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TRANSLATION TODAY

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Editorial Policy

'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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In This Issue

ARTICLES

B. Venkatacharya's Novels in the Kannada Literary Polysystem and the Founding of the Novel in Kannada

S. Jayasrinivasa Rao

Abstract

This paper looks at the dynamics of the appropriation and establishment of the novel as an independent genre in Kannada literature through translations during the last decades of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th Century. With Itamar Even-Zohar's concept of 'literary system as a polysystem', as the theoretical anchor, the corpus of translated novels of B. Venkatacharya is looked at as a unified genre. Through this perspective, the role played by B. Venkatacharya's Kannada translations of Bengali novels in establishing the novel in Kannada literature is examined.

Background

Kannada literary historiography considers the history of the Kannada novel as nothing more than the history of the realist novel. According to Kannada literary histories[1], the realist novel marks the beginning of the novel as a form in Kannada, and some of the greatest achievements in novel writing have taken place under the realist paradigm. The question to ask is: what preceded the realist novel? Little importance has been given to, or critical attention focussed on, describing and analysing the precursors of the realist novel. In documenting the development of the Kannada novel, Kannada literary histories completely ignore the content, the form and status of the early novels, the sheer numbers of such works, and negate the existence of the innumerable translated novels during that time. Effectively then, the history of the Kannada novel in these literary histories, begins only in 1899 when the first 'independent'[2] or 'autonomous' realist novel –

Gulvadi Venkatarao's *Indirabai* – was published. With this publication, the field of novel writing is opened up and critical energy is diverted, and devoted to, analysing its form, content, and language. In this act of focussing, what gets completely negated is the role early narratives have played in defining the terrain of the realist novel and developing a new genre in Kannada.

The second half of the nineteenth century leading up to the early twentieth century is of crucial importance in Kannada literary history. It is during this phase that we see the dynamics of an old form making space, both socially and linguistically, for the arrival and survival of the new form, and for situating a new genre in the field of literature. Unless we study the realist novel in the light of these early novels, what we might end up doing is to account for the emergence of the realist novel in terms of a direct influence of the English novel form.

This paper attempts to focus on translation activity in Kannada literature during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, looking especially at the translation of Bengali and Marathi novels into Kannada by Venkatacharya and Galaganatha respectively. When we observe this process through the lens of Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, we see that these two writers bring about a turning point in the polysystem where translated novels, once treated as secondary, become the prime focus and work towards integrating the novel, a hitherto absent genre, into the Kannada literary polysystem. By reinstating themselves, the translated novels make possible the features of the realist novel to emerge and take shape, thus transforming the polysystem altogether. We begin with a quick look at the literary scene and translations of novels in Kannada during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

Early Attempts: Several Lonely Journeymen

The earliest appearance of what we call 'novel' in Kannada was during the second half of the nineteenth century when an entirely new and unfamiliar genre was made available through translations and

rewritings. Some of these earliest attempts in Kannada were made by the missionaries, who translated both from English and from other Indian languages[3] into Kannada. Among the Kannada writers, S. B. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, M. S. Puttanna and others[4] were involved in translating English novels into Kannada during this phase. What got translated during this period were both popular English prose narratives like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and less familiar novels like Mary Martha Sherwood's *History of Little Henry and his Bearer*.

These translations and rewritings were isolated individual efforts and enjoyed neither vast readership nor popularity. What they achieved however was to help in introducing a new genre. Though these were good rewritings and adaptations, they failed to interest the reading public. It is quite possible that this was due to the newness of the genre, which the reading public was not familiar with, in terms either of form or content. Novels from Telugu, Marathi, Bengali, and Malayalam too were translated into Kannada between 1860 and 1900[5], but these novels too met with the same fate.

The novels and novelists translated into Kannada during the nineteenth century are not part of the canon of 'classical' Victorian novels and novelists we know today. These writers – Wilkie Collins, Marie Corelli, Benjamin Disraeli, Edward Bulwer Lytton and G. W. M. Reynolds – were then 'popular' Victorian novelists. To this list of popular writers we can add a few more unfamiliar English names that we have encountered through Kannada literature like Maria Edgeworth, Henry Taylor, Mary Martha Sherwood, Theophilus Smith and Thomas Day. The choice of the novels for translation was not motivated by aesthetic, linguistic or political concerns but essentially because they were available at that time. The availability factor was so overriding that it made no difference to the translators whether the novels were classical or popular, culturally familiar or alien, acceptable or unacceptable genre-wise or otherwise. The themes and subjects of these novels, both classical and popular, were

culturally alien, and remained so even after they were adapted/rewritten for nineteenth century Indian readers. It was not surprising, therefore, that these novels did not catch on as a major trend and have remained mostly experimental in nature. Along with the sporadic nature of these efforts, this contributed to the failure of these translated novels in taking roots in the Kannada literary soil. The prolificity that is usually associated with the emergence of a new form in a literary history was completely and conspicuously absent.

Had these translated novels succeeded and had they been replicated in Kannada as independent writings, we could have said that it was through translations of 19th century English novels that Kannada literature assimilated a new genre. Having looked at the random and sporadic nature of the translation activities, we can confidently venture the claim that these early attempts could not have directly influenced the novel as a literary form in Kannada. In other words, the establishment of the novel as a literary type in Kannada is not a clear case of assimilation of a Western form through direct translation activity.

What was required for the novel as a genre to be instituted on the literary scene was an initiated, informed, and supportive reading public. Here, we need to understand the relationship between the reading public and the emergence of a new form. Just like in movies and fine arts, a reading public is in persistent need of interesting and entertaining material. Once interest is aroused in the reading public, the reading public expects more of a similar kind. If the writers continue to sustain the interest of the readers and produce more material to fulfill the increased demands of the reading public, a large body of work is created in the new genre. This happens when something that began as an experiment becomes a popularly accepted genre. The acceptance and institutionalisation of the new genre makes space for further experimentation with the content, form, language, and helps transform it.

Let us now turn to another terrain of translation activity – translations from other Indian languages into Kannada. This is an important site of translation, because we claim that this is what set the field for the establishment of the novel in Kannada literature. In discussing translation at this level, which we call the 'micro level of translation'[6], we look at the works of two prominent writers of that period – B. Venkatacharya and Venkatesha Tirako Kulakarni 'Galaganatha' – and examine the reasons that drive the popularity of their translations.

Venkatacharya and Galaganatha: The Two Towers of Translation

The establishment of a dynamic relationship between the reading public and translated novels proved to be the turning point in the history of the novel in Kannada. Venkatacharya and Galaganatha industriously translated novels from Bengali and Marathi respectively into Kannada in large numbers, and established this dynamic relationship with the reading public. What is more significant is that these two writers themselves translated almost 75 novels from Bengali and Marathi, beginning from 1876 and continuing till 1930. No other Indian regional language literature witnessed such fecund prolificity of translation activity.

If we look at the literary output of Venkatacharya and Galaganatha, who have almost 130 works to their credit, we see that 75 of these are translated works. When we compare this output with the lack of critical focus on them, especially with regard to Venkatacharya's translated works, it is evident that their translations have not received the kind of critical and theoretical attention they deserve. Galaganatha is more fortunate than Venkatacharya in this regard. He has received critical and literary attention, especially from writers belonging to his home district of Hubli-Dharwad in Karnataka. Four full-length books have been written on his life and works – two by Srinivasa Havanur and one each by Ha Ma Nayak, and Krishnamurthy Kittur[7]. Kittur's book also has a chapter on Venkatacharya's translated novels.

For a person who had produced almost 80 literary works (including novel translations), only 10 to 12 essays are available on Venkatacharya's works in various Kannada journals published during the 1960s and 1970s. Does Venkatacharya's work suffer this indifference and neglect just because he was a translator? Have his translations played no role at all in Kannada literature? Looking at the abundance of translated novels in Kannada during the early phase, one can say with confidence that they definitely had a role to play in establishing the novel as a distinct genre in Kannada.

We can place this situation in the larger Kannada literary scene that obtained in the early twentieth century where the emerging modern Kannada had to face stiff challenges – from adherents of Sanskrit and *halegannada* 'old Kannada' on the one hand and the influence of English literature on the other. If we can analyse the growth of the novel in Kannada from the perspective of the relationships between various literary genres, we can see a scenario emerging that situates the contributions of Venkatacharya in a different light. In such a situation, when there is an interface between two or more literary systems, the literary system which considers itself weak seeks to fill the gaps in its literary system by incorporating/ appropriating those features or genres that are absent in its system. One of the finest researched instances of this is the study of the process of establishment of a canon of literary works in Hebrew.

Hebrew Literature and the Polysystem Theory

A group of Israeli scholars, led by Itamar Even-Zohar, studied the interaction between languages leading to the establishment of various genres in Hebrew literature and postulated the concept of the literary system as a 'polysystem'. Although examining translation was not his primary concern, it became a naturally inevitable and significant part of his research.

In explaining the special case of Hebrew literature, Even-Zohar coins and employs the term 'polysystem' to define the aggregate of literary systems in a given culture, which includes 'high' or

'canonized' forms such as poetry, and 'low' or 'non-canonized' forms like children's literature and popular or pulp fiction. A polysystem is stratified into various heterogeneous systems which are hierarchised. The struggle between or among the various strata constitutes the dynamic synchronics of the system, and the dominance of one stratum over another at a given time brings about a change in the diachronic axis. The dynamic and conflictual relationship between the different strata constitutes a continuous movement of one phenomenon being driven from the center to the periphery, and the other pushing its way into the center and occupying it. Consequently, and this is significant, there is no *one* center and no *one* periphery in a polysystem. There are several systems operating simultaneously in a polysystem, and a certain item may be transferred from the periphery of one system to the periphery of an adjacent system within the same polysystem, and it may or may not move to the center of that system.

The typology that Even-Zohar finds useful to begin with is the dichotomization of the polysystem into *canonized* and *non-canonized* systems. The two systems are further classified into various sub-systems or genres. The question that interests Even-Zohar is – *What are the kinds of relationships that can be observed between and within these systems?* In any literature, though there are many features common to different genres like detective novels, westerns, romances, thrillers, and sentimental magazine short stories, they are still considered different genres and they exist in different relations with each other, and with various genres of 'canonized' literature. However, according to Even-Zohar, in addition to all these 'whole' genres which exist in the literary system,

> … it is necessary to include *translated literature* [within the polysystem]. This is rarely done, but no observer of the history of any literature can avoid recognizing as an important fact the impact of translations and their role in the synchrony and diachrony of a certain literature (Even-Zohar 1978b: 15).

What is interesting is the fact that 'translated literature' is seen as a constitutive member of the polysystem. After it has performed its function of transforming a polysystem, if translated literature has to continue to have the same importance, translation has to become a prolific activity and the particular genre has to be further developed.

We shall proceed from this understanding of 'translated literature' – as a component of a polysystem which has the catalytic capacity to transform it – to analyse the process of establishing the novel as a form in Kannada. Here we turn to the case of B. Venkatacharya whose translated works, we claim, parallels the movements of translated literature in the literary polysystem, as evidenced in the Hebrew literary polysystem. We also argue that these translated novels had a similar impact on the Kannada polysystem as had other translated works in the Hebrew polysystem.

The 'Venkatacharya' Novels and the Kannada Literary Polysystem

Venkatacharya's entire corpus of translated works may be said to constitute a single body of literature on the basis solely of the number of novels he translated. S. Shivanna and Srinivasa Havanur, prominent Kannada literary historians, have compiled separate lists of books written/translated by Venkatacharya[8], and according to these lists the number today tentatively stands at eighty. Of these, forty are translations from Bengali. Venkatacharya has translated most of the novels of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and of other well-known Bengali authors too of the time (See Appendix for a list of Venkatacharya's translated novels). As we see from the list, Venkatacharya did not restrict himself to any particular type of novel. He has translated from a variety of genres like the essay, the religious-spiritual story, history, the historical and social novel and even the detective novel. For its sheer quantum and variety, Venkatacharya's contribution is astounding.

That Venkatacharya came in contact with the Bengali language by a curious chance is surprising. In his essay

'Karnatakada Bankimchandra, B. Venkatacharyaru' (which translates as 'Karnataka's Bankimchandra, B. Venkatacharya') (1969), Venkatesha Sangli relates an incident which could be responsible for sparking off Venkatacharya's interest in the Bengali language. "Venkatacharya", says Sangli, "had arranged for some medicines to be sent from Calcutta. These medicines came wrapped in an old Bengali newspaper. The Bengali script attracted Venkatacharya's attention. It was then that the desire to learn Bengali took birth in him." (1969) More details are found in B. Garudacharya's essay 'Divangata Bi. Vem. Bangaliyannu Kalitudu Hege' (How Venkatacharya Learnt Bengali) (1953). Garudacharya says that, when Venkatacharya was a Head Munshi in Shimoga during 1874-75, B. Satyanarayana Iyengar, who was a head clerk there, noticed Venkatacharya's interest in Bengali and procured some Bengali books for him. Venkatacharya subsequently wrote to Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, the well-known social reformer, writer and scholar of Bengal, who began to teach Bengali to Venkatacharya. This 'correspondence course' in the Bengali language helped Venkatacharya learn the language in a short period of six months. Pleased with his student's effort, Vidyasagar sent him a copy of his novel *Bhrantivilasa* (Garudacharya, 1953).

Bhrantivilasa is a novelised adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and this was the first Bengali novel that Venkatacharya translated into Kannada. This was in 1876. In spite of its 'foreign' elements in content, the 'novelty' of *Bhrantivilasa* attracted the attention of the Kannada reading public. This translation was noticed immediately and prescribed as a textbook for various courses. Encouraged by this recognition, Venkatacharya translated two more of Vidyasagar's novels – *Shakuntala* (1882) and *Sitavanavasa* (1884).

At a time when interest in Kannada literature was low, Venkatacharya felt that Kannadigas could be brought back to literature only through such translated novels. He talked about this

objective in an exhaustive 'preface' to his translation of Bankimchandra's *Durgeshanandini* in 1885, which could be called the first 'critique' of the novel in Kannada. In this preface, Venkatacharya talks about the influence that English literature had on Bengali literature and the Bengali novel, and the lack of similar literary efforts in Kannada despite the presence of many English-educated scholars and tries to explore reasons for this apathy. What also comes through in this preface is Venkatacharya's strong belief in the abilities of English-educated Kannadigas to develop the Kannada language and literature. Venkatacharya does not expect this task to be undertaken by Sanskrit scholars. We discern a note of mild sarcasm when he says in this preface that these Sanskrit scholars who are immersed in their search for truth should not be asked to devote any time to worldly issues like the development of a regional language.

Venkatacharya charts the development of the Kannada novel here from its pre-novelistic stage and long narrative poems to its present day 'incarnation' as a social novel. The social novel, for him, seemed to symbolise the hopes and aspirations of the common citizen and had a big role to play and a definite purpose to fulfill. He says:

> The main purpose of the social novel is to portray the evils prevalent in our society and in human beings, and to expose the dangers arising out of this unsocial behaviour. Through these, the novel would show the need for everyone to exist in harmony and to practice exemplary behaviour in public. If this purpose is to be achieved, incidents should be created and written with imagination and skill, so that by reading such novels, ideas of good behaviour get instilled in the minds of the readers. The novel should be a reflection of the society and human life and act like a mirror for every reader. The quality of a novel is to be decided on the basis of how far it is able to achieve this purpose. Many thinkers have felt that if the intention of the novel is pure, then the

> novel as a genre can become a scientific study of society or become Sociology itself. Since novels of this type are not in circulation in Kannada, I felt impelled to write this book (Venkatacharya [1885]; 1930: xii) (my translation).

After the publication of *Durgeshanandini*, it was as if the floodgates had opened. Many more translations came out in rapid succession, revealing a new literary world to Kannadigas and thus popularising the novel in Kannada. Among the more popular ones were *Durgeshanandini*, *Vishavriksha*, *Anandamatha*, *Adavi Hudugi*, *Rajasimha*, *Vangavijeta*, *Kohinooru*, *Bhrantivilasa*, *Unmadini* and *Parimala*. These novels went into multiple editions and reprints (See Appendix for details). Some of his novels were serialised in popular journals of that time like *Suvasini*, *Avakashatoshini*, *Vagbhushana* and *Karnataka Granthamale*. Interestingly, not many of his regular readers knew that these novels were translated from Bengali. It was always 'Venkatacharya's novel' for them, though Venkatacharya had always made it a point to name the author of the original novels in his books[9].

Due to their number and the way they impacted Kannada literature, the entire corpus of Venkatacharya's translated novels can be considered a literary system in its own right. Even-Zohar's concept of literary polysystem, where all sorts of literary and semi-literary texts are taken as an aggregate of systems "in an attempt to overcome difficulties resulting from the fallacies of the traditional aesthetic approach, which prevented any preoccupation with works judged to be of no artistic value" (1978a:119) can be constructively used to explain the role played by Venkatacharya's translated novels in the early days of the novel in Kannada.

In a literary polysystem, translated literature is no longer 'tainted' as a derivative form but has an equal standing with other forms of literature in the system. This hypothesis of the polysystem theory "enables us to observe relations" and also "helps to explain the

mechanism of these relations and consequently the specific position and role of literary types in the historical existence of literature" (Even-Zohar 1978a: 119). It is mainly concerned with the positions assumed by various systems 'which elicit certain features', within the polysystems. Even-Zohar explains:

> When the top position is maintained by a literary type whose pertinent nature is innovatory, the more we move down the scale of strata the more conservative the types prove to be, but when the top position is maintained by an ossified type, it is the lower strata which tend to initiate renewals. When, in the second situation, the holders of positions do 'not' change places in spite of this, the entire literature enters a state of stagnation. (ibid: 120)

Even-Zohar's major concern is not to identify literary types as high or low, but to see under what conditions "certain types participate in the process of changes within the polysystem." To enable this analysis, he suggests the notions of "primary versus secondary activities," "the primary activity representing the principle of innovation, the secondary that of maintaining the established code." (ibid: 120)

Translated literature in this polysystem is therefore not relegated to an inferior position. It can occupy any position, but whether the position is primary or secondary depends upon the conditions operating in the polysystem. It is neither always shifting nor always unchanging. It may occupy a certain position for a long time if certain conditions are long-lasting. When translated literature maintains a primary position, it means, "it participates actively in 'modelling the center' of the polysystem". In such a situation it becomes a part of the innovatory forces.

> This implies in fact that no clear-cut 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 important translations. Moreover, in such a state when new literary models are emerging, translation is likely to become one of the means of elaborating these new models. Through the foreign work features are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before. These include not only a possible new model of reality to replace conventions no longer effective, but a whole range of other features as well, such as a new poetic language, new matrices, techniques, intonations, whatsoever. (ibid: 121)

This is exactly what happened in the case of the novel in Kannada. The novel as a genre was largely absent in Kannada[10] till translations of a few English novels came out. When Venkatacharya entered the scene, the conditions were ripe for the institutionalisation of the novel in Kannada. Kannada was ready, in a manner of speaking, for the novel as a literary genre. By that time, the Bengali novel had established itself as a popular genre in Bengal, and it was readily available for Kannada writers who were still trying to figure out and develop the Kannada novel form. Kannada translations from Bengali provided the form and the content, and the translated novel in Kannada attained a primary position in the Kannada literary polysystem. These novels incorporated features into Kannada literature that were earlier unavailable, like social themes, depiction of lives of ordinary men and women, everyday activities, prose narrative which had humour, adventure and suspense, and the use of the spoken idiom and colloquialisms in literary writing.

In his preface to *Durgeshanandini*, Venkatacharya says that the supernatural/ counterfactual, extraordinary incidents and heroics earlier found in marvellous and historical tales had begun to lose its charm among the reading public in the late nineteenth century. The novels translated by Venkatacharya provided a new model and fresh reading material and these translated novels maintained this primary position for a long time. Their impact was so powerful and they were

so popular that there was no clear-cut distinction between the original and the translation.

Venkatacharya's novels were actively participating in 'modelling the center' of the Kannada literary polysystem. The novel finally found its form and language. The language of Kannada prose clearly and categorically changed from *halegannada* 'old Kannada' to *hosagannada*[11] 'modern Kannada'. Both in terms of language and form, these novels brought in a new model of reality marking a clear break from earlier forms of 'marvellous' narratives.

When novels were being translated into Kannada, a vast body of literature with various genres already existed in Kannada. Kannada literature was neither weak nor impoverished. But changing social conditions demanded a break from the contemporary (mostly) verse-oriented *nadugannada* 'middle Kannada' based genres. When writers were struggling to find a suitable form and language as seen in early attempts, an already established form from a 'foreign' language occupied this space. Even-Zohar theorises this aspect:

> . . . the dynamics within the polysystem creates turning points, that is to say, historical moments where established models are no longer tenable for a younger generation. At such moments, even in central literatures, translated literature may assume a primary position. This is all the more true when at a turning point no item in the indigenous stock is taken to be acceptable, as a result of which a literary 'vacuum' occurs. In such a vacuum, it is easy for foreign models to infiltrate, and translated literature may consequently assume a primary position. (Even-Zohar 1978a: 122)

We can get a sense of what Even-Zohar means by 'literary vacuum' in Venkatacharya's words as he describes the prevailing situation in the second half of the nineteenth century with respect to the Kannada language and literature:

> People who set out to write books or essays in Kannada are the most unfortunate. However hard they may try, the pseudo-intellectuals of our region shy away from reading them. The English-loving pseudo-intellectual class firmly believes that nothing worth reading can be written in Kannada and that anyone who ventures out to write in Kannada has lost his senses and must lack talent. Not only that, they feel that anything written in Kannada is unreadable. As regards our Sanskrit scholars' concern for their mother tongue, nothing much needs to be said. If a society is to develop, it is necessary to achieve unity, and unity can be achieved only when the regional language develops (Venkatacharya 1914: 14) (my translation).

Venkatacharya drew inspiration from the developments in the Bengali language and literature. These developments, he firmly maintained, were a result of English education and literature. And this influence, in turn, resulted in the production of a number of periodicals and books on varied topics. Venkatacharya grieves over the fact that though English education has spread to all the Kannada-speaking areas, it didn't impact the development of the language as witnessed in other languages like Bengali and Marathi. In his 'preface' to *Durgeshanandini*, he explains the reasons for this:

> Our English-educated scholars feel that their job is over once they get their degrees. They become complacent and pay little attention to developing their regional language. This, I think, is the main reason for the present dismal situation. They should not feel that they are being blamed. We will never blame them because the welfare of the country depends on their work. At least, now onwards, let them come out of their complacency, even if it means breaking their vows, and use their knowledge to try and develop our language, as other Indians have done for their languages. The country will benefit by this effort and they will be repaying the Government which has educated them.

> They cannot but agree with this point of view. (Venkatacharya [1885]; 1930: x) (my translation)

Venkatacharya's novels themselves are proof of the development of Kannada. In his first translation, *Bhrantivilasa*, one can see the struggles of a writer trying to come to terms with his mission of developing a language. The Kannada in this novel is a strange mixture of *halegannada* 'old Kannada' and *hosagannada* 'modern Kannada' and long Sanskritised phrases. The abundance of Sanskritised phrases in his early translations is also because of the recurrent and heavy use of Sanskritised Bengali used in the original Bengali novels. In his later works the Kannada he uses is completely modernised, but Sanskritised phrases and Sanskrit words continued to exist in his later translations too. To Venkatacharya's credit, this acted in favour of the new genre and became a hallmark of his style. These discontinuities in diction and style signified the early shifts of a language in its transitional state. As Kirtinath Kurtkoti put it, "Since the novelty of plot, marvel of history and the natural intimacy of prose had captured the readers' minds and hearts, these defects would not have appeared so glaring at that time, as they do now, in retrospect." (Kurtkoti 1962: 184) (my translation)

In spite of the huge popularity enjoyed by his novels in the early decades of the twentieth century, neither Venkatacharya nor his novels are known to the Kannada literary world today. When Venkatacharya's and others' translated novels occupied the literary vacuum in Kannada literature and assumed the primary position, efforts were being made to write 'independent' novels in all parts of the Kannada speaking areas. Once a distinct style had evolved and the shift to modern Kannada was complete, independent novels slowly began to appear on the Kannada literary horizon. The translated novels that had been instrumental in ushering in a new genre lost its primary position. Independent novels of all sorts – literary and popular – came into the Kannada literary polysystem, pushing the translated novels as a genre to the periphery. Though Venkatacharya's novels continued to be reprinted even after his death, there are no takers for his novels now.

These novels that had emerged from the periphery to the center during a period of literary vacuum performed their function of modelling the center of the polysystem, modernising the Kannada language, and transforming the literary history of Kannada. They have now lapsed into history.

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NOTES

1. E. P. Rice 1915 *A History of Kanarese Literature*, Calcutta: Association Press, 1921 (2nd revised enlarged edition); M. Mariyappa Bhatta 1960 *Samkshipta Kannada Sahitya Charitre (*A Brief Literary History of Kannada), Bangalore: Directorate of Kannada and Culture, 1983 (2nd edition); R. S. Mugali 1975 *History of Kannada Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi; R. S. Mugali, 1953 *Kannada Sahitya Charitre* (Kannada Literary History), Mysore: Geetha Book House, 1998 (10th revised edition); L. S. Seshagiri Rao 1983 *A History of Kannada Literature*, Bangalore: Directorate of Kannada and Culture.

2. The term 'independent' used here is the literal translation of the Kannada word viz. 'swatantra'. This term was used to differentiate the novel *Indirabai* from the 'translated' novels that were being written at that time. *Indirabai* has the distinction of being dubbed *prathama swatantra samajika kadambari*, the 'first independent social novel'.

3. C. Campbell's translation of Mary Martha Sherwood's *The Ayah and the Lady* into Kannada as *Doresaniyannoo Dadiyannoo Kurita Kathe* (Story of the Lady and the Ayah) in 1844 is one of

the earliest translations of an English novel in Kannada. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was the focus of three translations in Kannada. G. Weigle translated it as *Yathrasthana Sanchaaravu* in 1847, and two subsequent translations appeared as two separate parts – part one as *Deshantriya Prayana* in 1861 by R. B. Rice and part two as *Yatrikana Sanchaaravu* in 1908 by Christanuja Watsa. Hermann Moegling translated Mary Martha Sherwood's *History of Little Henry and his Bearer* into Kannada as *Chikka Henry mattu avana Boyiya Kathe* in 1867. *The Last Days of Boosy*, a sequel to Martha Sherwood's *History of Little Henry and his Bearer*, written by Theophilus Smith, was translated into Kannada by Christanuja Watsa in 1869.

4. S. B. Krishnaswamy Iyengar translated Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* into Kannada as *Robinson Crusoe Vrttanta* in 1854; M. L. Srikantesha Gowda translated Henry Taylor's *A Sicilian Summer* into Kannada as *Kanyavitantu* in 1895 and Maria Edgeworth's *The Little Merchants* as *Chikka Banajigaru* in 1901; Annajirao Malleshwara translated Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Harold* as *Ullasini* in 1902 and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* as *Sharanagata* in 1905; Bapu Subbarao translated Maria Edgeworth's *Murad the Unlucky* as *Nirbhagya Murada* and *The Marvellous Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor* as *Arabian Nights athava Yavanayamini Vinodagalalli ondada Sindabad Navika* in 1901; M. S. Puttanna translated Thomas Day's *The History of Sandford and Merton* as *Sumati Madanakumarara Charitre* in 1893.

5. Kandukuri Veereshalingam's Telugu novels, *Viveka Chandrike*, *Satyavati Charitre* and *Satyaraja Poorvadeshayatre*, were translated into Kannada by Bellave Somanathayya in 1895, Nanjanagudu Ananthanarayana Shastri in 1897 and Benegal Ramarao in 1899 respectively. Joseph Mulayil's Malayalam novel, *Sukumari* was translated into Kannada by H. Roberts in 1899 and Baba Padmanji's Marathi novel *Yamuna Paryatan* was

translated into Kannada by Bhaskar Solomon in 1869. Hannah Catherine Mullens' Bengali novel *Phulmoni O Karunar Bibaran* was translated into Kannada as *Paranjoti mattu Kripe* by B. Rice in 1859.

6. See S. Jayasrinivasa Rao "Translation and Kannada Literature: Appropriating New Genres", *CIEFL Bulletin*, 14: 1&2 (December 2004), 73-91, for a discussion on the categorisation of early translation activity in Kannada literature into macro and micro levels.

7. Srinivasa Havanur 1972 *Galaganatha Mastararu*, Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishat; Srinivasa Havanur 2000 *Kadambarikara Galaganatharu*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi; Ha Ma Nayak 1970 *Galaganatha*, Mysore: Institute of Kannada Studies, Mysore University; Krishnamurthy Kittur 1978 *Galaganatharu mattu avara Kadambarigalu*, Dharwad: Karnatak University.

8. S. Shivanna, "B. Venkatacharya Anukta Kritigalu", *Kannada Nudi*, August 1969; Srinivasa Havanur, "B. Venkatacharyara Kritigalu", *Kannada Nudi*, April-May 1969.

9. A typical 'Venkatacharya novel' had the title of the novel and the name 'B. Venkatacharya' on the cover as well as the inside cover. The name of the author of the original is usually mentioned, along with a eulogistic reference to him/her, in the foreword or preface. *Durgeshanandini*, for example, has a preface in English by Venkatacharya, where he quotes from Edwin Arnold's preface to the English translation of Bankimchandra's *Vishavriksha* – "The author is Babu Bankim Chatterji, a native gentleman of Bengal, of superior intellectual acquisitions, who ranks unquestionably as the first living writer of fiction in his Presidency. … Bengal has produced here a writer of true genius, whose vivacious invention, dramatic force

and purity of aim, promise well for the new age of Indian vernacular literature."

10. Srinivasa Havanur in his comprehensive study of Modern Kannada literature in its early phase, *Hosagannadada Arunodaya* (2000; revised edn.), has a different opinion. He considers Yadappa Kabbiga's *Kalavati Parinaya* (1815?), Mummadi Krishnaraja's *Saugandhika Parinaya* (1820) and Kempunarayana's *Mudramanjusha* (1823) as three home grown Kannada prose narratives in *halegannada* 'old Kannada' in the novelistic style written before the appearance of Kannada translations of English novels. For Havanur these works are proof that Kannada would have had its own indigenous prose fiction if not for the advent and influence of English novels. (Havanur 2000: 555-560)

11. Though it was in the novel that the literary language could be seen clearly changing to *hosagannada* 'modern Kannada', not all the changes took place in the novel. Winds of change can be seen as far back as the 12th century in the *vacana* period, when the vacanakaras used the spoken language and used common images like the chameleon, tongs, monkey, etc., in their *vacana*-s. It was from the seventeenth century onwards that we could see major changes like the assimilation of Urdu, English and Hindustani words into the language. We can see this in connection with the *kaifiyath*-s and *bakhairu*-s, i.e., chronicles, plaints, cases, letters and historical documents and records that came to be written for administrative purposes. And with the coming of printing, there was a major shift to writing in prose. Though prose was not uncommon in *halegannada* 'old Kannada', as we can see in c*hampu* poems (a genre where verse is interspersed with prose), since the writers had to cater to a new audience, the language of prose shifted to the spoken variety. With this we see a major change – *halegannada* 'old Kannada' words ended in consonants, but in the spoken form words ended in vowels. This was carried on

to the written form as well. The inevitable assimilation of punctuations into the written form also came during the 19th century.

APPENDIX

The list of novels translated/rewritten by B. Venkatacharya into Kannada from Bengali

This alphabetical list is compiled from Srinivasa Havanur's (1968) and S. Shivanna's (1968) lists. I have added some more information which was not available in either of the lists. This is a list of only the translated works from Bengali. B. Venkatacharya has forty more works, so far identified, to his credit. The additional year(s) against novels refer to subsequent editions/reprints. Details of reprints, if any, of the rest of the works are not available. Among the forty other works so far credited to Venkatacharya some might be translations from Bengali. Neither Havanur's nor Shivanna's list provides any more details. So far there is no evidence of any diary or notes kept by Venkatacharya which might throw more light on his works.

