition. Only a methodological option of *transculturation* can rise to the challenge and integrate terminology into the target language/culture without appropriating or excluding key concepts. The solution is to do a reasoned translation, since we start by defining the concept, and only after this consider the techniques described below and choose the one that in this case, and only this case, lets us effectively render the concept.

Translation Techniques

If the concept exists in the target language/culture, we use, in order of preference, the following techniques:

a) *equivalence:* a translation that covers the full meaning of the original concept. There are, in fact, concepts in Buddhism that already exist in our language/culture. For example, the Spanish term *transitoriedad* is fully equivalent to the key concept of 'impermanence', expressed in Tibetan as *mi rtag pa* (Sanskrit, *anitya*).
b) *contextual equivalence:* a term in the target language that refers to a concept that does not fully cover the Buddhist concept described by the Tibetan term. This technique involves enriching the target language/culture. For example, *mente* (mind) for *sems* (Sanskrit, *citta*), *conciencia* (consciousness) for *rnam par shes pa* (Sanskrit, *vijñāna*),

If the concept does not exist in the target language/culture, we use, in order of preference, the following techniques:
a) *creation:* creating a new term for the target language/culture. This is an essential technique, as it helps to bring the reader closer to understanding the new concept than a calque or loan term would. Buddhism, for instance, defines three types of suffering. The first type of suffering refers to what we usually understand as suffering: all sorts of physical or mental pain. The second is suffering caused by the transitory nature of phenomena. The third type is the suffering

that characterises all forms of conditioned existence. To avoid confusion with the other two types of suffering, we opted to translate the first type (*sdug bsngal gyi sdug bsngal*, in Sanskrit, *du kha du khatā*), ordinary suffering, as *sufrimiento por el dolor* (suffering due to pain) rather than *sufrimiento del dolor* (suffering of suffering), the traditional calque, which struck us as not very illuminating, not only because of the repetition of the word 'suffering', but also because of the grammatical construction, which in Spanish might seem to suggest that the suffering itself is suffering. Another example: in translating the key concept referred to as *ma rig pa* (Sanskrit, *avidyā*), if we start with the definition, i.e., 'falta de conocimiento de la realidad tal como es que mantiene a los seres atrapados en la existencia cíclica' ('unawareness of reality as it actually is, which keeps beings trapped in a cyclical existence'), it becomes clear that the traditionally used word, 'ignorancia' ('ignorance'), which the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* defines as 'Falta de ciencia, de letras y noticias, general o particular' ('Lack of knowledge, of arts or news, general or particular'), does not refer to the same concept. We therefore propose the newly coined term *desconocimiento fundamental* (fundamental unawareness).

b) *calque:* a literal lexical translation from the Tibetan or Sanskrit. Examples of calques from Sanskrit include the translation of *bodhi* (Tibetan, *byang chub*) as *Despertar* (Awakening) and *vipari ṇāma du khatā* (Tibetan, *gyur ba'i sdug bsngal*) as *sufrimiento por el cambio* (suffering due to change). It is important here to stress the difference between a calque, which is a technique used when the concept does not exist, and a contextual equivalent, a technique used when the concept already exists. For example, the term 'suffering' is a contextual equivalent since it refers to a broader concept, but at the same time it sometimes refers to the concept of suffering as we generally understand it. By contrast, 'suffering due to change' is a completely new concept. Finally, regarding calques, one of our goals is to rethink the calques from English that are traditionally used in Spanish texts dealing with Buddhism, which are actually barbarisms.

c) *loan terms*: this does not involve translating the Sanskrit term but rather generally adapting it to the target language's system. Indeed,

Sanskrit is traditionally the source language for the loan. Thus *buddha* becomes 'buda' to adapt it to the rules of the Spanish language, and it appears in that form in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*. In the same vein, we propose 'bodisatva' as an equivalent for *bodhisattva*. In this matter we follow Martínez de Sousa[12] (2001: 129), who says that the loan can be either integrated, in other words fully adapted to the language's phonological and spelling system, or transplanted, in cases where a form not fully compliant with the target language's phonological and spelling system becomes entrenched through usage, as with the term 'dharma'. Thus, we decided to accept integrated or transplanted loan terms that are already entrenched by usage, while choosing to integrate new loans when they are needed from now on.

In fact, the problem consists entirely of defining the concept correctly in order to determine whether we are dealing with a concept that already exists or one that is new. If the concept exists, we must precisely assess the degree of correspondence between the Buddhist concept and the concept in our language/culture. If the concept is new, we should favour creation and avoid the calques that have been employed too often under a pretext of faithfulness, as this type of lexical faithfulness betrays ignorance of the translation axiom that one should translate meaning rather than words, and messages rather than languages. On the other hand, existing loan terms should be examined to decide whether they should be retained, with an eye towards avoiding excessive exoticism. If the loan is essential, it should be adapted to the phonological and spelling system of Spanish. Since our goal is, again, to integrate Dharma into our language/culture, we subscribe to the words of Francisco Varela (2000):

> Part of my life has been spent repeating the Dharma in our languages, reformulating it in accordance with our models of thought, with an approach of radical innovation. It is, in fact, respect for tradition itself that inspired this enthusiasm for the project. It is still a risky endeavour. We must begin a process of reinvention whereby people will re-experience that which is central and unique within Dharma.

Conclusion

Our preliminary work in developing a database about Tibetan Buddhism has yielded 1) a methodological option for translation that can move beyond the dichotomy of privileging either the target language/culture or the source language/culture, 2) the development of translation criteria and techniques that should allow true integration of the terminology.

What is unusual about our research is that, because we were not satisfied with the numerous terms put forth by available Spanish glossaries, which were based on English terms, we insisted on working not only from terms in the original source language, Tibetan, but above all from the concept. We are guided by the definition and by the word's context. We are aware that this subject matter is foreign to our categories of thought. We must accept this, in order to free up our thinking and keep our ears open to new categories. As Wallace (2003: 5)[13] writes about Buddhism and science:

> To understand Buddhism on its own terms, it is imperative that we in the West recognize the cultural specificity of our own terms *religion*, *philosophy*, and *science* and not assume from the outset that Buddhism will somehow naturally conform to our linguistic categories and ideological assumptions.

Notes

1. The MarpaTerm database is a project of the TRAFIL research group (Translating remote philosophies to facilitate understanding), attached to the Department of Translation and Interpretation at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.

2. This is because French and English are the two Western languages from which the Spanish and Catalan translations are made, since direct translations from Tibetan are still extremely rare.

3. The most widely used system for transliterating Tibetan, proposed by Turrell Wylie in 1959.

4. The proposed term, which may be either our own translation or a translation already in use, is marked with the tag 'MarpaTerm proposal'.

5. Using the Romanised transcription established in 1894 by the 10th International Congress of Orientalists.

6. This methodological option corresponds to what Venuti (1995) calls *domesticating*.

7. The methodological option of differentiation has something in common with what Venuti (1995) calls 'foreignizing', in that both emphasise differences. It should be noted, however, that the third methodological option we propose takes our discussion beyond the traditional dichotomy that Venuti reflects.

8. For example: 'il porte son attention ferme sur la *bodhi*', p. 69 ; 'il accomplit le chemin gnoséologique pour parvenir à la *bodhi*', p. 127.

9. In our work, we intend to use the loan word 'dharma' only when it means Buddhist doctrine, and to translate the other meanings according to context.

10. The concept of transculturation first appeared in 1940 in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* by Fernando Ortiz.

11. As previously noted, with this third methodological option our approach goes beyond the traditional dichotomy in translation, which involves either reducing the original cultural elements to the reader's culture, or transporting the reader into the source culture.

12. Martinez de Sousa is a leading specialist in the Spanish language, particularly in spelling, typography and lexicography.

13. Quoted in Payne, 2002: 2.

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Translation: A Case of Border Crossing in the Global Village

Maya Pandit

Translation is a journey that requires the translator to cross many borders. The text being translated is not an incommensurable universe; it is part of a landscape that gets mapped in the dynamic and complex relationship defined by the constitutive and constituent forces operating in specific social formations at particular points in time. The text itself may provide perspectives on the way the terrain should be negotiated, navigated, and traversed. The task becomes all the more difficult when one realizes that the paths have to be constructed for an outsider, a traveler who may be entirely new to the peninsula and needs to be introduced to the region, to the nooks and corners of this territory, since this is basically what a translator is expected to do. The boundaries of this terrain keep on shifting according to the preoccupations of the translator / reader, the general political cultural ethos, and the intentionality of the original author and that of the translator. The receiver/s of translations are also located in contexts that are fraught with various tensions as they represent the site of multiple struggles. So the translator's ideas about the roadmap of expectations that the receiver may have in mind and the actual lampposts that emerge through his/her act of translation, also play a significant role in the act of translation.

Besides, the relationship between languages and cultures is complex. Languages do not simply reflect reality; they obfuscate it at times. They may even hide reality of exploitation, inequalities or various asymmetries in favour of certain normative perceptions that are privileged in the society. In this sense, the contexts may represent vibrant political, linguistic or cultural struggles, which are glossed over or obliterated by the dominant users of language. They draw boundaries between the 'included' and the 'excluded', between what is politically expedient from the perspective of a particular dominant group and what is not. It is possible that the translator translating a text from his/her own language is sometimes rudely awakened out of his/her self-proclaimed familiarity with the

terrain in unexpected ways in the act of negotiating the roadmap. S/he has to be aware of the obvious routes and the escape routes; the main roads and the hidden paths and the difficulties involved or the traps they set in for the translator. At least that is what I have discovered while translating literature from Marathi into English. I would like to share some of these preoccupations with you in order to discuss a few of the problems encountered in crossing many boundaries, visible and invisible, in the act of translation.

The problems begin with the very decision to translate Marathi texts into English. Why English? Why not some other language? Who does one translate for? And why? What is the impact one strives for? Who is the readership? Is it an "assorted generation of asylum seekers who want to belong to the elite English club" as Rita Kothari has noted?

Before answering these questions it is worthwhile looking at the relationship between globalization and English. The foundations of the expansion of the English language outside the English-speaking world were laid as the British empire itself expanded after 1600. With the historical legacies of imperialism and capitalistic development, English did indeed spread almost all over the world. The proportions of the spread of English today, however, are phenomenal. The scope of globalization and the energies unleashed by it all over the world are absolutely unprecedented in the history of the world. (It must be remembered here that more than forty per cent of the world's population is illiterate.)

It is possible to consider globalization as the extension of, and the later stage in, the development of linguistic imperialism that has dominated the third world for the last three hundred odd years. As Mignolo points out in his insightful essay on the relationship that obtains between globalization and various subordinated cultures, (Mignolo 1998), linguistic imperialism, under its 'civilizing mission', was a project to extend the imperial plan of collecting and configuring knowledge in terms of western frames of reference. In so doing, it systematically denied 'local' knowledge of the 'natives' any epistemological possibility or

acceptability under its 'civilizing mission'. The dichotomy between the eastern / local and the western / global was also in a sense synonymous with the dichotomy between 'culture' and 'civilization'. Unless something was articulated in western discourse fields, such as education, and in languages acceptable to it, such as English, German, or French, it was not considered 'civilized knowledge'. As a result what constituted knowledge for the local was considered imperfect, archaic, irrelevant, pre-modern and at times even unscientific and wrong. An attempt was therefore consciously undertaken in many colonies of the European countries to "improve" the local cultures, as well as languages, with the advanced knowledge of the "civilized" countries of the colonial rulers. This is reflected in the process in which, initially, third world cultures came to be characterized as 'barbaric'; then they became 'exotic' and were studied from an anthropological perspective to underline their difference from the civilized countries of Europe first and America later.

The two major domains in which this difference was addressed and established were language and literature. English language and literature became the major tools for achieving this aim. The disciplinary foundations of English literature and English language were laid in India and in many third world countries in this respect during the earlier phases of imperialism. And very cleverly the consent of the native elite – in the case of India, the upper caste Brahmins and the powerful landlords – was obtained in this endeavour. Lord Elphinstone, the Governor of Mumbai, declared in 1824 that the task of the European rulers was to conciliate the elites – the upper castes – in Indian society to their rule, in their project of 'grafting' the advanced knowledge of the European civilization on the underdeveloped Indian languages. That was in response to the need of the expanding market, to use Macaulay's words, "to sell our glasses and cutlery to the Indians". The important point was that it was translation that was defined as the methodology of that grafting. This went a long way towards laying the foundations of translation from English into the local languages, and translation achieved a great importance and cultural significance in constructing an orient as well as various knowledge

fields that carried an imprint of the dominance of the western world on the one hand and of the upper class, upper caste native elites on the other (as represented for instance by the translations from Sanskrit).

In today's world, as David Graddol claims in *English Next***,** "English is a phenomenon that lies at the heart of globalization; English is now re-defining national and individual identities worldwide, shifting political fault lines, creating new global patterns of wealth and social exclusion; and suggesting new notions of human rights and responsibilities of citizenship" and goes on to declare that "the world English project is under way" (2005: 12).

One may look at the overall linguistic scenario of the present world in this context as pointed out by David Crystal (Crystal 1997). Of the literally thousands of languages in the world, one hundred account for 95 per cent of the world's population, the remaining 5 per cent speaking those thousands of other languages that remain ignored and that eventually may even die and disappear from the face of the world. Of the one hundred languages, twelve are spoken by 75 per cent of the population of the world. Of these, six are colonial and languages of European modernity. Their ranking by number of speakers is: English, Spanish, German, Portuguese, French, and Italian. In fact, Chinese has a greater number of speakers than English, and Hindi occupies a place between German and Russian. The number of speakers of Arabic and Bengali exceeds that of French, Portuguese, and Italian. Yet the European languages are considered to be the languages of scholarship in the domains of knowledge, intellectual production, and the cultures of scholarship. English is claimed to be a world lingua franca, a universal language of knowledge used by around 337 million people as their first language and by over thirty-five crore people, all over the world, as a second, or additional, language, in countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and the Philippines, as well as in many others. In addition, an additional 1.5 crore people are learning it, in China, Japan, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The United States, the world's largest English speaking nation, has only about twenty per

cent of the world's English users and the United Kingdom, about five per cent (Krishnaswami and Krishnaswami 2006).

In addition to its connection to imperialism, English has also been a tool of domination and oppression in the hands of the urban elite, who are marked by increasingly consumerist tendencies. It has been emerging all over the world as the language of international communication. Harish Trivedi has described this spread as the 'cultural totalitarianism' represented by English (Trivedi 1996).

All of these facts – historical, political, linguistic and cultural– have a bearing on the activity of translation and the translation cultures that have emerged in India. This poses a major challenge to the translator: what should be translated; which direction the traffic of translation should take; which language should be a source language and which language a target language? Should we translate from one Indian language into another? Or should we give primacy to translations from English and other 'developed' languages into our Indian languages?

For me as a translator, the problem cannot be posed as an either-or problem. Against the background of internal colonization by the urban upper caste middle class elite of the subordinated local sub-cultures, it might be politically more expedient to translate resistance writing from the local languages into English, as well as from one Indian language to another. Dalit writing is a case in point. This body of writing is produced by people from the margins of society who have long been dominated by the upper class and upper castes. The history of their resistance and struggle for release from the age old bondage is very important because it has extended the frontiers of existing knowledge domains, as well as released energies for the liberation of downtrodden people from many areas (Zelliot 1992). Should it be translated only into the other Indian languages of similarly deprived and oppressed sections of other societies? On the other hand, in the days of globalization, is it possible to start a process of 'reverse swing', having an exactly opposite direction of influence? In the past English was used as a tool for the exclusion of

the lower caste from the domains of knowledge. Now English can be appropriated and used as a tool of assertion of the identities of the oppressed and marginalized, as well as for constituting new domains of knowledge. Rather than argue, along the lines of Kothari (2006: 34), that the situation is neither one of 'confrontational neutrality' nor of 'unequivocal totalitarianism', it possible to take a more assertive stand. Also what is from the margins in the regional language and culture can be brought into forefront of the international arena for the sake of bonding with similar cultural forces operating within other cultures. Given the spread and significance of the English language, the English translation could then be a form of radical intervention in the dominant literary-cultural-political discourses in these other cultures.

When Daya Pawar, the first major Dalit writer, wrote and published his autobiography, *Baluta*, there was a strong reaction from many sections of Marathi society, including Dalits, that the story of the sufferings of the Dalits was being written for a middle class Brahminical readership by a Dalit who typically cast himself into the victim mode. And yet the autobiographical writing by Daya Pawar represented a crossing of the boundaries in many senses of the term. This was a crossing of the boundary that divided the 'impure' from the 'pure', the 'sacred' from the 'profane' and the lower strata of the society from the elite within Marathi culture. This act of writing by a Dalit of his community's suffering itself represented an act of transgression. This writing represented a crossing of the boundaries, from the margins of Marathi literary culture into the mainstream of Marathi literature itself. The act had thus become controversial for various reasons. But then Pawar's writing managed to break the stranglehold of the dominant universalist aesthetics in Marathi through his radical act of self assertion in the language of his own caste, class and community. The book challenged the notion of universal brotherhood as well the dominant aesthetics of high caste Marathi language. Many Dalit books followed *Baluta* and these Dalit articulations, which had once occupied a place on the margins of Marathi cultural production, have today come to occupy almost the central place in it. For the

translator, thus, Dalit writing poses an interesting set of challenges on the cultural and political level within India itself.

The issue has now entered the terrain of international struggles. There is now a strong debate going on with respect to the similarities between Caste and Race issues since the Durban Conference on Race and the same logic can be extended to the specificities and differences of the struggles of the other minorities in order to bring out the similarities among the factors that constitute these differences, as well the strategies of resistance. Taking the life histories of the marginalized to an international scale in order to form bonds with similarly oppressed sections of various societies becomes a political form of action for a translator. And it is here that the significance of English as the dominant language needs to be appropriated. When, for instance, I realized that Baby Kamble's *Jina Amucha* had been already translated into some other Indian languages and even Spanish, I decided that an English translation was a must. The necessity of aligning with radical forces from other regions, societies, and cultures, constantly fighting to change the world, proved to be far stronger than the so-called lure of the prestige of English. Political commitment can become the defining force behind translations in cases such as these. Consider, for instance, the autobiographies of Dalit women and women's testimonios from Spanish-speaking Latin American countries! Rigoberta Manchu, the Nobel award winner Guatemalan writer, wrote about the civil war and the sufferings of indigenous people there. Rigoberta helps us understand their suffering, which is different from anything we have known; but at the same time the excesses of the imperialist oppression, the human bonds that common, suffering people form with each other and their resistance is something that links them with us. As Rege argues (Rege 2006), Dalit writing is different as it talks about suffering which is distinctively different, like the suffering that comes across to us in the Spanish testimonies. This is not merely to celebrate the 'difference' of the Dalit communities, but to explicate the factors that bring this 'difference' into existence, in the form of a life based upon indignities and humiliation, in order to challenge and change it.

That is what links the Spanish testimonies with Dalit writing, for instance. And taking such writing to a wider set of people, involved in similar struggles, in order to build bridges of understanding between the different manifestations of resistance, becomes significant.

This signifies that the role of the translator is far more transgressive than is envisaged by many translation theorists. According to Anthony Pym, for instance:

> Translation is generally considered to be a woman's field. It's seen as one of the 'nurturing' professions, professions which care for other people, where the workers' reward is supposed to be the good feeling they have about helping others. Translating is like smiling, or like typing out a dictated letter. It's a nurturing profession. We are supposed to like helping people to communicate with each other, and that's supposed to be our reward. (Pym 1993, 55)

But in the case of the translation of people from the oppressed sections of society, the translator becomes a political agent in disseminating resistance across similarly deprived and suffering communities. Translation nurtures resistance, thereby becoming a subversive act of crossing the boundaries of territories hitherto defined in terms of sacred / profane, pure / polluting, high / low. How does one go about it?

As I have said above, dominant cultures within a society very often suppress the reality of the oppressed and this poses a problem of representation for the translator. The translator has to enter the text and look at the hidden paths and, in some cases, clear out a lot of dead wood in order to bring to light certain domains that lie dormant or hidden in the text, under the linguistic façade. Words then become more complex signifiers which may hint at more than the realities represented. The problem for the translator is how to bring these dormant realities alive through the translation. Various translators tackle this problem in different ways. When I translated

Baby Kamble's autobiography *Jina Amucha*, I encountered a similar problem. The title of the original Marathi book meant "This Wretched Life of Ours". But actually the book narrates a heroic tale of the struggle of the entire Mahar community under Dr. Ambedkar's leadership; it is a story of suffering as well as courage, fired by the indomitable will of the women to change the life of the entire community. The collectivity of the struggle and resistance becomes more important. The book is not written in the victim mode. This underlying reality, which is taken from the lived struggle of the Dalits for dignity and self respect and which is not represented in the Marathi title, became more important for me. Hence, I changed the title of the translation from the literal *This Wretched Life of Ours* to *The Prisons We Broke*. This may be termed as a 'compensatory' translation strategy, but it at least partially managed to bring alive the political context of the struggle, the self assertion, and the agency of women and their communities.

In the course of her narration, Baby Kamble brings alive a world constituted by a difference in location. The difference is not only in terms of geography, however. Her world is physically located on the margins of the village, but it is also on the margins of the social imaginary: it is alienating and alienated simultaneously, by being cut off from the village as unclean, impure, polluting, and untouchable. The customs, the rituals, the rites, the festivals, the jatras that she describes are indeed a source of unexplored treasure for a sociologist, as Maxine Berntson says in her brief introduction to the Marathi edition. More than that, however, they represent the composite apparatus of Brahminical dominance, maintained through the weave of superstitions, illiteracy, ignorance, and oppressive practices. Baby Kamble debunks this weave of the cultural apparatus in many ways, using the dialect of her community, matching the rhythms, but filling them with a subversive content. And then she uses standard Marathi, highly ornate and politically charged. Translating these variations was indeed a huge problem. For one thing, there are hardly any lexical, syntactic, or semantic structures that matched the force of the dialect used by Baby. I used standard English for translating, but with a Marathi sentence structure with

short N + V constructions that gave the text a singsong jumpy rhythm.