Name	Year of Publication	Type	Author of the Original
1. Adaviya Hudugi	1899-1916, 1917	novel	Yogendranath Chattopadhyay
2. Attige	not available	novel	Nagendranath Chattopadhyay
3. Amritapulina	1907-1908	novel	Nanilal Bandyopadhyay
4. Ahalyabai	1899	history	Yogendra Basu
5. Anandamatha	1897-1899, 1922, 1930, 1959, 1990	novel	Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay
6. Idondu Chitra	not available	novel	Bankimchandra

7.	Indire	1897	novel	Bankimchandra
8.	Unmadini	1901-1918	novel	Yogeendranath Bandyopadhyay
9.	Kapala Kundala	1898	novel	Bankimchandra
10.	Kamalakantha	1909	novel	Bankimchandra
11.	Krishnakanthana Uyilu	1909	novel	Bankimchandra
12.	Kohinooru	1905-1920, 1921	novel	'A Bengali Writer'
13.	Geetokta Dharma	not available	religious essay	'A well-known Bengali writer'
14.	Chandrashekara	1898	novel	Bankimchandra
15.	Durgeshanandini	1885-1910, 1922, 1930	novel	Bankimchandra
16.	Devi Choudhurani	1899-1968	novel	Bankimchandra
17.	Donneya Helike	not available	short story	Sudhindranath Tagore
18.	Nawaba Nandini	1913	novel	Damodar Mukhopadhyay
19.	Neerade	1912-1920	novel	Satishchandra
20.	Parimala	1902-1912, 1919	novel (detective)	Panchkori De
21.	Bharata Mahila	1884, 1933	social tract	Haraprasad Shastri
22.	Bhrantivilasa	1876, 1899, 1911	novel	Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar
23.	Manorama	1907	novel (detective)	Panchkori De
24.	Mrinalini	not available	novel	Bankimchandra
25.	Madhavilatha	1901	novel	Sanjivachandra
26.	Malathi	1913	novel	Swarnakumari Devi
27.	Rajani	1898	novel	Bankimchandra

28. Rajasimha	1898, 1929	novel	Bankimchandra
29. Radharani	1898	novelette	Bankimchandra
30. Rameshwarana Adrushta	1919	novelette	Bankimchandra
31. Leele	1910, 1960	novel	Yogeendra Babu
32. Lokarahasya – Vol.1 and Vol. 2	not available	not known	Bankimchandra
33. Vangavijeta	1913, 1921, 1930	novel	Romeshchandra Dutt
34. Vishavriksha	1900, 1912, 1990	novel	Bankimchandra
35. Shakuntala	1882	novel	Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar
36. Shanti – Part 1	1920	novel	Damodar Mukhopadhyay
37. Shanti – Part 2	1922	Novel	Damodar Mukhopadhyay
38. Sadhane	1911	novel (detective)	Satyendranath Kumar
39. Seetharama	1898, 1901	novel	Bankimchandra
40. Seethavanavasa	1884	novelette	Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar
41. Yugalanguriya	1898	novel	Bankimchandra

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Translatology: Interrogative Musings on the Grid

P.P. Giridhar

Abstract

This essay attempts some regurgitation of what has been happening in TS these days. It argues that Translatology has culpably failed to address issues and has instead moved around without quite getting things into a rational perspective.It argues that the putative opposition of the 'linguistic turn' and the 'cultural turn' in TS is misplaced, by spotlighting the language-nonlanguage dialectic (Rajendra Singh (2005) argues for a 're-turn'). Translatology has culpably failed to work toward the rigour that characterizes, or should characterize, all academic disciplines.This piece is a plea for more rigour and less hyperactivity in TS. That there is as yet no theory of translation is unarguable. None is there to be sighted on the horizon. I don't agree with Peter Newmark on the other hand that there can be no laws or theory of translation. That is too strong a position to take it seems to me. (Equally obvious is the averral that there is no theory of literature. 'Theory' is too strong a word to characterise the phenomenon of literature) Whatever TS theory may be said to exist lacks muscle tone in a way in which Nuclear Physics, for example, does not. That Nuclear Physics is a physical or natural science and TS is Humanities is no argument. The point is that anything that is unconstrained in an absolute sense, in a transcendent sense cannot be piquant in any meaningful sense. Unbridled or barely bridled creativity cannot be meaning-making. Absolutely untrammeled centrifugality where everything and anything 'goes' is in point of fact an intellectually vacuous exercise. The 'cultural turn' in its strong version effects a radical change in the 'enabling function' of translation and converts the 'traces' of the translator's presence into a massively visible one. At the least the 'cultural turn' is

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misstated and, in a sense, which I hope to make clear, overstated in the sense of throwing the floodgates open, which isn't a hallmark of an academic discipline. Attempting an elucidation of why things are the way they are in TS the note concludes that TS must strive toward a crosslinguistically and crossculturally valid discourse about translation, a discourse grounded in, sanctioned by, driven and underpinned by a well-founded, crossculturally valid but subject-to-rational-change grid. This piece is intended therefore as a corrector and some kind of a reiner. As indicated at places what is said about translation applies equally to literature. The piece would have served its purpose if the interrogatives get home. The answers could take a while to come by.

If one strays from the marriage-bed, there are two major positions one can take in a nonanarchic society:

1. (a) say that there is a behavioral grid, a social code that goes with the institution of marriage but confess that one is violating it clandestinely and culpably. (b) argue that the behavioral code is ill-founded and so one is free to do whatever one wants, in which case the straying is not culpable and need not therefore be clandestine. In which case it is in point of fact not 'straying' at all.

2. to aver that there was never such a grid of behaviour constraining and binding one.

Position 2 does not tenably exist, it seems to me, except of course in an anarchic state of society, where 'everything' and 'anything' goes, which is not the kind of social habitat we are talking about. Underpinning every intellectual human endeavour there is such a grid, a mental matrix, which is defined in some rational way. This is very clear, even obvious, in the case of the exact sciences, the hard sciences, the formal sciences, the natural sciences. In the case of these sciences such a grid is very solidly and stablely defined. The uncertainty principle of Quantum Mechanics, I

am afraid, does not counter this position, which is basically a position of rational rule-governedness. The nature of the quanta of light energy, of the position and velocity of subatomic particles is uncertain. The observer's eye changes them. How does this invalidate the essentially rule-governed nature of natural phenomena? This grid is of course subject to variation, revision and change, which is a function of the progress in that field. It is subject to chopping and changing in this sense. In fact an ingenious subsequent contribution can substantially alter the shape of the grid. But such a contribution is NOT an arbitrary or subjectively inspired flight of creativity or imagination but is propelled almost inexorably by principles of delightful rationality that brought the grid into being in the first place. Any contribution that is not founded on such principles of rational argumentation is promptly consigned to the dustbin by a critical but universal consensus. *This is the beauty of these sciences*. This is the grid that ensures the intellectual nonvacuousness of these enterprises. This is the grid that has resulted in such spectacular progress in each of these disciplines. There is an elegant and solid body of knowledge that evolves incrementally and accretively in these sciences through such rational contributions built on an existing understructure of knowledge.

There is no such grid for literature as of now, the hoary tradition right from Aristotle and Plato notwithstanding. One can write anything, in form and content, and be accepted, accoladed and serenaded in her own camp. All creativity, including literary and translational creativity, I submit, derives its validity from its resonance with a noncreative poppycockish part which is at a given point of time pretty well defined and is universally consensual, which itself, mind you, is subject to change. In no sphere of human activity, I submit, can it be true that whatever anyone says/does is ipso facto correct, valid or true. This is true everywhere, I guess, and is part of being human. Whatever an Einstein or a Gandhi or a Derrida said or did or whatever a Chomsky or a Mandela or a Bush says or does can not be ipso facto correct/valid. Whatever a person

or a group of individuals or society believes in can not be ipso facto correct/valid. Whether it is valid or correct is decided by the grid, which is by definition impersonal and neutral[1]. TS can not be an exception to this. **In other words whatever the translator does (as indeed the creative writer does) can not be ipso facto correct or valid.** The translator's work, as the creative writer's, should be assessed for its value and place in the disciplinary cosmos with reference to a crossculturally valid explanatory grid. As it is, such a grid is far from being rigorous. For example, in Peter Newmark's opposition of 'communicative translation' to mean 'capturing the effect the original had on the source language readers' vs. 'semantic translation' to mean 'capturing the context of the (sentences of the) original text' is unfortunately imprecise because investing the words 'communicative' and 'semantic' with this kind of technical charge is at variance with, and does unacceptable violence to, their known and universally accepted meanings. The 'cultural turn' which is even otherwise unjustifiable because it both misshoots and overshoots the target, as I will try to argue, makes matters worse for TS. This is the burden of this piece.

There is surprisingly little reaction to the 'cultural turn' in the TS literature. One such rare reaction is Clifford (1997). Clifford (1997) shows how postcolonial discourse with its one-sided emphasis on a purely nonessentialist position runs the risk of reducing the complexity of the situation it intends to describe by reverting to a dichotomy which is highly questionable, that of tradition and renewal. "Isn't it time" asks he, "to sidestep the reverse binary position of a prescriptive antiessentialism? Struggle for integrity and power within and against globalizing systems need to deploy *both* tradition and modernity, authenticity and hybridity – in complex counterpoints." (Clifford 1997:178)

Like literature, I submit, TS has no such grid either driving its progress, sanctioning what the translator does in terms of a resonant relationship with the noncreative part. One can manipulate

the original text, even upstage it in the service of power and ideology and get away with it. One can do ANYTHING with the original. There is a joke doing the rounds in translation circles in Bangalore, and that is that translators who swear by fidelity to the original are said to be suffering from *muula-vyaadi* literary source-disease (='piles')! **…the study of translation, Bassnett (1999:11) avers, involves mapping the journeys texts undertake.** The objection to this observation is that translated texts don't undertake journeys but translators steer these texts onto taking the roads they do take. In fact this is just the opposite of the trend in literature today. Imaginative literature, it is averred, should not be tendentious, should not be agenda-driven. The current in TS is the opposite. Translation could be, even should be, tendentious and agenda-driven. The more tendentious, the more politically driven a translation is, the more excited TS scholars are, it seems! ('prescriptive antiessentialism'!) Translations, one is told, are functions of the translator's socioeconomic background, her ideological propensities, her gender, her age, nationality, her ethnic identity and whatever it is that you can identify a translator by, her colour, her marital status, for example. Even nonliterary, scientific translations are not an exception to this, people say, a noticeably gleeful did-you-know-that-you-dunce glint in their eyes!

The 'cultural turn', also called the 'postcolonial turn', has been around since the 1980's. This basically means translating the enveloping culture underlying the linguistic form, the web of signification, as Geertz had it, that man weaves around himself and in which he stays suspended. An explicit definition of this turn comes from its most ardent advocates viz. Andre Lefevere and Susan Bassnett (1990:8): "Neither the word, not the text, but the culture becomes the operational unit of translation."

Taking this to be paradigmatic of the 'cultural turn', let us examine it to see what sense it makes. One could note to begin with that this privileges the world over the word, the culture over the text,

which is just as well. However there is obviously something wrong with this characterization. When we say 'translate this word', what we mean is 'put what this word means into the target language form which expresses it' or 'disembody the content in code A and reembody the same content in code B'. This meaning, which is the target of all translation, is the sociocultural world, the cultural cognition that all languages encode or give vent to. Is there anything other than culture which has to be translated, especially when, by their own admission, language is a distinctively cultural vehicle, a cultural phenomenon par excellence? What is meant by saying that culture becomes the unit of translation? How do we arrive at this culture which has to be translated except through the text which is an embodiment in language? The culture is embodied in language, in particular in the specificities of the language of the text. We already see how TS is moving away from groundedness to something very airy, not easy to catch and almost ineluctably ambivalent. This is what leads to what they call the 'larger' picture that 'linguistically oriented' translations don't allegedly capture, to 'translator subjectivities beyond reason' (Robinson (2001)'s expression) which are perhaps what lead to the delightfully open position of the translator being able to do anything with the original!

Before we take up a text to find out what this could mean, let's sort out this 'cultural stuff' with regard to words and turns of phrase. There is some clutter here as well, which needs to be cleared. A famous example of one such word would be the Sanskrit word *dharma*, which is putatively untranslatable because it putatively has an awe-evokingly heavy cultural weight. I don't agree, to begin with, with the averment of the untranslatability of this word. At the least its untranslatability is grossly and mindlessly exaggerated. Bhalla (2003:15) asserts such words as *dharma, nirvana* and *catharsis,* although "they do seem to be difficult to translate…, nevertheless do not bring us to the abyss of incomprehension." And that "they only call for a greater 'hermeneutic alertness' on the part of the translator". My submission here is that, in its various collocations,

the word *dharma* is quite delimitable and is delimited in its meaning. In Kannada, a South Dravidian language, for example, the compound word *dharma patni 'dharma*-wife' for example, means simply, and no more and no less than, 'legally wedded wife'. It does not mean anything else. In *dharma chatra* it has the meaning of 'charitable', the compound collocation meaning 'a free charitable public dwelling place'. In application forms to be filled in by candidates the word *dharma* means 'religion' and nothing else. It need hardly be said that there is no bivariateness of meaning – linguistic and cultural – to the word. A turn of phrase like *kick the bucket* also has only one nonambivalent meaning viz. its noncompositional meaning of 'to die' unless the situation dictates its compositional meaning of someone moving his feet to strike the bucket. There is no such thing here either as an opposition of linguistic and cultural meaning. To say that there is a linguistic meaning either of words or texts leading to translation of language leading to the 'linguistic turn' which one can oppose to what could be called cultural meaning leading to translation of culture leading to the 'cultural turn' somehow lacks perspective. In the sound-sense contract that human language is, is the 'sense' susceptible of such a dichotomy? This is intended as a rhetorical question! If the meaning of *nirvana* and *catharsis* are externalisable in any language, then one could arrive at a reasonably good translation in any language. Only, resorting as it would to 'compensatory glossing' or what is called 'extratextual writing', and 'paratextual writing' the translation would not in all probability be holophrastic which fact would dent the architecture of the text in which these putatively untranslatable words occur, and thereby its communicative impact. I, of course, agree that such many-to-one correspondences across languages seriously affect the expressive (and affective) dynamics of the text. The now famous example is that of the tripartite second personal pronoun in Hindi/Urdu *tuu* ('you (singular and possibly itimate')), *tum* ('you (singular and respectful or plural')) and *aap* ('you (extrahonorific when singular, otherwise plural')) which corresponds to the monopartite *you* in English so that the Urdu poem-part

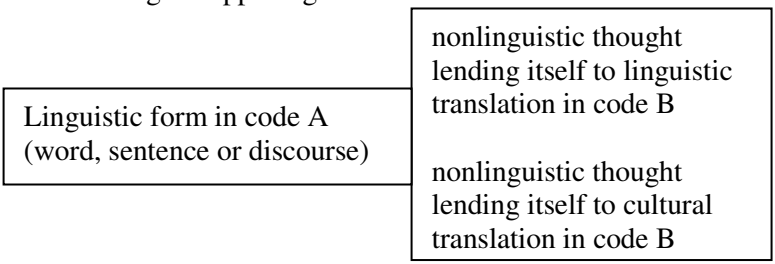
aap ban gayii tum
tum ban gayii tuu

has to be per force translated into English as

You became you
and you became you!

Which is obviously not as expressive as the Urdu original. There is no doubt about the untranslatability of some linguisticisations of conceptual space. There is absolute translatability, absolute untranslatability and relative translatability. In Giridhar (1991), I argued that some literary meanings are irretrievably lost in translation simply because languages are structured the way they are[2]. The point germane to this essay would be that this untranslatability has nothing to do with the linguistic meaning/cultural meaning opposition that is being foisted on us. Languages are, simply, (original, native and specialised) ways of looking at the universe. It is difficult to see within a linguistic code a cultural way and a linguistic (=noncultural) way of looking at the universe!

Are the proponents of the linguistic turn/cultural turn dichotomy making a distinction within the realm of nonlinguistic thought that language is there to express between what could be called 'linguistic translation' and what is usually called 'cultural translation', which in turn are what make for the linguistic and cultural turns in TS? If this is what they mean, then something like the following is happening:



'Is nonlinguistic thought susceptible of such a dichotomy?' is the question.

Another sense, broached earlier, in which the cultural turn/linguistic turn opposition is used is that you take culture as the unit of translation and translate a text. Has anybody shown that a translation taking culture as the unit of translation and a parallel translation taking whatever the other unit is as the unit of translation are distinctly and axiologically different things? In particular, are they different from what are called 'literal' and 'free' translations? How? They are presumably different from what used to be called 'sense-for-sense' translations as opposed to 'word-for-word' translations because they go beyond the sense and do something different? Such translations are culturally coloured, culturally relevant free translations. The position expressed in statements like 'One does not translate languages but cultures' or 'In translation we transfer cultures, not languages'(House 2002:92) is no big deal and is hardly a new discovery precisely because that is what ALL language is about. This is not special to translation. Nonlinguistic thought or meaning is what language cognizes and codifies, and that is what language is exactly there for. Nonlinguistic thought or meaning is the raison d'être of language so that a statement like 'Since in translation meaning is of particular importance it follows that translation cannot be fully understood outside a cultural frame of reference' (House 2002: ibid) makes no special sense. Nor do statements like translators are 'agents of culture rather than transmitters of words' (Barsky 1996:46). I mean these don't represent advances in our knowledge of human language[3] and hence, I submit, contrary to what people think, don't represent any advance in our awareness of translation. **This amounts to saying that the 'cultural turn' isn't saying or said anything new (er than the literal/free translation)**. There are translation teaching softwares that evaluate a translation on a literal/free cline, and it is hard to see how this would be crucially different from a linguistic/cultural meaning cline or a text-as-unit and culture-as-unit cline.

What would be the English translation in the 'linguistic turn' of the following paragraph of the celebrated Kannada literary artifact

called *Kusuma Bale* (1984), and what is its translation in the 'cultural turn', parallel translations that stand opposed to each other?

> *kuusu huTToodaku muurjinaka muncitavaagi saikalluu aa saikal kyaariyarnall sakkara tumbida byaagalli iLididda kiTTayyanigaaga gaNDaguusaada sambhramavu tuLukaaDta tuba aa saikala tiiDta ada thaLa thaLva maaDta maaDta adu thaLaguTTaada myaalza innenuu maaDaluu innentuu maadaluu kayaa bandara kaalu baraduu kaalu banadara kayya baaradu. Antaagittalla aaga kiTTayyanu tolamyaakka tandeerisi iTtiddanatha aa tumbida sakkara iLusidavanu maadutalidda dadagubadagu daddugaLa arthavu naDudu bandu kepmii kivuuga pisu guTtiti. Aa oNagida gaNTalu, angaLu, naaluga, tuTiga jala barsakaNDu kempiyu, tanna munda kuusaagi kuutiroo tanna avvaga "avai… aa muudeevi byaagin tumba iroo sakkaraniga ondaraLnuu buDde hancbuTT battada. Ondu bogasanaaru ettiTaga." andaLu. I maatu tuurammaga baccicaara uNTu maadi "nii teppaga malikammi" andaLu.*

An English translation follows:

> Kittayya, who has on his cycle-carrier, brought home a bag brimming with sugar three days before the child was born, was now brimming with excited enthusiasm, the excitement of having had a baby boy. His excitement showing in his body language, he rubbed his cycle vigorously, and as the cycle shone, his limbs went numb, unable to do anything. After a while however reaching for the bag of sugar which he had placed on the rafter, he held it, hugged it before putting it down on the floor. The meaning of the noises that he was making as he got the sugar bag down traveled to Kempi and whispered something into her ears. Wetting her throat, palate, tongue and lips with her saliva, Kempi said to her mother sitting, child-like, by her. "This fellow will take away the whole lot for distribution to people. He won't let even a

> single grain remain. You go keep aside atleast a palmful!" Jolted awake, Juugamma quipped, "you sleep without a word, girl!"

Now, it may be, and in fact is, entirely possible to do multiple translations of this chunk as indeed of the whole work of art. But is it possible to do a translation of this in which one takes the text as a unit of translation and oppose it to culture as an operational unit of translation? I don't think it is. This is because there is no such dichotomy in the world of nonlinguistic thought. What however is possible is taking the sense of the original as a point of departure and doing a rewriting in the target language to suit the requirements of the target culture, to achieve 'differential plurality', treating translation as a culturally relevant mediation between two ethoses, which is a distinctly different enterprise, and which is part of what postcolonialism aims at. Barsky (1996) is a seminal paper, I think, in understanding the intellectual content of the postcolonial turn in translation. Barsky points out that in Convension Refugee Hearings, or for that matter in any litigation (my addition), rather than attempting an accurate and fluent translation the interpreter should seek to improve the chances of the claimants getting a fair hearing. In which case he may be required to do more than a faithful and fluent translation. He may be called on to recast the utterances of the claimant, coming as they might from different narrative traditions, "into an acceptable format …, minimizing the damage by mediating culture-specific attitudes." (Barsky 1996:53) He might be impelled to tell an appropriate and compelling story or an anecdote by using examples acceptable to the target culture. This is one example where translation may be said to aim at nonclose linguistic equivalence as opposed to 'close linguistic equivalence' (Bassnett 1980). There is a rational or ethical agenda that drives the interpreting/translation which subordinates the target culture to the source culture in the interest of the authenticity of the original. Fair enough. A strong or extreme version of this is what is impugned in this paper because that is what militates against the requirements of a rigorous academic discipline. This kind of interlingual re-creation is part of what is called 'creating paths' to the TL. This process of path-

formation, I submit, does not invoke a linguistic/cultural (turn) distinction that could be argued to be different from literal/free opposition. Whatever the translator does has to be through language. It has to be linguistic in that sense. But as I hope to have shown, the issue is more than a terminological quibble involving the word 'linguistic'. The issue has to do with our understanding of what language is about. In the light of the fact that language is there to express non-language, and nonlangauge makes no valid distinction between what can be called 'linguistic' and 'cultural' meanings to justify the 'linguistic' and 'cultural turns' in TS, an opposition between linguistic and cultural translation as is implicit in the linguistic and cultural turns seems hard to justify. It seems hard to justify a translation with culture as the operative unit of translation, which is different from the sense-for-sense translation, or, better, 'free' as opposed to 'literal' translation. There is in the literature some hint that sense-for-sense translation refers to the translation of individual words or phrase 'according to their grammatical form and meaning in the text', not 'according to the wider contextual meaning' (Cf. Lambert 1991:7). This would presumably mean a context that extends outside the text. Does this make good sense? All literature is socioculturally embedded, which is to say all individual literary artifacts inhabit space part of which or, indeed a lot of which, obviously exists outside the text, in the sociocultural world which made the text possible in the first place… What are we saying when we say 'cultural translation' would mean 'translating with contexts extending beyond the text in mind'?

The confusion could also be because of the mistaken assumption that one could privilege the word over the world. Privileging the word over the world which means focusing on form to the exclusion of content, I submit, does not happen anywhere in language use except in exceptional instances among others like language pathology, language pedagogy and pediatric language games. In its genesis as in its continued use, human language is there to focus on nonlinguistic worlds, to express nonlinguistic thought. Language is a delightfully effective and excitingly efficient cognitive vehicle and tool in man's journey through life on this

planet. Focusing on the vehicle/tool for its own sake makes no sense! I submit that this privileging of form over content does not happen despite protestations to the contrary even in creative literature. What makes imaginative literature worth serious and extended pursuit is not, I submit, the way language is used (See Giridhar 1976, 1978 and 2005), but the fact that it makes interesting, sensible and powerful statements about nonlinguistic worlds, kicking open the doors of our nonlinguistic consciousness, teasing it into new awarenesses, shocking it, cajoling it, transporting it into totally new and exciting horizons, rearranging the intentionally ordered information that human consciousness is, thus heightening and enhancing, generally raising the bar of, our mental existence, and disclosing new avenues of thought and so on. A heightened use of language in poetry, which demands a heightened sensitivity to language on the part of the reader, is a result of letting your meaning choose the linguistic expression. An ordinary speaker of a language finds herself under no pressure to use language the way a poet does. It is in other words not the case, or it is untenably strong to say, that the ordinary speaker is intrinsically unable to make what is called the 'poetic' use of language.

All human creativity especially that which gives rise to constructs of the human consciousness is some kind of 'imagined rationality', it seems to me. All human creativity happens in a context and this context, as indeed the contours that such creativity takes, are rationally driven, or driven by imagined rationality. It can not be unconstrained no-holds-barred flights of imagination. A clear-as-daylight rationality governing literature, for example, is the essentialist idea that part of being human is to be responsive to and protective of life and civilization. Engineers of the soul that writers are supposed to be, this burden has to be shouldered by them. There is grievous and culpable lapse of rationality in the praxis both of literature and TS about this. 'Everything' and 'anything' goes. I asked a distinguished TS scholar and TS teacher for decades what she (This is referentially *she,* not the concessive feminism-driven evener *she*) thought of the idea argued persuasively by Bhalla (2003), for example, that the translator can not for example communalise a noncommunal literary piece. Her response is typical

of the state of affairs in TS. Her response was that she does not relate to such constraints, and she was for no-holds-barred creativity. This I thought was strange, even funny ('zany' is the word), being as it is an academically irresponsible and intellectually unaccountable stance. It is clear that a translator has no business to carnalise a noncarnal piece or communalise a noncommunal piece, or generally demean an original. I agree holus bolus on the other hand with the sociocultural embeddedness of translation as a phenomenon, and as practice. (The sociocultural embeddedness of literature and translation on the one hand and of language on the other are not on the same footing though.) There is something called a 'translating consciousness' which is not an automated machine and that the translator is not a photographer who duplicates the original in another linguistic code. Her job is not just to transfer 'determinate semantic cargo from one phonetic vehicle to another'. The redoubtable Theo Hermans (2002) puts this beautifully which is why what he says bears reproduction here:

> Translation is of interest as a cultural phenomenon precisely because of its lack of neutrality or innocence, because of its density, its specific weight and added value. If it were a merely mechanical exercise, it would be as interesting as a photocopier. It is more interesting than a photocopier in that it presents us with a privileged index of cultural self-preference, or if you prefer, self-definition. The practice of translation comprises the selection and importation of cultural goods from outside a given circuit and their transformation into terms which the receiving community can understand, if only in linguistic terms, and which it thus recognizes, to some extent atleast, as its own. And because each translation offers its own, over determined, distinct construction of the otherness of the imported text, we can learn a great deal from these cultural constructions – and from the construction of self which accompanies them. The paradigms and templates which a culture uses to build images of the foreign offer privileged insight into self-definition.

I also agree, and this is a corollary of the above, that any translation which, as Benjamin pointed out, does no more than perform the function of transmitting information is a bad translation. Again as Benjamin (1970) pointed out, translations could breathe new life into the original text to ensure its survival and continuity, which notion warranted the term 'donor' text rather than 'source' text. This however does not mean that the translator can do anything with the original, does it? The value-addition that the translator does has to be constrained in terms of academically rationally defined filters. And these academic filters and constraints issue from the grid. It was Chomsky who repeatedly and rightly, talked of constraints in grammar and constraints in language. All creativity has to be and is constrained in ways that can be identified sooner than later. It stands to reason that there has to be something in TS which directs research in TS, a well-defined, well-founded cerebral matrix, a mental representation, a 'grid'; as I have called, which sanctions things, constrains what can happen in the field, which itself is subject to well-founded change, as in the case of the natural sciences.

One, or atleast I, would be perfectly happy if people concede that translation, as is indeed literature, is a highly subjective phenomenon, and hence is not subject to rational analysis, unlike let's say, Nuclear Physics or Paediatric Cardiology or Molecular Biology. There is no science or objective study of translation but only a phenomenology of translation, no science or objective inquiry of literature but only a phenomenology of literature. I even fell back satisfied when somebody answered a long-standing objection of mine to literature which was how it is that literature as a body of knowledge can filter nonsense like, let's say, a piece which endorses fascism, or caste as a social category in India, or head-hunting as a cultural practice in some communities, or to put it in more general terms, a literary piece which makes categories that exist in human societies but which are outside human ontology look positively ineluctable. Such pieces of literature surely have no justifiable

existence.[4] As I said such works culpably continue to be serenaded. I was told that time and people would see such stuff consigned to the dustbin of history. This I thought on further reflection was not satisfying because disciplines like Nuclear Physics do not depend on time and people to consign nonsense to the dustbin. This is done by some delightful consensus by the rationally driven grid that underpins the discipline. How on earth can an academic discipline worth its salt depend on people and time to screen out nonsense? To this somebody said literature was not a 'discipline' in that sense, which makes a lot of sense. That is it. Literature is not a discipline in an intellectually credible sense. Which is why it does not have an underpinning grid of the kind that disciplines like Nuclear Physics have, which is why the credibility of new entrants to the field is not evaluated with resonant reference to the noncreative part which all creativity entails and which was broached earlier. This could very well be. However this can not be the case with something like translation simply because translation is an operation on an object that already exists, an object with its own internal rhetoric and ontological dignity that is there for all to see.

The scenario however is not as hopeless as it may be made out to be. One quite sees that there is an attempt howsoever feeble on the part of the practitioners in the field to provide a generalized theorised underpinning to the whole enterprise. After all man is a pattern-seeking, order-seeking animal. Thus 'fidelity' to the original as a measure of translatorial ontology was one such theoretically laden construct, which is being increasingly replaced by 'relevance' to the target culture, which makes a lot of good sense. Bound up with fidelity was this literal/free continuum. 'Abusive fidelity' (Philip Lewis's term) was another. 'Foreignising' as opposed to 'domesticating' is another. 'Covert' translation as opposed to 'overt' translation is a third. The notion of 'translation universals' is a fourth. Another heartening development has been the coming forth of 'relevance-theoretic' treatments of translation (Gutt 1991 (second edition 2000)… But these are fledgling attempts. The field is in

desperate need of more rigour. The field should address questions that legitimately belong in its domain of enquiry like why it is that the best possible, the best conceivable translation in language B of a work in language A leaves the bilingual unsatisfied. This despite the fact that humans all over are biologically and cognitively prewired identically. The answer surely is in the language, in the ways languages encode nonlinguistic content. Questions like why intralinguistic translation is prima facie unable to carry forth the flavour and timbre of a dialect to which a possible answer could be that there is something code-dependent about linguistic meaning, the idea that the meaning that escapes the code is no longer it, and so on. There are of course legitimate nonlinguistic questions of how translation engages with issues like alterity, subjectivity, selfhood – individual and communal, (the construction of) identity, hybridity, the dialectic resonance between cultures, nation-building, human ontology, human rights, human consciousness, epistemology, the Other, civilisational habitat and space, the role of translation in literary-movement formation, literary canon-formation, translation as an agency of cultural dialogue, and translation as a catalyst of social change, translation as reflective of the nature of sociocultural space at a given time, translation as indicative of sociocultural processes, translation as an impressionable site of cultural traffic and so on and so forth. Instead of addressing questions like these one would find stories and stories in place of any objective (=rational) analyses of the piece of translation. One finds the TS literature flooded with treatises and disquisitions which are either very exuberant but airy nothings or belong more to literature, aesthetics, sociology, culture studies, rather than to Translation Studies proper. It is not enough to say that TS draws upon other disciplines for its subject matter. It is absolutely essential that TS has its questions to address, questions which may be argued to belong in its legitimate domain of inquiry to answer which it connects with or appeals to other disciplines. In case the questions and issues themselves are integral both to translation as a phenomenon and to other disciplines,

then there arise doubts as to the legitimacy of TS as a discipline in itself. There is then a case for hyphenated disciplines which have translation as their part, like Translation-Literary Studies, or Translation-Cultural Studies, Translation-Aesthetic Studies and so on. Or is it something like the omnibus Environmental Science which proposes to advance our understanding of our environment through inputs from ecology, the geosciences, hydrology, the biosciences, the vegetation science, the atmospheric sciences and so on?

The grid that I have talked about the related fact of the dialectically resonant relation between creativity and the noncreative part of human cerebration should in tandem lead to what one would like TS to achieve in the end. **That end toward which TS should (as indeed should Literature) relentlessly strive is the goal of cross-culturally and cross-linguistically valid ways of talking about the being of a (translated) work of art.** Therein lies the essential academic validity of the translated piece. Therein lies its place in the cerebral cosmos of the discipline. Describing a translated piece however ingeniously and in however detailed a manner in terms that are rigorous but are confined locally to the piece achieves almost nothing, unless of course one delights in talking about the individual piece as an isolate and not situate it in a framework of reference which is populated by other pieces of translation, which activity some may find good enough but is clearly less interesting than the activity of defining its situatedness in an illuminating framework which is informed by the kind of things I have been talking about. In Linguistics, for example, we say a language should be able to be described in its own terms but at the same time in terms that range beyond the language being described. This is somewhat of a paradox. But that is why and how Linguistics as an academically viable and cerebrally credible discipline gets born. That is why and how all academic disciplines get born and get their intellectual credibility. If there is to be such a discipline of TS this must happen viz. we need to have terms in what could be called

an underpinning grid, terms which range beyond the description and evaluation of individual translated pieces. This 'ranging beyond' is what leads to a generalized matrix and an explanatory framework of an academic discipline. The 'cultural turn' in vogue now which is a suspect development in TS, as I tried to argue in this paper, and indeed as Rajendra Singh (2005) has argued so persuasively, hardly leads one to a platform fraught with the positive possibilities of grounding the discipline in an inexorably solid theoretical grid. In fact, it takes TS in the opposite direction because it is itself eminently unjustifiable in terms of any rationale. We need to worry about the way a 'free' ('infidel'?) translation aiming at target-cultural relevance and self-definition meshes with or fits into the idea set out in this paper of crossculturally valid ways of talking about translation. There are crossculturally valid ways of talking about music, sculpture, architecture and painting, which are all examples of 'imagined rationality' and are constructs of the human consciousness. So are literature and literary translation and there is no reason why there could not be crossculturally valid rigorously discipline-enriching discourse about them[5].

NOTES

1. This is at variance with what Geertz (1973:49) thinks of what culture does to man. He says that man has no nature independent of the particular culture he finds himself in. I think this is too strong a position to take. It does not reckon with (wo) man's great creative urge, with her delightfully unique ability to think wrenching herself free from the known, and from received wisdom. If what Geertz says is strictly true, how do we explain the fact of the path of man's progress paved relentlessly by his intransigent originality, innovative initiative and originalising creative spunk? I am intrigued by such pronouncements which people are still fond of making.