I have not gone into the problems encountered in the translation of the rituals, the jatras, the sacrifices, worship, and other such details in Dalit autobiographies. Many Dalit autobiographies abound in such details, but how can one prevent their being read patronizingly by the cultural elite, the socially dominant, as exotic details of a strange and amusing way of life of people living on another planet, plucking the text out of its historical context? This is a problem of developing a political perspective on translation. And if the translation does not help develop that perspective, as part of an overall strategy, how does one address the task? It is here that the political commitment to the act of translation and the reading of translations becomes important. I am very much aware that these concerns of mine as a translator and the interests of the publication industry may not necessarily match. Indeed, chances are they won't. However, since many publishers of translations – such as Seagull, Stree, Orient Longman, Oxford, Kali for Women, Samya – seem to be interested in translations, there is scope to believe that translation itself might be an activity by which we may cross the many boundaries between cultures.

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Translation and Power: The Indian Context

Priyadarshi Patnaik

Abstract

All men are equal but some are more equal than others (Animal Farm, George Orwell)

Language born of man (sic woman), proliferating in and around him, giving him identity, can never be innocent. Translations born of men and their interpretations, selective, mapping signposts within minds of individuals and cultures, can only reiterate power relations variously. The paper proposes to look at the various ways power evolves in languages and proliferates to other languages through the translation of texts, contexts, configurations, signposts and concepts. The paper will attempt to do so through illustrations and case studies that primarily show the relation between Sanskrit and Oriya/Regional language traditions, but will also look at more radical cultural translations and their implications (say, from Sanskrit to English) and also from one mode of language to another (say, from poetry to painting), where the mode of languaging itself reconfigures translation according to different power rules.

Introduction

Translation has various meanings[1], but one of the most significant of them is 'retelling' in the sense of telling again, transferring, conveying or moving from on place to another. This can happen in (1) another language, (2) in another art form (which is also a language) or (3) in another way – irrespective of language – through clarification, interpretation and elaboration.[2]

Jorge Luis Borges talks about Pierre Menard, in whose writings a fragment of *Don Quixote* is replicated intentionally in the twentieth century (Borges 1999). So the question that arises is: are

the two fragments – the one written in the sixteenth century and the one written in the twentieth century – the same? Borges writes:

> It is a revelation to compare the *Don Quixote* of Pierre Menard with that of Miguel de Cervantes. Cervantes, for example, wrote the following (Part I, Chapter IX):
>
> ... truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.
>
> This catalog of attributes, written in the seventeenth century, and written by the "ingenious layman" Miguel de Cervantes, is mere rhetorical praise of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes:
>
> ... truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.
>
> History, the *mother* of truth! – the idea is staggering. Menard, a contemporary of William James, defines history not as a *delving into* reality but as the very *fount* of reality. Historical truth, for Menard, is not "what happened"; it is what we *believe* happened. The final phrases – *exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor* – are brazenly pragmatic.
>
> The contrast in styles is equally striking. The archaic style of Menard – who is, in addition, not a native speaker of the language in which he writes – is somewhat affected. Not so the style of his precursor, who employs the Spanish of his time with complete naturalness. (94)

The text is interestingly poised. To the twentieth century reader, there is no difference between the two texts if (s)he is not aware of the background of this writing. But for the authors, who write the same text in two different worlds, what a profound difference! One is writing in his own native tongue (Spanish) who is so close to him in time that he can almost touch him. And the other? – What makes a twentieth century man write in the sixteenth century Spanish of a sixteenth century Spanish gentleman of strange attributes! The point I am trying to make is, here is a case of the same text and yet not the same text. There is some 'retelling' here

that is brought out by Borges's analysis of the two texts above, and in spite of the text remaining the same, there is such profound difference in possible understanding! The text remains the same, but it is rewritten again and again in the minds of its different authors with different intents and in the minds of its readers in different worlds – it is like moving into the world of *bhasyas* or commentaries.

If this be so, (where the same text can be understood differently in different contexts) what may not happen with translations where you are retelling something in another language, in another time, for another world? – where the text changes, the context changes, and so does the intent. One translation takes place in the mind-world of the translator and the other in the mind-world of the reader/perceiver.

Retelling[3] in or transferring a text into another language – this is first and most commonly understood meaning of translation. There are two other senses in which I shall use the word: 1) when the very form of language is different, for example when we translate a written story into a picture or dance performance. Here, the very structure of the language is different, the syntax and semantics following different rules; 2) an interpretation is also a translation. It includes an 'elaborate' restatement and the 'elaborations' are assumed to talk about things which are 'meant' or 'understood' but not explicit in the text being interpreted. In other words, the original text (*sutra*) has spaces or silences that are profound and meaningful and the translation (*bhasya*) makes them visible/audible. They are like the readings by Borges of Cervantes and Menard. Power can make its presence felt in all the three cases. We shall try to identify some of the ways this has been done in our tradition and in others.

Part One

Translating from one language to the other involves two possibilities: 1) retelling (telling again), and 2) interpretation. Sometimes the two cannot be separated. In fact, some would insist

that they can never be separated. These can hide power; so also can contexts.

For instance, in the fourteenth century, in Orissa, Sarala Dasa wrote *Sarala Mahabharata*. The story goes that his mother was illiterate and hence had no access to the holy book. So her son translated the entire text for her. The very act of translation here is an exercise in power against power, both born of language: 1) Brahminical supremacy was based on power – the knowledge of Sanskrit and its exclusive use. The elite would decide what to elucidate for common people (which amounts to translation) and how much. They would also decide who should have access to the language, and definitely not the women; 2) Translation, here, undermines that power. It makes accessible a world otherwise shut within an alien language, controlled and regulated by a particular group of individuals. The act of translating/regeneration also makes this target language gain in richness, popularity, credibility and hence power. The Oriya language underwent such a transformation from orality to literacy, from the people to the court (which often used Sanskrit or Persian) between the fourteenth and sixteeenth centuries. The Sanskrit *Bhagabata* was made available in Oriya by Jagannatha Dasa and the Sanskrit *Ramayana* by Balarama Das by the sixteenth century.

Colonial translations acted, perhaps, in the exact opposite way in Orissa. An English text translated into Oriya would make the alluring and 'superior' world of the Whites accessible to the Oriyas. This would not make the Oriya language more credible or powerful, as was the case in the earlier example. For instance, the British translated their language and texts when they felt that the natives must read and orient themselves to the ways of the White. It was also done by the *Phiringi*-oriented 'natives' in admiration of the White culture that they wanted their native friends to emulate. Interestingly, another way of translating (not texts but) culture came in form of travel writings by natives. We have less of these in our colonial past and more of these in our post-colonial present where many authors seem fond of recounting their experiences of the West for the Oriya reader.

On the other hand, an English translation of an Oriya text, as Said might suggest, would make that uncharted unknown world/knowledge accessible and hence controllable.[4] But this has two connotations in two different times. In the past, colonial power got translated into "what should be translated": the English and the Europeans decided what should be translated and how. Indian identity-formation through language was articulated by these processes of selection and interpretation. We were 'defined' by the West, through a process of translation;[5] our identities were transformed/recreated by a process of translation. Today, the choice, at least apparently[6], is in our hands.

Borges talks of the various translations of the *Arabian Nights*, some literal and some that attempt to catch the essence. (2000: 13; see also Rodriguez 1992) A literal translation makes the author's words powerful and expects that meaning lies in the words; an essential translation looks at the configuration of words, echoes, stylistics and contexts, and attempts to translate some of these as well at the cost of the words. The first translator makes the source language more powerful. The second translator makes the target language more powerful and s/he gives more credence and respect to the culture for and to which s/he is translating.[7] But Borges's essay points to other elements also. The story of the *Arabian Nights* illustrates this amply: 1) to begin with, the first truncated French translation – although it insisted it was a translation – was considered an imaginative work and not a translation; 2) when it was acknowledged that such a work as *Arabian Nights* existed at all (were Europeans unable to believe that the 'East' could produce such a work?) other cultural dimensions came into play, some overtly and some covertly. Truncated editions continued to emerge that assumed that only what was translated was relevant for the Europeans and only what was presented was 'civilized' and would not horrify decent taste. Editions after editions followed, but we shall focus on the above elements only. The source text was looked down upon. Any translation, in that case, with all its alterations and eliminations, were looked upon as improvements. The 'original' had potential but was not good enough until the European hand

'transformed' it into something better. Thus, a translation had not only the power to retell, but also to improve, to make the copy a 'masterpiece', which the original never was, in the process transforming the work according to a newer set of aesthetic canons.

But when one talks of translation within a culture, as is often the case with Indian texts getting translated into various Indian languages, the configuration of power is differently articulated. Hence, the Indian history of translation within its cultures is radically different, but here also the notion of power can be explored profitably. 'Translation' is a difficult word to translate in the Indian tradition. For instance, the configurations within which translations took place in Europe and in India were different. They were probably also considered different types of activities and thus had different implications. The Europeans used two different paradigms for translation: 1) If the Bible was translated, it was the word of God. If it was Plato or Homer, it was their words, their worlds, acknowledged as superior. The author was powerful and the translator was lower down the hierarchy. Here, authorship lay in the source language as did the significant text, and the target language only attempted to communicate this to its audience. It acknowledged both the text and in the process the source language, as more powerful. A point of clarification – every time Aristotle is debated, we go back to how "catharsis" is to be translated/interpreted. The source language holds the secret and the key; 2) On the other hand, when the Europeans translated the "Sacred Books of the East" or the Arabian Nights, the text as well as the source language were looked down upon and the translator was powerful, as was his language. This might be a sweeping statement. True, there were anxieties and insecurities (that here was something that the West did not make but which was still beautiful or great), and even grudging admiration, and translation was a process of mastering it through rearticulation.

Such a thing did not happen with many significant Indian translations within its culture. This is not to say that power and language did not play their parts in our culture. The Buddha's use of Prakrit was a reaction against the power of Sanskrit (through its

notion of exclusion). The retelling of the *Itihasa-Puranas* in regional languages was also a part of the same language politics. But at a different level; authorship and power were differently configured in the Indian context. As discussed above, authorship gave power. The cultural identity of the author was also linked to this power. Hence, an author of Greek culture or one with divine authorship were much more powerful than the translator, while one with a Eastern authorship could be played around with, manipulated, reconfigured and rearticulated casually. In the Indian context, things were configured differently; different signposts were used.

On the one hand, Sanskrit *mantras* and the authority of the Vedas retained their superiority. They were *apuresiya* (given or without human authorship). They were original words and hence untranslatable. So even up to the present day, there are hardly any notable regional translations of the Vedas, at least not into Oriya. Nor are medieval translations of the Vedas into other languages available.

On the other hand, a different type of configuration of power, where authorship was known, was taking place as well. Thus, the *Sarala Mahabharata* or the *Kamba Ramayana* acknowledged Vyasa or Valmiki's significance in a tradition of storytellers, but the stories no longer remained their property. If Vyasa was the author of the *Mahabharata*, so too was Sarala. The story belonged to everyone; it was communal property. Hence, authorship, in a certain way, was undermined, as was the power associated with it. It was a type of recreation – what is popularly called 'transcreation' today. But while transcreation presupposes an awareness of authorship, with all its authorial and legal implications (see Foucault 1988), and the transcreator's deviation, these ancient authors probably lacked that awareness. So these acts were different, as were those in Borges' tale of the authors of *Don Quixote*.