2. Phonologically contrived feedback to meaning is untranslatable. Look at the following English sentence group whose expressive dynamics goes untranslated in any other language:

> *My brain has two parts: The left and the right. In the right part there is nothing right and as for the left part there is nothing left.*
>
> *The smutty joke, 'children enjoy their childhood and adults their adultery' is a joke because of the speaker's confusion between adultery and adulthood. This would be untranslatable in other languages because there is no formal relationship between these two nouns in those languages.*

3. Academic heavyweights, otherwise distinguished, have said things about language that are wide off the mark. Derrida for example says linguistic signs have no meaning that is final or transcendent. This is no big deal. We knew this for centuries. Built around a relatively stable denotative core the meanings of words have an open-ended multiplex potential. The contours of a content word – those of its grammar and of its lexical semantics – are never finally drawn. Look at the following for example where contrary to expectations a proper noun turns into a verb:

    1. *Babita Bobitted Bobby (*=Babita depenised Bobby, Bobbitt being the name of a person)

    2. *IT has been Bangalored (*Bangalore is the name of a place*)*

    The most recent examples I saw of zero derivation are the words *guilt, weapon world, room* and *baby* being used as verbs. The deferment of meaning that Derrida has talked about makes no sense either in the daily business of linguistic communication. All linguistic communication requires that there be a synchronically solid and stable system in terms of

which there is communication. An ever changing and unstable code that postpones meaning of the kind that Derrida and his followers think possible leads to no successful communication. The fact that there is in the norm successful communication through language day after day after day after day, week after week after week, month after month after month, year after year after year, across the cosmos of every linguistic code is proof that there is no conceivable postponement of meaning and Derrida must therefore be wrong. The beauty of language is that it is at the same time a Procrustean bed and a code subject to lived experience, essentialist and free (or whatever is the antonym of 'essentialist'), centripetal and centrifugal, constitutive (=creative in the sense of 'creating thought') and representational (=reflective of thought) at the same time of reality.

4. I am sure there are examples of such literature everywhere in the world. A conspicuous example in Kannada literature is the novel entitled *Daatu* translated into English as *Crossing Over* (2003), which positively endorses caste as it is understood in India. (All powerful artistic creations radiate the exhilarating light of a universal oneness which our equally exhilarating and interestingly distinctive differences mask, which must be the reason why the best in every literature, the sublimest in every literature appeals to everyone irrespective of cultural differences. Empathetic appreciation entails a shared ground. I have warmed to, and indeed everyone warms to, the best of Tolstoy, the best of Dostovesky, the best of Gorky, the best of African, Commonwealth and Latin American writers almost at first reading. The Malayali novel *Chemmeen* whose translation into so many languages, Indian and foreign, has crossed seemimgly insurmountable linguistic and cultural divides with such ease and with such spectacular success is a great example). Even a much hyped, much discussed, much translated and much

prescribed novel like U.R. Ananthamurthy's Kannada novel *Samskara*, I am afraid, falls into a subcategory of the same category although it has other positive qualities to recommend and redeem it. I agree with Suchetana Swarup (2009:410) that the writer of *Samskara* concentrates on, hammers on, and wants the reader not to miss (what in the perception of the rabble is) the allegedly and ineluctably inherent superiority of the caste of Brahmins. How can writers, who are themselves die-hard caste-(or colour- or religion-…) supremacists, be engineers of the human soul that they are supposed to be? Such things should amuse any rational being. In the name of depicting social reality things are portrayed as if they are ineluctably final. (Some) social realities when they filter through a creative literary consciousness emerge, or need to emerge, with an undertone of disapproval unlike when they pass through an anthropologist's or a sociologist's consciousness. This is an essential difference between social sciences like Anthropology and Sociology and imaginary-world creating imaginative sciences like creative literature. This is an integral part of the imaginatively decisional act of ethical responsibility that serious creative literature (and serious literary translation) is. Our writers need to realize this, I was taken aback to learn the Kannada novel in question ('Crossing Over') was awarded the Central Sahitya Akademi (Central Academy of Letters, Delhi) prize, social recognition for a novel which has no business to be called 'creative literature'. This kind of recognition is a great comment on the quality of (the evaluation of) some of our literature as also on the people who dish out awards! More importantly, it fills with empirical content my charge of a lack of a constraining grid in literature, of the intellectual indigence, the cerebral vacuity and invalidity of a lot of stuff we call 'creative literature'.

5. Luminous and limpid lucidity may not be one of the virtues of this exposition of musings. However I am sure it throws up some thoughts for the TS community to mull, to rein in

Translatologists who have gotten on their 'cultural turn' horses and are riding madly off. Thanks are due to Ms. Susan Daniel of Ooty and Nilanjan Chakravorty, Reader in French, Dept of English and Modern European languages, Santiniketan, India for some piquant feedback.

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Not Lost in Translation: *Chemmeen* on Alien Shores

Mini Chandran

Abstract

The process of translation as it is generally understood often implies loss of subtle linguistic nuances and cultural flavour in the target language. Are there components that survive translation and appeal to 'other' cultures and languages? This paper attempts to answer this question by foregrounding the Malayalam writer Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's Chemmeen, which is one of the most translated works in Malayalam. The success of Chemmeen in translation is a surprise, given the fact that it is about a very specific culture, which is of the fisher folk in the coastal region of Alappuzha and that it is written in an almost untranslatable colloquial Malayalam. Obviously there are factors that have surmounted the obstacles of language and cultural difference.The paper focuses on the components that survive the process of translation, like the structural simplicity of the story that can be reduced to an archetype or the elements of folklore that resonate even on culturally alien shores.

The notion of loss is implicit in the process of translation; the assumption is that complete equivalence between two languages is impossible and that meaning slips through the interstices of disparate cultures. The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis underlines this aspect: "No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached: (Bassnett 13). Thus the premise is that the wider the cultural divide between the SL and TL, the more difficult it is to translate. Keeping in tune with cultural differences, the linguistic nuances are also thought to pose a problem for the translator. Are there factors that bridge this divide, and make

easier the process of interlingual and intercultural communication, which translation is? If so, would these factors determine the translatability of a text across linguistic and cultural divides? The goal of this exposition is to attempt an answer to this question by foregrounding the English translation of a Malayalam novel, *Chemmeen*, written by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai.

Chemmeen (translated as 'Shrimp') was published in 1956, and became the first Malayalam novel to win the Sahitya Akademi prize. It sold well in Malayalam and was translated into numerous languages in India and abroad. The first foreign language translation was into the Czech language by Kamil Selabil. According to D. C. Kizhakkemuri, the publisher of *Chemmeen* in Kerala, the novel sold 44,000 copies upto its 19th edition in Malayalam and 57,000 copies in the Czech language. DC reminds us: "You must not forget that the number of Czech speakers is not even half the number of Malayalis" (Preface to the First edition of *Chemmeen*). The intersemiotic translation into the cinematic medium was equally successful. It won the President's Gold Medal for Best Film in 1964, and is considered a classic, noted for its acting, cinematography and music. So *Chemmeen,* in its original language and its interlingual and intersemiotic translated forms, can be considered an artistic and commercial success.

What is surprising about this success is that *Chemmeen* is not the finest of Thakazhi's (as Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai is popularly known) works. He is one of the best novelists of Kerala, perhaps even of India and won the Jnanpith award in 1984. He has written numerous short stories besides novels like *Randidangazhi, Thottiyude Makan, Enippadikal* and his masterpiece *Kayar.* Thakazhi himself has confessed that *Chemmeen* is a bit of a 'painkili', which means mushy or sentimental love story. It does not have the social issues that he discusses in *Randidangazhi* or *Thottiyude makan* or the thematic complexity of *Enippadikal* or *Kayar.* Moreover, it is a linguistic nightmare as far as the translator is concerned, because the characters speak the colloquial idiom of a

particularly small fishing community that lives only in a few villages of Alappuzha. The Malayalam that they speak contains words that are unintelligible to the rest of the Malayalam-speaking people in Kerala.

Capturing nuances of dialect in English translation is a major challenge for any translator. R.E. Asher, well known for his English translation of another major Malayalam writer Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, has written about the difficulty of capturing the evanescent dialect in a foreign language like English. (Incidentally, Asher has also translated Thakazhi's works). When confronted with the "Islamic terminology that is no more familiar to the non-Muslim Malayali reader than it would be to the average non-Muslim speaker of English," Asher says he had no option but to sacrifice such dialectical variations completely because there was no English substitute for a vernacular dialect (xiv-xv). The form of Malayalam that Thakazhi uses in *Chemmeen* is also unfamiliar to a majority of Malayalam speakers. Interestingly, Narayana Menon the English translator of *Chemmeen,* does not make any comment on the equally vexing task of translating the colloquial idiom of coastal Alappuzha. Perhaps, translation as a self-conscious activity was not that well developed in 1962 when the translation was first undertaken. Or perhaps, as A.J. Thomas argues: "Making the translation eminently readable and racy, Narayana Menon got away with it – at the cost of the narrative marvel of the original, through deletions, suppressions, and mutilations,…" (Thomas 2005:45). Thomas points out that Menon unabashedly foreignized the original to cater to western readers, and the commercial success of the translated version indicates the triumph of the translator. However, the translator's interventions seem to be in the domain of the cultural ethos. As Thomas (2005) illustrates, Menon edits out portions which he thinks would be meaningless for a culturally foreign readership; rarely does he leave out a sentence because it is too colloquial to be captured in a foreign tongue. *This strengthens my argument that there is an element, the dynamics of which we will do well to study*

and understand, in Chemmeen *that makes you forget language and the related problematics when it comes to translation, which encourages a look at the factors that are extrinsic to the language of the novel to account for its, or any text's, translatability, and its appeal despite the apparent untransaltability.*

Structurally, the novel is extremely simple probably because Thakazhi's characteristic narrative style is simple and linear. The central characters are Karuthamma and Pareekutty, who are childhood friends and now lovers. They belong to two different communities, she to the Marackan (which is Hindu fisherfolk) community and he to the Muslim community, and marriages between the two are strictly forbidden. Despite this they are drawn to each other in a love that is not destined to end in marriage. The story is complicated further as he is *Kochumuthalali*, or the owner of the tanning yards on the seashore whereas she belongs to a poor fisherman's family. Karuthamma's parents sense the budding love between their daughter and the young and handsome Pareekutty, but turn a blind eye to it temporarily as he lends money to her father to buy a new boat and fishing net. Chembankunju, Karuthamma's father, grows rich on Pareekutty's money while Pareekutty falls deeper and deeper into debt. Karuthamma is a mute witness to his downfall. The nouveau riche Chembankunju arranges Karuthamma's marriage with Palani, an energetic and hardworking fisherman from another village. Karuthamma bids farewell to Pareekutty and starts her marital life with Palani. Life is good for them and a daughter is born. Meanwhile, Chembankunju's life becomes a misery as his wife dies and he remarries. The ill-gotten wealth soon dissipates and he is financially ruined. The relationship between Karuthamma and Palani is marred now and then by Pareekutty's shadow as Palani accuses her, without any basis whatsoever, of infidelity. Karuthamma's resistance gives way one stormy night when Palani is out at sea, and she goes off with Pareekutty. The next morning, both lovers are washed up on the beach and Palani dies at sea, fighting a shark.

The story can be reduced to the Karuthamma-Pareekutty-Palani love triangle which is set against the myth of the Kadalamma ('goddess of the sea') who is Preserver and Destroyer. She is beneficent to the fisherman who leads a life of moral purity; even on the stormiest seas, she guards the fisherman whose wife remains chaste and prays for his safe return while he is at sea. It is not only the man's life, but the life of the community as well that hangs upon the moral purity of the woman. The land, or in this context, the seashore, is identified with the woman's body because local lore depicts a chaste woman who succeeds in bringing her man back from the jaws of impending death.

Shorn of its cultural and linguistic trappings, the Karuthamma-Pareekutty relationship is very much a love story like Laila-Manju, Farhad-Shirin or Heer-Ranjha of the East and Romeo and Juliet of the West. The story of the star-crossed lovers that ends in death is very familiar and cuts across cultural and geographical barriers. Patrick Colm Hogan underscores this point in his study of literary universals by saying that "… every tradition tells tales of conflict in two areas – love and political power" (23). He points out: "Perhaps the most cross-culturally widespread version of the love plot is a particular variation on the comic love story. This variation, "romantic tragic-comedy", in effect includes the tragic love story, where the lovers are separated, typically by death, often with a suggestion of literal or metaphorical reunion after death…" (24). These 'prototypical narratives' that appeal to our emotions (Hogan 6) have the capability to transcend cultural divides.

Chemmeen follows this 'accepted' pattern of the tragic love story. The central characters of Karuthamma and Pareekutty are types, not rounded characters. Pareekutty is the typical romantic lover living in the dreamland of his love. Palani is the antithesis of Pareekutty in every way – he is a solid realist, a counterpoint to Pareekutty's romantic dreamer and lover, sparse with words where Pareekutty is eloquent in love. Karuthamma is thus caught between romantic love and the realistic man-woman relationship in wedlock. The moonlight and song that are associated with Pareekutty is a clear

indication of this dichotomy between romantic aspiration and harsh reality: "One moonlit night when the sea was calm, Karuthamma heard a song which seemed to mingle with the moonlight. Pareekutty was singing. It wasn't as Pareekutty's song that the music sounded in her ears. Pareekutty's entity was no longer there. She felt as if she was being called to a world of joy and happiness, the call of the seashore bathed in moonlight, the music of the seashore she was bidding farewell to." (*Chemmeen* 76) After Karuthamma gets married and goes away to her husband's house, the love-lorn Pareekutty wanders on the seashore singing his heart out, like Majnu, of the Laila Majnu story, made majnu (mad) by his love for Laila.

This love story is framed by the Kadalamma narrative and this mythical frame defines the relationships in the novel. The myth of the sea goddess is common to most sea-faring countries. The Inuit myth of Sedna, the Chinese myth of Mazu, the Greek myths of Thetis and Leucothea are a few instances. There is even a goddess of the sea named Bavers in Santharia, a cyber realm based on the Tolkien myths. Myths are bound to evolve especially in a community that lives in close proximity to the sea, dependent on its vagaries for a livelihood. In *Chemmeen,* this myth is woven with elements of the folktale. In typical folktale fashion, it is Karuthamma's mother Chakki who reiterates Kadalamma's contradictory qualities: "Do you know why sea goes dark sometimes? That is when the anger of the goddess of the sea is roused. Then she would destroy everything. At other times she would give her children everything. There is gold in the sea, child, gold" (7).

The world of undisplaced myth, according to Northrop Fyre, is a world "with gods or demons, and which takes the form of two contrasting worlds of total metaphorical identification, one desirable and the other undesirable" (139). We discern this mythical aspect in the description of Kadalamma's fury when she drags fishermen to the unplumbed depths of the ocean:

> "The waves rose high on the sea. The whales approached him with their mouths gaping. The sharks charged the boat with their tails. The current dragged the boat into a terrible whirlpool" (6).

When the benevolence of the goddess is transformed to fury, the desirable world of the life-bestowing sea gives way to the undesirable to oceanic depths that offer death to the human. The contrast between the upper world and the Stygian depths of the underworld are clearly brought out again in the scene of Palani's death when his boat is caught in a whirlpool: "The palace of the goddess of the sea was at the bottom of the deep sea. There the sea goddess was enshrined. Palani had heard descriptions of that palace. He had to get there through a whirlpool, a whirlpool which made the whole sea churn round in circles, knocking at the gates of the sea goddess's abode" (171).

The sea, as a huge water body, also teems with symbolic associations. Water, according to Jung, is "the commonest symbol for the unconscious" (18). He points out that drowning in water is the prelude to the attainment of wisdom: "… the way of the soul in search of its lost father … leads to the water, to the dark mirror that reposes at its bottom (17). Frye also discusses the symbol of the sea at length, where the sea is home to the leviathan, the monster which devours, but is also a source of life-giving waters (191-192). But the huge water body of the sea in *Chemmeen* does not regenerate; it merely spews death and destruction. Karuthamma and Pareekutty decide to merge their lives with the sea, and Palani's boat is towed by the shark, like Captain Ahab's by the white whale, to definite death. Palani is the scapegoat that has to be sacrificed so that the fishing community of the seashore is saved from the fury of Kadalamma, and the lovers united in death. This would fall into the 'sacrificial tragic-comedy' prototype outlined by Hogan, where the "…physical, rather than a personal, social, or transcendental goal – prototypically, food, plenty of the primary means for maintaining life…" are taken care of by the sacrifice of a person (181-182). Palani has to die to ward off the curse of famine and starvation

which was bound to stalk the shore because of his wife Karuthamma's sexual transgression. It is significant that after his death, the lovers are united – literally and metaphorically, for when their dead bodies are washed up or returned by an appeased Kadalamma, they are in each other's arms. Moreover, there is promise of life hereafter as we see Karuthamma's and Palani's girl child who can be the mother of the progeny to come.

The archetypal mother figure can also be located in the Kadalamma myth. Jung stresses the infinite variety of the mother archetype. He points out that many things that arouse devotion or awe can be mother symbols, like the earth, the woods, sea or moon (81). It is also associated with places that symbolize fertility. Kadalamma in her benign form is the Bountiful Giver, the mother who tenderly looks after her straying children, but she can also be the terrible Destroyer. As Jung points out, "On the negative side the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate" (82). The cross-cultural examples that are cited by Jung range from the Indian notion of Kali and Mary who is not only the Lord's mother but in some medieval allegories his cross.

The Kadalamma myth is dexterously woven with the fisherman community's belief that the safety of the man at sea is in the hands of his woman who, remaining chaste, prays for his safe return. In the folktale of the seashore, the first fisherman who fought with the waves came back safely "Because, on the shore, a chaste and pure woman was praying steadfastly for the safety of her husband at sea. The daughters of the sea knew the power of that prayer and the meaning of that way of life" (6). However, it is not only the husband's personal safety that is at stake, but the survival of the community as a whole. It is the purity of the seashore itself that is in the hands of the womenfolk, and any transgression could invite Kadalamma's wrath. "Because a woman strayed off the path of virtue, the waves rose as high as a mountain and the water engulfed

the seashore. The seashore was infested with poisonous sea snakes. Other monsters of the sea with mouths as large as caves darted after the boats" (75) this notion of chastity at first appears to be very culture-specific, or Indian, but the identification of the honour/safety of the land with the female body transcends geographical barriers. The universal phenomenon of the plunder and pillage of the land by an invading and conquering army is parallelled by the rape of its womenfolk. This "land-as-woman" symbol (as Annette Kolodny terms it in her book *The Lay of the Land* ix) has been explored by feminist theoreticians and more recently, by ecocritics alike and we can safely assume that this is a symbol that would be read and comprehended almost universally.

The power of the chaste woman is a recurring theme in many other myths, like Penelope waiting at home for her husband Ulysses while he is on his voyages. In India, we have the Satyavan – Savitri story, where Savitri's devotion to her husband persuades Yama to do the unthinkable, which is, return Satyavan from the land of the dead. Kannaki's righteous anger reduces the mighty Pandya capital to mere ashes and dust. Sati's immolation marks the destruction of her father Daksha, at the hands of her husband Siva.

Besides these very indirect echoes of myth and legend, *Chemmeen* is imbued with the spirit of traditions and customs that seem to pre-date the community. At the time of Karuthamma's marriage, the neighbouring women come together to give her advice on the responsibilities of a wife, because it was "an age-old custom", and "if she [Karuthamma] went wrong, the community would blame the neighbours" (74). Karuthamma's decision to part with Pareekutty is to uphold the time-honoured tradition of the seashore, but she imagines that she is "reliving a story in a strange language she could hardly follow. There must have been grandmothers who suffered like this. The sea breeze murmured the same kind of sad tale. In the sound of the waves, too, one could hear the same story" (75). Tradition is continued through generations, and Karuthamma's blighted love story is but a link in this chain. This notion of

continuity elevates the story from the local and the specific and places it on the level of universality that answers to some deep, primeval aspect of human nature.

In his essay "The Task of the Translator" Walter Benjamin discusses the translatability of literary works. He agrees with the popular conception that in all literary and linguistic creation there remains an element that cannot be communicated –"it is something that symbolizes or something symbolized" (22). However, his argument is that if the translator is able to get to the "pure" language, "which no longer means or expresses anything but is, as expressionless and creative word, that which is meant in all languages", then the translator's task has succeeded (22). The mark of the translatability of a text is its ability to be "identical with truth and dogma, where it is supposed to be the "true language" in all its literalness and without the mediation of meaning" (23).

It is perhaps the pure language of myth and folktales that transcends linguistic and cultural divides that makes Thakazhi's *Chemmeen* a translator-friendly novel. Its structural simplicity makes it a prototypical narrative with symbols that can easily communicate to a reader in culturally alien realms. This aspect of the novel is highlighted in the blurb on the dust jacket of the English version:

> "This is a book that deals with eternal values, and its immemorial rhythms of sea and sky stir out hearts with their haunting sweetness. The result is that *Chemmeen* has the quality of a fable in which the lives, the superstitions, the inner beliefs, the traditions and the sufferings of the community of fishermen are portrayed as a way of life with a deep and significant moral."

This reductivity, which becomes an advantage in the process of translation, also has the potential disadvantage of making a novel an artistic failure. Somehow, *Chemmeen* manages to walk this artistic tightrope fairly well, and hugely successfully. Its appeal, not just to Malayali readers, but to readers in other languages as well as in other media, is ample testimony to this.

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Translating *Ulysses* into Malayalam: Theorising a Practice

Chitra Panikkar

Abstract

This paper recalls my experience of translating sections of Joyce's epic novel, Ulysses into Malayalam and attempts a theorization of that practice. Seven chapters of this novel have already been published by the Malayalam journal, Keralakavita, in its annual numbers. A preliminary theorization of that translation practice seemed inevitable even before further translation could be carried out. This think-and-research method applied to the work in hand has helped clarify my own position as critic-translator. It has also helped me raise certain vital issues and questions that periodically surface in the realm of Translation Theory and Practice. The piece that emerged as a result of a translation practice that went self-reflexive is incorporated in this paper. It may be noted that the spade-work towards the writing of any theoretical piece will also involve much reading of critical material and the constant updating of knowledge produced on particular texts. This paper is a sample piece cast in that mould.

James Joyce (1882-1941), the Irish catholic writer, was for a long time, projected as a difficult writer, a formidable stylist/aesthete, apolitical in views, European in temperament, and therefore clearly high-modernist in terms of literary location. Times have re-written Joyce. Today, in critical circles, he is a feminist writer, an anti-imperialist, Irish in sensibility, political to the core - his style, a mask to fight the English, and thereby, in terms of location, a postcolonial writer. This formulation is an attempt to bring home this point of the relocation or dislocation of Joyce through a discussion of my own experience of translating *Ulysses* into Malayalam.

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As a translator, the lesser known side of Joyce had always held my fascination. My critical engagement with Joyce's writings which began more than a decade ago, ultimately led to a translation experiment. Even in the initial pieces that I tried out, it was the relatively unknown Joyce that caught my interest: at first, the children's story, *The Cat and the Devil*, which he wrote for his four-year-old grandson, Stephen, and then, *Chamber Music*, a young musician-poet's first collection of love poems. The only story which I attempted to translate from the collection, *Dubliners*, was 'Eveline' – again, an obscure piece. *Portrait*, at that time, was a prescribed text at the English M.A level (more popular than any of the other Joyce texts), and therefore, according to me, it could be easily bypassed. *Ulysses* was well-known but was reverentially treated – touched, but not read. It was during the fag-end of my Ph.D work on *Ulysses* that I started translating extracts from *Ulysses* as a means of "know"ing the author.

The last chapter, 'Penelope', was the first long piece from *Ulysses* that I translated into Malayalam. I was then curious to find out what a no-punctuation, no-capital-I, a woman's narrative voice – colloquial in rhythm, unconventional in matter and tone – would sound like in Malayalam. Very soon, I could discover that the stylistic/linguistic nuances in English pertaining to the use of limited punctuation and small letter i (first person pronoun) went unnoticed in Malayalam which anyway does not have much use for either punctuation or capital letters (may be this is bound to happen in other Indian languages also). The colloquial rhythm had to be worked at, but the "shock-effect" the piece produced in Malayalam was the result of a middle-class woman character's unconventional musings on her sexuality, along anti-patriarchal lines. The Malayalam *Penelope* thus emerges more as a feminist text than as an author's experiment with the "interior-monologue (female)" narrative technique. Joyce thus was already falling off his secure pedestal in the modernist canon – whoever heard of an anti-patriarchal male voice within modernism?

Though no close reader of *Ulysses* can miss out on the subversive quality of its writing or the rich political overtones implicit in the narration, I would still say that these became specifically clear to me only after the experience of translating *Penelope*. I began to read *Ulysses* not in its European context anymore but in its Irish context, more precisely in its Dublin context. Dublin as the Irish capital-city, and Ireland with its history of years of subjugation under colonial rule took precedence over other considerations. A few questions hit me hard, and they are

> *Why are Irish writers denied their particular histories in the English Literature curriculum in India?*
>
> *Why are Shaw, Wilde, Goldsmith, O'Casey, Synge, Swift, Joyce, Beckett, etc., still part of the British Literature classes?*
>
> *How can the coloniser's history be mixed up with the history of the colonised? Is this then another instance of colonial appropriation which went unquestioned?*
>
> *Why is this glossing over of specific histories a norm only in the English Departments in India, whereas in both England and Ireland, Irish authors are discussed under a special slot called Irish Literature even within the English Department?*

These questions were uppermost in my mind when after a gap, I sat to translate *Ulysses* (this time from the first chapter onwards, chronologically). The agenda behind the translation was the interpretation and understanding of Joyce as an Irish writer, and *Ulysses* as a postcolonial text. I found the support for my reading in two critical texts released while the translation was on – Vincent Cheng's *Joyce, Race and the Empire* and Maria Tymoczko's *The Irish Ulysses*.

While translating the first Chapter, 'Telemachus', I could see this interpretational grounding affecting my approach. Unlike in

the translation of *Penelope*, I allowed bilingual elements to prevail, words like *Sassenach* and *Strangers* (words used by the Irish to designate the English) were explained by means of foot-notes, and the anti-imperialist, anti-church statements mouthed by Stephen, I realized, carried an added punch in Malayalam. When the draft was read out to a group of Malayalam speaking English Department students who had not read *Ulysses* in English, they responded most to the political implications of Joyce's text. The response amounted to this: "Are you sure you haven't changed it much, because he was always talked about in our Department either as a formidable modernist or as a stinking aesthete". Reading out the translated versions of the next two chapters, 'Nestor' and 'Proteus', to the student group made this even more obvious. They suggested the incorporation of more of Irish history in my foot-notes (to assist the reader's understanding) and they were quick to respond to issues of betrayal and usurpation in the text.

Let us note that *Ulysses* is full of themes and moments related to the idea of betrayal and usurpation. I'll give a quick review of these and my own inferences as connected with the review. I may first supply specific instances from *Ulysses* that would help the reader in India strike a colonial transaction with Ireland:

Ch.1. Telemachus - Stephen, the Irish intellectual, constantly snubs the English Haines and rejects Mulligan's subservience to Haines. Stephen understands himself as the server of a servant and describes himself as the servant of two masters. The milk-woman becomes for Stephen the symbol of poor old Ireland, and he thinks of Mulligan as "Usurper". The first chapter ends with the slow ponderous delivery of the word, "usurper".

Ch.2. Nestor - Stephen's history lesson in School is on

Pyrrhus who suffered usurpation. He understands Pyrrhus as someone broken by his own victory and sees himself as an Irish jester in the court of his English master. He pauses on a line from Lycidas to sense the shadow of Christ on the lives of believers and non-believers and feels the challenge posed by divided loyalties which has its significance for the Irish. Stephen observes symbols of the Establishment (civil and ecclesiastical) in headmaster Deasy's room - Stuart coins ("base treasure of England won from the Irish bog") and twelve apostle spoons encased in purple plush. Deasy is one who is in awe of the success and power of the English. There is mention of Parnell (Ireland's pet story of betrayal) and attempts to stir Stephen to a political argument. The chapter shows how Ireland has had more than its share of colonial history.

Ch.3. Proteus - Brings Kevin Egan into the picture – his bright left-wing atheistic chatter is alluded to at intervals. Stephen's Paris memories are full of Kevin Egan - the Irish conspirator in exile who tries to evoke Stephen's interest in the cause; he's full of the tales of Irish revolutionaries, their plots, disguises, and escapes. Stephen looks in the direction of the Martello tower and notices how it has been usurped by the Panthersahib and his pointer. Stephen, walking the strand, cannot escape his past or Ireland's past - the coming of invaders to possess the land, the whales

hacked and eaten by his ancestors, his understanding of the Pretenders as men claiming thrones denied to them.

Ch.7. Aeolus - The theme of frustration particularly frustration experienced just at the moment when the goal is in sight recurs throughout. There is Ned Lambert's reading of the flowery patriotic speech, delivered by Dan Dawson. Cranford's use of the word, 'history' reminds Stephen of his own aphorism, "History is the nightmare from which you'll never awake". McHugh describes how the College Historical society debated a paper advocating the revival of the Irish tongue, Fitzgibbon throwing scorn on it, and Taylor's bright analogy of Moses being compelled to submit to the authority of Egypt. The red-tin letter box and the statue of Nelson figure as symbols of British imperium and Stephen's parable of the plums comes to be called, the Pisgah Sight.

Ch.9. Scylla and Charybdis : The focus is on the consubstantiality of father and son and the issue of betrayal. It records Stephen's efforts to oust the English Shakespeare and establish his own position as son and rival. The chapter sees the total dismissal of the Englishman Haines and his admirer, Deasy.

Ch.10. Wandering Rocks : Kernan pauses at the site of Robert Emmet's execution and thinks about the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

Ch.11. Sirens : Dwells on the theme of betrayal and the song,

	"The croppy Boy" tells the story of a betrayal.
Ch.12. Cyclops :	The nationalist's one-eyed fanatical view is seen to be as dangerous as what Nelson represents - he is critical of anything and everything that doesn't fall into his narrow shallow slot. It is proved by the riotous list he prepares, his criticism of the national dailies, and his curses on England. He accuses England for everything that went wrong - depopulating the land, destroying her arts and industries, reducing the land to a treeless swamp, and inveighs against England's use of sanctimony as a cover-up for self-enrichment.
Ch.13. Nausicaa :	The cuckoo clock announces a betrayal.
Ch.14. Oxen of the Sun :	Molly Bloom is seen on a par with Ireland, engaged in adulterous betrayal.
Ch.15. Circe :	Images of betrayal and usurpation abound. Stephen annoys the King's soldiers. Kevin Egan showers abuses on Queen Victoria. The citizen materializes to revile the English; Stephen sees the absurdity of the nationalistic and revolutionary poses, those of the British imperium as well. The last bit on Rudy and the Home rule Son is indicative of Home Rule in Ireland.
Ch.16. Eumacus :	Skin-the-Goat sees the conspiratorial hand of the British in everything. There is a detailed

reference to Parnell and with it thoughts of betrayal, national and personal.

Ch.17. Ithaca : Carries the comparison between ancient Hebrew and ancient Irish languages and the correspondences between two rejected peoples. There is mention of dispersal, persecution, oppression, and the prospects of national revival.

Ch.18. Penelope : It is ironical that Molly Bloom who says she has no use for politics or war has in the text been linked up with themes of political betrayal.

It is my reading that Stephen handles these issues at an intellectual level and problematises it. Leopold Bloom faces it at a personal level. Incidentally, being a Jew, he also functions as an international representative of the subjugated - forever marginalized, and persecuted for no fault of his.

If these themes and issues in *Ulysses* get foregrounded in the translation, what is likely to emerge in the target-language is an awareness of *Ulysses* as a predominantly Irish text, and Joyce as a political writer. The concerns that so far lay hidden under the cover of "style" and experiments with the English language would consequently stand exposed. (The use of a self-conscious style and language itself, in my reading, is this writer's ceaseless pre-occupation with an inherited language which he wants to re-fashion for purposes to fight the given, the imposed, etc.). The translation thus disrupts a critical continuum which treated Joyce as stylist-modernist, and offers active resistance to that reading of *Ulysses*.

To make my point, I give a few examples from *Telemachus*, *Nestor*, and *Proteus*, which are already translated. There is a subtle

way in which the following bits from "Telemachus" stand highlighted in the translation.

(1) Mulligan to Stephen (about Haines): "A ponderous Saxon….God, these bloody English. Bursting with money and indigestion."

(2) Stephen on the old Irish milk-woman: "A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer."

(3) Haines (to Stephen): "I intend to make a collection of your sayings if you'll let me" and Stephen's bitter reply, "Would I make money by it?"

(4) "I'm the servant of two masters, Stephen said, an English and an Italian…the imperial British state and the holy Roman Catholic and apostolic Church".

(5) Haines: An Irishman must think like that, I daresay. We feel in England that we have treated you rather unfairly. It seems history is to blame…of course I'm a Britisher and I feel like one. I don't want to see my country fall in the hands of German Jews either.

(6) Stephen's observation on the smiling Haines: "Horn of a bull, hoof of a horse, smile of a Saxon."

In my translation, I have also used foot-notes as a strategy to highlight these thematic concerns. For example,

In "Nestor": (1) A foot-note I've incorporated would read this way, if back-translated, "If we were to link up the conversations between Deasy and Stephen, we'll get from it, the history of Ireland's centuries' long struggle to win freedom

from the English".

(2) Foot-note to "Ulster" – Northern Ireland is now called Ulster. The protestant community in Northern Ireland did not join the Home Rule Movement.

In "Proteus" : (1) My footnote to "Feefawfum. I zmellz de bloodz oz an Iridzman" – "reminds us of the lines from an Irish nursery rhyme:

Fee Fee Faw Fum
I smell the blood of an English man
Be he alive or be he dead
I'll grind his bones to make my bread"

At the close of this session, I am tempted to quote Vincent Cheng's observation:

> "The elevation of an Irish-catholic colonial writer like Joyce into the pantheon of the Modernist greats – is hardly innocent but rather insidious for it shifts attention away from the manifestly political contents and ideological discourse of Joyce's works into his unarguably potent role in stylistic revolution… The net effect is to neutralize the ideological potency of Joyce's texts, to defang the bite of Joyce's politics. Perhaps only in this way could an Irishman whose works bristle with bitter resentment against the imperiums of Church, State, and Academy be appropriated and rendered acceptable, even revered, as a High-modernist icon of the Great English literary canon" (Cheng 1995:2).