Thus, translation in the Indian tradition is not really translation as understood in English or by Europe. The European translator is trapped by words; s/he either translates (or attempts to

translate) words or evocations (what can be commonly included as style, connotation, associations, and context and so on) created by the vibration of and among words. The Indian retelling of the story, however, is not on the basis of words but on the basis of a process of internalization of words, where their edges dissolve, so that they are visually and aurally evoked in their culture and then become words again. The re-teller is aware of the other's style and technique, acknowledges his superiority (which may not always be taken seriously and may be considered an expression of humility) and writes on, as in the "Prologue" to the *Kamba Ramayana* (2-3):

> How strange that with, the poorest of words,
> I should tell again that arrow's tale
> Which pierced seven trees like a Rishi's curse –
> A great story by a great sage.
> …
> Will children's sketches of rooms and halls
> Scratched on a floor annoy an artist?
> Should my poor and foolish poem
> Irk those well-trained in making verse?
>
> Of the three that in sacred tongue
> Told this story, I shall take
> The earliest master as my source
> To render into Tamil tongue.

Part Two

Translating from one form of language to another brings in other interesting notions of power. First, let us justify the notion of translation here. Translation presupposes an 'original,' on which it depends. Its independent, self-contained existence is impossible. If one looks at Indian visual arts tradition, it is either narrative or else freezes a moment from a narrative. Thus, the entire *Gita-Govinda* may not be translated, but a fragment is frozen and translated. Thus, one notices hierarchies, a presupposition in all translations – an original and its representation/retelling (although this hierarchy may be reversed). In the *Visnudharmottara* there are passages that

emphasize the knowledge that is required to understand image-making:

> Mārkandaya said: Lord of men, he who does not know properly the rules of *chitra* can, by no means, be able to discern the characteristics of images. [. . .] Without a knowledge of the art of dancing, the rules of painting are very difficult to be understood. [. . .] The practice of dancing is difficult to be understood by one who is not acquainted with music. [. . .] Without singing music cannot be understood. (Part 3, ch. 2, verses 1-9; pp. 31-32)

Certain art forms were given primacy over others. For instance, while *kavya*, *sangita* and *vastu* could make one reach the *Brahman*, the other art forms only emerged from them. (Pandey 1959) While *kavyas* had authors, authorship was lost for most sculptors and painters. In the king's court there was place for poets and musicians, but none for artists and sculptors. (Sivaramamurti 1970: 14-17) This is expected to manifest power relations if one looks at them from the perspective of translations as well – for instance there is hardly a story that is performed first and then written down.[8]

Translations presuppose certain commonalities in rules of syntax and semantics. For instance, the temporality of a story can only be replicated in sculptural relief or panels if one knows the sequence in which they are to be viewed. The translation of the play *Sakuntala* in *nritya* (dance with meaning) presupposes that one already knows the story. Here, the role of authorship/power is taken up by the source language (written/oral language) and the key to unraveling the meaning of the translation in the target language (sculpture or dance) lies: first, in one's knowledge of the text in the source language, and second, in certain codes (for example, iconography or gestures that suggest that someone is a king) that are common to the tradition and hence common to both the source and target language. Thus, the source language is very powerful in this type of translation. Unlike the case with literal translations, where

one often does not know the source language, here familiarity with the source language (and the text) is the basis for understanding the translation.[9] Thus, Walter Benjamin's query, "Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?," becomes very significant. "For what does a literary work 'say'? What does it communicate? It 'tells' very little to those who understand it. Its essential quality is not a statement or the imparting of information. Yet any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information – hence, something inessential." (Benjamin 2000: 15) The paradox of translation (which he calls bad translation) does not apply here. Rather, the notion of good art (whose essence is transmitted) is based on the notion of translation as transformation, of construction, of "interpretation in pictorial space" where the space of the picture, unwritten, is where translation of the 'essence' takes place. This is not possible in translation in the first sense discussed in this paper.

A less complex translation takes place into dance. Here, again, the visual depends on the text. In the Indian performance tradition, a distinction is made between *nruta* and *nrutya*. *Nruta* is dance as celebration, an articulation of the joy of life which is not systematic, reflective and thus not linguistically meaningful. On the other hand *nrutya* is articulated through elaborate socio-cultural conventions, through the languages of gestures and facial expressions and usually take up a story for enactment. For instance, in Kathak there is a practice where the dancer translates into the language of performance an entire verse (from the *Gita Govinda*, for example) in front of a literate audience.

Before concluding this brief section, I would like to point out how the notion of translating from one form to another embeds layers of reading and exposes the operation of power through hierarchies. This notion of hierarchy through which power operates affects both the artists (in a particular social setting) and his/her work, which in order to be appreciated, in its essence (as Walter Benjamin proposes), had to depend on certain master codes. In that sense, the very acts of translation of the text into art (by the artist)

and translation or the act of understanding both the literary text as well as the art form (by the viewer) were only possible through codes that did not belong to the translating language (i.e. painting or dance) but rather to the source language (or literary text). I will use a brief illustration[10] to make this point:

This is a *ragamala* painting which depicts *ragini bhairavi*. An appreciation of this presupposes an understanding of music (*raga*, garland of *ragas*, meditating on *ragas* through *dhyanaslokas*) and of the dance-performance tradition (the iconography, the gestures codified in the performance tradition). In Indian music *ragamala* was a tradition where a garland or chain of *ragas* is sung one after the other. Since different *ragas* have associations with different times of the day or night as well as with different seasons, a chain of ragas can symbolically traverse an entire diurnal or seasonal cycle with all their evocations. *Dhyanaslokas*, on the other hand, are verses for musicians that are supposed to embody the raga (in a human form) for them. The challenge for the painter of the *ragamala* tradition is to evoke both these connotations successfully. For the audience without such knowledge, without an understanding of the cultural meaning, such a painting collapses. This brings back the quotation from the *Visnudharmottara* cited above. While music is self-contained, dance depends on music, and painting depends on

both music and dance. Thus, translating, for example of *ragamala* or the *Gita-Govinda*, fails if the translator (painter) is not aware of the master codes, and if the perceiver does not know them. In terms of social hierarchies, this power gets reflected in the humble status of the painter/artisan. In the context of his painting, his very existence is based on translations only. Since time immemorial, his painting is 'mere' translation in the Indian tradition. Ajanta frescoes translate *Buddha Charita*, Jaina palm leafs translate/supplement Jaina stories, the miniatures of the medieval times are subservient to mythical or historical narratives (the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata,* the *Gita-Govinda,* the *Ain-i-Akbari*) and even in a non-narrative tradition as in *ragamala*, they translate musical forms and gestures. If architecture can invoke the Supreme (*vastubrahman*) then art (sculpture and wall paintings) can only embellish creation.

Part Three

It was a question earlier of interpretation as translation. The concept is not new. Discussing Borges's views on translation, Rodriguez writes:

> Reading in itself is a translation within the same language. He does not consider literature as a fixed monument, but as a text. And a text is a circular system which irradiates possible impressions, given the unlimited repercussions of the oral. A text has many possible approaches, that is to say, many possible translations. (244)

This was later on taken up by Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes as well. The West has a rich recent tradition of the notions of reading/ misreading, interpretation/ misinterpretation, reconstruction/ deconstruction and self-referentiality. Such a tradition moves within the awareness of the possibility of multiplicity of meanings and translatabilities. The notion of power is inbuilt into such a tradition of interpretation where one is aware that to interpret is to exercise one's power in a certain way – to suppress certain configurations and to reveal or construct certain others.

What is interesting in the Indian tradition is a sub-tradition of interpretability called *vasya*-making or *tika*-making. Yet it is not self-conscious of itself, nor torn by the turmoil of the multiplicity of meanings. Each *tikakara* assumes that a text is to be understood in only that specific way. For instance, if one takes the case of *Brahmasutra*, there are at least five significant *bhasyas*. We can start with *Sankarabhasya* and then move on to the ones by Ramanuja and Nimbarka. Each starts a tradition of philosophy – *advitavedanta*, *dvitadvaitavedanta*, *visistadvaitavedanta* and so on.

This tradition was not unique only to Sanskrit but pervaded other regional languages as well. Here is an example from Oriya of a fifteenth century text and its sixteenth century interpretation. Orissan literature had a popular form (*Koili*) that belonged to the *dutakāvya* genre. Jagannātha Dāsa took one of them, *Keśaba Koili*, a poem of lament, and interpreted it in philosophical terms in his *Artha Koili* or 'The meaning of the *Koili*. Apparently, such a method can be traced not only to the *bhasya* tradition but also to Tantric-Buddhism of Orissa and its influences; Jagannātha's attempts can be traced back to them, especially to their tradition of esoteric writing known as *sandhābhāsa*.[11] While *bhasya* assumes that the text is innately difficulty, evocative, suggestive and that its 'silence'[12] has to be explicated or translated, *sandhābhāsa* assumes that the text is innately secretive, hiding another meaning behind the surface, which has to be translated. Here are a few lines from *Artha Kolili* to illustrate the point.

Artha Koili
(The meaning of the *Koili*)
Poet: Atibadi Jagannātha Dāsa

Sutra
O Cuckoo, Keśaba has gone to Mathurā,
On whose bidding has he gone,
My son has not come back yet, O Cuckoo. *(1)*

Bhasya
Arjuna Speaks:

Arjuna said, 'Listen, O Mighty Armed,
Give me leave to ask you a question,
What does one understand by Keśaba Koili?'
– To this question of, O Srihari, give me an answer.

Krishna Speaks:
Hearing Pārtha's question, Bhagavān said,
'You asked a very noble question indeed.
By Cuckoo, the *jîva* is meant.
That life force is me, pervading everything.
The *jîva* came by itself and went by itself,
Hence the son did not come back and
Mathurā, the body, lay empty.' (1)

Sutra
O Cuckoo, who shall I give milk of the breast?
my son has gone to Mathurāpuri, O Cuckoo. (2)

Bhasya
Again Arjuna prostrated himself at Krishna's feet,
'Clear my doubts, O Bhābagrāhi.
Explain to me the discourse about the mother's breast.'
Srihari said, 'Listen O Arjuna,
Inside the *pinda* the *jîva* gets great happiness.
Again it disappears and goes elsewhere.
It dissolves into ether and enters another pinda,
To relish the nectar of Hari - mother's milk.'
Hearing this Arjuna was delighted
And Krishna explained on and on. (2)

I will not attempt to delve into the reasons why the multiplicity of meanings was not made problematic in the Indian tradition. It is beyond this paper and I have not yet explored it. It is puzzling since Nagarjuna already wrote of *Chatuskotibinirmukta* and yet the tradition did not explore self-referentiallity. That language is slippery, can lead to paradoxes, can have multiple interpretations was thus illustrated through our tradition and cultural texts. And yet that element of self-reflection that makes language problematic did not come in, but what is interesting while looking at the notions of translatability and power is the license allowed to each interpreter

within the tradition. The tradition allows for the possibility that the last interpretation/ translation is not final and that there is scope for more. Meaning lies beneath the words, hidden away, and a *tika* can bring it out, but at the same time a new *tika* does not invalidate the last one. One moves within an awareness of pluralities that is never made explicit. In the Indian tradition interpretation is encouraged. Each *bhasya* is often commissioned by the master, within the tradition, in order that the text be 'translated' again and again, for new contexts and in order to retain the contemporaneity of the *sutra* in each new era. However, I believe that one also moves within the awareness that beyond the plurality there lies one master text (*sutra*) that is indescribable in words. Perhaps, to me, this pervades the Indian psyche – the immense power of the source text or *sutra*. It is so powerful that even a thousand interpretations do not do justice to it. Language and interpretations (translations) with all their paradoxes are subsumed by it, resolved by it and thus the *bhasyas* do not become meaningless. In this sense, the *sutra* is a kind of unconscious cultural metaphor for "That" which is indescribable in its totality, whose complete reality eludes each translation or interpretation. In sum, language fails or is only limited and so is the power of language. Whether one looks at Nagarjuna's *Chatuskotibinirmukta*, Jaina *anekantavada* (made popular by the analogy of the elephant and the six blind men) or the popular Hindu saying that the *Vedas* became speechless on seeing the *Brahman*, I believe that the reference is to the same issue. The essence of the source text is beyond language and is reformulated through each translation (*tika* or *bhasya*) again and again for new generations.

Notes

1. "The network of connotations associated with the term *translation* leads to notions of transferring, conveying, or moving from one place to another, of linking one word, phrase, or text to another. These connotations are shared among the words for translation in many modern languages: *fanyi* in Chinese, *translation* in English, *traduction* in French, *honyaku* in Japanese, *Übersetzung* in German, and so forth. It may therefore appear justified to postulate the following definition: 'Translation is a transfer of the message from one language to another.'" (Horowitz 2005: 2367)

2. This is based on Roman Jakobson's division of translation into three classes: "1) Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. 2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. 3) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems." (Horowitz 2005: 2365)

3. It is assumed that something 'essential' exists at the core of a work that can be transferred. Each translator must discover his/her essential and this is what makes translations different. It is also this that decides how power is exercised, consciously or unconsciously.

4. As Vossler suggests, "The artistically perfect translations in a national literature, are the means by which the linguistic genius of a nation defends itself against what is foreign by cunningly stealing from it as much as possible" (Venuti 2000: 13).

5. Although Borges does not make it explicit, while discussing the *Thousand and One Nights* he points out that the very work in European languages and its unity is a European construct, addressed to a variety of European audience. (Borges 2000).

6. 'Apparently', since even today what gets published is regulated by publishers. A foreign publisher would have a say in the matter, would expect something (which in turn reflects the expectation of its audience) and one might translate accordingly. Thus, power is more subversively presented in translations today.

7. Other things happen as well. As Schleiermacher's notion of "foreignizing translation", later taken up by Benjamin, suggests, attempting to evoke the 'literalness' of translation across time and culture can transform the target language as well, thus extending the stylistic possibilities of the language into which one is translating. Here, one might, as Pannwitz critiques in a colonial context, "germanize hindu greek english instead of hinduizing grecizing anglicizing german." Either direction would suggest a different power politics. (Venuti 2000:12)

8. The contemporary art context is radically different. Often the avant-garde artwork prepares its own world and context; understanding it requires a translation into words, an interpretation of its context, formal qualities and intention. Here, the artist as author is very powerful and the text is subservient.

9. The other element of power would lie in what a language is best at expressing (say description of dance can never be as powerful as a performance of dance, or description of painting and painting as an act can never be equated). In such circumstances, power relations can be reversed.

10. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ragamala_painting

11. *Gunduripadānaam*
(Tiaddā Chāpi Joini De Ankabāli)
Poet: Gunduripā, my translation.

'I will press the three veins,
Open your thighs.
Churning your lotus flower with my lingam
Would give me the ultimate pleasure[9].
O *jogini*, I cannot live a moment without you!
Kissing your lips I will drink the lotus juice.'
Angry, the *jogini*, would not go to bed.
Yet her breath comes out harsh.
The mother-in-law has locked the door.
Rip open the two lips, the solar and the lunar.
Tells Gunduri, he is a king among the handsome
Standing naked amidst the beauties of the town.

One might read the poem for its erotic content, but one cannot neglect the reference to lotus (female sexuality as well as the highest state of meditative consciousness) or to *Idā* (sun) and *Pingalā* (moon). In yoga the consciousness or meditative practice moves through six (according to some seven) stages. The lowest is *kundalini*, at the base of the loins, and the highest is at the top of the skull, known as sahasrāra, represented by a thousand lotuses and implying the highest state of consciousness. This poem, the final of the illustrations presented here, is the most significant. It is

an erotic poem in its own merit. It is complete without loose ends, and at the same time there is no reference to another level. Here, the concealment is complete.

12. Wolfgang Iser's notion of gaps that the reader fills and the *Gestalt* notion of closure or completion (of that which is incomplete) are concepts that self-consciously explore the notion of interpretation/*bhasya*.

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Gandhian Translations/Translating Gandhi

Nandini Bhattacharya

Abstract

The essay examines Gandhi as a translator, and discovers Gandhi's translation practices as animated/ informed by startlingly radical ideologies. It suggests that while Gandhi's 'Indic' imagination is produced by translations, his translations intend to produce a distinct 'nationalist' consciousness. Translation enables Gandhi to recast minds, and 'imagine' a nation through transfer of (trans)national ideologies, while taking into cognizance the transnational conditions within which, paradoxically, nation-spaces are inscribed.

As a translator, Gandhi acknowledges and engages with the complexities involved in transfer of meanings, long before the emergence of translation-studies as a discipline. Realising that the translation act is a culturally inflected one and recognizing translation as a volatile, and ongoing dialogue between two cultures, Gandhi, more often than not, indicates the (im)possibilities of translation.

"The 'tower of Babel' does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompletion, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics" (Jaques Derrida, Des Tours de Babel Tr. J. Graham, 165)

"The best translation resembles this royal cape. It remains separate from the body to which it is nevertheless conjoined, wedding it, not wedded to it" (Derrida, Des Tours de Babel, 194)

i

Imagining Nation: Translation as Resistance

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), otherwise recognized as a preeminent Indian political ideologue, and one that shaped/ directed an anti-imperialist mass movement (unique in human history in having employed non-violent, non-coercive means of conflict resolution) was also a tireless translator, experimenting radically with transfer of meaning in various languages. This essay contends that Gandhi recognized, and enunciated many of the contemporary positions regarding translation long before Translation-Studies as a discipline (enriched/inflected by postmodern theoretical tools) came into being[i].

This essay is primarily concerned with Gandhian translations, as inscribed in his journal the *Indian Opinion* (founded and operating from his South Africa-based 'ashrams' Phoenix and Tolstoy in 1903) in the first two decades of the twentieth century, as well as his translation of the self-inscribed *Hind Swaraj* from its Gujarati original into English. It proceeds to examine the texture of, and the imperatives that contoured these translations.

Gandhi, it must be noted, never considered himself a professional translator, or claimed pre-eminence as a theoretician but saw 'translation' as an effective tool of communication; a means of making available transnational thought to his readers (that included semi or non-literate listeners) of his journal the *Indian Opinion* and the international Anglophone community at large, thereby 'imagining'[ii] an Indian nation, and contributing to the rising tide of nationalist aspirations. English translations of European language texts, or translation of English language texts into Indian vernaculars (primarily Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil as Gandhi's target readers, the diasporic Indians of South Africa, belonged to these language groups)[iii] was geared towards the shaping of an anti-imperialist, anti-racist mass movement; and informing/ inflecting nationalist 'imaginations', thereby. Like Rabindranath Tagore[iv], Gandhi's nationalist imaginations were developed within and animated by

(and in turn re-animating) a complex matrix of transnational ideologies, and enunciated in multifarious languages. Translation was Gandhi's way of building bridges between Indian *bhasas* and English (a language Gandhi never gave undue importance), just as it was a means of building bridges between his imagined India, and the world at large.

ii

Within a translated world

To evaluate/examine Gandhi's endeavors as translator is also to situate him within the larger and ongoing context of the translation- act as definitive of colonial modernity. I contend that Gandhi's specifically Indic imagination was produced by his exposure to translations in transnational conditions, while going on to produce a distinct brand of Indianism or nationalism.

The second half of the nineteenth century Europe marks a watershed in translation history, as there is a concerted effort to produce translations of the major Greco-Roman; modern European and Sanskritic classics, into the English language, for the benefit of Anglophone consumers. This effort had a great deal to do with Britain's preeminence as a political and economic power, and perceptions regarding centrality, as well as the normativity of the English language.

Translation efforts in colonies like India, were, on the one hand directed towards translating texts (written in classical languages such as Sanskrit, and Perso-Arabic) into English, and thus appropriating subject cultures by 'knowing' them. On the other hand, translating English language texts into the Indian vernaculars was intended to disseminate English (or European) culture and knowledge, and thereby render them normative. These efforts were often aided and abetted by governmental organizations such as the Fort William College, in Kolkata (the then capital of British imperial rule; the various School Book Societies, or by publishing houses

(such as the Bangabasi Press or the Naval Kishore Press) which enjoyed government patronage[v].

It is a well documented fact that, Gandhi's situatedness in London as a budding lawyer during his formative years, and his association with *fin-de-siecle* critics of industrial modernity, leavened his ideological stance. An assorted group of vegans, spiritualists, theosophists, Fabian socialists, such as Henry Salt, Anna Kingsford, Edward Carpenter, Edward Maitland, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Annie Besant were engaging with Indic cultures in search a viable alternative to the 'materiality' of the West, and Gandhi's intimacy with this 'radical fringe' of Victorian modernity exposed him to Sanskritic literatures in English translation[vi].

His subsequent location in South Africa, and his being surrounded by a group of radical European Jewish friends also exposed him to certain European Transcendentalist writing in translation. North American Transcendentalists such as Henry Thoreau were, in turn, formulating their critique of industrial modernity through a reading of translated Sanskritic texts. Gandhi's exposure to Ralph W. Emerson and especially Henry Thoreau's writings brought him even closer to an understanding of his cultural roots[vii]. It was during this period that Gandhi read the *Upanishads* (translated and published by the Theosophical Society) and Edwin Arnold's translation of the *Bhagwad Gita* entitled *The Song Celestial*, as well as Arnold's *Light of Asia*, a rendering of the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. What is equally significant is his reading of an English translation of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's *The Voices of the Silence*, and exposure thereby to Theosophy, a belief-system (as admitted by its propagator Blavatasky) formulated through its responses to Hindu and Buddhist doctrines.

Pyarelal's *Gandhi: The Early Phrase* records Gandhi reading, and his being particularly impressed by Arnold's *The Song Celestial*[vii] . Gandhi's lifelong fascination with the *Bhagwad Gita*, his determination to learn enough Sanskrit to read it in the original, his adoption of phrases such as *aparigraha* (or a non-possessive

mind set) as definitive of his world-view; and his employing of the *Gita*-esque dialogic mode in many of his subsequent writings such as *Hind Swaraj*, owe a great deal to his reading of Arnold's English translation[ix]. Gandhi's Indic imagination; his very consciousness of a nation's cultural past was mediated by the fact of his locatedness in Anglophone centres, and exposure to Anglophone translations of Sanskritic texts, as well as to his 'friendship' with European readers of the same[x].