I also wish to draw upon Maria Tymoczko's (1994) arguments that previous criticism has distorted our understanding of *Ulysses* by focusing on Joyce's English and continental literary sources alone. Her argument is supported by extensive research and Joyce emerges between the English and' Irish literary traditions, as

one, who like later postcolonial writers, remakes English language literature with his own country's literary lineage.

Having discussed in detail, through specific examples, the role translations could play in the rewriting of literary traditions, and in offering active resistance to stereotypical readings, I also wish to draw attention to an inevitable subsequent formulation. In a translation where the agenda is clear to the translator, the linguistic/stylistic choices play second-fiddle to the primary interpretation itself. There was a time when editions of translations could be brought out without the required attaché of a Translator's Note, but now in the field of Translation Studies, this is counted as an unwelcome habit of shirking responsibility and therefore the translator-creator has the added responsibility of playing the translator-critic, the translator-theorist, etc. In short, if I engage in the project of translating *Ulysses* into Malayalam, will the critical community spare me the question, "Why do it at all?"

NOTES

1. Cheng, Vincent l995 *Joyce, Race, and Empire* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, p.2.
2. Tymoczko, Maria l994 *The Irish 'Ulysses'* Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

Translating Violence: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *La Respuesta*

Ira Sahasrabudhe

Abstract

Called the Tenth Muse of her times, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695) is Mexico's finest Baroque Poet. Born of mixed parentage, she was a prodigy celebrated as much for her beauty as for her intellect that spanned the understanding of both the Old World and New World literature and philosophy. Most of her work was written in the Convent of Santa Paula of the Order of San Jeronimo which she entered voluntarily in order to pursue her studies. In addition to La Respuesta, she is also renowned for Primero Sueño and several other poems and theatrical works. Sor Juana wrote La Respuesta in March 1691. Referred to as the Prototype Feminist Manifesto, La Respuesta is remarkable for its defence of a woman's right to teach, study and engage herself in literary pursuits. In La Respuesta (as indeed in all her works), Sor Juana examines gender, racial and religion-based violence and counters it through subtle, elegant word games. I propose to examine this text that is truly Baroque in its shifting shadow play, and attempt to analyze how Sor Juana translates the ontological violence of a colonial patriarchal order into an elegant, powerful defence of women primarily in the New World.

Introduction

One of the most well known portraits of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was painted by Miguel de la Cabrera in 1750, just a little over fifty years from Sor Juana's death. Even now, hundred years later, Sor Juana's face beguiles and intrigues the viewer just as much as it must have her contemporaries. Her eyes look at us with the confident gaze of a woman sure of herself. Set against the somber background of her convent cell library, it is Sor Juana's face that

becomes the radiant focus point. It unites the various elements of the portrait: the sensuous red cloth covering the table, the elegant hand half turning the pages of a book lying open on it, the other hand holding up a long rosary looped around her neck, an enormous medallion below her face depicting the chastisement of women into humility, the cross on the shoulder. Her serene, confident, beautiful face unites the discordant elements: sensuality and a nun's habit, a straight confident posture and the kneeling woman on the medallion, a nun sworn to prayers and humble obedience against tomes arguing the might of reason.

One cannot help compare this portrait to the fashionable equestrian portraits and statues of the noblemen of the same period. Instead of the horse we have a high-backed chair as the seat of power and control. Reins are replaced by loops of rosary indicating control over brute nature instead of over other beings. The hand on the sword is replaced by a hand on the book. Instead of vanquished humans on the battlefield, we have serried ranks of books indicating battles of a different kind.

Called the tenth muse of her times, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648 to 1695) is Mexico's finest baroque poet, credited by Octavio Paz to have written the first intellectual autobiography of the New World. A prodigy, she was famous for her beauty as well as for her intellect that spanned the study of both the Old and the New World's literature and philosophy. Most of her work was written in the convent of Santa Paula of the order of Saint Jerome, which she joined for reasons that are not very well known. In addition to *La Respuesta*, she is also renowned for *Primero Sueño, villancicos, loas* and sonnets.

In 1690, Sor Juana presented a paper for an academic gathering at her convent. In this paper, she praised the wisdom of a Portuguese Jesuit Father Antonio de Vieyra, but sharply criticized his understanding of Christ's love for humanity in a sermon that he had preached in 1650 in Lisbon. Don Manuel Fernandez de Santa

Cruz y Sahagun, Bishop of Puebla asked Sor Juana to send him a copy of her presentation. The result was the *Athenagoric Letter*. Though it was meant for him alone, the Bishop published it at his own expense without Sor Juana's knowledge or permission. This publication was prefaced by one Sor Filotea, the feminine identity assumed by the Bishop. The preface asked Sor Juana to desist from committing heresy, stay away from secular studies, "to improve them by occasionally reading that of Jesus Christ" (xv) and submit herself to the humility required of a nun in Holy Matrimony with Christ. A friendly, sincere letter on the surface, it nonetheless dangles the sword of *Santa Oficio*, Inquisition over her head. Aware of the threat, Sor Juana adopts the same friendly, humble tone in her reply, *La Respuesta*, but uses devastating reason for arguments. Referred to as the Prototype Feminist Manifesto, *La Respuesta* is remarkable for its defense of a woman's rights to teach, study and engage herself in literary pursuits.

In this paper, I propose to analyze how Sor Juana with her characteristic baroque style engages with the violence ontogenic to her patriarchal, colonial society governed by an obssession about purity of race and religion. I propose to demonstrate how she translates a patriarchal command of submission to ecclesiastical authority into its opposite: an elegant, powerful defense of women in the New World.

Colonial Creole society of Mexico in the seventeenth century

The conquest of the Americas was a political and cultural conquest. It was a monolithic patriarchal order where the word of God translated itself into the 'righteous' sword. Both the conquistadores and the priests, who accompanied them, viewed the natives as an essentially barbaric race that needed to be 'civilized'. The ecclesiastical members had no problem distorting the word of God into an instrument of repression and death. They were reclaiming the barbaric lands and its peoples for the greater glory of the Church. The mechanism for maintaining the purity of race and

Catholicism (and its consequent superiority over the rest of humankind) that had served the monarchs so well in mainland Spain, functioned equally well in the New World. An essential violence was wrought upon the gentle tolerance preached by Jesus Christ. As in mainland Spain, His Gospel was translated into a doctrine of intolerance and violence which had disastrous consequences. Bypassing the poverty of the Franciscans, the Church owned vast tracts of land in the New World, its produce and unlike in Spain, the souls of those who worked on it. In an effort to maintain the purity of the race and religion, the *Santa Oficio* functioned as the religious watch dog. In the New World, its ruling was by the necessity of its agenda, harsher than on the mainland. Though by Sor Juana's time the obsession with building a spiritual empire on the converted souls of the Indians was being replaced by a growing Creole desire for its own *patria*, the repression was still severe. Sor Juana was up against this language of repression and death that the ecclesiastics had translated the Gospel into.

By the time Sor Juana joined the convent at the age of 19 years, the colony of Mexico had experienced a long phase of peace. War with local Indians was down to a few scattered insurgent attacks. Millenarian expectations were a thing of the past, but the *Santa Oficio* retained its oppressive control over the people. The creoles were engaged in the task of building up a civic life: cities with palaces, convents, churches and large residential areas were being consolidated. We get a picture of Mexico City in the closing decades and beginning of seventeenth century from Bernardo de Balbuena's *La Grandeza de Mexico*:

> Spirited brave horses frisky and proud,
> Houses with haughty facades in sumptuous streets,
> A thousand riders light of hand and foot,
> Sporting rich harnesses and costly liveries,
> Embroidered with pearls, with gold, and precious stones,
> Are common sights in our city squares
>
> (Lafaye 1976: 52)

The seventeenth century witnessed the dawn of Creole identity. The creoles were now firmly entrenched in the colony. The Viceroy governed the colony in the name of the King. Thanks to a long period of relative stability, the colony was witnessing a surge in liberal arts. Convents were at the heart of this surge, open as they were to the influences of the world, though they did come into conflict with the *Santa Oficio* once in a while, as was the case with Sor Juana. Debates, poetry competitions and other literary pursuits were a common occurrence among them. Jacques Lafaye observes, "Humanistic culture, with its train of references to Hellenic polytheism, was a field cultivated indeed almost exclusively, by ecclesiastics (regular as well as secular clergy)" (ibid:53).

For a woman contemplating convent life, therefore, the task may not have been as daunting as it appears. Sor Juana herself was able to enjoy literary activities in the convent, and was able to transfer herself from the strict Carmelite convent where she found life too restrictive to the more lenient one of Santa Paula of the order of Saint Jerome to pursue her literary studies. Sor Juana was a natural child. Natural children of Creole parents were accepted to a degree in the society and there were restrictions on the levels they could rise to. Sor Juana herself never makes any reference to her father. Her status as a 'natural child' must have accorded her some very uncomfortable moments. In her poem *The Trials of a Noble House* she writes,

> I was born of noble blood,
> This was the first of fortune's blows (241)

However, there is no doubt that this "first of fortune's blows" allowed her access to learning and to a convent life where she was able to produce some of her best works.

Sor Juana's religious life

Sor Juana's life in the convent was not very different from the one she would have enjoyed in her grandfather's house. Though we do not know exactly why she joined the convent, Sor Juana herself tells us she joined the convent for,

> . . . notwithstanding that the spiritual exercises and company of a community were repugnant to the freedom and quiet I desired for my studious endeavors, . . . [and] given the total antipathy I felt for marriage, I deemed convent life the least unsuitable and the most honorable I could elect if I were to ensure my salvation.
>
> (13, 17)

It must have been a bitter blow to realize that even centers of learning like convents faithfully followed the translated language of violence against its errant members, imposed more strictures and had the means to make her conform to the Community and its rules to turn her into the ideal nun: meek, submissive, devoted to the scriptures, abstaining from secular studies.

Both prior to and after joining the convent, Sor Juana had enjoyed the patronage and protection of two Viceroys: Don Antonio Sebastian de Toledo, Marquis de Mancera and his wife Leonor Carreto, and later of his successor, the Marquis de Laguna and his wife Maria Luisa. The recall of the Marquis de Laguna was of special significance. Juana had been celebrated at his court. There were also persistent rumors about a lesbian relationship between her and Maria Luisa. Inadvertently, Sor Juana became the site of a contest between the religious and secular powers. The church struck when the Marquis de Laguna was recalled to Spain. The *Athenagoric Letter* was published and Sor Juana was denounced for heresy. The injustice of it made her cry out,

> In my pursuit world, why such diligence?
> What my offense, when I am thus inclined,
> Insuring elegance affect my mind,
> Not that my mind affect an elegance?
>
> (171)

This was a dangerous period for Sor Juana. The Church had barely been able to tolerate her love sonnets and other secular works. Heresy was the last straw. Plus, her powerful protectors were no

longer around. The publication of the *Athenagoric Letter* was a double betrayal: of her confidence in the Bishop of Puebla and of her own sexuality. However, Sor Juana enters the charade and frames *La Respuesta* as a woman answering another woman. I believe she does so to be faithful to the context of the correspondence. Walter Benjamin in his essay 'The Task of the Translator' says, "the basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue." Sor Juana avoids this error by allowing the feminized masculine voice of the Bishop to frame her own feminine defense and expose the gentle face of the Gospel behind the language of control and chastisement. The result is a shifting mosaic of eloquent silences and utterances, of rhetoric and learning. Sor Juana herself planned it this way, though this intention is voiced not in *La Respuesta*, but hinted at in her *loa*, *The Divine Narcissus* that precedes *La Respuesta*:

> . . . I shall give you
> a metaphor, an idea clad
> in rhetoric of many colors
> and fully visible to view,
> this I shall show you, now I know
> that you are given to imbue
> with meaning what is visible,
> it is now clear you value less
> what Faith conveys unto your ears,
> thus it is better you assess, see
> what you can see, and with your eyes
> accept the lessons she conveys.
>
> (229-231)

The opening lines of *La Respuesta* stress her weakness, lack of wisdom and ability to answer "Your Reverence" Sor Filotea, in suitable terms. However, in the very next instance, Sor Juana quotes Saint Thomas to refer ironically to her intellect. *La Respuesta* abounds in instances in which Sor Juana affirms that "Christ [who]

goes not to rebuke but to work an act of mercy" (37), had been translated into an instrument of fear and control. This control was evident in the command of her Abbess who believed that "study was a thing of Inquisition, who [the Abbess] commanded me not to study" (39). Sor Juana translates the negative force of the Word of God making her stay away from studies both secular and religious into a force that "…willed that such an ungovernable force [her desire to study] be turned to letters and not to some other vice" (28). She states implicitly that those who commanded her to desist from studies had translated the Word of God to suit their own ends, to satisfy their craving for power. She bares the source language behind the mask of concern for well being and safety to what it really was: a more "civilized" translation of the envy the clergy felt at her success, of the panic and anger at the thought that she was escaping their rigid structure.

To support her argument, Sor Juana quotes "that politically barbaric law of Athens by which any person who excelled by cause of his natural gifts and virtues was exiled from his Republic …Those reasons have been replaced by another …which is to abhor one who excels, because he deprives others of this regard" [29].

The "clumsy" pen that can translate itself into erudite reason makes a powerful argument for secular learning and the importance of creating a space for it within the ecclesiastic structure for, as she says, "I studied all things that God had wrought reading in them, as in writing and in books, all the workings of the universe" (39). She argues that secular and religious studies cannot be translated as profane and sacred: for the eyes that can see, the profane world is but a translation of God's sacred creative impulse. Studying it and its artifacts like secular texts is as devout an activity as studying religious texts for as the Bible says, in the beginning was the Word and later, that God looked at his creation and pronounced it good.

Sor Juana: The woman in a man's church

In her *villancico Saint Catherine*, Sor Juana evokes the patron saint of the arts, Saint Catherine, to emphasize that men

should not try to limit the reason of women, for it had been granted to them by God himself.

> There in Egypt all the sages
> by a woman were convinced
> that gender is not of the essence
> in matters of intelligence
> . . . None of these Wise Men was ashamed
> when he found himself convinced,
> because in being wise he knew
> . . . it was of service to the Church
> that women argue, tutor, learn,
> for he who granted women reason
> would not have them uninformed
>
> (189-190)

Sor Juana believed that the Bishop of Puebla's response to the *Athenagoric Letter* was the result of a conscious distorted translation of the Scriptures manipulated by the patriarchal church to keep women, both religious and secular, in their place. The Church translated the courage and wisdom of women like Mary and Salome, of Mary Magdalene into a rhetoric that pronounced women as weak, emotionally unstable, vain and untamable beings who required religious rigors to transform them into creatures fit for rational society. A woman of intellect was an oddity and must be treated as such: either banished from the Republic or chastised into submission.

Sor Juana argues that Saint Paul's admonishment "Let women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted them to speak" had been translated into a rule that went against the will of God and keeps women mute, under control. Sor Juana argues that the Pauline ruling applies to

> not only women who are held to be so inept but also men, who merely for being men believe they are wise, should be prohibited from interpreting the Sacred Word

> if they are not learned and virtuous and of gentle and well inclined natures …and that *keep silence* is intended not only for women but for *all* incompetents."
>
> (49-50)

Sor Juana accuses the patriarchal Church of deliberately manipulating the broad all encompassing nature of the Pauline ruling to include "all incompetents" to signify only women, for they being women *are* incompetent.

She writes,

> I would want these interpreters and expositors of Saint Paul to explain to me how they interpret that scripture. Let women keep silence in the Church. For either they must understand it to refer to the material church . . . or to the spiritual, the community of the faithful, which is the Church. If they understand it to be the former . . . that if in fact it is not permitted of women to read publicly in church, nor preach, why do they censure those who study privately? And if they understand the latter . . . that not even in private are women to be permitted to write or study _ how are we to view the fact that the Church permitted a Gertrude, a Santa Teresa, a Santa Brigitta, the Nun of Agreda and so many others, to write? And if they say to me these women were saints . . . this poses no obstacle to my argument . . . because Saint Paul's proposition is absolute, and encompasses all women not excepting saints . . . the Church allows women who are not saints to write, for the Nun of Agreda and Sor Maria de la Antigua are not canonized, yet their writings are circulated. And when Santa Teresa and others were writing, they were not as yet canonized.
>
> (59)

What Sor Juana says here is as important as what she withholds. Silence itself becomes a language into which she

translates the persecution she feels she has been specially targeted when so many others like her had not been. It was her secular learning and works that were so threatening, not those of mystics like Santa Teresa de Avila, though even she had been accepted reluctantly in the beginning. Sor Juana argues that women have a right to teach the Divine Word in their own space, their hearths, if not publicly. Not only do they have the right, this right was supported by her own spiritual father Saint Jerome. She quotes from his letter *To Leta upon the Education of her daughter* where he instructs Leta on how she can initiate her daughter into religious studies: how a woman can instruct another in the private space of her own home. Sor Juana herself demonstrates how she found evidence of Divine Wisdom in her kitchen for instance. She laments, ". . . oh how much injury might have been avoided in our land if our aged women had been learned, as was Leta, and had they known how to instruct as directed by Saint Paul and my Father Saint Jerome" (53).

Sor Juana thus translated into powerful arguments through her 'clumsy pen' her belief that she was being persecuted not for the nature of her studies, but because she was excellent in them, because she could see through and efficiently counter patriarchal controls, because of the favor she had enjoyed under the two Viceroys, because of rumors of 'unnatural' relationship between her and Maria Luisa, because of her well argued critique of the powerful Jesuit de Vieyra's sermon, because of her 'natural' birth. She criticizes the Bishop of Puebla for mis translating her intentions in public and thus misinforming people about what she was actually saying. Sor Juana comes straight to the bone of contention:

> If the offense is to be found in the *Athenagoric Letter*, was that letter anything other than the simple expression of my feeling, written with the implicit permission of our Holy Mother Church? For if the Church in her most sacred authority, does not forbid it, why must others do so? That I proffered an opinion

> contrary to that of de Vieyra was audacious, but, as a Father, was it not audacious that he speak against the three Holy Fathers of the Church? … Is his opinion to be considered as a revelation, as a principle of the Holy Faith, that we must accept blindly? …If as the censor says the letter is heretical, why does he not denounce it? … I have not asked that he approve, as I was free to dissent from de Vieyra, so will anyone be free to oppose my opinion…
>
> (62-63)

About the criticism levelled against her for her secular poetry she remarks, "and if the evil is attributed to the fact that a woman employs them [verses], we have seen how many have done so in praiseworthy fashion, what then is the evil in my being a woman?"(65).

Conclusion

This cry is at the center of Sor Juana's life and works. The crisis of identity that it reflects is but one aspect of the larger baroque crisis. The crisis is complicated because it is refracted through the newly awakened Creole society, separated by an ocean from its parent identity. Sor Juana's writings derive from and are translations of the Old World baroque. Her life, caught in the dualities of Spanish/Indian, nun/academician, is the source text that translated itself into a baroque feminist crisis of the said/unsaid, overt/implicit criticism, reason and fear. Sor Juana is conscious that she needs to bring these dualities to some degree of equivalence, to neutralize the power structure they imply without antagonizing her opponents further. The correspondence between Sor Filotea and her is a delicate waltz of hidden meanings led by a man to which Sor Juana adds her own arabesques. She does not unmask her partner – his mask helps her assume a more intimate relationship with him. The face behind the mask threatens, but it also helps her to demonstrate her intellect.

The dialogue that Sor Juana carries out with Sor Filotea is as much a dialogue with her own mirror self, with the doubts she needs to address about her own uneasy relationship between learning and asceticism: questions like who is she? A Creolla? A feminist? An academician or a nun? A disobedient headstrong woman or one standing up for what she believed in? Do these identities need to exist independent of each other, or can they be integrated into one? If so, what is the framework in which one can do it?

These questions are important because they lie at the heart of most of our probing into our own means of resolving our identity crises. They assume an added significance if we place them in the context of language. As a means of expressing these conflicts, language plays a central role. In *La Respuesta*, the two correspondents mask their own identities to present their arguments. This reveals the nature of language itself. How often does language succeed in unmasking its intention? As such, can languages be considered truly translatable? If they are, to what extent can one stay faithful to the unseen source language, or does it always become a personal, idiosyncratic approximation to the source language? What does this do to our own identities in relation to the "intended meaning?" In its baroque-ness, *La Respuesta* leaves one with these questions even as it testifies to Sor Juana's courage to engage with them from her own precarious position in her world.

NOTES

1. All translations from Spanish to English of the original text have been taken from Margaret Sayers Peden. Transl. *Poems, Protest and a Dream: Selected Writings of Sor Inés de la Cruz.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997.

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Translation as Empowerment : Translational Fiction of Latin America

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Abstract

This paper looks at a shared space inhabited by contemporary literatures of Latin America and India generally studied in western academia under the rubric of "Third World Literature." We will, in the first place, see how the act of translation is embedded in the literary imagination of hybrid cultures arising out of colonial encounters. The issue of translation recurs constantly in contemporary Latin American fiction as a part and parcel of the problematic of writing in America arising with the discovery and conquest of the New World and the colonial encounter. The self-reflexive use of translation is a characteristic of much of contemporary writing in Latin America as it is in much of Indian writing in English. While new concepts about translation from Latin America and India have deeply influenced the theory and practice of translation and have led to a reassessment of the history of translation and postcolonial writing itself, the cultural economics of translation remains a domain still largely regulated by metropolitan centers. The paper will examine the translation practices that lie at the core of creating and regulating this domain in the context of India and Latin America.

In recent times, translation theory has been enriched by varied perspectives. One of the ways in which the role of translation has been studied is by contextualising it, not in the largely monolinguistic and monocultural situations that exist in western societies, but instead seeing it in the context of those societies that experienced colonialism, as a result of which they became spaces where literatures and languages of diverse cultures came into contact and gave rise to what G.N. Devy, in the case of Indian multilingualism, has referred to as a

"translating consciousness" (Devy 1998). These ex-colonial societies form a part of the so-called 'Third World.'

The present paper will attempt looking at a shared space inhabited by contemporary literatures of Latin America and India, a space which Aijaz Ahmed sees as arising primarily in the metropolitan University of the Western world under the rubric of 'Third World Literature' (Ahmad 1994:43). More specifically, we will look not only at translation practices that lie at the core of creating and regulating this space, but also, and perhaps more importantly, at how the act of translation is embedded in the literary imagination of hybrid cultures arising out of colonial encounters.

Translation, Conquest and Colonisation

The Spaniard Antonio de Nebrija, writing the first grammar of Spanish language in 1492 which, in fact, was the first of a modern European language, had written to the Catholic Kings as they launched their colonial project in the Americas that "la lengua es la compañera del imperio" (language is the partner of the Empire). In his study on linguistic colonialism in the new world encounter between European colonizers and native Indians, Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out the connivance of language, translation and the Empire noting that the primal crime in the New World, the first of the endless series of kidnappings of Indians, was, in fact, plotted in order to secure translators (Greenblatt 1992: 17). Vicente Rafael, in his analysis of the role of translation in articulating the relationship between Christianity and colonialism in the case of the Phillipines Tagalog society under early Spanish rule, has noted that the Spanish words, *conquista*, *conversión* and *traducción* (conquest, conversion and translation) are, in fact, semantically related.[1]

Early colonizers created the view that the inhabitants of the New World had no language at all: "God willing, when I make my departure I will bring half a dozen of them back to Their Majesties, so that they can learn to speak" (Cohen 1969: 56), thus goes the entry on that fortuitous day of 12th October, 1492 in the diary of

Christopher Colombus when he 'discovered' America. However, from placing them at the outer limits of difference, that is, denying their language or considering it deficient or defective, was the opposite conviction that there was no serious language barrier between the Europeans and Indians. The Spanish conquistadors used the latter view to intentionally falsify the narratives of early colonial encounters to make their actions appear fairer than they actually were by themselves "translating such fragments as they understood or thought they understood into a coherent story." (Greenblatt 1992: 27).[2] Eric Cheyfitz has, therefore, argued that translation was "the central act of European colonization and imperialism in America" (Cheyfitz 1991:104). It was the European colonizers who decided what would be translated or made known about the New World in those early encounters. Thus, the image of America was inaugurated by the European gaze and the history of this image as fabricated by successive colonizers has been determined not by a greater or lesser knowledge about the New World, but rather by the changes in the dominant interest of European culture. In fact, long before the Orient, that is, the East, grew as a set of alternatives to Europe and as a place to consume, and to fantasize about, America had been Europe's other. The knowledge constructed by the Empire, through travel writings, histories and chronicles of the Americas which may also be seen as acts of translation, made available the New World to the rest through 'Imperial Eyes' (Pratt 1992). Even today, as Aijaz Ahmed has pointed out literature from other zones of the 'Third World' comes to us not directly or autonomously but through grids of accumulation, interpretation and relocation which are governed from the metropolitan countries (Ahmad 1994: 44). He further points that "by the time a Latin American novel arrives in Delhi, it has been selected, translated, published, reviewed, explicated and allotted a place in the burgeoning archive of 'Third World Literature' through a complex set of metropolitan mediations" (ibid: 45).

There exists a recent but vast corpus of studies which has looked at the role of translations initiated in the period of British Orientalism in India (1792-1840) in the specific context of this kind

of imperial knowledge creating enterprise through which "the orient was 'translated' and made available for self-definition not only to the Europeans, but also to the Orientals themselves" (Kothari 2006: 9). In India, the role of translation went hand in hand with the consolidation of English language from the eighteenth century onwards as a hegemonic language which could never, however, obliterate the linguistic diversity of the subcontinent. The gradual hispanization of America, moved by the harmonizing criteria of unity, homogeneity and organicity deriving from a coherent power structure centered around what Angel Rama calls *La ciudad letrada* (1984, Republic of Letters), negated the basic heterogeneity which preceded the conquest and colonization. But, despite tremendous violence and destruction, this basic heterogeneity could not be eliminated either. Translation into (as also from) metropolitan languages remained a constant practice in what Mary Louise Pratt calls 'contact zones' and defines as the spaces where subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other and not separately but through co-presence and interaction often characterized by radically asymmetrical relations of power (Pratt 1992: 7). Such a perspective brings into play the colonized subject's engagement with the colonizer and foregrounds the interactive dimensions of colonial encounters.

Thus, in the history of translation of Indian texts into English, after the eighteenth century Orientalist phase, translations into English by British scholars declined. In the nineteenth century, it is the Indian intellectuals who began to intervene and interrupt the colonizer's version of India. Although, in most such instances, the colonized subjects undertook to represent themselves on the colonizer's own terms, the content was from the point of view of the colonized. Translation became an important tool in the anti-colonial agenda of correcting the Westerner's version of India's past. This was the context of the first English translation by an Indian – the translation of Sankara's *Vedanta* by the leading reformist Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Roy's main aim was the rebuttal of the charge of idolatry and to establish the fundamental unity of Hinduism in the

context of constant comparisons by Utilitarians such as James Mill and Lord Macaulay between a monotheistic Christianity and a polytheistic, inchoate Hinduism, with superiority being accorded to the former (Kothari 2006: 16-21). Roy was interpreting Hinduism in the light of Christianity and his translation can be considered what Pratt calls 'autoethnographic expression', that is, a text constructed by a colonized subject in response to or in dialogue with metropolitan representations. Pratt explains that "autoethnographic texts are not what are usually thought of as 'authentic' or autochthonous forms of self-representation, rather autoethnography involves partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conquerer" (Pratt, ibid). She quotes an extraordinary manuscript, a 1200-page long letter dated 1613 in Cuzco, written by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala addressed to King Philip III of Spain, found by the Peruvianist Richard Pietschmann in 1908 in the Danish Royal Archives in Copenhagen. Written in a mixture of Quechua and an ungrammatical Spanish, this letter of an unknown Andean begins by rewriting the history of Christendom incorporating Inca history and customs, followed by an account of the Spanish conquest denouncing its exploitation and abuse and finally ending with a plea to the king to consider a new form of government through collaboration of Andean and Spanish elites.

Ram Mohan Roy's translation into English of the *Vedanta* in nineteenth century India and Guaman Poma's appropriation of the Spanish chronicle form in the 17th century and his review of Inca history in a bilingual and dialogic letter are examples of transculturated texts in which lie the seeds of literary cosmopolitanism which has characterized the Latin American 'boom' novel and the Indian English novel exemplified in writers like García Márquez and Salman Rushdie.

Narrative Transculturation or the Art of Translation

In his famous and oft quoted lines, Salman Rushdie said:

> I, too, am a translated man, I have been borne across. It is generally believed that something is lost in translation; …I cling to the notion…that something can also be gained. (Rushdie 1991: 17)

A key term throughout his work, 'translation' in Rushdie, is not just an act of bearing across but of fertile coming together (Prasad 1999: 41), something that is common to all Indian English writers as the very act of writing Indian realities in the English language implies that they are writing translation (ibid). The hybridity which Rushdie conceptualizes as 'translation' is also a key element in the Latin American discussions on literary cosmopolitanism, as for example, in the works of the critic Angel Rama, whose term 'narrative transculturation' refers to that feature of the Latin American boom writing which oscillates unceasingly between the adoption of the European model and the valorization of national difference (Rama 1982: 29). Rama takes the term from the Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz who, writing in the 1940s, coined the term 'transculturation' while theorizing Cuban identity. As opposed to the hegemonic term 'acculturation' which referred to the dominated culture's effacement by the dominant culture when different cultures come into contact, Ortiz stressed the translational displacements, the cultural mutations that take place with the collision of cultures. Transculturation is not synthesis of diverse cultural elements, it is the mutability, the fluidity and uprootedness produced by cultural contact (See Ortiz 1999). In the essay titled *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar), Ortiz sets up the book's argument taking up an allegorical episode from the Spanish classic *Libro de Buen Amor*, that of the dispute between Carnival and Lent, to analyze the impact of tobacco and sugar, two leading actors in the history of Cuba. In Ortiz's allegorical scheme, sugar represents the invasion of Cuba by a 'white', exogenous culture which has, however, legitimate claims to naturalized Cubanness. Tobacco is dark and native, and represents the indigenous substratum. The counterpoint of tobacco and sugar embeds the dialectic of foreignness and autochthony that produces vernacular culture (ibid). The search for literary expression in Latin

America was the creation of a vernacular literary language. From Spain, the Latin American writer inherited a set of artistic and literary resources, a grammar of literary and linguistic usage, and the search was now for a literary vernacular from within the matrix of the mother tongue (see Pérez Firmat 1989). This was a project in translation and it is no wonder that it is not in the foundational fictions of the nineteenth century but in its literary cosmopolitanism, which was not foundational but translational, that Latin America found its most potent expression.

The issue of translation recurs constantly in contemporary Latin American fiction as a part and parcel of the problematic of writing in America, a problematic that, as we have tried to show, arose with the discovery and conquest of the New World and the colonial encounter. The self-reflexive use of translation can be seen, for example, in Borges ('Pierre Menard, author of *Quixote'*, 'Averroes' Search'), in Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) and *Explosion in the Cathedral* (1962), in Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Three Trapped Tigers* (1962), in Julio Cortazar's *Hopskotch* (1964). In García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), the act of translation is foregrounded as a vital constitutive element of the novel. The plot of the novel deals explicitly with the Buendías translating Melquíades' manuscript. The text of *One Hundred Years…* abounds with 'scenes of translation' and references to plurality of languages (González 1987: 65-79), besides the well known scene at its end when Aureliano Babilonia discovers that the language in which Melquíades has written his text is Sanskrit and finally decodes the text. In the more recent testimonial narratives, which have been seen by many as a contestatory genre to the 'boom' canon, the verbal transcribed into written is also a writing involving translation at its core. On the other hand, the Chicana feminist writers have sought in their recent writings to assert their poliglossia and reclaim La Malinche, translator and mistress to Cortés, who betrayed her people to the Spaniards by giving her tongue and her body to Cortés and, like Eve, was to blame for being the mother of the 'fallen' people (Behar 1993:19).

It is not surprising that translation is such a fundamental issue for writers in Latin America. Will we always be "but a distorted echo of what occurs elsewhere?" The state of being 'translated men' understood as mere copies or shadows of the metropolis informs *Caliban*, the seminal text of Roberto Fernández Retamar on the cultural identity of Latin America (Retamar 1979:10). In assuming Caliban as the symbol of the colonized, Fernández Retamar acknowledges that it is also an alien elaboration but a formulation that cannot be avoided. "To assume our condition as Calibán implies rethinking our history from the *other* side" (ibid: 37), ie., from the viewpoint of Caliban. It is this kind of rethinking from *el otro lado,* the other side, which has resulted in radical concepts of translation emerging from the former colonies, India and Latin America, particularly. The calibanesque/cannibalistic metaphor of devouring of western legacy to produce a synthesis of European and autochthonous elements informs the Brazilian translator Haroldo de Campos' vanguard poetics of translation as textual revitalization. Translation, says de Campos, is like a blood transfusion: the translator devours the text for his/her own nourishment and vitality. Translation, in such terms, is not servitude but a dialogue and the translator a powerful and free agent (see Vieira 1999: 97).