It is perhaps a quirk of fortune that Edwin Arnold (of all translators) should stimulate Gandhi's Indic imaginations, leaven his culturally attenuated- 'nationalist' imagination; and awaken him to an anti-imperialist course of action. Edwin Arnold's life is a perfect example of the close relations between translation, penetration and empire building. Arnold served as the Principal of the Government College of Sanskrit in Pune (in the Western part of British India) and received special commendation from the Viceroy, Lord Elphinstone for his role in saving British life and property during the uprising of Indian *sepoys* in 1857. Arnold was also a close associate of Stanley (and the latter actually named a mountain in, Congo, after Arnold), and Cecil Rhodes, and had a considerable role to play in the British appropriation of Congo. He was awarded the CIE (the highest civilian honor) by the Queen for his role in preservation and extension of the British Empire. Gandhi's knowledge regarding Arnold's complicity in the perpetuation of the British Empire is a matter of conjecture, but nevertheless remains an interesting side story that could be pursued for an insight into the close relation between translation and empire building.

It is during this period that Gandhi read the Koran (in English translation) and Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomed and his Successors*. He was equally impressed by the English translation of Socratic *Dialogues*, and Leo Tolstoy's *What is Art*? and *The Kingdom of God is Within You*.

iii

Translation, transnationality and the nationalist imagination

The birth of the *Indian Opinion* in South Africa, and its operations as a mouthpiece of the racially- discriminated diasporic Indians, provides a clue to an understanding of Gandhi's approach to languages, and to the very business of transfer of meaning in times of nation building or a critical moment of cultural transition. Itamar Even- Zohar's contention that translation has played a major role in the developing of *national* cultures, and that translation takes on an added meaning when there are turning points or crises, or literary vacuums, where older, established models cease to be tenable and an influx of new ideas is required - seems particularly germane in this context (Even-Zohar, "The position of translated literature" 109)

The *Indian Opinion,* a foolscap –sized, three-column weekly journal, was launched in Durban on July 4, 1903, in four languages, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil and English - so that it could reach out to every Indian in South Africa. Mansukhlal Nazar, the first editor records the incredible difficulties involved in publishing a four-language version, non-profit making, activist news-journal; that "translators are not particularly clever, and they will not work at day time" and that some translations are simply 'shocking." (qtd Uma Dhupelia Mestherie, "The Significance of *Indian Opinion*"). Then there was the practical problem of the editor (Gandhi) not knowing Tamil, and his struggle to explain the spirit of the articles to translators who were not too proficient in English. These practical problems led to the discontinuation of the Hindi and Tamil versions of the *Indian Opinion*. However, what is significant about *Indian Opinion* is its desire to imagine India in the multiplicity of languages, cultures and registers.

What is equally noteworthy for translation-scholars is the reception/reading of the journal. In *Satyagraha in South Africa* Gandhi notes that at the height of the anti-colonial, anti-racist Satyagraha movement there would be "many whose first occupation after they received the paper would be to read the Gujarati section through from beginning to end. One in the company would read it,

and rest would surround him and listen." (*Satyagraha in SA*, "Indian Opinion"133) This complex transaction between the private reading of the written/printed word and its public hearing, is worth noting, as it involves another level of transportation of meaning; from the reader (enabled to read, access the printed word) to the reader orally receiving it. If this public reading is accompanied by comments and glosses (as I have often seen it being done in Indian roadside teashops), then there is an even greater refraction of the source text, and the deepening of shadows between its 'originary' coding and subsequent de-coding and re-coding.

A further clue to Gandhi's view on languages and the dissemination of meaning can be gleaned when in *Satyagraha in South Africa* Gandhi condemns the imperial education system, geared towards colonizing and disabling of minds, rather than enabling it to understand and use multiple languages. He commends the natural linguistic abilities of South-African Indians such as Thambi Naidoo who speak, and understand at least three or four languages without having been formally taught in schools (*Satyagraha in SA*, "A Series of Arrests" 136). What Gandhi emphasizes (with unfailing regularity) is multiplicity of languages, and the necessity of seeing English as one among many such languages. Gandhi questions the un-seeming primacy given to the English language as a result of the colonial intervention, and chooses to treat it as one among many languages (and by association, cultures) of the world. The printing and publishing of the *Indian Opinion* in several Indian languages was meant to serve as a co-text of people like Thambi Naidoo, and an objective correlative of the polycultural, polylingual Indian nation, of Gandhi's dreams.

Indian Opinion was a means of bringing news about Indians in the colonies before the public within South Africa and in India. Gandhi notes that "through the medium of this paper we could very well disseminate the news of the week among the community. The English section kept those Indians informed about the movement who did not know Gujarati, and for Englishmen in India, England and South Africa, *Indian Opinion* served the purpose of a weekly

newsletter" (*Satyagraha in SA*,131-132). Translation was a means of disseminating information, so vital to the anti racist movement in South Africa. The translation of Natal State laws into Gujarati, Tamil and Hindi made it intelligible as well as accessible to the poor and oppressed indentured labour, and enabled/urged them to defy the same[xi].

iv

Translation as Resistance

Mohandas Gandhi's distinct interpretation of oppression and resistance as mind-games, his rejection of armed struggle and advocacy of *satyagraha* or principled non-violent resistance owe a considerable intellectual debt to his reading and (what is more significant) decision to translate/paraphrase texts as various as Socrates' *Apology* (tr. as "The Soldier of Truth"), Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, *A Letter to a Hindoo*[xii], and Thoreau's *On Civil Disobedience* (tr. as "The Duty of Disobeying Laws"); and John Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (tr. as " Sarvodaya").

To understand the Gandhian position regarding translation is to begin with an evaluation of his translation of a European text, that is, Ruskin's *Unto this Last* (1860). In many ways, Gandhi's reading of this text, and his decision to translate it into Gujarati for the diasporic community of primarily indentured labour, and Indian businessmen in South Africa was momentous in the sense that it led to the crystallization of his decision to wage a non-violent protest movement (the one he called *satyagraha*) against the racist South Africa government; and his enunciation of an 'alternative modernity'. His foundation of alternative habitational structure/lifestyle (that Gandhi ultimately described as 'ashram') and belief that it was imperative to the producing of the true *satyagrahi* mindset-can also be traced back to Gandhi's reading and translation of Ruskin's *Unto this Last.* Gandhi records its momentous impact as

"the magic spell of a book" in his *Autobiography*, as well as in his other works such as *Satyagraha in South Africa* and *Ashram Observances in Action.*

In deciding to translate into Gujarati, Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo* (where Tolstoy advocates non-violent civil disobedience in response to Taraknath Sen, the editor of *Free Hindustan*'s advocacy of armed resistance to colonial powers) and stating that he would "induce others to translate and publish it into various Indian vernaculars" (Parel, *Hind Swaraj*, 136), Gandhi acknowledges translation as forging modes of resistance, that are Indic and yet not quite. Translation is both an inscription of difference, as well as sameness.

What is equally remarkable is the intimate connection between Gandhi's desire to translate, and his responsiveness to the conditions of victimhood inherent in the diasporic situation. While the very idea of an Indian nation for Gandhi could only be realized in terms of his understanding of how Indians lived (and suffered) under racially prejudiced regimes around the world, his formulation of a resurgent Indian nation could also be inscribed by translating (and thus making available as historical exemplars) cases/patterns of exceptional courage and resistance to Indians around the world. Consider the data provided below, and note how Gandhi's concern for, and need to resist racial denigration of immigrants around the world (especially Indian immigrants) went hand in hand with his translation effort. The connections between the impulse to translate, and the desire to express solidarity with the wretched of the earth was neither casual nor arbitrary. Such translations in the *Indian Opinion* intended to serve as historical exemplars of courage, and integrity in the face of unjust oppression. Section 148 in the eighth volume of the *Complete Works of Mohandas Gandhi* discusses pitiable state of Indian immigrants in Canada (281); section 150 with racist denigration of Chinese immigrants in Australia (286); section 153 with victimhood of Indian diaspora in South Africa (291), and

section 161 with racial harassment of Indians in Canada (300). These sections of the *Indian Opinion* are interspersed between Gandhi's translations of Socratic *Dialogues* entitled *The Story of a Soldier of Truth* (published in parts in sections, 122, 131,140, 151, 156, and 166). Similarly, his translation of John Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (sections 175 to 257) and Henry Thoreau's *The Duty of Civil Disobedience* is followed by his narration of the plight of immigrant Indians' in Vancouver Canada (*CWMG* vol 9, section 148, 240).

v

The (im)possibilities of translation

(*i*) *The untranslatable* sarvodaya

It is my contention that, long before translation theory had taken 'a cultural turn' to quote Bassnett, Gandhi, through his translation practice, was able to suggest the extreme complexity at the heart of transfer of meaning. He realized that language is after all a complex system of significations, and those significations are meaningful only within a co-text and con-text. Hence 'equivalence' in translation is a practical impossibility, or an 'interpretative fiction', and transfer of meaning a complex, ongoing, fluid process. Gandhi as translator takes into account the angle of refraction between the source text and target of the transfer. While in English 'translation' could simply mean transfer of meaning in a transparent, non-problematic, interchangeable manner, *anuvad*-the Sanskrit-Hindi/Gujarati word that Gandhi often uses has a distinct semantic charge. *Anu* in Sanskrit is 'diminutive,' as well as 'one that follows,' and hence, semantically speaking, according primacy to the 'source' or 'original' text. '*Vad*' is, however, both 'speech' and 'dialogue' and hence conveys the sense of exchange, dialogue, or transaction. *Anuvad* actually encompasses what most postmodern theories regarding exchange of meaning suggest – that is,'translation' being a complex and ongoing dialogue/transaction between the source and the target texts, and by association, cultures. The translator decodes

the source language text and recodes it in the context of another culture, giving the text a new life and meaning. "Translation effectively becomes the after-life of a text, a new 'original' in another language (Bassnet, *Translation Studies*, 9). Also, it is an ongoing process where an excess of meaning or trace is always left behind, and the translator works in awareness of the (im)possibilities of translation, rather than in conviction of carrying across meanings in a transparent, reversible and non-problematic manner. Gandhi posits the vital difference between *tarjuma* (or *tarjumo* in Gujarati) *adhare* (based upon; in paraphrase of) and *saar* (essence) and uses the former to mean complete and faithful transfer of meaning. *Adhare* and *saar* are used to convey the idea of a free translation in which texts must be recoded for the specific needs of his culturally distinct (that is from the Eurocentric cultural source) readers

An examination of the "Prasthavana", (foreword, a statement of purpose) to *Sarvodaya* - Gandhi's translation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* - will bear out many of my contentions. Gandhi refuses to translate *Unto this Last* literally because he considers this task to be an interpretative impossibility. Instead, he provides a *saar* or essence because:

> "*Tena lakhano ame je saār apie che,te tarjumo nathi.Tarjumo aapta ketlāk Bible vagare ma thi apelā dakhlāo vachnar nā samjhi sake evo sambhab che. Tethi āme Ruskin nā lakhano saār je apio che*" (I have rendered the essence of Ruskin's book, and not a literal translation because the examples cited in Ruskin's text emanate from Biblical sources and may not be intelligible to the readers. Hence, here is a rendering of the essence of Ruskin's writing, *Sarvodaya* 4.)[xiii]

Gandhi's awareness that examples/analogies drawn from the *Bible*, and concepts of Christian Socialism or Christian brotherhood (emanating from Bible-reading/knowing European/British cultural contexts) would fall flat upon the Indian diaspora of Gujarati-speaking indentured labour in South Africa. It is a realization of

cultural specificity, and the distinct nontransferable con-text of Ruskin's work that motivated him to 'paraphrase' rather than 'translate' the book.

Also, the very title of the book, (which Ruskin gleans from the parable of the "Labourers in the Vineyard," chapter xx, verse 14," Book of Mathews" of the *New Testament*) and where the phrase "I will give unto this last, even as unto thee" is used to signify unselfish service; commitment to the poorest of the poor, the wretched of the earth - is changed to s*arvodaya* as it conveys Ruskin's spirit. Ruskin's *Unto This Last* critiques Adam Smith's proposition that pursuit of happiness is constituted in the accruing of wealth and thereby, wellbeing, for the majority, and even when such pursuit is achieved at the cost of overlooking (as well as infringing upon) the rights of the weakest in a community and in contravention of ethical positions. What Ruskin, as well as his translator/transcreator Gandhi proposes is the **upliftment of all**, the happiness and advancement of the poorest of the poor, the marginalized of marginal, rather than good of the majority.

Gandhi captures the essence of Ruskinian protest by using the title 'Sarvodaya' to mean not the 'well being of many' but the good of all. "*Te pustak na naam no pan ame arth nathi apio kemke te jāne angreji ma Bible vachu hoe tej samajhi sake. Pan pustak lakhano hetu sarvanu kalyan—sarvanu udaya* (*matra vadhareno nahi*) *–evo hoa thi ame a lakhan ne 'sarvodaya' evu naām apiu che*" (I have not translated the title of the book literally because it would not really convey any meaning to people who have no English or Bible reading habits. This book is about the upliftment of all and not just the advancement of majority and hence I have chosen the name 'sarvodaya', 4)

What is equally 'postmodern' is the fact that Gandhi refuses to grant John Ruskin or himself, or anybody for that matter the status of textual 'originality.' Ruskin he says is merely 'expanding' ideas that are inscribed in Socrates' *Apology* (something that Gandhi paraphrased as *The Soldier of Truth*), and hence wisdom seems to be

something that can be freely drawn upon by different writers of different cultural contexts to suit their different needs. As Gandhi notes in the "Prasthāvanā" of *Sarvodaya* "*Socrates mānās ne su karu ghate che. Tenu thoruk darshan karāviu. Tene je u keoiu teuj kareu. Tena vicharonu lammāne Ruskin nā vichāro che* (Socrates was a man whose philosophy had a great influence. He was a man who practiced what he preached. Ruskin has worked on and expanded Socrates' philosophy to arrive at his own, 4). Gandhi prefigures Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury of polysystems theory fame, in his efforts to deprioritize **source-centric** discourse that sees translation only as an inferior copy. As Zohar notes; "This implies in fact that no clearcut distinction is then maintained between 'original' and 'translated' writings, and that often it is the leading writers (or members of the *avant garde* who are about to become leading writers) who produce the most conspicuous or appreciated translations" (110).

Significantly, *Hind Swaraj* is a text that is many ways coterminous with *Sarvodaya*, as repeats and expands many ideas already touched upon in *Sarvodaya.* Significantly, *Hind Swaraj* also announces in its title page "No Rights Reserved", thereby, cancelling at a stroke, the claims of originality and authorship[xiv].

vi

The impossibilities of translation ii: The untranslatable Satyagraha

The historical evolving of the concept *satyagraha* is an indication of how Gandhi achieved deferral of 'normative' meanings, and produced the desired differences between European terminologies and his cultural-specific endeavors. Within a year of Gandhi's organizing civil disobedience against the infamous Asiatic Registration Act in South Africa (one which compelled people of Asiatic origins to register with fingerprints and bodily identification marks with the government in 1906), he had begun expressing dissatisfaction with the term 'passive resistance.' In his *Autobiography* he notes that he found the term "passive resistance"

as “too narrowly constructed” so that it appeared to be “the weapon of the weak.” What he actually wanted to convey was a unique principle of active nonviolent resistance to injustice, which was aimed at not simply neutralizing violence but transforming the opponent. In order to arrive at a unique word, which would convey this unique idea he announced a contest in the *Indian Opinion* for the renaming of “passive resistance”, and even declared a prize for the best entry:

> To respect our own language, speak it well and use in it as few foreign words as possible […] this is also part of our patriotism. We have been using some English terms just as they are, since we cannot find exact Gujarati equivalents for them. Some of these terms are given below, which we place before our readers. […] The following terms are in question: Passive Resistance; Passive Resister; Cartoon; Civil Disobedience […] it should be noted that we do not want translations of these English terms, but terms with equivalent connotations (*CWMG* vol 8, sec. 95. 194).

By 1920 Gandhi had been able to coin an alternative concept as well as an alternative word distinguishing it from the cultural register of ‘passive or civil resistance’

> Passive resistance is used in the orthodox English sense and covers the suffragette movement as well as resistance of nonconformists. Passive resistance has been conceived and regarded as the weapon of the weak. Whilst it avoids violence, being not open to the weak, it does not exclude its use if, in the opinion f the passive resister, the occasion demands it. […]
>
> *Satyagraha* differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South. […] In the application of *satyagraha* I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit use of violence being inflicted on one’s opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy […] and patience means self-

> suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self (*CWMG* vol. 8, 194)

In a section entitled "Gujarati Equivalents for Passive Resistance" (anthologized in the eighth volume of his *Complete Works*) Gandhi rejects words such as *pratyupaya* (countermeasure), *kashtadhin prativartan* (resistance through submission to hardship); *dridha pratipaksha* (firmness in resistance) as unable to suggest the exact meaning of his particular mode of protest, and chooses *sadagraha* (later transformed to *satyagraha*) which means firm adherence to truth and truthful principles[xv]. "To suggest any word that comes into one's head [in finding an equivalent of for passive resistance] is an insult to one's language; it is to invite ridicule upon oneself" (*CWMG*, vol.8, 194).

vii

The case of Hind Swaraj

I will conclude with *Hind Swaraj* to underscore once again Gandhi's views regarding the impossibilities of complete translation or transfer of meaning. Incidentally Gandhi was adamant about **not** using words such as 'independence' or 'freedom' to connote the Indian nationalist movement because he felt that such words were culturally coded and while 'freedom' and 'independence' had the charge of 'go as you like,' 'swaraj'-- a word evolving from Indic context was suited to re-present an Indic struggle. "The root meaning of the word *Swaraj* is self rule" he noted and therefore "Swaraj may […] be rendered as disciplined rule from within." 'Independence,' "on the other hand, has no such limitation. Independence may mean license to do as you like. The word *Swaraj* is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not a freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means."

Gandhi went further to underscore the unique cultural context of the word swaraj and thus its unique acceptability among the Indian masses.

> I defy anyone to give for 'independence' a common Indian word intelligible to the masses. Our goal at any rate may be known by an indigenous word understood by three hundred millions. And we have such a word in Swaraj, first used in the name of the nation by Dadabhai Naoroji. It is an infinitely greater than and includes 'independence'. It is a vital word. It has been sanctified by the noble sacrifice of thousands of Indians. […]It is a sacrilege to displace that word by a foreign importation of doubtful value (*CWMG*, vol. 35, 456)

Such was the extent of his refusal to consider these words as interchangeable that when in the 1927 Madras Congress, Nehru suggested that the Congress Party should drop 'swaraj' and adopt the phrase 'complete independence' as 'swaraj' was unintelligible to the world (and of course Nehru was considering an English-speaking/knowing world) Gandhi replied that he had no problems with 'independence' if it led to 'swaraj' for all mankind.

Hind Swaraj (1909) is in many ways special, as this is the only book that Gandhi translated personally, and exists therefore in both Gujarati and English, with both languages inflecting and informing the other and interanimating the texts. It is a text that was produced within several kinds of liminality-on board of a passenger ship plying between Britain and South Africa; in a trance/dream like state; with both right and left hands; and offered as a book and a no-book. By retaining the Gujarati and the English title in the English translation, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, he created linguistically speaking an amphibious text. That he calls his own translation of a work that he himself inscribed a 'free translation' and not a 'literal' one is a case in point.

The concluding section of the Gujarati *Hind Swaraj* is entitled '*chutkaro*' literally meaning 'freedom', emancipation, or

'release.' The Bangla equivalent is '*chuti*', and the Hindi '*chutkara*.' This term, in the context of a work that sets out to demolish the discursive chains of colonial modernity and industrial civilization has a distinct charge. Coming, as it does, at the end of the text, it identifies *Hind Swaraj* as a clarion call of release from the normative prisonhouse of European discourses.

However, in the English version Gandhi uses "Conclusion" to end his work, when he could have used an equivalent of '*chukaroo*' such as 'release' or 'emancipation.' The decision to avoid a semantic equivalent (say such as 'release') to distinguish the concluding-section of the English *Hind Swaraj*, robs the text of its vital charge, denudes it, and renders it far less effective in terms of what it purports to propagate!

Gandhi's motives for making such a vital change in the English text are not known, but one could, advance three possible reasons as to why he may have made the change and remained silent about it. Readers could choose any one, or all of them!

1) This replacement of '*chutkaroo*' with 'conclusion' in the English translation of original Gujarati *Hind Swaraj* is due to Gandhi's is careless, or unmindful approach to the text.
2) Gandhi deliberately replaced '*chutkaroo*' with 'Conclusion' and not its equivalent 'release' in the English *Hind Swaraj* as 'Conclusion' signifies the conventional end of an English language text. Also, possibly, Gandhi considers the body of the text, that is *Hind Swaraj* [decrying Western 'civilization' and 'modernity'], strong and rousing enough. He prefers not to confuse his English-knowing audience with a strange unconventional term like 'release' to conclude his text, and deflect their attention from the clarion cry he has declared against Western modernity.
3) Gandhi considers the contents/codes of his Gujarati text (written on board of Kildonan Castle, in a trance- like state, distinct, inimitable, and unique. By refusing to translate '*chutkaroo*' into English, and remaining completely silent

on this issue in his English text, Gandhi directs our attention, once again, towards the (im)possibilities of translation.