Translation as Empowerment

The marginalisation of translation, Bassnet and Trivedi note, begins with the advent of print capitalism in Europe and stems from notions of 'copyright' and 'ownership.' In this scheme of things Europe becomes the great Original and the colonies were therefore copies, 'translations' of Europe which they were supposed to duplicate (Bassnet and Trivedi 1999:4). While new concepts about translation from Latin America and India have deeply influenced the theory and practice of translation and have lead to a reassessment of the history of translation and postcolonial writing itself, the cultural economics of translation remains a domain still largely regulated by metropolitan centres. Who decides what will be translated, published and disseminated? As Aijaz Ahmad has noted, the archive of the so

called 'Third World' literature is largely built by the machinery of accumulation, translation and gloss for texts from Asia and Africa cranked up in the metropolitan countries (1994: 81), the case of Latin America and the Caribbean being slightly different as Spanish, Portuguese and French and English, of course, being metropolitan languages facilitates to a certain extent the circulation of these texts in metropolitan circles when compared to say, the vast body of texts written in vernacular languages in India. The translation projects sponsored by Foundations, university presses, private publishing houses and other agencies generate all kinds of classificatory practices (79).[3]

In the case of Latin America and India, translations from and into Indian languages and Spanish show a revealing trend. In Spain, Indian Writing in English is fairly available in translation into Spanish, thanks to the enormous industry of translation in the West. The other translations that are published in Spain are largely of texts the 18th and 19th century British and mainly German Orientalists had made known and thus merely redeploy the orientalist disregard for India's present and satiate the West's thirst for an exotic spiritual India. In her introduction to Felix Ilárraz's translation into Spanish of Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*, the then Ambassador of Mexico to India, Doña Graciela de la Lama mentions that while preparing the Bibliografía Afroasiática (Afroasiatic bibliography) for El Colegio de México, she had noted that there were very few translations into Spanish of modern Indian literature (Introduction 1981: ix). She further noted that the Mexican philosopher and writer José Vasconcelos had translated the works of Rabindranath Tagore but that Tagore's fame did not create a reach for Indian literature in general, or other writers of Bengali nor those of other regional languages of India. It was to correct this situation and let Latin Americans have a better knowledge of contemporary Indian literature that after *Tughlaq,* the Centre for AfroAsian Studies of El Colegio de México did undertake some translations, notable among which is the anthology of stories of Saadat Hasan Manto published in 1996. The list of Latin American works translated into Indian

languages is woefully short and if one takes into consideration that Latin American fiction has invited world wide attention, it is surprising that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* of García Marquez has been the only Latin American novel translated into Hindi till date.[4] Given this situation, one may have to conclude that the story of 'orientalist' translations is being repeated in a neo-colonial world.

I would have concluded this paper with such a positioning but for a recent happy discovery. During the course of my readings of women writing in India, I was looking at Dalit women autobiographies. Since Dalit writing is particularly well documented in Marathi, I was trying to locate English translations of autobiographies by Dalit women in Marathi. I found that Baby Kamble's Marathi work, *Jena amach* is still not available in English. My colleague, who is undertaking the English translation to be published shortly, gave me a Spanish translation of this work done in Uruguay titled *Nuestra Existencia*.[5] I read the work in the Spanish version as it is inaccessible to me in the Indian language it is written in, i.e, Marathi. A Marathi work of a Dalit woman, not available in English translation, read by an Indian in its Spanish translation has affirmed once again my conviction as a translator that translations can create spaces where foundations for sustainable solidarities can be built.

NOTES

1. *Conversion*, Rafael states, refers to the act of changing a thing into something else, and is commonly used to denote the act of bringing someone over to a religion or practice, but it also has the connotation of translation.

2. The most glaring example of the latter view was the Requerimiento, a legal document which was read out aloud to the newly encountered peoples in the New World. The document demanded obedience to the Catholic Kings as rulers of the Indies by virtue of donation of the pope, and permission

for the religious fathers to preach the true faith. If these demands were promptly met, many benefits were promised, but if there should be refusal or malicious delay, the consequences were made perfectly clear (Greenblatt: 29). The Requerimiento glossed over the biblical account of the variety of languages and assimilated the Indians into utter likeness doing away with the need for translation.

3. It is to be noted that translation from one Indian language to another and from Indian languages into English is a different case, but as soon as we talk of translation from and into Indian languages and foreign languages, the situation is quite different.

4. The translation into Hindi has been done by the author of this paper. This translation was undertaken directly from Spanish. The genre of poetry has been more fortunate and poets like Pablo Neruda, Gabriela Mistral, Cesar Vallejo as well as several contemporary poets have been translated and published in magazines, anthologies as well as individual volumes.

5. I thank Prof. Maya Pandit, EFL University, Hyderabad, whose translation of Baby Kamble's autobiography is now due for publication soon, for providing me with a copy of the Spanish version, La vida de una mujer intocable: Nuestra existencia

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Writing and Translation: Perspectives from Latin America

T. Srivani

Abstract

Recent translation theories and the discussion around them have benefited from postcolonial perspectives. Latin American perspectives on translation have now been circulating in such discussions. This paper will attempt to present the views offered on translation by Latin American writers such as ***Jorge Luis Borges*** *and* ***Octavio Paz*** *as well as the perspectives coming from Brazil on* ***antropophagia.*** *Borges views all literature as a form of translation while Octavio Paz argues that to learn to talk is to learn to translate. Both writers make an extraordinary effort to comment on translation which seems to form an important part of their views on writing itself. The* ***antropophagia*** *school views translation as devouring of an original to produce a new text. All these perspectives call for detailed attention as, in the Indian writings on translation, these perspectives have either remained marginalized or have been scattered as sporadic references. Latin American views on translation need to be looked at closely to see if one can talk of a Third World paradigm as regards translation theory.*

When Hernan Cortes, the Spanish conquistador, entered Mexico, his dialogue with native Indians was routed through Malinche. Malinche was a native Aztec Indian woman who was sold off as a slave to Cortes and later became his mistress and interpreter who facilitated communication between the Spanish masters and the subjugated native community. There is a hierarchy inherent in this linguistic exchange which is haunting the discourse on identity and literary works in Latin America till date. The Adamic function that the conquistador performed in Latin

America annihilated the possibility of a two-way translation. During the colonial period in Latin America, translation was an act of subjugation. The context of translation studies has to be seen within this frame work.

In this paper I make an attempt to look at some theoretical aspects on how the act of translation is perceived by some Latin American Writers. I am going to focus on basically two writers: Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina 1899-1986) and Octavio Paz (Mexico, 1914-1998) and have a brief look at the perspectives from Brazil. Both, Borges and Paz write as well as translate and have, in various contexts, discussed translation.

Translation acquires significance especially with reference to Latin America as both colonization and de-colonization have had significant social, political, cultural and economic consequences. Some of these have reshaped the definition of the term 'Translation', along with different literary and linguistic movements. As we know, the debate on what exactly translation is, is still on. Since the 1990s, there has been a cultural turn in translation studies whereby neither the word nor the text but the culture becomes the 'operational' unit of translation (Lefevere and Bassnett 1990: 8). (This is impugned in Giridhar's paper in this issue though.) As Kothari notes, while Sturrock (1990) and Talal Asad (1986) see ethnography as an act of translation, Tejaswini Niranjana (1992) and Eric Cheyfitz (1991) employ it as a metaphor of the Empire. Their postcolonial writings focus on understanding in equalities and slippages in colonial relationships through translation (Kothari 2006). These post-colonial definitions of translation, arising basically from Asia and Europe should be seen alongside how the act of translation is perceived in another part of the world, i.e. Latin America. The writers that I am going to discuss prefigure this cultural turn in their views on translation.

Daniel Balderston (2002), in the introduction to his recent book *Voice-Overs*, states that translation has become both a mechanism and a metaphor for contemporary translational cultures

in Americas. Except for Brazil, the entire south and central Americas have Spanish as the official language and translation continues to be one of the main tools and defining images of Latin American cultures in its relation to world cultures.

Translation and the colonial enterprise

Translation went hand in hand along with conquest in Latin America. Colonialism imposed Spanish to transcribe native languages.[1] Talking about the translation practices historically one could say it is "one and multiple," a history which is a reflection of one cultural unity based on essential paradoxical relation between hispanism and indigenism. The figure of Malinilli Tenepal, the Aztec Indian referred to above by her better known name of Malinche, is a symbol of 'mestizaje' (hybridity) of the cultures in Latin America, being one of the first American interpreters. When Columbus first landed on the American lands he came across thousands of languages among them were Azteca, Maya-quiche, Nauhatl, Chibcha, the Tupi-guarani, Aymara Quechua and Araucana. (Rosenblat 1984: 72-74). Gradually Spanish was imposed in whole of the continent.[2]

The role of lettered class, regardless of race, incorporated translation as practice and as a method of analysis. The work that Calvo considers as the "major efforts of translation of the Catholic church in America in the colonial period" are the catecismo of the Christian doctrine, a trilingual doctrine in Spanish, Quechua and Ayrmara published by Autorio Ricardo in 1584 (Calvo 2002:113).

The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Guaman Poma de Ayala present mestizo and indigenous examples of cultural 'interpreters' of the colonial experience. Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was a famous Peruvian poet. He was born of Spanish aristocratic and Inca royal roots while Guaman Poma de Ayala was an indigenous Peruvian who became proficient in Spanish language at a very young age and served as a Quecua translator.The first law that came into force to

teach Spanish to the Indian children dates back to 1550 (Solano 1991: 17) and subsequently the American languages were declared illegal by Carlos III (Solano 1991: 257).

It is also interesting to note that like the already quoted case of Malinche, the conquerors married the indigenous women who were their interpreters. As stated by Francisco de Solano (1975), the Indian or the Spanish interpreters represent the first step of the approximation of two worlds, or one of the 'axes of acculturation'. Many books in French, Italian English were read in the new world with an avidity which was thought an obstacle for Christianization and therefore it resulted with the extinction of the book (the burning of the Maya codes perpetrated by Diego de Landa in 1529) which Delisle and Woodsworth call it a serious act of 'anti-translation' of the new world. The end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the XIX century acquire intellectual prominence in the whole of Latin America.

With the consolidation of the Republic, the activity of translation also got consolidated from the second half of the XIX century. Translation has an important role in the definitive implantation of Latin American nations and defined their development. It was also a central character in this continent which had several indigenous languages and gained lot of importance in the period after independence. Many French and English works were translated. Many Latin American writers took up translation, prominent among them is the famous Venezuelan Andres Bello. Cuba counts on the famous writer, philosopher and translator Jose Marti (1853-1895) who translated Antiguedades Griegas, of J.H Mahaffy. He is also known as a critic of the translations.

To conclude one can say that the history of translation in Latin America is anchored in the region's colonial past and its Post-Independence process of developing and redefining cultural identitites. The contests over languages and cultural identity that still

rage in contemporary writing derive from these early nation building struggles.

Two translators: Borges and Paz

Jorge Luis Borges

Jorge Luis Borges the Argentinian poet/writer is more widely recognized for his fiction than for his views on translation. Borges introduces himself as the translator of Franz Kafka, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and Henri Michaux. Borges' translations and his reflections on translations are invariably at the core of his creative process. Borges views all literature as a form of translation.

His observations on translations came in as early as 1930s. There is a significant shift in his views on literature since the 1930s which also reflect in his views on translation. He abandoned two positions he had considered seriously and in some cases defended vehemently. The first is the idea that literature is fundamentally autobiographical and that its ultimate significance is lost on those who ignore the circumstances of individual authors. The second which he sometimes related to the first, is the view that literature is the ex-pression of nationality or a national character. However, he never abandoned altogether the view that personal circumstances can be a relevant factor in the discussion of a literary work, but since the 1930s the individuality of the writer played an ever diminishing role in the observations on literature, especially when compared to the impersonal and collective efforts of the literary experience.

The fidelity debate that took place in translation has a different angle with respect to Borges' views. In normal practice it was argued that the translation is not faithful to the original but Borges affirmed, in earnest, that an original can be unfaithful to a translation. Borges would often protest, with various degrees of irony against the assumption-ingrained in the Italian adage *traduttore traditore*- that the translator is a traitor to the original (Kristal 2002:1). Translation according to him enriches or surpasses

the original. A good translator, according to him, might choose to treat the original as a good writer treats the draft of a work in progress.

Talking about translatability and untranslatability, he discusses two main aspects – "the language of ideas and the language of the emotions", the former he considers as translatable and the latter as un-translatable (ibid.: 4). A good poem therefore according to him is untranslatable as it involves not only transfer of meaning but also the intonation and the rhythm of that language.

Borges like Steiner believes that a translator can bring out the hidden subtleties of the original text. He encouraged the translators of his poems to take liberties. He follows Quine in claiming that any given text can have an indefinite number of valid and even contradictory translations.

Borges closely followed the Mathew Arnold and Francis E. Newmann debate and formulates his definition on translation. He defines translation as a long experimental game of chance played with omissions and emphasis which involves choice, chance and experimentation (Kristal 2002:18).

These views on translation were expressed by him in two of his major essays *Homeric Versions* and *Thousand and one nights*. In his essay on the *Arabian Nights*, Borges also contends that a translator has an option to interpolate passages into a text that are not in the original. He coins the term *Buenas apocrifidades* which Esther Allen improves with the phrase '*fine apocrypha*' to refer to the additions with which a translator can supplement the original (ibid.:26). He maintained that some interpolations in a translation may leave the content of a work untouched because they are implicit yet unstated in the original.

Having seen Borges' observations on translation we can say that his views come basically more from his own experiences as a translator than from a very critical point of view.

For Borges a translation is not inherently inferior to its original. He further feels that a translation enhances the work of the original. Most of his writings can be seen as responses to the works he already translated. For him a translation is as creative a process as writing. In short, Borges' translations offer insights into his creative process, and into workings of his imagination. We could sum up with a quotation "Perhaps the translator's craft is more subtle, more civilized than the writer: the translator obviously comes after the writer. Translation is a more advanced stage." (see Levine 1991:1)

Octavio Paz

Octavio Paz, the Mexican writer, poet and Nobel Laureate too has translated many literary works and has discussed translation. For him to learn to talk is to learn to translate. He compares translation to that of child language acquisition. He doesn't differentiate much between the two processes. For him a translator is doing the same as the child when he asks his mother the meaning of a word, what he really asking is to translate to his language the unknown term. The same according to him happens between two languages. In his essay on *Traduccion literature y literalidad*, he says, it is thanks to translation that we are aware of how our neighbours think and talk differently. The world is seen as a collection of heterogenities on one hand and on the other as a superposition of texts, each one slightly different from the earlier: translations of translations of translations (Paz 1980:13).The diversities existing in the world he feels encourage the translator to translate more and more. His opinions on translations have influences of history, philosophy and linguistics. The text is the central theme in his discussions on translation. No text for him is entirely original, because the language itself, in its essence is already a translation, firstly from the non verbal world and later each sign and each sentence is the translation of another sign and another sentence. He further adds that each text is unique and

simultaneously is the translation of other text. Thus Paz sees the text as the subject of translation.

He explains further in an interview with Edwin Honig that the text as a text is lost in translation. But the text as a poem is not lost. What he says is that it is changed, transformed… perhaps. Text produces the poem: a set of sensations and meanings. The texts are signs – written or oral, they are material things, you can see them or hear them and they produce meanings. While discussing literal translation which in Spanish is significantly *Servil*, he doesn't view it impossible and adds that it is not a translation but a device which helps us to read the text in original. The translation is just a transformation of the original. These literary transformations are operations that come under the Jakobsonian modes of ex-pression: Metonymy and Metaphor. (Paz 1980:14).

He continues his argument saying that in prose the function of signs is mainly to produce meanings: in poetry the material properties of the signs, especially the sounds are also essential. Both Borges and Paz who are poets as well, express their anguish about the translation of poetry. "In poetry you cannot separate the sign from the meaning. Poetry is the marriage of the sensual or the physical half of language with its ideal or mental half."

Translation, he defines, is an art of analogy, an art of finding correspondences, an art of shadows and echoes. In the same interview with Honig, Paz talks about three kinds of translation. One is literal translation, which is conceivable and useful in learning a language. Then you have literary translation, where the original is changed in order to be more 'faithful' and less 'literal'. And then you have another kind, imitation, which is neither literal nor faithful. In the discussion with Honig he maintains that translation is dynamic. He feels that a translator while repeating what is in the original should also invent something new. Translation is thus only one degree of balance between repetition and invention, tradition and creation.

Talking about the practice of translation he says in the first place one must love the text, then one must know his own language and also have a good knowledge of the text he is translating. Apart from other essential things for translation one should also have inspiration which should come from within.

Translation and creations are operations that are like twins. His views on translations were formulated while translating works of the famous poets of the occident. To conclude, Paz honors the process of translation as a different but still 'original' creative activity.

Translation Today in Latin America

Translation is viewed radically different in the Brazilian school of thought. The emergence of *Manifesto Antropofago* in the 1920 by Oswald de Andrade where the activity of translation is cannibalistic, has given a new dimension to the theories on translation.

Antropofagia has developed into a very specific national experimentalism, a poetics of translation, an ideological operation as well as a critical discourse theorizing the relation between Brazil and external influences increasingly moving away from an essentialist confrontation toward a bilateral appropriation of sources and the contamination of colonial/ hegemonic univocality.

Antropofagia discusses translation in terms of a dialogue and defines it both as donor and receiver of forms. Haroldo de Campos, the best known theorist of translation discourses on antropofagia, in his essay *Mephistofaustian Transluciferation* calls "the translator of poetry" a choreographer of the internal dance of language and opposes the straight ahead goal of a word–to-word competition, the pavlovian bell of the conditioned feed back to what he advocates: to hear the beating of the wild heart of the art of translation, regarded as a form, poetic translation, transcreation, 'hypertranslation' (Vieira 1999:96-98).

In the opening plenary lecture in a conference organized by the Universities of Oxford and Yale in honor of Haroldo de Campos on his seventieth birthday, Brazilian literature as well as other Latin-American literatures, he argues, was born under the sign of the Baroque, as such a non-origin, non-infancy. The Brazilian/Latin American literary nationalism, he says, should be seen not as formation but as transformation, hybridism and creative translation.

Conclusion

Both Borges and Paz's comments on translation have arisen from their actual practice of translation as a craft. Translation is, for them, a creative activity as worthy as an original. It is also enriching in the sense of a creative process conditioned by a hybridized culture which has oral indigenous tradition and the colonial written influence, the outcome of which leads to transcreation. We can thus see that their views on translation prefigure the 'cultural turn' in translation which was debated in the 90s.

Borges views all literature as a form of translation while Octavio Paz argues that to learn to talk is to learn to translate. Both writers make an extraordinary effort to comment on translation which seems to form an important part of their views on writing itself. The Antropophagia School views translation as devouring of an original to produce a new text. All these perspectives call for close attention in order to see if one can talk of a Third World paradigm about translation theory as they bear a close similarity to post colonial views on translation arising mainly from India.

NOTES

1. Vicente L. Rafael states that the Spanish words *conquista* (conquest), conversion (conversion) and *traduccion* (translation) are semantically related. *Traducir* (to translate) is synonymous with conversion (to convert) just as it can also refer to *mudar* (to change) and *trocar* (to exchange).

2. The intersection of languages is a hallmark of postcolonial literature, according to William Ashcroft, and Latin American writing clearly demonstrates this distinguishing feature. Whether or not one considers Latin America to have been 'colonial' or 'postcolonial' is a big question as its literature does not exhibit many of the characteristics of 'postcolonial' writings that theorists have studied in writing from India and Africa (Bhaba, Triffin et al).

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Redefining the *Karna Parampara Katha* via Intralingual Translation

Sujatha Vijayaraghavan

Abstract

The karna parampara katha or the orally narrated tale is a semi literary genre, which as a simple anecdotal artifact predates all written literature. Generally classified as part of the Little Canon, there is now a wide spread interest, to preserve it in print, as a vital part of oral literature, both through the mediation of individual and state agencies. The status of oral literature has almost always been lower than that of the genres written in the vernacular style, which again rank below written/print literature although oral arts still continue to form a part of daily life activities in many non-professional ways, through folksongs, work-songs, season-songs, marriage-songs, jokes, riddles, proverbs and sayings, songs for mourning, lullaby and so on, even to this day. Indian oral traditions like the Chinese and African have a long history, and the oral canon forms a vital part of the people's tradition, being handed down orally from generation to generation. The following paper is an attempt to problematise its generic taxonomy in the process of translating it into the print medium and eventually to the electronic mode.

I

The orally narrated tale shows the characteristics of everyday speech as well as the innovative poetic features, to some measure, of the language, in which it is narrated. It is perhaps the only literary genre which practically anyone can be a creator or receiver of. It is enough that one is able to speak and is even a little imaginative, to tell a tale. Literacy is imperative only when the language has to be used in the written mode or when it has to be

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used in specific professional situations, though story telling is treated professionally in village communities to narrate myths, religious texts or to convey a socially relevant message. In lay terms, a katha is a fruitful and compulsive area of human interaction, fruitful because it is always contextualized and prompted by the need of the situation, compulsive because most human utterances are compressed anecdotes balancing the said on the unsaid implying metonymic extensions. In critical terms, for a linguist it is an exercise in stylistics and poetics via the linguistic sign; to a narratologist it is a speech utterance coalescing the authorial utterance, the authorial utterance facilitating the character's utterance and besides these two, a third sub-textual utterance that is generally the most vital although often the most silent of all the utterances in the oral text; to a cultural critic the oral tale's third sub-textual utterance which is unsaid but emanating through the text would be the most definite clue to the extra-literary, cultural environment of the text and as such every text would be an ideological form. The tale existing in the absence of a fixed text that could be sought for verification and authentication expresses itself through a fluid and incessantly improvised form. It invokes a diversity of areas and a range of disciplines, overlapping into ethics, philosophy, semiotics, cultural studies, anthropological studies, feminist studies and also political science.

Each of these areas into which it extends problematises its literary taxonomy as it enters into the print mode and finally into the electronic mode. Distinguishing the 'Ear (karma) Tradition (parampara) Story (katha)' from other forms like the folk song and folklore, it can be identified largely as a domestic and social artifact that is more personal and communal, reflecting the aspirations and anxieties of the individual and the community that produces it. Traditionally, tales that are narrated especially for children, converge, across the world on the recurrence of the same key terms that are relevantly individulised through region and culture specific apparatus. Thus when we identify idiosyncracies (such as region and culture specific items) it suggests at once that these function through

idiolects, dialects and a wide heteroglossic range of intra- linguistic variations.

Of these characteristics, the heteroglossia or the variedness of different varieties within a single linguistic code particularly marks the orally narrated tale as a special speech-act and speech-action genre, co-opting the listener(s) into the act of the narration. The phenomenon of narration and that of listening/comprehension is as much of prime focus for the present argument, for the psycho-social environment wherein the orally narrated tale is generated, plays a significant role in deciding the totality of its functions: i.e. its contexts that prompt its emergence, the nature of the tale, the role of the narrator, modes of narration, the psycholinguistic proximity of recognizable language features, the relationship between the narrator and the listener and the nearness of the chief characters in the tale through the channel of the community's cultural traditions. All tales function in the spheres of potential and actualized meanings. So although each tale may be an utterance specific to its moment of production, it is at the same time a receptive point of entry to a chain of stories. Oral tales are also a part of a long evolution of social and domestic ethics. Thus the aesthetic relation the listener has towards the hero is considered as a means of investigating the ethical implications, both individual and social. Such a poetics of the orally narrated tale makes it a region of experience where the inner experience and individual consciousness of the child meet the outside world through the concreteness of all the semiotic signs in the tale, such as words, gestures, the imagined presence of unknown objects and the real presence of known aspects and situations of life. The fact that demands attention therefore is the position of the language of the narrative itself and its use, which makes the narration an act that always comprises at least one more individual apart from the narrator. For example, the *Villupaatu,* literally 'the bow-song' is one such popular genre in oral literature in Tamil. Still in practice during village festivals, the singer(s) uses an upturned

bow to the ends of which bells are tied to keep the beat and rhythm. The performance is always threaded on a central tale that is sung mostly, although the performer may speak a few words in between if he aims at teasing a response from the audience. The singer plucks at the string with a small stick and sings legends from the religious epics, often interspersing it with socially relevant messages. The audience participates as a chorus, saying "Yes!Yes!" to rhetorical questions put to them by the lead singer, thereby becoming creators and the singer(s) become listeners when the audience participates through choric responses. Thus there is no formal division between the artist and his audience. These performances use basic texts orally inherited and improvise upon it from time to time depending upon the need of the hour. *Villupaatu* performances are usually held in the evenings and late into the night, appealing to the leisurely mood of the audience during annual festivities, especially in the post harvest season. Such immediate moments of production and exchange determines a style that is very close to the vernacular, everyday mode and the exchange between the singer and the audience very matter of fact and reliant on the use of parataxis as an effective linguistic tool.

Of course, the presence of the oral tale specially constructed for children, when framed into print, becomes the most sensitive index to the changing patterns of domestic structures and communal life. Tales narrated to children reflect domestic hierarchies and extended families. Tales can only be produced in some amount of leisure for it comes alive every time someone narrates it and when someone listens to it. More than any other literary genre it demands an immediate and continuous interaction with both the text and its narrator. So much so, that whether the tale is narrated to the child or whether he or she narrates it, the child becomes at all points of narration, both the author by simultaneous conceptualization and hero by simultaneous enactment of the events of the narrative. Fear, admiration and a host of other emotions permeate the narrative act. Apart from this a tale that is associated with, for example the

grandmother, occupies a special identity in the child's psyche that would probably not be exactly similar to the identity of the tale if it were to be read from a book, although it could impress very deeply upon the young reader's mind. So reorganization of extended and branched families into smaller nuclear ones does bear directly upon the emergence and continuation of this particular literary genre.

Locating the domestic tale in the contemporary literary map, especially in print, ensues the erasure of intra-linguistic richness, at all levels: lexical usages, phonological transitions, freedom in the use of surface grammar rules and more than anything else the open-endedness towards literary rejuvenation and repletion. Telling tales is a natural human act. When a child carries a tale, or imaginatively interprets a situation it is also in fact performing an exercise in the oral tradition of story telling, in spite of the moral censure it evokes. This is because the story-teller almost always wants to tell *something* to the listener. When the teller/narrator narrates a story what he does is far different from the writer of the story who sets out to create a piece of literature. The speech act combining with individual proficiency of 'telling' accesses the twists and turns of everyday speech and the more colloquial and close is the tale to day-to-day reality, the more effective is the presence of the flavor of the spoken language in all its variations. Freed from restraints of societal norms of speech, the teller of the oral tale has the license to create his own grammar for his narration. Combining with extra-lingual skills such as gesture, intonational variations, use of regional registers, idiosyncrasies in pronunciation and the judicious use of humor, the teller of the tale stretches the parameters of his artifact in such a way that finally the right use of a language becomes only one of its uses. Therefore the links and dependencies between the utterance and the language is never a simple one to one relationship. Rather, it becomes complex and dialogic.

An orally narrated tale keeps changing from time to time, absorbing the social ethos and events of the age when it is told with the imaginary and linguistic warp and woof available to the teller.

The changes in the details of the tale may be dictated to, by contextual needs: individual, social and political. Thus by its very nature this kind of a narrative is concentrically intertextual, moving backwards and forwards in its borrowings and yet keeping to itself. This flexibility which constantly opens up new shades of meaning every time it comes into being therefore makes the same story signify new meanings of the older story or even create radically opposite meanings. Therefore the older the story the more complex it's 'history' and the older the culture the more the possibilities of dialogic subversions.

The often parodic function of the orally narrated tale breaks down the divide between high and low cultural forms. It maintains a continual and effective critique of those very social aspects and situations to which it is indebted for its emergence. A tale could be, in this parodic sense, kind of a dialogue about the discourses that circulate in one's society. It is a moment of the carnivalesque[1], self-conscious in its narrativization. Its relation to the mass especially distinguishes the orally narrated tale from the printed tale which is more exclusive and dependent on a certain amount of aesthetic formalism. The listener of the orally narrated tale is directly complicit with the ideologies that determine our sense of reality and our self critique of it.

For purposes of illustrating the contention stated above, some examples are taken from the matrix of *karna parampara katha* (which forms the core of oral literature along with the ballads) that circulate in the Tamil language. A remarkable feature of the Indian tradition (I am using words like 'tradition' and 'culture' only functionally and not in any nuanced way) is that no matter how philosophically grand an idea, it has its critique in one form or another. Every system of thought, one could say almost every seminal idea has a counter-system of thought, a counter-concept. The orally narrated tale excels in this function. Whatever the system of thought, or counter-thought, it targets foundational structures. Here are some illustrations.

Perhaps nowhere in the world does the guru or the master occupy so much of the life-space and convictions of a people as he does in this country. Yet his teachings are constantly subverted with a vigor that sometimes outweighs the original force which builds them up. The guru himself as a person becomes the butt of personal jokes and caricaturing. The orally narrated tale has often taken care of this subversive act, provoking the listener/(now) reader to give the matter a second thought, as it were. A popular oral collect in Tamil known as the *Paramartha Guru Kathaigal*[2] is fully devoted to puncturing the master-figure and the very idea of the teacher-disciple or the 'guru-shishya parampara' concept. These stories are known widely are may be cited sarcastically in every day speech to drive home a point[3]**.** A loosely sequential string of stories, this hilarious 'text' has six central characters, the master and his five disciples. The master is known as the Paramartha Guru or One who is the Embodiment of the Supreme Truth (*parama+artha+guru*). As such, the truth that he is a manifestation of, is never understood through the tools of the mind and intelligence, for it is The Truth that must by its own definition, remain ideational with even the idea an approximated and hypothetical necessity. This means that the master is infallible in his most supreme wisdom, so much so, that any question of doubt is ruled out altogether. After all, how can one question that which cannot be known? Thus acquitted of his shaming, the master wades through one escapade after another without a stain to his holy name. To begin with what makes the Paramartha Guru a master is that he has a following of five disciples (who are types or flat characters). They are given names such as Moorkhan, Matti, Muttal and so on. They behave as their names suggest because where the fool plays the wise man, the disciples must in reality be fools. Although there are variations of these tales from one version to another, by and large they are similar.

In a well-known episode, the disciples set out to get a horse for their aging master to ride on during his travels. They are conned

by an unlettered peasant who sells them a pumpkin, at a very high price, assuring them that it is a through-bred horse's egg. The disciples carry it slowly and carefully, stopping often in their journey so that the colt inside the egg is not traumatized by the movement. During one such interval, they rest the pumpkin in the thick foliage of a low tree and sit down beneath it. A stiff wind topples the pumpkin into a bush behind where a hiding rabbit takes off in a terrified sprint, followed at once by the disciples who wish to retrieve the escaping colt. But the story does not stop here as a mere parody of foolishness. The disciples return empty-handed to the master and narrate their misadventure. The master is at first disappointed but soon recovers to pronounce philosophically that it was a good thing after all. He argues that if a prematurely born colt is so high-spirited then what would the nature of the adult horse be, not to speak of the plight of the rider upon it? The disciples are consoled when they see the matter in a new light. But the listener/reader is puzzled by the ending of the story. In accepting the ridiculous Pumpkin Horse-egg adventure, the master shares the idiocy of his disciples to the full and thereby becomes the complete subversion of the traditional concept of the master. But in suddenly taking shelter under a fairly sound system of logic, he disturbs the subversion that he represented only a moment ago. So a simple tale that ran counter-wise seems to become complementary. At the same time the extraordinary use to which the system of logic has been teased into is no small matter. The tale can therefore turn back on itself while turning things around thus leaving its meaning indeterminate. The conceptual defiance must come to its logical finish if the tale is to make its point. As it happens in this tale, this collection poses several impossibilities only because our sense of the possible is disturbed. A well injected vein of satire on several cardinal philosophical concepts runs through story after story. This tale laughs at the voluminous exegeses on cosmogenesis. At the same time the language and principles of logic demystify themselves by their employment in incongruous settings.

In another tale which is well known all over India, the Paramartha Guru and his five disciples cross a river in spate. On reaching the other bank the master counts the others leaving himself out. The others do the same. Always failing to count up to six the whole group collapses on the river bank weeping for the comrade lost in the waters. A passing fisherman enquires and sizes up the situation. He then lines up the six fools and instructs them to shout their serial number as he gives them a hard knock on the head, thus reuniting the band once again. A grateful master pays the fisherman a large amount of money. Actually, apart from its subversive effect, this story has been used in many folk tales to highlight human being's failure to see and note the obvious. Generally used to illustrate the inability of the individual to know his self, in its metaphysical sense, in this story, the fisherman uses the same kernel of the story to help the master to recover the lost student not through any elaborate metaphysical teaching but by a quicker and more direct method. This is what makes for the use of the tale in one context and another. Much of the satire lies not only in the method of retrieval but also on what is retrieved. In the former it is the wisdom of the self and in the latter, it is the foolish disciple. Moreover, as it happens in the case of the Pumpkin Horse-egg story, here also, the outsider figure who arrives into the context is the total opposite of the master–disciple group. If they represent wisdom he is either a simple villager or an illiterate. Yet it is he who finally gets the better of them. One could give a number of examples where the narrative imagination affects this kind of a defamiliarization.

The carnivalesque success of the tale and its enjoyment lies in the shared knowledge both the narrator and the listener have of the traditional semantic field of meaning of the words, as well as its subversive and creative possibilities. However the multiple meanings can never be seen as separate entities, because for each to function effectively the other must act as a foil. Therefore the orally narrated tale exploits the inherently dialogic nature of words, here

for instance 'master', specifically appealing to the regional renderings of words at the semantic and more importantly the phonetic levels. Dialogic readings of the word impressing upon lived experience make the tale possible, providing, that the cultural context allows this alliance. So using the same set of words to decode known systems of thought, new discourses come into being, always questioning the neutrality of words. Vinay and Darbelnet encourage the translator (here the intralinguistic translator) to think of meaning as a cultural construction and to see the close connection between the linguistic signs and processes and the metalinguistic information that are outside the text[4].

One can think of a number of collections of the orally narrated tale constructed like the *Paramartha Guru Kathaigal* using binary divisions, like the Akbar-Birbal tales or the Tenali Ramakrishna–Krishnadevaraya tales. While history texts accord Akbar a high rank among the Moghuls, substituting the claim with reference to the efflorescence in art and learning, it is always Birbal who gets the better of the two, offering commonsensical solutions to tricky situations. Similarly in the Tenali Ramakrishna–Krishnadevaraya tales, the court jester outwits not only his patron but all the scholars of the court. He has the special gift of fathoming a riddle or revealing what is hidden from sight and understanding. Some of the finest specimens of temple art and architecture in south India were the product of Krishnadevaraya's zeal and he was himself a poet of repute. But in every encounter with Tenali Ramakrishna, he eats the bitter fruit. In such tales it is not the king who is the hero but the *vikata kavi* or the *vidushaka*[5] whose special talent is his use of language in newer and unprecedented ways. The king's existence is reduced to textual remains along side the official versions, always in opposition with the former. While the official canons of history define exhaustively the life and achievements of legendary heroes and kings, the orally narrated tale upsets conventional hierarchies, reads history cynically and redefines categories. Thus a historic figure like Krishnadevaraya exists only as a residue in the stories and

legends about him in the genre where he is more human and closer to life when compared to his presence in the impersonal official version.

Institutions are also pulled down at times. Recall for instance, tales celebrating the wisdom of Mariyadai Raman. A runaway peasant boy, Raman emerges as the finest judge of the Chola kingdom. He assesses every case with exceptional insight and objectivity which is why he is known as Mariyadai Raman. Since law and justice are generally incompatible, Raman posits an alternative figure to the judge in his society. In these tales the corrupt judges of the court stand in opposition to Raman who does not have scholarship but has a deep sense of righteousness. The oral tale becomes an alter world where things are set right in a language that is known to the common man.

In all the three collections mentioned so far, humor laces every episode pungently and while serious reversals are effected, no ill will is meant. The orally narrated tale is irrepressible and nothing contains it. The teller of the tale stands outside the language he uses and manipulates the speech of the characters to project his own subversive intentions in a refracted way. The comic, ironic utterances of parody create the 'double-voiced discourse' which serves at the same time two speakers, expressing the direct intention of the character within the fictional context and the refracted intention of the story-teller. In carnivalised literature such as the orally narrated tale, nothing is a high or true utterance, neither is that low and false. Signifiers such as 'master', 'king' and 'philosopher', to refer to the examples given above, are released from official contextualization and regenerated by the author through the characters so that, what results is "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices"(Emerson's trans. of Bakhtin 1984 :6).

Whether these kinds of tales were started off and set in circulation as a satire of formalized thinking or simply for the sheer

fun of it – like school boys nick-naming the headmaster because they cannot defy him openly-is left for us to guess at. Whatever the motive, it is clear that the 'author' must be learned in life. The point of contention however is that reading a tale is at all times restricted to a specific group, whereas listening to/creating simultaneously to a tale coalesces a larger group. The former act is elitist and in entering the portals of print loses its open-ended vigor in the closure of print. Bound by the logic of syntax, it must necessarily order itself in a linear fashion. The informing structure that makes its discursive substance secondary is its grammar and syntax that operate through a priori rules, so that what is printed and read makes sense to the reader. Moreover the act of reading being an intensely personal exercise, poised in a moment of time, circumscribes the periphery of the story's function, excluding for the writer, at the same time, alternate and multiple modes of narration through instantaneous editing and improvisation. The oral narration of a story to/with a group of involved people could radically refashion an already established story in unexpected ways. It would not be farfetched to say that the orally narrated tale as a communal semiotic establishes the social stability of human groups and enshrines the ways and means which every society views life and tackles life.

II

Shifting from the preceding argument of how print affects oral narratives in their production and reception/participation, I now look at some difficulties of generic classification that arise when the spoken language is inscribed in the narrative, with specific literary references to validate my hypothesis. With the increasing withdrawal of domestic tales narrated verbally - person to person - comes in the growing predominance of oralistic traditions in written fiction. While most of the examples highlighted in the first section centered on adult reception of adult tales, there is also a vast fund of oral narratives for children about children. If tales about children were meant for children and meant therefore to build up their ethical,

psychic and emotional stamina necessary for life, then the contemporary tale about children have also to be seen lying juxtaposed alongside the traditional tales. Traditional tales were of course carefully pieced together keeping the listener in mind and story telling was a responsible act.

Usually tales narrated to children feature through the mother tongue, although with growing and irreversible facets of urbanization and consequently education, the mother tongue is constantly replaced by, for us in India, English from early childhood, for language usage is today affected both by the politics and economics of globalization. This, besides the hierarchization of languages as related to upward social mobility and social identity, tends to invariably place the mother tongue, more so the region based variation lower, or lowest, perhaps in the ladder, although in the individual sphere it may occupy a higher place. However such a reduction does not hold as a commonly applicable truth in a state of affairs where access to the basics of education even in one's mother tongue is difficult and impossible for many. Yet the filtering impact of urbanization into villages and the necessity of the fragmentation of the community and domestic groups towards the urban areas in search of economic sustenance take its palpable toll on the intralinguistic aspects of day to day language which is truly the language of the oral narrative. To explicate in terms of a simple but valid citation, take a brief comparative look between the domestic language in any regional language heard thirty or forty years ago and compare it to the one heard now. Many lexical items have gone out of use because the items that they signify have gone out of use. Similarly the persistent linguistic interference of another language into and at times in lieu of the mother tongue affects the speech utterances which enable narration, that are once more culturally located.

Seen from this angle, I now argue for the presence of the orally narrated tale authored by adults about children within the contours of contemporary fiction that stem from oral traditions.

Some of the finest practioners of oral tradition within the fictional mode are writers of identities with the third world in general, from where they imbibe their stylistic devices. Bringing oral narrative modes into print fiction creates a field of literature where the oral mode itself functions as part of the thematic and discourse that underlies the text. Here the orally narrated tale becomes a stylistic tool which is however not value free. This mode of narration also is meant to destabilize the formalized print form and practice, being in its use of orature, a continuity and a difference at the same time. When one hears a regional dialect in real life situations, it may pass off as nothing uncommon, but the same when it appears in print within a fiction, becomes purposeful and is no longer just a language variation. It is an ironic stance upon the representation of language as spoken in daily life**.** This justifies the genre crossing i.e. from the domestic oral tale to oral structures of narration in contemporary fiction by marginalized writers in the continuation of my argument.

A tale narrated can never be considered as an autonomous linguistic construct, abstracted away from the dynamics of social context. How the child is presented in the story is also a comment on how the child ought not to be in reality. Ideations in traditional tales are taken *prima facie* and generally no tale is told that elaborates the class and gender based exploitation of the child, as being located in an unalterable reality controlled by real forces outside the textual space. If it is the story of a suffering child, the story is finally resolved at a point where virtue triumphs, reward is at hand and the harsh realities are easily surmounted and altered to lead to an optimistic closure, because at the heart of the story-telling act is the philosophic aspiration to create not only the ideal individual, but also an ideal social and historic world. Therefore the child and his or her experiences within the story and the closure and nature of the closure of the story are predetermined by these compulsions. In other words, characters are archetypal, located within Manichean binaries[6] of eternal good and evil and values are fixed.

When writers use the oral mode in contemporary fiction, what they do is to use the lucid narrative forms so as to question the

synchronic approach that underlies traditional narratives, disturbing at the same time our understanding of what we consider stable. From the visionary epic foundation that aims at an ideal world the move is towards a novelistic mode that is resistive and often oxymoronic in content. They record the fluctuations of tone, semantic ambiguity and unconventional grammatical constructions as they occur in day to day language, interspersing the narration with other genres like songs, letters and self-addressed comments. Humanistic legends and aspirations are defeated by them by allowing the onslaught of a contemporary world that is far from conducive to the engineered construction of an ideal child and an ideal community. Their narratives mirror the linguistic impoverishment, lack of leisure, the alienation of the child, the collapse of domestic comfort and the inescapable future where the good child is not the best or the most successful child. So old epistemes and paradigms are questioned when we look at not the tale told for the child per se, in itself, but alongside the child in other narratives as well in the actual world as a seamless semiotic paradigm. The theoretical complexity involved in this complex manouvre is often overlooked leaving one set of texts as an aspiration that fails to address the ways in which values and beliefs are often conflictual, and other sets of texts fully implicated within the society in which it is produced defying the former in precise detail. Institutional matrices such as the syllabi or the canon once again resolve the issue by emphasising on specialization, but even here the resolution is indebted to linguistic analysis which differentiates literature for children, from that by children or about children the last of which not always recording the expansive and negative meanings of the term as well it does the positive. The orally narrated tale is not a distinctive genre but a problematic that can be described as a site of a combination of all the problems inherent in synchronic classifications, stretching its contours to the totality of the study of all texts. This may veer the emphasis from the inspirational and aesthetic (I do not equate the two as synonyms) to the ideological. This, however, by no means excludes the aesthetic although it links the total construct of the aesthetic of literature with

its reliance on inspirational value of the spoken language and the spontaneously, often metonymically constructed oral tale.

When writers tell a story about a child they have a point to make and they are talking about and for real children who cannot speak for themselves. This then raises a fundamental question. What kind of a tale is a tale for the child? Are those tales privileged or are they? Can the child's world whether narrated through the vision of an adult or whether self-narrated through authorial help in the pages of a novel ever exist independently without adult intervention? Since it cannot, one is then led to conclude that tales of heroism and vision meant and narrated to children are most necessary not so much for the children themselves as it happens in the oral/domestic form, as they are for the adult who shapes the child's future world. Otherwise children's literature will lie museumised on the one side and contemporary literature will continue to be read and critiqued on the other side without being seen side as two sides of the same coin.

Stepping further towards the responsibility that makes literary art meaningfully empowered to shape and reshape life, literary genres cannot be compartmentalized synchronically. Rather their diachronic and simultaneous identities or taxonomies should be accommodated. It is on the strength of the above argument that I underscore the difficulties that arise in the classification of the orally narrated tale when it enters the print media. The only way to preserve oral literature outside human memory is to convert it into written texts. However, this process of writing/printing the oral body of literature is necessarily determined by various socio-political factors through history, apart from language usages of a society at a given period of time, thus influencing both its content in form and content, when it enters print. Like language itself, oral traditions grow and change into new forms, die out or persist in unexpected new varieties. The language of the tale is closely related to the spoken dialects of the local areas. Textualizing puts an end to the continuous imaginative renderings through reformulation of already known legends and tales and robs the tale of its strongest

characteristic. Media critics[7] lead us on to acknowledge the inevitability of the digitalized form replacing printed versions of oratures, giving place to a technological orality as it were, although in India oral literature is statistically more than print literature.

This takes us to a final question: who really is the author of the tale, which depends on the narrator and the listener for its survival. Every time a narrator appropriates a tale to suit his need and imagination he creates it and every time the listener hears it and appropriates it into his individual or social context, he creates it too. Knowledge of the listener's social and personal identity, gives the teller of the tale an edge over the writer. Constantly provided with a feed-back from the audience even as he narrates the tale, he can rapidly modify items of information, shift the focus of the tale to suit the audience's mood or even provoke the listener to enter into the tale by making the references recognizably personal. Thus he receives, creatively, certain benefits which the writer of the story does not. This is why the oral tale has an existence that challenges time. As the social situations, listeners, and language change the tale keeps changing too, to come into being relevantly. The oral tale because of its flexible nature renders the same story differently in every instance of repeated performance, depending upon the need of the hour. The written story on the other hand, frames oral stories into singular versions. The form is tight and allows no room for improvisation or human presence via mediation. It is always defined by the translator of this exercise or the editor or the publisher, rather than by the narrator/performer. Oral tales disappear the moment after it has been narrated, so memory, repetition and reformulation keep them in existence though they may continuously change in detail.

Thus instead of classification being a disciplinary measure, with the pun deliberately intended, it becomes an inquisitive and responsible activity that questions the problems contained within disciplinary studies itself. Tale tellers or tale fabricators have skirted scrupulously all immediate determination of truth by rhetorical

strategies that are resistant to what is increasingly the normative practice around us, in the negative sense of the word. If a contrary stand is taken, then the exercise of contextualizing literary studies views the genre not in terms of what it is, but in terms of what it does to related texts. So the difficulty arises in the containment of one set of definitions and one focal point in the genre of children's literature rather than as something that is composed, and constructed of multiple truths. This means the necessary erasure of our understanding of the differences between the two set of texts referred to earlier that makes them easily manageable without one disturbing the other. Such disagreements about cataloguing would therefore also inflect the availability of meanings in the text, making it, to borrow a currently recognizable term, heavily encrypted. Sympathetically positioning the argument which starts from an initial bafflement at the totalizing and generalizing of generic taxonomies. If we step further towards the responsibility that makes literary art meaningfully empowered to shape and reshape life, literary genres cannot be compartmentalized synchronically. Rather their diachronic and simultaneous identities or taxonomies should be accommodated. It is on the strength of the above argument that I underscore the linguistic, cultural and ideological difficulties that arise with the entry of the orally narrated tale or the *karna parampara katha* into print.

To sum up the orally narrated tale that is known as the *karna parampara katha* or to translate literally, the ear-tradition tale, cannot have an author in the sense of a text being written by the author. Compilations and editions in print make these tales available to many, but we find quite often - see the reference list to my paper - that editors print their own name under the head of author. Leaving aside the question of publication ethics, a more serious point is to be considered. The very forte of an oral tale lies in its anonymity, its defiance to closure, its availability to all people at all times and its endlessly self-generating power. Being antique, no authentic claim can be made to its authorship. The absence of a manuscript does not facilitate verification. Many versions of the same tale as well as the

simultaneous existence of the same tale in several traditions only complicate the matter. So the privilege of the authorship of the orally narrated tale lies with all people of all times, owing itself to a shared matrix of the knowledge of life as well as the incurable human impulse to pull things apart and upside down to know it better. Its essential location in life keeps it elusive and not fully captured by any method to frame it in time and space through the written/printed/digitalized word. The orally narrated tale is thus a spacious literary genre which enables epistemological and semantic conversions, both delighting and instructing at the same time and defiant of classification. While scholars and philosophers present counter-systems of thought in elaborate theses, the orally narrated tale prefers the fisherman's straightforward tactics - of a hard blow - not caring even for the written word.

NOTES

1. Carnival is associated with the revelry, the subversion of authority and hierarchies. In literature carnivalisation mobilizes one form of literature, an informal or popular genre against the more elitist forms. As a literary usage the carnivalesque is transhistorical and is not located in the Renaissance model of the carnival as seen in Rabelais by Bhaktin, who extends it to the ancient Menippean satire as well as to the subversive style of Dostoevsky. See Mikhail Bhaktin, Rabelais and his World (1965; Trans. Helene Iswolsky [Indiana Univ.Press, 1984).

2. Constanzo Beschi, a missionary better known as Veeramamunivar who lived in Tamil Nadu in the early eighteenth century is credited with first putting the Paramartha Guru's story collection in written form from the oral tradition.

3. Print editions, referred below, have also been taken into consideration along with the oral versions for discussion in this paper.

4. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, "A Methodology for Translation" translated by Juan C. Sager and M.-J.Hamel in the *Translation Studies Reader,* Ed. Lawrence Venuti (rpt. New York: Routledge 2002), pp128 -137.

5. The *vikata kavi* is a palindrome (literally 'back direction'), a poet and polyglot who has such command over the languages he uses, that he can create meanings forwards and backwards simultaneously and alike using the same set of syllables, words or at times alphabets. Kings considered it prestigious to have a vikatakavi in court. A vidushaka is a secondary character in Sanskrit drama, like the court jester of the European tradition. However he is not a fool but often the wisest in the text, both jesting and commenting on the action. Witty but sarcastic and frivolous, he takes extraordinary liberties in speech.

6. Manichaeism is a dualistic religious system of Manes, from first century A.D. Persia and refers to a combination of Gnostic Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and various other elements, with a basic doctrine of a conflict between light and dark dualistic philosophy dividing the world between good and evil principles or regarding matter as intrinsically evil and mind as intrinsically good. The term is used here only descriptively and not theologically.

   Web source:
   http://www.reference.com/search?q=manichean

7. Walter J. Ong in his *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. New Accents* (Ed. Terence Hawkes, New York: Methuen, 1988) talks about the emergence of a second orality dominated by electronic modes of communication and incorporating elements from both the chirographic mode and the orality mode.This in turn creates a secondary community, a virtual community.

Marshall McLuhan, in his *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (University of Toronto Press, 1962), studies the emergence of what he labels as the 'Gutenberg Man', the subject/reader who is a product of the printed book and whose consciousness is shaped by the medium of knowledge, whether individual or collective.

Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business,* Penguin USA, 1985 holds the view that the boom in technological media like the television trivialises all human concerns. All three media critics illustrate the western model.

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Remapping Stylistic Boundaries: Translating Early Oriya Women's Literature

Sachidananda Mohanty

Abstract

In this essay, following the practice of Italian academic-novelist Umberto Eco, I shall describe my own experience as an archivist/ editor- translator. I shall concentrate on the analysis of texts that I discovered in the course of seven years of my research in the area of early women's writing in Orissa. I shall suggest that as an archivist- translator- editor, I was acutely conscious of my role and responsibility although I may not have succeeded in all my efforts. I viewed my role basically as a sympathetic male critic who must remain "faithful" to the spirit of womanly texts. The "authenticity" in the female experience I was seeking to describe and record, I knew, must attempt to make sense of the choice of a specific idiom, style and diction in many of the original texts. To a casual observer or reader, these demands must appear specious or excessive. But to a discerning critic and self-conscious narrator of the female literary experience/ sensibility, far from being commonplace, these aspects, are a crucial matter of understanding literary imagination.

Translation Studies in India has not been blind to the role of gender in the theory and practice of translation. Yet sufficient notice has not been taken of the complex process involved in the archival recovery and translation of texts by literary women in regional languages. This is both surprising and regrettable. For, some of the best work in the field of gender/cultural studies today happens to be archival in character. Filtered through several variables, it includes but does not exhaust the colonial contexts of the early women writers, the style and register of the "womanly" texts produced and

disseminated, the role, conscious or unconscious, of the archivist – translator-editor, and finally the perceived compulsions of the target language, publishing industry and readership.

What is gained and what is lost in this exercise? Perhaps only the archivist – translator would know. Clearly, most readers would not have access to the original texts or the archives. He/she would probably seek direction for help in the critical introduction, bibliography and citations in the volume concerned. About the complex trade off between the original and the translated version, and above all, the precise transformation entailed in idiom, style and diction, in conformity with the dictates of the female voice and narrative vision, would be missing. Publishers' editors, generally for reasons of space, are averse to unraveling these detailed creative processes. Feminist critics, on their part, tend to focus primarily on cultural and ideological factors of the social-scientific kind. Problematic areas in women's experience and creativity are most often not traced to issues in translation practice. Contradictions and ambivalence in women's voices are generally traced to biographical, autobiographical and ideological factors. Attention is seldom drawn to the very act of translation. In a self-validating manner, the critic-translator participates in the concealment of his/her own role in the rendering of the final translated product.

In this essay, following the practice of Italian novelist-academic Umberto Eco, I shall describe my own experience as an archivist/editor – translator. I shall concentrate on the analysis of texts that I discovered in the course of seven years of my research in the area of early women's writing in Orissa. I shall suggest that as an archivist- translator- editor, I was acutely conscious of my role and responsibility although I may not have succeeded in all my efforts. I viewed my role basically as a sympathetic male critic who must remain "faithful" to the spirit of womanly texts. The "authenticity" in the female experience I was seeking to describe and record, I knew, must attempt to make sense of the choice of a specific idiom, style and diction in many of the original texts. To a casual observer

or reader, these demands must appear specious or excessive. But to a discerning critic and self-conscious narrator of the female literary experience/ sensibility, these aspects, far from being common place, are a crucial matter of understanding the literary imagination.

II

The literary women of Orissa who adorn my Hall of Fame, invariably came from a typically middle class background. They accepted domesticality, conjugality and childbearing responsibilities imposed on them by society while attempting simultaneously to participate in the wider, social and political domains. Some like Sarala Devi, Kuntala Kumari and Abanti Rao were more fortunate. Aside from their intrepid nature, they were also blessed by a set of more favourable circumstances: sympathetic parents and spouses, upper class background, responsive to the world of literacy and culture, and the inheritance of a tradition of public service and social empowerment. Many participated in events of national significance such as the freedom struggle, social reform movements, and campaigns for widow remarriage and trade union rights. Some authors, widows themselves, painted sympathetic sketches of widow protagonists such as Bilasini.

How do these factors have a bearing on their writings and on their ideological and narrative vision? More importantly, how did this impact the way I valorized these texts from the many that I came across and judged their emergence in their new incarnations in English? It seems to me that such questions, unanswered so far, are not peripheral to my original project; they are central to the basic task of feminist literary research in India.

III

The first example I would like to cite for my purpose is a story called "Bilasini", written by Kokila Devi. Born in 1896 as the fourth child of Bhagvata Prasad Mohapatra and Radhamani of

Talapada village of Badrak, Orissa, Kokila was the sister of the eminent Oriya writer, Lakshmikanta Mohapatra. Married in 1916 at the age of 20 to Managobinda Das of Khantapada, Kokila, (literally cuckoo), became a widow in 1927.

In "Bilasini", Kokila, the poet, nationalist and activist portrays the plight of widowhood and the conflict between the reality of erotic desire and the world of spiritual sublimation.

The choice I faced as a translator of this story was to decide whether to keep the opening paragraph of "Bilasini" as it is, or to skip it and go directly to the main story, which is more dramatic in content and style.

The tale opens with the description of the approach of evening. There is a cascade of images; items are piled up, one after the other, almost in an archaic romantic style: "Gold lotuses", "birds returning to the nests" setting sun casting an unusual "slow of vermilion," "hanging bats" making the hollow of the trees "fearful". As Kokila Devi writes:

> The day was already over. The setting sun cast an unusual glow of vermilion. Hundred of red gold lotuses bloomed in the vast empyrean. Notes of farewell resonated in the four corners. Birds returned to their nests, their parting melodies resounding in all directions. The indigo of the distant mountains gently merged into the vast azure. Soon the blue of the forests turned dove-gray. Hundreds upon hundreds of bats hanging from the branches in clusters made the hollows of the trees look fearful. There was darkness everywhere. Darkness covered the heart. A dark curtain suddenly dropped. All became still and immobile.
>
> All of a sudden, the *Tandava* dance of Nature stopped. The heart overflowed with joy. In uneven rows, millions of stars ascended and escorted the queen moon to the sky. Moonbeams flooded the earth. It was as though the

> goddess of nature had recovered her youth. (Mohanty 2005:95)

The paragraph by itself may appear to be part of a "period" style. A translator-editor, keen to plunge headlong into the story of forbidden love of a widow may wish to skip it altogether. On the other hand, a closer look at the position of this opening vis-a-vis the rest of the story indicates that the opening is absolutely essential. It is integral to the basic design of the tale.

What is important to understand from the point of view of the discerning translator is that the opening paragraph, by offering the description of a familiar dusk, in a somewhat poetical manner, is not simply there to help create a context. Its commonplaceness is significant. For the third paragraph inaugurates the dramatic story of Bilasini's illicit love as seen from the narrator's point of view.

> Sitting in the courtyard in front of our house, I was lost in thought. Suddenly my blood quickened and the stupor was gone. I heard the conversation of two persons at the wall facing the rear enclosure to the house. The voice was soft, the tine indistinct. Slowly, I got up. I craned my neck in the direction of the voice and yet could not grasp everything. Driven by curiosity, I listened more attentively. (Mohanty 2005:95)

The atmosphere of a profound serenity evoked in the opening paragraph contrasts sharply with the sense of foreboding and disquiet that characterizes the life of Bilasini until she reaches the holy town of Brindavan. The end of the story, following the dictates of similar tales, sublimates erotic love into spiritual ardour:

> O, what heart-touching melodies! Could there be such wonderful sweetness in the voice of a woman? My mind and heart were filled with joy; I began to pay attention in a state of intoxication. But surely she could not be a human person! She must be a demoness with a human body!

> The woman gradually approached and I was stunned by what I saw. Never could I imagine that a female could be so beautiful! Nor could I ever conceive that there could be such luster in her eyes! My waking consciousness could not bear such thoughts for long. My head automatically bowed at her feet. The Goddess lifted her eyes full of divine love. I was stunned by what I saw. The beating of my heart stopped. After much effort, I called out once, 'Bilasini!' Tears rolled down my cheek. My voice was choked. I looked around and spotted no one. Was I awake or asleep? (Mohanty 2005:98)

IV

Similarly, the translation of early Oriya poet Reba Ray's memorable composition 'Nirabe' merits our consideration from the gender point of view. Married to litterateur, Sadhu Charan Ray, Reba was a pioneer of female education in the state. Niece of Bjkta Kavi, Madhusudan Rao, she was the founder of the 'Model Girls' school', which later merged with the historic 'Ravenshaw Girls' School', Cuttack. In all her works, Reba combined her interest in gender identity with larger philosophical and existential concerns. Deeply lyrical and moving, her poems and short stories appeared in *Utkal Sahitya*. 'The Sound of Silence' is a characteristic example. Widowed at the age of 22, Reba passed away on 7 August, 1957.

Reba begins by underlining the leitmotif of her lyrical composition. The metaphor of silence used recurrently becomes an objective correlative to physical, existential and spiritual states of the persona:

> In silence I came to this world
> And my life will sing unceasing,
> In silence will my life forever
> Her songs of silence sing. (Mohanty, 2005:87)

One after the other, the stanzas reiterate the dominant theme, bringing in a cascading set of imagery and metaphors that

consolidate the overall effect: sunrise, sunset, birds, beasts and flowers, indeed, throughout the circumambient universe there is all pervasive silence:

> In silent sky the crescent moon
> In silence floats she by
> She sings her glory as she glides
> In silence smiling, high (Mohanty, 2005:87)

Soon, there is the overwhelming presence of silence. From the physical there is the progressive ascension to the spiritual levels. It is out mortal life that is the subject of reflection:

> In silence when it's time to die
> Will Death hold me in warm embrace?
> In silence will I go,
> Of friends or kin will leave no trace. (Mohanty, 2005:89)

As a critic translator, I was beginning to have a sense of unease about the gender aspect, when I came to the penultimate stanza. And sure enough, there was the female voice, so far absent in the poem that seeks urgent articulation:

> Silent, shorn of strength, is woman
> Beside a man forever strong
> When she cannot even cry for you
>
> For fear of loud-voiced man so long (Mohanty, 2005:89)

It is commonly believed that mystical or spiritual poetry generally eschews ideological issues and takes recourse to the routes of idealization or escapism. However, in Reba Ray, we find the simultaneous use of both, uncovered in the process of translation.

I encountered a similar problem while translating Sarala Devi's "The Rights of Women" ("Narira Dabi"). Sarala was the first Oriya woman to take part in the national Satyagraha movement and to court arrest. She is best remembered for her essays and critical writings. Hindustan Granthamala, Cuttak, published "Narira Dabi"

in 1934. Sarala's essay on the need for the freedom of women brings to mind early writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf and Indian feminist like Pandita Ramabai. Sarala writes in a detailed fashion and uses an expansive style.

A translator-editor conscious of the need for a dramatic beginning may be impatient with the opening of the essay. Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight, the opening remarks of Sarala may appear to lack freshness.

> There is much agitation in today's world over the question of independence of women. Both in the West as well as in the East, one hears, in one voice, the demand that women should become free. The campaign has made headway in Western countries. In the East, however, it is still at the stage of inception. Nevertheless, there is little doubt, that the agitation will bear fruit in the near future. (Mohanty, 2005:153)

The decision I had to take here as translator-editor was whether or not to keep this paragraph and similar others or omit them altogether ensuring a more readable translated version. After all, the account of women's oppression that Sarala underlines at the outset seems to be fairly commonplace today, given the relatively emancipated status of women in the present day world.

How then would a keen editor try and project the radical nature of Sarala's feminist thinking?

I decided that regardless of the response of the feminist press I was aiming at, I was going to retain Sarala's essay in its entirety. For one thing, Sarala's views in many parts of the essay may seem less remarkable now. But I had to bear in mind the context in which she wrote, especially, her lack of formal or higher education. (She had studied up to class seven). She was virtually self-taught. She came from a fairly conservative background. Given the constraints she faced, her assessment of the plight of women in the historical and contemporary context was truly incredible. I

realized that as an admirer of Sarala Devi, the best action of mine as a translator-editor would be to retain the essay as it was in the original. I had to be loyal to the spirit of the essay. To tamper with it either for the sake of brevity or readability, or to make it sound more radical in our present context would be to grossly violate the original spirit. Worse, I would be disloyal to the context in which the essay was written. Equally, inauthentic would be the author's feminist thinking.

How false would have been my position had I persisted with my desire to see a more "radical" Sarala becomes clear when we come to the heart of her essay. It becomes apparent when she begins to quote extracts by justice Meccard's Judgment:

> I maintain that the husband can never own the wife's body. It is her own property and not her husband's. She can leave her husband at her will; she can choose her business or join the political party of her choice. She has full right to decide whether or not she is going to get a child and at what point of time. No one can keep a woman under his control on the basis of the fact that he is married to her. The women of this country have won independence; they are citizens and not slaves. They can turn their wishes into action. One does not get pleasure of married life from the codes of rules and regulations. The success of marriage depends on mutual compassion, mutual considerations. Mutual forgiveness, mutual sacrifice, and above all, a mutually shared morality. (Mohanty, 2005: 157-158)

VI

As a translator I continued to face temptations to embellish many texts that appear to be somewhat straightforward in the original. Nandini Panigrahi's "Call of the Chimney" provides a characteristic example of this kind. Written as a literary response to the important issue of the trade union movement in Orissa,

Nandini's tale captures the tragedy of protagonists Siba and Phula who become victims on account of industrial capitalism. The author uses thinly veiled characters such as Siba, (mythologically, Shiva the creator) and Phula (literally the flower in Oriya) to buttress the significance of the tale. Siba, the mythological creator, gets ruined just as "Phula" the flower withers away due to the onslaught of the chimney that symbolizes the ugly factory system. It uproots people from the natural habitant and destroys the symbiotic relationship they share with Mother Nature. As Nandini writes:

> As usual at the crack of dawn, Siba rose and with this prized sickle set out for the fields. It was a rain-drenched morning of *Shravana*, the breeze blew gently. Layers upon layers of chirping birds flew in the vast sky. A curious tremor of joy passed through the thick foliage. The sun, an orb of vermilion, was a miracle in the east. Siba's gaze went past the playful movement of nature. Clutching his sickle with a firm grip, he walked on, his mud-laced feet plying through the filed the paddy saplings seemed engaged in a love play with the zephyr. (Mohanty, 2005:235)

The ending of this ideological tale might sound a trifle melodramatic. I decided to retain the last paragraph nevertheless. It is based, I thought, that the author's original voice was left intact:

With the limp child on his shoulder, Siba proceeded, and holding Phula's hand plunged into darkness and rain. In a soft subdued voice, Phula said,

> "Shall we never return?"
>
> "Yes, we shall, one day. Only after ending the lines of masters and their Saviors!"
>
> A blast of cold wind form the North drove them to the other pole of the world-into the arms of millions of creatures like Siba. (Mohanty,2005:237)

VII

Translating Bidyut Prabha's poem "Pratighat", (The Assult) proved to be quite a challenge. Not only was the unique rhythm of the original nearly impossible to capture in an alien tongue, more significantly there were a number of regional and gender markers that were extremely hard to transfer. Matching equivalents were simply not there. A translator aiming at a pan-Indian audience might therefore be tempted to flatten out the differences in idiom and registers. However, all through, I attempted to retain these specific markers. For Bidyut Prabha and the women of her times, household work involved grinding the spices. There were no "Sumit Mixies" then. Similarly the physical agony of a housewife with two children is captured in terms of references to Kerosene and fuel. Blowing fire into a mud oven is different from cooking over gas stove. Here too, I have invariably retained the original. The output, I know, may fall short in terms of the original cadence, but hopefully the poem in the English version retains an authentic flavour of the original and symbolizes the dilemma of a mother who also is a poet:

The grinding is half done.
Where are you,
Eldest daughter-in-law?
Unmindful of Chores
That lie piled up
Until nightfall!

'Am I a bonded laborer?
Am I to be sold daily
Only for this house?
Work, work and more work!
From morning till night!
Tell one,
Is there nothing else
To Life?"
***

writing is the balm
for all my pain.
It's the glory of my sorrow.
Writing is rain-soaked woods.
It's the music of cloudbursts
During the month of *Sharavana*!

I wish I could speak of
The joy that gathers in my heart.
Like a flame
In the mouth of storm,
My poetry
A luminous lamp! (Mohanty,2005:229-230)

Thus 'translation and gender' continue to be one of the most exciting but neglected aspects of current scholarship and cultural criticism. In this essay, I examined a few of the Oriya texts such as those by Kokila Devi, Reba Ray, Sarala Devi, Nandini Satpathy and Bidyut Prabha to explore the gender dimension latent in translation practice. As I have tried to show, my role as an archivist, translator-editor dealing with early women's literature in Orissa revealed many problematic areas and blind spots that are usually glossed over. An awareness of these aspects, I have argued, would empower the translator to be loyal to the spirit of the original texts, and 'true' to the context in which they were produced. In the process the translator can become an effective mediator between gender and culture.