Notes

i. For more on birth of Translation Studies as a discipline with distinct methodological tools, read Susan Bassnett's "Preface to Third Edition" in her *Translation Theory* (London: Routledge, 1980, 1-10); "Preface" in Bassnett, Lefevre eds *Translation/History/Culture: A Sourcebook* (London, Pinter Publishers, 1990); Lawrence Venuti eds. *Translation Studies Reader* (Routledge, 1998). Also refer to Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanah eds. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London: Routledge,2009)

ii. Benedict Anderson used the term 'imagined communities' to suggest the idea of nation as a discursive construct rather than merely a geographic entity, in his book.

iii. Refer to Margaret Chatterjee's *Gandhi and His Jewish Friends* (Houndsmill, Macmillan, 1992, 23-38) as well as to Gandhi's *Satyagraha in South Africa* for more on the heterogeneous configuration of immigrants (in terms of race nation, class) in South Africa at the beginning of the 20th century. Margaret Chatterjee notes: "The Johannesburg Indians, in fact, presented a picture of India in miniature. It is interesting to note that the Hindi and Tamil editions of Indian Opinion were dropped in February 1906. There would be no readers for a Hindi edition and in any case the Gujaratis read the edition in their own language and those who were able to read the English version. The Colonial Born children of indentured labourers were mostly Tamil- speaking and looked for material to read in their own language. This group, many of whom were converts to Christianity, were catered for by *The African Chronicle* started by P.S. Aiyar" ("Gandhi and his Jewish Friends", 43)

iv. Refer to Rabindranath Tagore's essay "Nationalism" to appreciate his plural and cosmopolitan interpretation as well as critique of the parochial definition of the nation-state in European cultures. Also, refer to Ashis Nandy's *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism* for more on this.

v. Refer to Ulrike Stark's *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2009), to see the close connections between the imperial process and growth of vernacular publishing houses giving primacy to translation activity, in late 19th century India. Amiya P. Sen records the activities of the Bangabasi Press in British Bengal, and its active encouragement in translation of Sanskritic classics, as well as Indian epics on a mass scale. Sen sees translation activities at the end of 19th and beginning of the twentieth century as contributing to the rise of Hindu nationalism in India in *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal*, 244-247.

vi. Pyarelal's *Gandhi: The Early Phase*, records Gandhi's association with the vegans, theosophists and Fabian socialists. Gandhi's own writings, as anthologized primarily in the first and second volumes of his *Complete Works*, also records his involvement with vegetarians and theosophists in London. Gandhi refers to these connections in his *Autobiography* as well. For more on Gandhi's involvement with Theosophists in both London and South Africa, refer to Joseph Doke and Margaret Chatterjee's "The Theosophical Connection" in her *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends* (Macmillan, 1992).

vii. Pyarelal records this rich cross-fertilization of cultures when he notes that "the Transcendentalism of New England was the result, among other things, of the quickening of the American mind by impact of Indian Vedantist thought" ("In Search of Goals", 240).

viii. Pyarelal notes that "two Theosophist brothers introduced him to Edwin Arnold's verse translation of *Bhagwad Gita-The Song Celestial*" and goes on to quote Gandhi to convey the momentous impact of Arnold's translation on the Mahatma-"It opened to me a new view of life. It touched my spirit as perhaps it can only touch a child of the East. I found at last, as I believed, the light I needed" ("In search of goals" *Mahatma Gandhi: The Early Phase,*250*).*

ix. In his *Autobiography* Gandhi notes that "to me the *Gita* became an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily

reference. Just as I turned to the English dictionary for the meanings of words that I did not understand, I turned to the dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my troubles and trials. Words like *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) and *samabhaba* (equability) gripped me" ("Result of Introspection" 211). In the same chapter Gandhi comments on the rich cross-fertilization, transfer, translation of thought and culture in London from 1893 to 1903-"When, in 1893, I came in close contact with Christian friends, I was a mere novice. They tried hard to bring home to me, and make me accept, the message of Jesus…
In 1903 the position was somewhat changed. Theosophist friends certainly intended to draw me into their society, but that was with a view to getting something from me as a Hindu. Theosophical literature is replete with Hindu influence … I explained that my Sanskrit study was not much to speak of, that I had not read the Hindu scriptures in the original, and even my acquaintance with the translations was of the slightest. … I already had faith in the *Gita*, which had a fascination for me. Now I realized the necessity of diving deeper into it. I had one or two translations, by means of which I tried to understand the original Sanskrit (112)

x. Leela Gandhi's *Affective Communities: The Politics of Friendship* uses the trope of friendship to explain the alliance and interdependence between Gandhi and characters such as Henry Salt, Anna Kingsford, Edward Maitland, Annie Besant, Edward Carpenter, in London in the formative part of his life. Margaret Chatterjee shows Gandhi's close alliance with his Jewish friends and the mediation of East European ideologies through these friends and associates in *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends*.

xi. I take this opportunity to answer a certain question/ comment that an acute translator such as Shurhud poses in his "Introduction" to the bilingual edition/translation of *Hind Swaraj*). Shurhud notes that "For someone setting out to write his definitive work, the decision to write in Gujarati was truly daring" considering the marginality of the language even among Indic group of vernaculars in the first decade of the 20th century, (not to take into account the near-total unintelligibility- quotient of Gujarati, so far as the Anglophone world was concerned). Shurhud proceeds to

ask "How is one to read Gandhi's choice of Gujarati as the language for thinking through and spelling out a meaningful appraisal of modern civilization as it happens to be, and as it seeks to become?" (Shurhud and Sharma, "Introduction" xiv) My response to these questions/comments is more basic. I suggest that the very practical necessity of conveying his ideas to his immediate audience (the readers and listeners of *Indian Opinion*) who were primarily Gujarati- speaking, and his sensitivity to the Gujarati-Indian cultural context of his South African struggle propelled Gandhi to inscribe, a work as seminal as *Hind Swaraj*, in Gujarati. Note that *Hind Swaraj* first in the columns *Indian Opinion* in two installments on 11th and 18th of December 1909, respectively; and in 1910 as an independent book. The decision to translate was also need-based as copies of *Hind Swaraj* were intercepted by the colonial government and proscribed on 24th March of 2010, and Gandhi went on to translate the text in English so that his ideas could reach out to a wider reader group. I conclude that Gandhi conceived of *Hind Swaraj* in a Gujarati/Indic context and therefore translated it only when the context-specific (and untranslatable) text was unavailable, and not as its equivalent.

xii. In translating "A letter to a Hindoo" in Gujarati,(and deciding to publish it alongside his seminal work *Hind Swaraj*) Gandhi effectively participates in the ongoing debate between radicals such as Taraknath Sen (editor of a newsjournal entitled *Free Hindustan*) and Leo Tolstoy regarding the inadvisability of armed or violent resistance against an oppressive power; underlines emphatically 1) his interpretation of oppression and resistance as mind games, and 2) the necessity of forging a resistance movement based on soul-force. Tolstoy's letter addressed to a young radical, centres around the stupidity of violence on the ground that this is not the "fundamental principle of the social order" (Tolstoy, *Recollections and Essays*, London, 1937, 426).

xiii. All translations from *Sarvodaya* from original Gujarati into English, if otherwise not mentioned, are mine

xiv. I am indebted to Tridip Surhud for this idea. Read Sharma and Surhud's *Hind Swaraj: A Critical edition* (Orient Longman)

xv. Refer to Raguramaraju's "Reading *rajas* and *tamas*" in "*Modernity in Indian Social Theory* (OUP, 2011, 111-124) for a nuanced reading of Gandhi's 'satyagraha' as produced within the ideological matrices of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*

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BOOK REVIEW

The Golden Gandhi Statue from America Early Stories

Subinal Misra
Tr.By V.Ramaswamy
2010 Harpor Perennial
New Delhi.

Subimal : Aliterary bigot?

At the very outset, I would like to concentrate upon the author's preface and commentary in the 'Golden Gandhi statue from Americay', a collection of stories of outstanding merit. The author subimal Mishra has been known for his anti-stories, his lances of derision and plain abuses more than his literary merit. 'A e Ajogar', the little magazine that was instrumental in letting subimal express, used to be studded with his anti-establishment opinions and queer visuals. Subimal has grown to be the face of subversion in the literary scene of Bengal. In the process, he outgrew his creation. This part of the article is inspired and incited by the author's ceaseless opposition, often just for the sake of it. It is bliss to come across an English translation of Subimal Mishra's work and before delving into other details let me accept that V.Ramaswamy does posses the linguistic skill to add some refinement to the 'directness' of the author without being oblivious of his mastery over literary montage and imagery.

Subimal's raillery is put to words unequivocally on more than one occasion. In the 'Preface: My sansness' the author writes, 'In the forty two years of my writing life, I have never allowed myself to print even a single letter in any daily or journal of any establishment.' We know it. His honesty to his cause remains unquestionable. But what is the cause for which an author has to push himself to complete isolation that is almost superhuman? If his prejudices are engendered by the hollowness of being in the modern

world, by the hypocrisy of the middle path then we must remind him that it was a poet of the elite who wrote,' I have known the arms already, known them all) Arms that are braceleted and white and bare) But in the lamplight downed with light brown hair'. The author who has exploit the space provided by the establishment and converts the same into a platform of reaction certainly does not give in but casts a greater impact. In fact, in the commentary, the author is more direct about his stance, 'We must prick the syphilic sores of this class-divided, counterfeit civilization until liberation is achieved'. But what yours sincerely has often found strange is an anti establishment's optimism of bringing liberation through pieces of writing and, in the process, limiting themselves within the fences of estrangement. Subimal is composing a manifesto that resembles the Angries and Beats of the West and at the same time bears their lacunae. He goes ahead to declare, 'No serious writing in Bengali can be popular today'. We must not forget that written literature owes its origin to the educated upper stratum of the society and has so far been cursed to serve them. Yes, even subimal Mishra is read by the middle class alone. And by middle class, I do not mean a homogeneous whole. A literary critique, if oblivious of the author's existence, can do better justice to a creator as great as Subimal Misra.

Dr.Jekil and Mr.Hyde

Thanks to the translator's choice, the stories compiled in the book are by far superior to some of the best stories ever written in Bengali language (even if we take Rabindranath Tagore, Banphul and Manik Bandopadhyay into consideration). Let us not read them in the light that the author himself casts on them. It is fine if we share his views, it is still better if we do not. I have already talked about the echo of the angry and the beat audible in the very core of Subimal's writings. Here I would try and explain the point. Subimal's characters renounce civility in its entirety. He invokes an animal who works as his chief muse. There is a Jimmy Porter[1] in each of his characters whose irascibility perturbs the reader to such an extent so as to tear their garbs of sanity into shreds. In the 'Naked Knife' the author portrays an intimate sensuous moment that immediately turns into a gory situation when Ghentu bites and tears

Mamata. But the moments are fluid. Mamata is found in his arms chewing cashewnuts in no time. Uncle seer saves and saves and rapes and then is bitten to death. He covets the one he addresses as his mother. A sinner or a savior? What should we call him? Creatures come out of Virgil's underworld-'As there was no light, everything was hidden. In that obscurity they removed their masks and descended into the darkness, exposing their big teeth' (Feeling Distant). The author's 'planned violence' not only shocks, but sometimes even repulses the reader.

In fact there is a constant interplay of light (s) and shade(s). The Cartesian man of reason is dead. Here rules a Dr.Hyde who appears from the hidden world, from the inferno of human values. Yet he is known to us. He often overpowers the Mr.Jekils awaiting his girlfriend in a coffee shop, bringing her children to the school or writing a bookreview. It is altogether a different world where his characters come from. There is neither clemency nor asceticism. There is a coarse war with everything social and an animal Kingdom of desire, violence and instinct. It questions every philosophy and every language of social norms. But at the same time it certainly does not shun the existence of humanity and the possibility of redemption. Contrary to the author's claim, there remains a note of humanity in his voice when he writes, 'Somewhere far away, within the mist, the lamppost would be lit. Somewhere sacred texts will be recited, of Buddha, of jesus, of Mohammed'.

A few more words

The translator V. Ramaswamy deserves high applauds for his wave translation. To translate an author as rarefied as subimal Misra, one certainly needs a great deal of understanding not only of linguistic intricacies but also of the author's attitude towards the subject and the language he deploys. In the end, we must agree with subimal when he says, 'I am… a different kind of writer'.

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