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Situating Post Colonial Translations/Translator in India

T. Sarada

Abstract

The term Post-Colonial Translations in the Indian situation is not completely free from the tentacles of colonialism. The translator in the Indian situation needs to be extremely cautious in representing the literatures in the English language since English is both the tongue of the erstwhile coloniser and a global medium too. The translator who is engaged in a serious task is not often divorced from the work translated. The pitfalls that an Indian translator needs to avoid are many given the hungry eyes of the West who eagerly look forward to see the representations of the languages of India in their tongue. The duties of the translator, the pitfalls she needs to avoid and the task embarked in translating a complex nation like India with a hoary past of more than two thousand years are discussed in this essay.

Post-colonialism and globalisation are simultaneously homogenic and heterogenic. While different literatures are now perceived with a uniform consciousness of native cultures, language, literature and ethos, their multiplicity has acquired the necessary validity, dignity, though a certain amount of unifocal parochialism at times cannot be ruled out.

No other literary activity in India led to the quantum of literary and cultural dialectics currently as has done the translation of texts into English. The sudden spurt of translations in India in the post-colonial times has altered both the Indian literary scenario as well as the fortunes of the publishing houses. OUP, Orient Longman, Katha, Kali, Stree, Penguin, Sahitya Akademi, NBT and the list is endless. Could the boom be attributed to the growing affluence, increased literacy rates, an increasing appetite to know the

'othered' or to merely gratify consumeristic desires in a global economy? The reason could be a combination of or beyond all these factors. While the 21st century reader in/of India across the globe is often caught in a surfeit of translations, the translator is often wrapped in a complex, ambivalent, multi-cultural and diverse multi-lingual spaces. Fostered alike by native and the western traditions, the post-colonial Indian translator is often in a trishanku position.

The position of the post-colonial Indian translator remains complicated by the fact of the deep furrows created by the empire in our native soil. Robert Young has conceded the "great attention accorded to India [….] perpetuate the differing evaluations that the British accorded to the various parts of the empire." Young further elaborates on the quantum of economic, cultural and historical attention that our nation received from the coloniser and concludes that India was "the crown of colonial discourse analysis." (Young, cited in Trivedi 1996: 233)

The term 'attention' needs a closer examination, for, it would superficially appear to be a benevolence condescendingly showered on the 'natives' by the colonisers. The semantic concerns of the term **Post Colonial** also remains to be examined, since it encompasses "all the cultures affected by the imperial power from the moment of colonization to the present day." (Ashcroft 1989: p.1-2). Its concerns therefore do predate the nation as certain preoccupations continue throughout in the "historical process initiated by European imperial aggression." (ibid.)

The "scramble for post-colonialism" as Stephen Sleman would label it, is real. But Ashcroft's essay "Excess Post Colonialism and the Verandahs of Meaning" concerns itself with the unwanted abundance and Derridean excess of Post Colonial theory.[1] The Indian situation reveals both the tides and counter-tides against the post colonial movement. At this juncture, it is essential for us to distinguish between the 'post colonial' and 'post-independence'. While the latter term refers to the mere grant of independence as

denotative of freedom from the British political control, 'Post Colonial' on the other hand connotes the multi-farious process of colonisation as an octopus-like control, out of whose tentacles it is rather difficult to free ourselves even long after independence. Its repercussions are deeply embedded in the psyche of the nation, making amnesia almost impossible.

Since, the prime focus of the paper is post-colonial translation of various Indian languages into English, the linguistic legacy bequeathed on the post colonial translator needs to be examined. But before that, the post colonial translator ought to remember the fact that dissemination of knowledge about India was evident in colonial times. Translations of *Manusmriti, Vedas, Upanishad, Vishnu Purana, Harivamsam* etc. into English have facilitated the occident to know India better. Translation and transcreations among the various Indian languages were also not unfamiliar. For instance, the multiple transcreations of numerous Sanskrit texts like *Ramayanam* into *Kambaramayanam* in Tamil, and the different versions of *Mahabharata* into Telugu, found the *Bhasha* literatures engaging themselves in a spiritual revolution, making its readers grasp the ungraspable. Critics like Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi have considered the movement from Sanskrit to the other Indian languages as being akin to the west's movement from Latin to Vulgate. The growth of Indian spiritual literature in the *bhasha* traditions are perceived as an attempt to release scriptures "from the monopolist custody of Sanskrit pundits." (Bassnett & Trivedi 1999: 10)

The contemporary post colonial translator in India needs to realise the fact that the analogy between Sanskrit and Vulgate can hardly be stretched beyond a certain point, because 'fidelity' being the key word of the numerous translations of the Bible, is the least resorted principle in Indian translation. For instance, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have been constantly re-worked with multiple shifts in ideological stances, and the creative transformation involved in the numerous translations.[2]

But the position of the modern post colonial translator in India is quite complicated given the linguistic legacy bequeathed by him. The post colonial translator in India often traverses in multi-lingual spaces. The (in)famous minute of Macaulay denigrated the cultural and linguistic legacy of Sanskrit and Persian, while unconsciously negating the value of the entire gamut of *Bhasha* literatures from *Sangam* times, to all existing vernacular modes of writing.[3] Therefore, the post colonial translator adopts the twin processes of appropriation and approbation of the colonisers tongue to explain his linguistic heritage and establish a cross-cultural relationship, while also adopting his translatory potential to write back at the empire. This brings us to the inevitable comparison which needs to be made between translations in the pre-colonial times and those in the contemporary scenario. The pioneering efforts of Scholars like Sir William Jones, Schiller and Schlegal was to delve deep into the perennial springs of Indian knowledge. But modern Indian translators are often fraught with tensions, politics and numerous forms of neocolonialisms.

Then, the discourse of such a translation becomes ambiguous since the psycho-linguistic terrain of the translator adopts a certain amount of mimicry. The transformation of language makes the translator situate the text in a different linguistic mileau. The process is both inevitable and problematic, since the signifying text attains a protean and fluid quality and the process of signification enters into a continuous interactive zone, wherein a cross-cultural dialogism is established between two linguistic and cultural zones.

Since fidelity alone has hardly been a quintessential feature of translation from and into various Indian languages, and the process of linguistic appropriation is endured with expanding horizons leading to discoveries. The discovery may at times exist in the original or lie embedded in the verbal resonances of the translated tongue. For instance, Hank Heifetz in his 'Poet's Preface' to *Purananuru* (3rd and 4th centuries before Christ) suggests that the exaggerated praise lavished on kings can at times be "over

powering", "but if you browse, you are likely to encounter a sudden image, a moment when the door of vision opens into a deeper, more inner world – and that the poem may be followed by others, elaborating, exploring, defining." (Hart and Heifetz: XIV) What has been merely hinted at in the original could be elaborated in the translation.

The 'discovery' made by the translator is also consequent of his creative ability to forge a new language. The creative writers of India who wrote during the immediate post-independence times like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand forged a new brand of English which acted as counter-discourse to the Queen's and Edwardian English while also widening the ambit of the English linguistic medium. Sukanta Chaudury rightly comments that translations "constitute nothing less than a parallel creative process. Involving extension, critiques and deconstructions, an "ambivalence of purpose" cannot be ruled out, since the translator occupies a realm distinct from the 'original' writer and the 'passive reader' and therefore, provides an 'equipollent version'. The dividing line between a translator and a creative writer has to be maintained since the translator needs to possess "a basic humility, a submission of his creative being to another's" (Chaudri 1999: 47). The creative mind of the translator may suffer from what Bloom would label as "anxiety of influence," but he would still need to guard himself against his reading.

This is a difficult task indeed, since a post colonial translation into English in India often continues to remain a vertex of overt and covert forms of the vestiges of the colonial rule. Citing Trevelyan, Tejaswini Niranjana adds that "… the representation of the colonized…. [is]… produced in such a manner as to justify colonial domination and to beg for the English book by themselves" (Niranjana 1992: 2). Therefore, translations produced by non-nation at times employ modes of representing the 'other', helping them acquire the status of what said labels as "representations or objects without history" (ibid.: 3). This justifies Macaulay's denigration of

all Sanskrit and Persian literatures. But, could such notions be accepted blindly, since translation of seminal Indian texts like *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Thrikkural, Agananooru, Purahanooru* etc. aim at countering such distorted notions of India and dispelling the myth of the supposed cultural impoverishment of our cultural heritage. 'Post colonial', then, in the Indian sense needs to be perceived through numerous intersecting perceptions like hegemony, distortion and subject formation. An "affirmative deconstruction" (ibid.: 6) is often needed to counter Saidian notions of 'otherness.'

Does the post colonial translator possess the freedom to produce a pure, true and issue–free translation? Considering 'history' and 'knowledge' (Istoria and episteme), Derrida contends that a transcendental signified is formed only "within the notion of an absolutely pure, transparent and unequivocal translatability" (Derrida 20). But the politics of power play, neo-colonialism and modes of differentiations basically make the translator adopt an essentialist outlook. Avoiding pitfalls like 'politics of blame' wherein the colonisers are often derailed, the nativist translator moves away from the larger concerns of post colonial translation, end up perceiving a unifocal vision of his culture. Disruptive such practices are, these translators could often forget the clashes involved in the annals of colonial encounter.

A major task that often confronts a postcolonial translator in India is the reconstruction of history. Should she also 'hand cuff' herself into the history of the nation (as Uma Parameswara would label Rushdie's pickling of history in his *Midnight's Children*)? In contesting the past, the translators are often engaged in the act of revising and expanding the historico-spatial domain as much as the creative writer. O. Chandumenon's *Indulekha* is an instance to prove this point wherein Anitha Devasia's translati on into English fully renders the dialogues in chapter XVIII wherein the Tamil translation of Appadurai has placed numerous cuts thereby reducing the lengthy chapter concerning colonialism, education, intellectual freedom etc. to a single page. Translations like these are concerned with what Tiffin labels as "subjectificatory legacies" (Tiffin viii).

The cultural encounter of translation calls for a transformative assimilation of the translated culture. The process is two-fold, since the cultural and linguistic osmosis involved, felicitates an expansion of the scope of the work of art. The native discourse, when fused into an alien semantic system, leads to the formation of a hybrid and unified discourse. Rightly does Sukanta Chauduri mentions:

> In translation, two ages and cultures – mere strictly, two groups or conglomerates of culture – are held in tensed, each re-worked in the light of the other and further refracted by a range of other for us (Chaudri 1999: 10).

Apart from the loss of certain native cultural forms, the cultural encounter also results in a state of reverse flow, since the target language (often English in India) remains enriched with ideas, metaphors etc. of the source language.

The multi-lingual situation of India acts as a source of enrichment and also lends an immense complexity to the situation. Despite the multiple translations that take place within the 'bhasha' traditions, the premier position occupied by translations into the Engish language is indisputable and has also been a source of genuine concern for the Indian academic elite.[4] In a multi-lingual country like India, the regional essentialist (if not chauvinistic) outlooks often create mental barriers which may at times hinder the process of translation. Even among the different languages of India, the translations may not be read on account of a lack of cultural dynamism. Chaudri makes a distinction between 'mono lingualism' described as "the literal state of burning or using only one language" and 'unilingualism' which has "a mindset or ethos that operates only in terms of one language" (ibid.: 72-73), which may hinder the appreciation of anything beyond the single language.

If the translator is genuinely interested in translating her native tongue into English, the problems of translating the quintessential cultural experience is difficult, given the basic alien

nature of the language. The Indian postcolonial translator, with her twin-linguistic legacy of her native tongue and English, often resorts to a subtle form of abrogation called the 'metonymic gap' (Ashoroft 1989). The translator inserts unglossed words. Mostly cultural items like names of food, dress, exclamatory remarks, familial retention and hips etc. which are actually synecdochic of the native culture. For instance, Ambai's short story in Tamil *Amma Oru Kolai Seidhaal*, (1971) has been translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom as *My Mother Her Crime*. The adolescent child's perception of the mother is significant:

> Suddenly she seems to me like the daughter of *Agni* [….] could this be my mother? …. Why does the *sloka* come to mind all at once? My mother turns her head what are you doing here *di* [……..] Is it [….] the sharp *Kumkumam* mark on her forehead that makes her seem the very image of those blazing fames? With long drawn out *Agniye Swaahaa* they pour ghee on to the flames.

The untranslated language represents the colonized culture in a metonymic way wherein the translator presents her ethos to the colonizer in her language [what may basically appear to her] while concurrently signalling a difference from it.

To once again probe deeper into the politics of translations, the undeniable fact remains that the realm in which the postcolonial translator traverses is not entirely free from the strings of colonialism. Nkrumah refers to 'neo-colonialism' which is a covert form of control, wherein numerous policy decisions, economic control and political sanctions enter into the foray with the leading publishing houses owned by the British and American nations. The imperatives like power play is visible and the conscious and unconscious hierarchies come to the fore especially when binarisms like colonizer/colonized, and those of economic strength, operate. The site of translation therefore is one in which two unequal worlds stand at difference, involving collision, collation, tension and yet

continuing to simultaneously de-construct and re-construct new semiotic signals and signifiers.

Such trends can also usher numerous forms of homogeneity, especially the linguistic one. Meenakshi Mukerjee is therefore right in stating that "global monolinguism is the aspiration of the younger generation today" (Mukerjee 192), especially at a time when books written or translated into the English language receives a greater quantum of hype, publicity and brings more dollars/pounds to the publishing houses. How different then, is the work of art from any other consumer product which is marketed world wide?

Even then, a novel by an Indian writer in English is often received with greater accolades than the translated one. Still, the translator in India needs to continue her mission to avoid the pitfalls of essentialising India as also its homogenisation, critics may even derail it as drawing us away from the original source. But it is indeed a stern fact that without the translation, the world would have probably remained oblivious of the original text.

NOTES

1. "Too much, too long, too many, too subversive, too voluble, too insistent, too, strident, [….] too complex, too hybrid […] too […] excessive" (Ashcroft 33)

2. India has a plethora of regional versions of the epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. For instance. *Kamba Ramayana*, the Tamil version of Ramayana by Kambar, is a modified transcreation of Valmiki Ramayana. The Telugu language has for its share various versions of Mahabharata as those of Tikkanna, Nannayya and Molla's version called *Molla Ramayana*.

3. Macaulay's tirade against India, its language literature, religion and culture is evident in his [in] famous minute on Indian education.

"I believe…. that all the historical information, which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language, is less valuable than what may be found in the paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England."

"…. A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."

4. Meenakshi Mukherjee's *The Perishable Empire* is an earnest plea for translations. In an essay "The Anxiety of Indianness", she mentions how numerous writers aspire to be "part of a global league." Although these writers show little familiarity with "Bhasha Literatures," they achieve fame paradoxically with their relationship to India. (Mukherjee 175) Shashi Deshpande has also somewhere, regretted over her lack of ability to write in the *Bhasha* tradition.

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Bodies in Translation: Alistair Macleod's *No Great Mischief*

B. Hariharan

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to push my understanding of translation beyond the identifiable Source and Target Language paradigm that address many contentious issues of practitioners as well as theorists of translation. Translation has to do with movement and distance. Languages remember, fail, or try to remember their older narrative contexts in their new cultural life as they negotiate the distances travelled between cultural spaces, relocating in the body of the reader. More than the act of putting thoughts and ideas of one 'language' into another, it makes much sense to recognize how translation is a version of memory and a bodily act in the sense that the new text remembers the distance between languages in its narration of the aura of the body translated. The paper uses Michael Cronin's idea of the 'therapy of distance' to discuss Alistair MacLeod's Canadian novel No Great Mischief (1999), which, with its breadth and sweep, takes the reader across oceans and to stories and lives remembered in oral and written narratives. The paper argues that in the communal body of the reader is the distance, translated back as print memory, which enables the tensions that imagine the nation. In the course of the argumentation, the paper identifies translations that find a body at the level of cultural identities manifest in terms of history, language, and readable surfaces (skin texture, and eye colour) that mark off and identify clan and nation as well as remember the distances that constitute a sense of history.

In his book *Translation and Globalization* Cronin introduces the notion of translation with a reference to how in AD 828 two merchants arrived in the city of Venice with the mortal remains of

the evangelist St Mark that they had stolen from the tomb where he lay in Alexandria (Cronin 2003). The relevance of such saintly bodysnatching may not be immediately apparent for translation, but it draws attention to what Cronin, following Brown's work, calls the "therapy of distance" (ibid 9) in his examination of the 'medieval practice of translation' (ibid 9), and what it says about translation and our roles as translators, teachers, and theoreticians in the global economy. Cronin locates the idea of movement and distance that is central to translation in the story of saints and their rise and function in Latin Christianity. P Brown's work on *The Cult of Saints* parenthetically refers to translations in the context of the common medieval practice of such saintly thefts as "the movements of relics to people" (quoted in Cronin op cit 8). However, the act of translation, in the religious or in the secular domain saves on time but "[does] not save on distance" (ibid 8). For, when "pilgrims go on a journey, the principal discovery is not destination but distance. The spiritual value lies as much, if not more, in the wandering as in the arrival" (ibid 9).

Here Cronin extrapolates on the idea of distance traveled to arrive at a description of translation from Brown's parenthetical reference to how "shrines containing relics were all closed surfaces, the faithful glimpse helps understand the therapeutic value of distance in a moment of sacred vision for the pilgrim who holds for an instant the miraculous power of the source text, the body that narrates something of its aura still. The miracle for the pilgrim/reader is the experience at the moment of glimpsing the 'fragments and shred of the sacred' of the distance between the body in remembered Alexandria and later in Venice.

Alistair Macleod's novel *No Great Mischief* (1999) set in Canada is as much about the legendary patriarchs, the secular pilgrims, who embarked on a journey from the Scottish Highlands and resettled in present-day Nova Scotia as it is a remembrance of distances traveled. As David Williams concludes, it is about the "shift from clan to nation", "a print creation of the imagined nation,

of that dreamed home in the book where Highlander and Québécois live in harmony with Ukrainians, Mennonites, and migrant workers from Mexico" (Williams 2003:102). In another sense, the novel remembers the journey in terms of oral memory and the technology of print culture not so much to arrive at a destination where one subsumes the other, but experience the distances in multiple narrative journeys.

What I wish to argue is that the narrative undercurrent of the shift from clan to nation is as much a discourse of the "fundamental tensions of the narrative" (ibid 102) of orality and print, as it is about the therapy of distance. In the silent reading that marks print culture, the reader is aware that there are others also who imagine similar worlds in the silence of reading[1]. That is to say, the reader, in the privacy of silent reading imagines nations[2] in the mind. In Macleod's novel, the reader relives the simultaneity of oral as well as print narration in a communal body, "occupy[ing] the same textual space as the narrator-listener, recalling shared family history" (ibid 84) that shares these two modes of narrative emplotment. In the communal body of the reader is the distance, translated now back as print memory[-3], which enables the tensions that imagine the nation.

The opening of the novel thus draws attention to the immediate moment of narration as it gets hold of the distances traveled to arrive at that point of memory that launches the narrative. A description of the Trans Canada Highway where the roadside stands display to "pick your own" (Macleod 1) the rich autumn harvest soon draws attention to migrant labourers who "pick instead for wages to take with tem when they leave. This land is not their own" (1). The regular practice of farmers ploughing down the old crops for the new cycle after picking, recalls from memory the narrator's grandmother who spend decades nurturing her precious plants. What the introductory paragraphs of the novel give the reader is a glimpse into the distances that describes a narrative that spans memory, elaborated in language, and history. This singular trope of distances that the narrator travels in multiple ways embodies

personal and collective memories in the body of the book as well as the reader.

The body always remembers. Translation is a version of memory and a bodily act in the sense that the new text remembers the distance between languages in its narration of the aura of the body translated. Macleod's novel emphasizes of how "the cultures of Québécois and highlander are equally based on economics of memory" (Williams 2003: 92). This version of memory manifests in the way Gaelic language and songs are sung (as oral text), remembered, and translated into English (the printed text); or how Gaelic, French, and English translate historical distances into a shared cultural history of loss; in the repeated story of Calum Raudh setting foot in Canada in oral and print versions and the stories of the faithful dogs; or even in the multilingual existence of the miners as they translate history and dreams in their songs in a remembered Orpheus-like state.

The oral poet Orpheus, at least in Ovid's version, returns from the underworld and sings his risqué songs that remember the exploits of the gods particularly on the earth. The narrator in the novel "mediates between cultures of speech and print" in what would seem as "the predicament of an over-educated son or rural folk" (ibid 86). Alternatively, Alexander MacDonald, everyone's *gille beag ruadh*, the narrator-translator is the orthodontist-turned-Orpheus whose remembrance recalls in oral and print ways fragments of the clan's shared language and history.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the narrator makes out the soft singing from his brother Calum's room when he goes out into the hallway after meeting him. The printed narrative remembers and renders the first four lines of the song in Gaelic and identifies it with a brief explanation and a translation in English: "He is singing '*Cumha Ceap Breatuinn*', 'Lament for Cape Breton', which is one of those communal songs often sung by large groups of people or in situations where one person sings the verse and the group sings the

chorus" (Macleod 16). Unlike the song of Orpheus, it is not a risqué song, nor a risqué thought that emerges as narrative. As he begins "to descend the steep, sad stairs, beneath the forty-watt bulb, the song continues and I am almost surprised to realize it is no longer coming from him but from somewhere deep within me. It rises up to the extent that my own lips move in an almost reflex action" (16). Calum and the narrator remember the pain, the longing, and that memory is translated here in the body of Gaelic and English where the Gaelic is obviously heard, then translated and made available in print. The song intercedes as an expression of time and distance in this release of the longing of the heart. As Williams remarks, 'One of the paradoxes of the book is that print can communicate this oral feel for existence" (Williams 2003: 95).

Such intercession is also a function of translation as when the grandma, in her senility refers to the ability of her 'friend' to the narrator-grandson. She remarks how songs that were very much a part of the rhythm of life had become the collector's item, thanks to the work of folklorists. In a sense, grandma's lament is also for Cape Breton. "We always sang," she says, "We always sang when we were working and then we just sang because we liked to. We were used to it. Some of the songs were long, verse after verse. It wasn't until the radio came along that we thought maybe our songs were too long. The ones on the radio lasted only a few minutes" (270-271). The 'friend', the narrator's grandfather who is also her son's father-in-law knew a lot of songs. "He knew all of the verses in his head and never made a mistake. He could remember everything. We should have copied all those words down while he was still with us. Copied them in a scribbler or something, but we never got around to it" (271). The cultural distance that grandma perceives here with the death of the grandfather is addressed in the narrative when the songs find a new body in the memory of the printed text when the narrator-grandson writes them down; the songs find a body in the reader.

There are other translations that find a body at the level of cultural identities manifest in terms of history, language, and

readable surfaces (skin texture, and eye colour) that mark off and identify clan and nation as well as remember the distances that constitute a sense of history. The narrator recalls how as a young boy he was surprised to hear from his grandfather that *Calum Ruadh* cried when he "landed on the shores of Pictou" (Macleod 24). There is no nostalgia in this evocation of the source text relocated from Scotland to Canada; the grandfather responds "composing himself and after a thoughtful moment" (25) to the incredulous query of the young boy who is at a loss to understand why an adult cried. In an interview Alistair Macleod discusses what it means to be away from the home landscape which helps clarify the processes of memory for bodies read in different climes. Macleod says, "I don't know if absence makes the heart grow fonder, but it makes the mind more thoughtful" ("Alistair Macleod and the Tuning of Perfection" www.modestyarbor.com/macleod.html). It is now easier to read what grandfather tells the young boy, with that little critical note in parenthesis that is the therapy of distance: "'He was', he said, composing himself and after a thoughtful moment, 'crying for his history. He has left his country and lost his wife and spoke a foreign language. He has left as a husband and arrived as a widower and a grandfather, and he was responsible for all those people clustered around him. He was,' he said, looking up to the sky, 'like the goose who points the V, and he temporarily wavered and lost his courage'" (25).

In a way both grandpa and grandfather cry for history in their oral and print memories of the Highlander who tried to make history with Bonnie Prince Charlie in England and later with General Wolfe in Canada. It is distance again that foregrounds the painful memory of the "auld alliance" (269) between the French and Scot against the English. The history of their people, doubly translated by the two grandfathers in oral and print ways in the text remind how the "Québécois and Cape Bretoners have been historical allies in loss, both of them having suffered the overthrow by the British of their respective feudal societies, first at Culloden in 1746,

then at Quebec in 1759, and at Montreal in 1760" ("Orality and Print" 90). While grandpa remembers the story he has heard and firmly believes in its truth value "ever loyal to the story he has been told", grandfather, the literate man makes a great discovery in the campus library while he attends the graduation of the young Alexander. He "searches the written record and finds that his people were betrayed" (90).

What the distances that constitute this memory of betrayal plots in Alexander MacDonald's text is Wolfe's hypocritical remark about the Highlander. In this sense, the novel turns inside out Wolfe's statement when his body is stolen from historical records and translated in the body of fiction. In this translation as therapy, Alexander MacDonald makes grandfather explain to grandpa in the body of print how MacDonald first fought against Wolfe, then went to Paris where he learnt French, and after he was pardoned fought for the British army in Quebec. And so, the narrator has the literate grandfather explain that Wolfe "was using them against the French". The body of fiction initially reads: "Wolfe referred to the Highlanders as his secret enemy and once, speaking of recruiting them as soldiers in a letter to his friend captain Rickson, he made the cynical comment, 'No great mischief if they fall'" (Macleod 109). Later on in the text, Alexander MacDonald translates for his sister grandfather's 'suspicion' about Wolfe. The sister apparently is in the know of things, for she repeats how the Gaelic-speaking soldiers went to France, and then returned to fight under Wolfe, comfortable with two languages.

Catriona, the narrator's twin sister further translates Wolfe's body in her brother's narrative in this "shared history of the another" (Macleod 238). It is perhaps in Catriona's oral narrative shared in print that we glimpse how the warriors newly returned from France were unaware of Wolfe's attitude towards them, one built on suspicion, fear, and distrust. "They didn't know about his earlier letter describing them. I still remember some of the phrasing: "They

are hardly, intrepid, accustomed to a rough country, and no great mischief if they fall'" (237). This signals the politics of the novel, for "[f]rom the title page onward, then, imperial interpretations of the Conquest are being called into question" ("Orality and Print" 89). What is more, "the words 'from Britain's shore in days of yore, Wolfe, the dauntless hero came', are never mentioned. Nor is *The Death of General Wolfe,* that icon of imperial hagiography produced in 1771 by Benjamin West, a painter from the Thirteen Colonies (Warner 214)" (89). Such translation-as-fleshing of Wolfe in oral and two print versions (the text in the campus library and then in the body of the novel) signals the distance the narrative travels from clan memory to national imaginings.

There are other textual re-awakenings of memory of the dead in the narrative that remember the body in multiple ways. What David Williams refers to explain the "somatic component" of oral memory as the "ache of memory" that can "produce a pain that has to find physical release" ("Orality and Print 96) is a useful way to describe embedded memories that have narrative therapeutic value. Such narrative is made available in the repeated translation of the body of the dead cousin and later in the journey in which Alexander MacDonald ferries his dead brother. The physical release posits translation as narrative of healing, at least for the narrator, who is "trapped in the net of my own guilt and history" (Macleod 14). The clan working in Renco Development remembers the dead cousin in bodily ways when they have Alexander Macdonald in the place of the red-haired cousin. More importantly, the aunt's ache of memory is translated as the brothers prepare to leave for work after the funeral: "Before we left, my aunt gave me the gift she had purchased for her son. 'Take this and *wear* it', she said, passing me the shirt. 'Don't leave it in the box. Will you do that?'" (Macleod 132).

In more bodily ways, the ache of the memory of the dead cousin manifests in physical terms when the Calum Ruadh clan stick together and help their cousin from San Francisco, he is included in

their team working for the company: "We found among our luggage and assorted papers the pinkish-brown employment card that had belonged to the red-haired Alexander MacDonald. It was more fragile than the current plastic S.I.N. cards, but the numbers were still intact. Calum took the card to the timekeeper. 'This man will be working with us tomorrow', he said" (224-225). It was as though the red-haired cousin was back after a short vacation. "It was almost as if the new Alexander MacDonald was the beneficiary of a certain kind of gift. A gift from a dead donor who shared the same blood group and was colour-compatible, although the two had never met. A gift which might allow an extended life for each of them. An extended life, though false, allowing each of them to go forward. Not for a long journey. Just for a while" (225-226).

Translation as gift that nourishes life, though, does not seem to be fully realized in this instance as the violent events leading to the death of Fern Picard and the imprisonment of Calcum attest. It is the memory of this that reinforces the sense of time and place for the modern Orpheus trapped in the shared guilt and history; he must travel to ferry back the dead. Only, the classical journey of Orpheus is made in the car across the Trans Canada Highway as he goes to meet Calum in the opening section of the novel and in the last chapter. This translation of the journey from oral to print narration is also a return voyage home. Or as Michael Cronin puts it, "Translation is a return ticket: the voyage out is complemented by the journey home…the translation *demarche* is essentially nomadic" (Cronin 2003:126).

Alexander goes to Toronto to pick up his brother who had phoned him and said "it's time" (Macleod 276). From there they head east into Quebec. They sight the lighthouse off Cape Breton where their parents died in the treachery of ice that gave way. Now, Calum dies in the Passenger seat beside Alexander. At this point, the narrator re-inscribes in the body of the printed text the memory of how Calum carried the three year old Alexander across the ice from

the island. Calum dies after "We're almost home" (Macleod 281), which signals the translation of clan relationships into "reading coalitions" (Anderson 77). For in the silent reading of the novel is established an imagined relationship in the space of the text that embodies the story of the journey home taking in all the sights that catalogue the nation[4]. Equally importantly, it is also a "geography of the nation" ("Orality and Print" 102); a very fascinating translation of the maps of the mind to imagine the nation in a multilingual existence as the reader takes both the highways that communicate a national consciousness and a mind.

NOTES

1. See Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* where he shows the newspaper reader reassured that he inhabits an imagined world shared and rooted in everyday life. See especially page 39.

2. See David Williams' preface to his *Imagined Nations: Reflections on Media in Canadian Fiction* especially page vii.

3. Benedict Anderson writes of how the 'thing' became the French Revolution, remembered in print: "Like a vast shapeless rock worn to a rounded boulder by countless drops of water, the experience was shaped by millions of printed words into a 'concept' on the printed page, and, in due course, into a model" (77-78) and "it entered the accumulating memory of print" (77). What we get in Macleod's novel is memory in print in a very different sense.

4. David Williams rightly notes: "For what he notes on the borders of his family history, and what he writes in the margins of oral memory, amounts to a vision of what Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined communities'; that is, communities mediated by some technological means. From the imagined inclusion of Ukrainians in Canada to the nameless workers invited by signs in the fields along the highways…the narrator appears to be

> engaged in cataloguing the plurality of the nation, from oilmen (and his sister married to a Slav) in Calgary, to ethnic miners (and his own brothers) in Northern Ontario, to Celtic fishers (and his remaining family) I Nova Scotia….Whatever their economic or immigrant status, they are still imagined as potential fellow citizens. In that respect, the print-form of the novel turns into an instrument of citizenship, by which large numbers of scattered people, who can never meet in person, can still meet in textual space that identifies their imaginative belonging in the geographical space of the nation" (100).

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Translating a Community: An Experience from Coastal Karnataka

Shashikantha K.

Abstract

Post-Colonial theories have brought in the agency of the colonized in a rather forceful way to retrieve the lost self-hood. But even as they do that, these theories do not look into the possibility of several communities within the colonies perceiving the colonizers as agents of modernity. This way, colonizers which include British officials as well as missionaries as the translators of several communities into modern communities. This paper looks into a context where one such community, Billavas in South India, opted for Western modernity by taking to Christianity, denying the offer from the elites at home to take to Brahmo Samaj, a way of modern Hinduism in the late nineteenth century.

South Canara[1] provides certain specificities for Translation Studies. Here, we have a multiplicity of languages, not brought about by the urbanity and cosmopolitanism of late modernity, but by the trade and commerce, travel and a constant touch with the outside world. The languages of the region are - Tulu, one of the old languages, considered to be indigenous; Kannada, which has been the administrative as well as literary language of the region for the last one and a half millennium with very few exceptions[2]; Konkani, spoken by Gouda Saraswat Brahmins as well as Catholic Christians, who fled from Goa, escaping from either proselytisation or inquisition from the hands of the Portuguese authorities. We also have the Beary language, spoken by a specific Muslim community. This is apart from certain dialects of Marathi and Malayalam spoken by smaller communities. This pre-colonial melting pot of linguistic communities witnessed speeding up of already existing forms of negotiation between groups during the colonial period. This paper

looks into an instance, which was part of such a negotiation between groups or communities. Textual work, translation, mediation and representation were part of this negotiation. In this sense, this paper does not do a stock taking of all translation works that have taken place in this geo-literary space called South Canara, now rechristened Dakshina Kannada.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century the missionaries and the British published vast representations of the Indian people, literatures, customs and traditions in English translation. Some of them dealt with Indian folk traditions at great length. With the help of texts as well as practices, there were efforts to represent modernity to several native communities in India. The contributors to these publications were sometimes Indian elites themselves. Therefore the efforts by the missionaries and the British were mediated by the Indian elites too. In this paper we shall look into the choices of modernity and options that were available to a native community of south coastal Karnataka – Billavas. The principal actors were the missionaries of the Basel Mission, British officials, members of the Billava and Brahmin communities, and the Brahmo Samaj. This article seeks to critique the postcolonial critique of Orientalism, which might ignore or sideline some groups or communities that accepted Western modernity. In other words, the Saidian ambition of retrieving the colonized as the subject of its own history, runs the risk of perceiving the colonizer and the colonized as terms in a binary opposition and might monolithise these terms without looking into the multiplicity and complexity of a variety of identities that these terms might be inclusive of, and the power play therein.

I

> According to the imagination of the people, in the Canara district, the Tulu country is especially fitted for demons, which they say, are partly created by God, like the Panjurli, and partly sprung from men, like the Beiderlu.

> There are several kinds of them, mostly thought to be flying about in the air. Some are, however, considered to be residing in certain places, houses, gardens etc. While some are family Bhutas, others are village Bhutas, and others, again, are only to be found in connection with certain temples (Manner 1894: 5).

> The ceremony at which we were present…was celebrated by the head-man of the Billava (i.e., toddy-tappers) caste, once in about twenty years. The expense, five hundred to a thousand rupees, falls on him, but he is partly compensated by gifts from the people who attend. Europeans have so often failed to get a sight of these rites, that, even after permission had been given and we had accordingly attended, it seemed questionable whether we had really seen the ceremony or had been imposed upon, and it was only after questioning a Bhuta priest, now a Christian, that we found out that what we saw was really the ceremony, and, therefore, we can confidently put forward this account of it (Burnel, A.C., and Hesse, J., 1894: 7).

The above excerpts are examples of ventures to describe the outlandish native customs and practices by the missionaries and British officials.[3] The British and the missionaries in the colonies mostly worked within the framework that has been identified as Orientalism.[4] The critique of Orientalism took to task a description of the Orient as a "place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes" and its enterprise to sift through the Orient into "Western consciousness" (Said 2000: 20-53). The above texts perfectly yield to the postcolonial critique of Orientalism. The critique of Orientalism would argue that the confidence and the power of first hand-experience as seen in the latter passage with the motif of an illusive spectacle on the one hand and on the other, a claim to authenticity, built up a repository of knowledge that made possible an Occidental hegemony over the Orient (ibid.: 24). But before we go further, an effort at acquainting ourselves with the

missionary group called the Basel Mission, which was involved in the linguistic and cultural study of the people, their land, customs and traditions, apart from the proselytizing activities in the south coastal Karnataka may be in order.

The Basel Mission is a relatively little talked about missionary group from Basel (now in Switzerland). It emerged in the early nineteenth century as a small but dedicated missionary group. The missionary organizations were highly ambitious as they entered a vast and almost virgin land. Gauri Viswanathan remarks, "the belief that Hinduism could surely fall from its foundation and the gospel rise on its ruins – that through science and modern learning 'we must all come to one religion' ('an intellectual revolution culminating in a universal Christianity') – was quite clearly an ideology that directed missionary labour in India" (Viswanathan 1990: 62). With a conviction to spread Christianity, this pietist missionary group set foot in India in 1835, in Mangalore, now in Karnataka. The Basel Mission had trained their missionaries to work in acute conditions. There was an Institute in Basel to train candidates who would become missionaries and would work in different parts of the world. The study of language was prioritized in this Institute. The chosen candidates in this Institute were trained both in Oriental and Occidental languages and literatures. In 1881/82, six hours of Greek and Latin was taught to the candidates. Missionaries who came to the East also received training in Arabic, Sanskrit and English. One of the worst exercises given to them was to pull a 'dung-cart through the city of Klein Basel…amidst the laughter of the Basel population' (Bieder 1985: 36-37). These rehearsals to work unabatedly helped these trainees in such a condition as their bazaar speeches during the native festivals, when even things such as cow-dung were thrown at them and they continued their speech being indifferent to the attitudes of the crowd.

Within the first twenty years of work in South Canara, the Basel Mission was able to achieve converts from almost all castes viz, the Brahmin, Bunt, Billava, Moger etc. However, after working among the Billavas for a couple of decades, there was a prominent

change in the profile of the new converts. There was a sudden outburst of response from the Billavas towards Christianity. In the 1860s and 1870s, thousands of Billavas from Mangalore and Udupi region were taken into the fold of Christianity.

II

Billavas were a caste that was considered 'low' in the caste hierarchy, though they were not considered 'untouchables'. Their population in South Canara was 1,51,491 (about twenty percent of the population of South Canara which remains the same even today) in the year 1851 (David 1986). During the olden days they were an important part of armies of the kings of the region. As the wars ceased, their prime occupation became toddy tapping and distillation. Some members of the community played the role of the *bhuta* priest or priests of spirits[5] during the worship ceremonies. They also worked as agricultural but landless laborers. Billavas were ardent worshippers of countless *bhuta*s or spirits. They did not worship any other gods and also did not have a proper temple until 1912, when the visit of Narayana Guru from Kerala prompted the community to build their own temple.[6] High alcoholism, lack of a proper occupation and constant vulnerability to deadly diseases resulted in the socio-economic and political backwardness of Billavas.

It was chiefly for upward mobility that the Billavas started converting to Christianity. Their hope for an exalted material life made many of them accept the fold of Christianity. Coupled with that was the fear of *bhuta*s. They had a feeling that Christians had a power to drive away the *bhuta*s. Stating the reason for conversion, the Report of the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society (henceforth RBMS) for 1869 says that the Billavas had realized "that their religion and their social circumstances were rotten and that the manner of life in which they saw the native Christians walking, was far better than their own. Joined to this was the dread of their

demons, a feeling of misery under the annoyances coming from their demons and Gurus, whilst they were convinced that the Christians were stronger than the devil and were able to shelter them also from his persecution" (RBMS 1869: 31).

The study of the *bhuta*s, their worship and the incantations during such worship had been conducted by the missionaries in the first half of the nineteenth century itself as part of the study of the culture and language of the Tulu people and especially Billavas. They had published such studies in various Indological journals such as *Indian Antiquary* and also as independent books and booklets. The presence of these missionaries during worship ceremonies sans any feeling of devotion and yet being immune to any curse of the *bhuta* appealed to the Billavas. The missionaries even got pleas from the newly converted people to stay in their houses so that the presence of the missionaries warded off any approaching *bhuta*. By representing the *bhuta* worship as 'devil' worship both in day-to-day practice as well as in textual translations, the Basel Mission was the agent of modernity in the above-mentioned region in Karnataka. These efforts were accompanied by the Enlightenment idea of 'development' and the pietistic idea of 'hard work'. Part of this was the establishment of some industries where the new converts could work and earn their livelihood.

The conversion to Christianity led to excommunication from the community. The Billavas and others, who got converted, were alienated by their friends, patrons and familial relations. This also resulted in the loss of livelihood not only because they lost their previous social network but also because the Basel Mission banned certain kinds of occupations like toddy tapping.[7] In such cases the Mission had to provide an alternate occupation to a displaced and isolated community. The kind of pressure that worked on the converts resulted in the missionaries trying their hands at various industrial enterprises and teaching the converts "the basic characteristics of modern man in general" (Fischer 1991:129). The

Basel Mission employed the new converts in various industries. The Basel Mission Report for the year 1854 asserted:

> Let us break the force of social excommunication which follows conversion, by teaching the industrial, mechanical and agricultural arts of Europe to the humblest converts, both in Christian colonies and industrial schools formed for their accommodation and tuition the great desirableness of which is becoming apparent (the Report quoted in David 1986: 166).

This solved not just the problem of providing the converts with livelihood, but also built an alternate community, which made up for the effects of excommunication. The Basel Mission established fly-shuttle looms on the West coast, producing high-quality clothes mostly for the Europeans in the region. In 1860, they ventured into tile industry to provide sound economic protection to the converted. In 1910, the number of people working in the weaving and tile factories was 3,500. There were other jobs created such as printing, bookbinding and watch making. All these jobs were occupied by the converted Christians. Fischer sees this as phenomenally different from other mission organizations in India and says "Basel Mission Christians underwent the most radical social change ever inflicted on Indian converts by a missionary society" (Fischer 1991).[8]

III

However, there was a Billava leader who 'was dissatisfied with the social customs of his people and the lack of a temple of their own for worship of God' (Anonymous n.d.: 8). He was well-to-do and could be counted on par with other elites of the region. His name was Arasappa. Arasappa had come into contact with a prominent Saraswat Brahmin of the place called Ullal Raghunathayya. He was the son of the District Munsif and a famous Sanskrit scholar, Ullal Mangeshayya. Raghunathayya had been

inspired by the ideas of Keshab Chandra Sen, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj from Calcutta. Incidentally Raghunathayya's interest in Brahmo Samaj had bloomed by a constant visit to the library adjacent to the Basel Mission School in Mangalore. Later, he started to subscribe to the weekly paper published by the Samaj from Calcutta, titled *Indian Mirror*. This had given a further boost to his interest in the Samaj activities. Arasappa was influenced by Raghunathayya's new inspiration and he too developed interest in the Samaj (Ibid.).

Arasappa was possibly the most powerful and influential leader among the Billavas in and around Mangalore who numbered about 5,000. He held a meeting of the community members in 1869 and sent a telegram to Brahmanand Keshab Chandra Sen, Secretary of the Brahmo Samaj of India, for the services of the missionaries to come and teach Brahmoism to the people of Mangalore. Three missionaries of the Brahmo Samaj, Bhai P.C.Muzoomdar, Bhai Gour Govind Roy, and Bhai Amrit Lal Bose came to Mangalore by the end of April 1870. They were accompanied by Vasudev Nowrangy of the Bombay Prarthana Samaj (Ibid.).

However, Brahmo Samaj missionaries failed in impressing "the minds of Arasappa's people". Their "ways and habits of life" were "something like Christian priests quite unlike their Hindu priests" (Ibid.). Or perhaps they looked rather more alien than the Basel Mission priests working in that region. The latter, they knew, were sympathetic to their cause. They took their children to school; gave medicines whenever they were ill; drove away the fear of *Bhuta*s and so on. But these new comers were totally strangers for them as well as their aspirations. Therefore, the vast Billava contingent turned down the offer of their leader Arasappa. "However, Arasappa tried his best to induce them to come forward" (Ibid.). But only five persons including himself got ready for the initiation into the Brahmo faith. Some twelve days later fourteen more joined them. A Samaj was established for them in Arasappa's house in May 1870, which went by the name of Brahmo Samaj (Ibid: 1-3).

In fact, the possible conversion into Brahma Samaj was highlighted then in the media. The Report of the Mission says, "The news of the Billawars of Mangalore had run the round of Indian newspapers…" (RBMS for 1869: 23). On the other hand, there was a considerable possibility of the large Billava contingent turning to Christianity as propagated by the Basel Mission. Since it was a large group of people who were getting ready for this conversion into Brahma Samaj, the Mission was worried about the prospect of getting anymore converts from that community. The Mission had put up its efforts to win over the minds of some "leaders", when it came to know about the Billava intention to embrace Brahmo Samaj. In fact, the Mission was even granted permission by the leaders. The Report says, "These leaders are people with whom we had been acquainted for many years, and we now tried again to influence them in favor of Christianity. One of their leaders[9] came to our house, and as soon as they granted us permission, we returned the visit to their houses. But it became more and more apparent that there were scarcely any spiritual motives, the chief reason of their wish for change being the desire to rise in social position, and they begged to make conditions, that in the event of their becoming Christians, they would not be *one* with the congregation, but remain an *independent* body, to be allowed to visit heathen plays etc." (Ibid.) The Mission was always for a single congregation without any fragments of caste or creed entering into it. The change in social position would only be a contingent factor along with conversion but not a primary factor. To this ideal, the Mission stuck to the end of its tenure and had a uniform congregation. However, the trickle of Billavas into the Basel Mission fold continued till the Mission existed in India and on the other hand, the Brahmo Samaj consisting of a handful of Billavas, died out with the death of Arasappa in 1876.[10]

IV

Now, it is also important to see why the Billavas felt so alien to the Brahmo ideals that within the time span of a single speech, about 4,995 of them had decided not to accept Brahmoism as a way

of life. Firstly, they saw that the "ways and habits of life" of the Brahmos were alien. Secondly, and more importantly, the people who were involved in persuading and influencing Arasappa were the Saraswat Brahmins of Mangalore such as Ullal Raghunathayya and Bharadwaj Shiva Rao etc. And it was the Brahmins who were quite opposed to the upward mobility of the Billavas in South Canara as was evident in the nineteenth century itself. In 1836 itself, the Brahmins were against the employment of Billavas in government offices as trainees, on the ground that such Billavas would attain the headship of the offices and Brahmins would be compelled to follow the orders of a man they could hardly look at without getting polluted. They even went to the extent of complaining to the judge. However, the judge had replied that under the administration of the East India Company, no man could be deprived of office, or employment on account of religion, custom, and caste (David 1986: 167). It could be easily observed that the ones who had undergone schooling in the Basel Mission school in Mangalore were immediately absorbed in to one of the government offices in Mangalore and it was the Brahmins of Mangalore who had appealed for the starting of the schools by the Mission in Mangalore (Rossel 1986).[11]

At this point, it is interesting to note certain remarks of the Oriental scholars with regard to *bhuta* worship and related cultural practices. It seems that the Brahmin intervention in *bhuta* worship started only in the mid-nineteenth century, roughly since the time the Billavas' entry into modern spaces was legitimised by the British rule in South Canara. To quote R.C. Temple, a British official and a scholar placed in Mangalore in the nineteenth century, "One of the points…which will prominently strike the reader conversant with Hinduism as a whole, is the stronghold that *modern* Brahminism has *now* obtained over the minds of the Tuluva *bhuta*-worshippers, and the acuteness with which their practices have been bent towards Hinduism pure and simple" (Temple 1894: 4, *my emphasis*). It looks probable that a community that could not be 'subdued' or isolated

had to be appropriated and as a way of appropriation, the 'upper castes' got assimilated in practices such as *bhuta* worship[12] and started orienting it towards Brahminical practices. Thus, the various *bhuta*s that were worshipped were identified as the attending forces of Shiva and the names of the ceremonies were also sanskritised, though sometime back, the practices were ignored by Brahmins. As A.C. Burnel and Johannes Hesse remark,

> This primitive religion is *now* no longer neglected by the self-styled "higher castes", which formerly merely tolerated, but now almost respect the barbarous rites; while some philanthropic Brahmins labour to persuade the people that their gods are Bhutas, or attendants on Siva. These influences are apparent in the classification of the rites, which are *deva-kriya* or *asura kriya*, according as offerings are, or are not, made to the Bhuta. As the aboriginal "Peyi" has been changed into "Bhuta", so these rites have now a Sanskrit name, nema (i.e., niyama), and they are sana (i.e., sthana) or illechchhida, according as they are performed at a temple or in a house… (Burnel and Hesse 1894: 7, *my emphasis*).

The word *peyi* has lost currency as the word *bhuta* has already become a commonly accepted word to refer to those spirits or deities. Going through Indological writings, thus, one can get references to 'upper caste' mediation in the modernity as it was represented to other communities. When modernity could not be denied to other communities, the 'upper castes' tried to mediate or appropriate modernity through the cultural sphere to maintain their hegemony. However, the evident opposition of the 'upper castes' to the upward mobility of the Billavas did not allow the latter community to see the agency of modernity (of the kind they wanted) among Brahmins or 'upper castes', who had arrived in the form of Brahmo Samaj.

Conclusion

Going back to where we started, it should be seen that modernity as it was represented by the Western agencies such as the missionaries or the British officials was a conscious choice among certain sections of the native population. By saying that through mechanisms of hegemony the Western colonial forces spread the tentacles of power, and by monolithising the colonial subjects as a uniform collectivity without any agency, is to deny the deliberate opting for colonial modernity by certain native communities, as it was represented by the West. However, a major chunk of Billavas remained within the fold of their caste accepting the Narayana Guru-inspired Hinduism in the early twentieth century.[13]

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NOTES

1. The present districts of Udupi, Dakshina Kannada and Kasargod (of Kerala), in the South-West of India, were considered to be the South Canara district. After linguistic state formation in India in 1956, only Udupi and Dakshina Kannada remained in South Canara, in the state of Karnataka. From 1997, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada have become separate districts. However, nostalgia rules the people in their cultural psyche and many a time we hear the expression 'Avibhajita Dakshina Kannada', i.e., undivided South Canara.

2. Among the inscriptions of Tulunadu, only a couple of inscriptions have been found which are in Tulu and rest all are in Kannada (Ramesh 1980). When it comes to literary expressions, some epic poetry have been found in the last two or three decades. They are *Sri Bhagavato, Devi Mahatme, Kaveri* and the recent one found is *Karna Parva*. All these were deciphered and

brought to light by Venkataraja Puninchittaya, a scholar in Tulu. From the third and the fourth decades of the twentieth century, we have the modern literature in Tulu language starting with a novel *Sati Kamale*, by S.U. Paniyadi.

3. In this case, Rev. August Manner and Johannes Hesse (latter, the father of the illustrious German novelist Herman Hesse) were the missionaries working for the Basel Mission in Mangalore and A.C.Burnel was the British official. In South Canara, the British and the Basel Mission had quite cordial relations except during the World Wars in the twentieth century.

4. Roughly put, that body of knowledge and ways of perceiving or imagining the Orient or the East that led to the hegemony of the West on the East. The hegemony, in turn, reinforced those perceptions and imaginations of the West.

5. The word *bhuta* has been translated in different ways by the Indologists. But predominantly the words 'devil' and 'demon' occur in their translations. *bhuta*s (the corresponding Hindi word being *bhoot*) are sometimes the spirit of the deceased or some other times they are partly divine. Apart from gratifying the wishes of the devotees, they have a high propensity to commit mischief on their devotees. These spirits were therefore highly feared.

6. This moment seems to be an important point in the history of the Billava community in South Canara. Billavas in Mangalore built Kudroli Gokarnanatheswara Temple, where they would have a non-Brahmin priest (However, the Basel Missionary Society considered it only as a step towards Christianity. The Report of the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society for 1912-1913 says, "The efforts of these people to get rid of the Brahman, to appoint priests of their own, and to break away as much as possible from their old ways of life can easily be understood. But as the newly

constructed temple is no real source of strength, this revival of Hinduism, and even the apparent opposition to Christianity can only be interpreted as a step on the road toward Christianity [RBMS 1912-1913: 27]). Many Billava leaders from throughout South Canara went to meet Narayana Guru in Mangalore and with his blessings they started Bhajana Mandalis (*Bhajan* troupes) through out South Canara, which were and are the constellation points of community activities.

7. One of the Tulu pamphlets distributed by the Mission was titled "Kaligangasarada Tayari Kraistareg Yogyadavu Adunda?" (Is preparation of toddy and arrack fit for Christians?)

8. The missionaries had tried to rehabilitate the converts in agriculture too. But the missionaries felt that the tenants tended to be lazy. So the focus turned more on industries as time rolled on (Shiri 1986: 196).

9. We do not come across any other leader of the Billavas, who was of Arasappa's stature. This must have been Arasappa himself.

10. The Saraswat Brahmins had started their own group of congregation called Upasana Sabha, because they did not like to be identified with the Brahmo Samaj, which consisted of Billavas. This group started to be called Brahmo Samaj only in 1903, long after the death of Arasappa in 1876.

11. Goud Saraswat Brahmins, Valerian Rodrigues says, 'were in a way the most troubled community looking for a religious identity throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, unhinged from its traditional anchor by the colonial interventions including that of the Portuguese and looking for a larger alternative' (Rodrigues 2006). However, it did not resort to conversion (except for an occasion in 1844 when three boys of this community were converted followed by a big commotion

in Mangalore city, (see Gundert 1997: 131)) but it oriented itself sometimes to Brahmo Samaj, some other times to Theosophical society and yet other times to a regional variety of Brahmo Samaj – Upasana Sabha (the latter being a distinct part of Brahmo Samaj, since the actual Brahmo Samaj was represented by the Billavas, Saraswat Brahmins did not want to identify themselves with that version of Brahmo Samaj)

12. It should also be noted that the practice of *bhuta* worship also involves the resolution of certain social disputes or disputes related to land etc. This takes place during the *bhuta* worship ceremony called 'Kola', which is an annual ceremony.

13. One study observes that there was no strong non-Brahmin movement in this region because of the intervention of Narayana Guru (Rodrigues 2006).

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INTERVIEWING TRANSLATORS

Malayalam translators Ajith Kumar A.S. and S. Sanjeev talk about various issues related to the question of translation in general and translation of the 'literature of the marginalized' in particular and its impact on the Kerala reading public.

Ashokan Nambiar C.

Ashokan: Let us begin our discussion by talking generally about the translation scenario in Malayalam/Kerala.

Ajith: I think the translation scenario in Kerala has always been very vibrant. Huge numbers of literary works were/are being translated from and into Malayalam. If we talk about the present day scenario, most of the Latin American literary works get translated into Malayalam. Writers like Marquez, Neruda etc. are house hold names here. Not just literary works, a huge volume of Marxist literature has been translated and widely disseminated here.

Sanjeev: I agree with Ajith about the vibrancy of the translation scenario in the Kerala context. It has been very crucial in the introduction and evolution of certain modern literary forms in Malayalam. Some scholars have argued that formation/ shaping of the novel in Malayalam was a consequence of translation during the late 19th century. We also know that *Indulekha,* hailed as the first "modern" novel in Malayalam was a result of a failed attempt by the author to translate an English novel. But having said that I feel that there is a serious lacuna in the translation scenario in the Kerala context and the kind of work we take up is a conscious effort to fill it. I consider translation as a concept/process with lot of other dimensions and not just as the passage from one language to another. But I don't think we need to go into such a discussion here, need we?"

Ashokan: Right. Tell me the circumstances, context - the 'lacunae'- and also the reason that triggered your interest in translation as an activity.

Sanjeev: In the early 1990s when I started seriously engaging with the public sphere, what has come to be known as 'mandal-masjid' issue was in the air. And we got to know and read English translation of works that come under the category of 'Dalit Literature'. Today I would not say that such literature was not produced then in Malayalam, but it was not available and there was no visibility. I think the complete works of Dr. Ambedkar had been translated by the state much before this. But as far as I know these translations have never confronted the question of the perennial structural relation between the systems of caste and language.

We also came to know that there were academic studies, of gender and caste in Kerala society, in universities located outside Kerala. Needless to say, they were in English. Our attempt, through the translation of such studies, was to disseminate in its 'location' and to see whether it was possible to 'produce' such materials in Malayalam itself. That is what we tried to do in the journals *Samvadam* and *Pachakuthira* and translations of *Why I Am not A Hindu*, *Buffalo Nationalism, Subaltern Studies* etc.

Ajith: Caste is something that we talk about in the 'public space' with much discomfiture. Scholars like M.S.S. Pandian talk about how Indian Modernity silenced/s any talk on caste in the public sphere. This is very much the case in Kerala society as well. The 'absence' of literature(s), which engage with caste in its own terms, both in Malayalam and in translation, is the 'lacunae' that we were talking about. So while translating these works it was those things that were 'not there' that come to the fore

Approaching the Source Text, Question of Fidelity, language(s) etc.

Ashokan: What kind of approach do you take towards the source text when you translate the kind of texts you translate? I may be raising the question of fidelity here, assuming that you may have to maintain total fidelity towards the source text.

Sanjeev: It need not be or I would rather say that it is not 'fidelity' towards the source text that drives the translation. Various factors are involved in this extremely complex process. We need to engage more with the language of the target text, Malayalam in this case. Let me elaborate, when we translate a writer like *Iliah* the very nature of his approach towards an institution like caste would require us to search for a 'new' vocabulary in Malayalam. More than the original it is the other translation works or the language of such works that we engage with or quarrel with when we translate.

Ajith*:* There is also a question of what kind of language within Malayalam that we can possibly think of for translation. There is an already existing highly sanskritised/elitist language which are often unreadable, which we consciously avoid.

Ashokan: Can you elaborate further by specifically talking about your experience as a translator of *Why I am not a Hindu*?

Sanjeev: The crux of this book is that it advocates a dalit-bahujan politics for language, culture etc. When we translate such a work we face lots of problems regarding the choice of language. As a translator, I can use a language which is already available with in the existing print culture, which as Ajith said is elitist. And even the language/vocabulary, which are now in vogue in Malayalam while translating subaltern literature, such as vyavaharam, varenyam, keezhalatham, etc. is not a commonly used/shared language. So, as Ajith pointed

out, translation is not driven by a concern vis-à-vis the original but the contemporary concerns of the target language. Is it possible to develop a dalit-bahujan discourse with in the existing language system? Even if we are able to do it whether it could be appealing to the publisher etc are things we should address. I am talking about the actual professional problems.

Translating Concepts

Ashokan: Now let us discuss about translating concepts, since you are primarily involved in such a process.

Ajith: Translating concepts presents lots of problems and raise a series of questions especially when you try to translate the 'subaltern' texts. For example when we translate the term/concept 'communalism', we are not very sure whether the commonly used term in Malayalam 'vargeeyatha' is adequate enough to capture the sense in which subaltern historians use it, so is the case with 'secularism'. Say for instance we are writing or translating a work that is a critique of the so called classical music from a dalit point of view, I feel that the available term in Malayalam 'sasthriya sangeetham', would not serve the purpose at all.

Ashokan: So in such cases we need to evolve a new language so as to capture these nuances.

Ajith: Yes.

Sanjeev: The very necessity of translation stems from the 'absence' of certain literature in the target language. We are translating concepts that have evolved in some other contexts, which are expressed in that language. It is precisely because of this reason that we face the 'difficulty' and the 'problems' while translating. But my point is that we don't need to consider it as a problem at all and it is important to present the translated text as a translated text itself, any pretension otherwise is not desirable.

Ashokan: Can you elaborate?

Sanjeev: Since we are talking about the Kerala context, let us take the case of Marxism, which we are more familiar with. Marxism is a translated concept. It was evolved elsewhere. There is no point in asserting otherwise. The consequence of doing that would be the failure of Marxism as both a theory and practice. In essence what I am saying is that there is absolutely no necessity to erase the presence of translation.

Politics of translation

Ashokan: Nowadays there is a lot of talk about everything being political! What do you have to say about it, especially with regard to your own involvement in the act of translation?

Ajith: I think that we partake in the 'politics of translation' in our day-to-day life and also when you translate 'texts'. Take for instance the way we use 'vulgar' terms. We tend to use the English 'four letter' words although we have Malayalam equivalents to it. Although semantically the same, I think, these terms when used in English have different connotation. It is quite interesting. In Malayalam there are many such examples of using 'standard' terms, especially in print, which are often Sanskrit or Sanskritised Malayalam terms. 'Pornographic books' is often translated into Malayalam as 'Ashleela Sahityam', where as the commonly used term 'kambi pusthakam' is rarely used!

Sanjeev: While translating Jyothirmaya Sharma's book, *Terrifying Vision: M.S. Golwalker, RSS and India*, I translated the pronoun 'he' whenever the author refers to Golwalkar, as 'ayaal' rather than 'adheham'. This is a very conscious political decision since I did not want to use 'adheham', which has reverence-value. And there are certain 'concepts/terms' we do not translate. Say for example 'hindutva', 'sangh parivar' etc. We leave them as they are, which is quite a conscious decision.

Ashokan: What could be the other factors that might determine the 'choice' of terms for translation, or translation per se?

Ajith: The existing print language could be a determining factor. Say for example, the 'exact' or 'word-to-word' translation of 'Buffalo Nationalism' is 'Erumadesiyatha vadam', which appears as 'odd' in print especially as a title of a book. So the title of the translation is 'chosen' as 'Erumadesiyatha'. Here it is the print culture of the target language which is the determining factor.

Sanjeev: In the case of 'Why I am not a Hindu', the title is translated as 'Njanenthukondu oru hinduvalla'. If we go by linguistic rules there is no need of an 'oru' there. But it is added so as to emphasise the very personal nature of the book.

Translating caste

Ashokan: You have been translating into Malayalam, works that primarily engage with caste for more than a decade. What impact do you think it had on the 'reading public'?

Ajith: I think there is a tendency among certain translators, when they translate works which engage with caste, to negate the presence of caste in Kerala society. It is as if to say that caste is something that exists elsewhere. That is a 'savarna', 'upper' caste attitude. We need to be conscious of this prevailing hegemonic tendency so as to resist such tendency and also develop strategies of translation to counter it. This demands a complex engagement with the language, its vocabulary etc.

I think translations open up new possibilities. Translation of Dalit literature can help the dalit communities, who are located in different parts of the country speaking different languages, to imagine themselves to be a part of a larger community. The sharing of experiences, expressed through various forms of literature, mediated through translation, will strengthen the political struggle of Dalits.

Sanjeev: A writer like Kancha Iliah has become a household name today. His books are translated immediately and the major publishers are keen to publish them. His positions, views etc. are debated or fought against in reputed journals, magazines etc. This is one very visible impact the translation had. I also think that the translation could create a public discourse on caste that was hitherto absent in Kerala.

Ajith Kumar A. S. has translated Kancha Ilaih's *Buffalo Nationalism*; Gyanendra Pandey's paper *Can a Muslim be an Indian* and Sanjay Shrivastava's paper *Pedestrian Desires*. He is also a music composer and a member of dalit music group called 'Ormakootam'.

S. Sanjeev has translated Kancha Iliah's *Why I am not a Hindu* and Jyotirmaya Sharma's *Terrifying Vision: M.S. Golwalker, RSS and India*; edited Malayalam journals *Samvadam* and *Pachakuthira* ; co-edited, with Susie Tharu, a selection of *Subaltern Studies* translations in Malayalam. He is currently editing an anthology of Cultural Studies on Kerala.

Translators and Translating

Raji Narasimhan

AFTER translating *Alma Kabutari*, a Hindi novel by Maitreyi Pushpa, into English I believe more than ever in a ground level requirement for translation: that the translator has to be fully at one with the spirit of the original. Of course an unwavering and total affinity is not always possible. Dips occur, as they occurred with me during my work with 'Alma'. But the initial attraction of the original for the translator has to be - as it proved to be for me - strong and sound enough to make these low pressure phases pass, and restore buoyancy.Let me start with my gut reaction to *Alma*. But before that a few things about the novel and its author, Maitreyi Pushpa. The novel, written in Hindi, is set in the Bundelkhand region of Rajasthan, the habitat of several tribes. The Kabutaras, the tribe to which Alma, the protagonist of the novel belongs, were a notified criminal tribe under the British. After independence Jawaharlal Nehru de-notified them. But they continue to be on the fringes of the society, mercilessly exploited, both socially and sexually, by the 'upper castes', called 'kajjas' in the Kabutara language. Some words from the standard speech of the area have been incorporated into the Kabutara language. But till today anything like a full assimilation of the tribe into the mainstream hasn't happened.

Alma, the protagonist of the novel, is able to breach the taboos and totems of the upper class and caste ideology. But hers remains an individual fight, remains the story of Alma, the spirited, charismatic girl of the Kabutara tribe. Maitreyi Pushpa, the author, has consistently written about politics in human relationships. *Alma Kabutari* won her the SAARC literary award.

Alma is omnipresent in the book. The story line is formed by presages of her arrival. All the women characters preceding her

climax in her personality. This is one of the major attractions of the book for me. In the stories of Kadam Bai and Bhoorie the seeds of the story of Alma are present. A genetic continuity runs through the novel. To write about Alma, therefore, it is not necessary to write about her per se. The other women prefigure her.

Apart from the women characters, Mansaaram, another character in the novel, was a man to whom I took an instant liking. Here was a man who could suffer, really suffer, for love. He doesn't whine, even though he does break into tears under Kehar Singh's quizzing. A man breaking into tears? Is it not sissy? Is it not effeminate, unmanly? No, it is none of these. Mansaram emerges masculine, sound of fibre, tough. He seems to be a man who becomes free of the latent oedipal longings that are present in him as in so many men. Kadam Bai, his 'low-born' paramour because of whom he suffers a boycott by caste and kin for life, for whom he has bouts of hatred too, finally becomes for him a transcendental female figure. He goes to her for physical satisfaction, but also as much for a sense of total security, of a homecoming. In their lovemaking she emerges as the dominant partner, generous, giving and inventive. He is the recipient, receiving Kadam Bai's bounty with hunger, wonder and a total sense of belonging.

He doesn't even glance at another woman for the rest of his life. For him, immediate needs and deeper longings of both the body and the intellect are fulfilled through his association with Kadam Bai. He endures the social rage that is let loose against him. And his psychic- emotional bonds with Kadam undergo no slackening. A passion like this, collected and channelised, spells masculinity to me. There is a solid density to it, like rock. It can flare into dramatic action, all quivery and vibrant with violence held in leash. This kind of sheathed violence is present throughout the novel. I took to this tensile quality, this hard core substance and fulcrum on which the story pivots. It does not always come so stated in women's fiction, one feels.

This stratum of solid worth in the novel saw me through the periods of lowered affinity with the original that strike the translator from time to time.

I couldn't like the first love scene of Alma and Rana. I found the explicitness just that - explicit - lacking the extra surge of writing tone that brings in ambiguity and touches explicitness with poetry. “Two solid mango-like breasts" (*Do ththos amiya si chchaatiyan*), I read that sentence with distaste. The simile seemed commonplace, hackneyed. I didn't like, either, the secrecy that surrounds the meeting of Alma and Rana. I thought it detracted from the innocence that was being projected by the author as a quality of the whole event and story of the meeting of the two. Alma seemed too knowing. She seemed, somehow, sullied by covert, romantic longings ascribed to girls of her age and of her circumstances. And the prompt, easy way she could broach marriage! "How will you marry me?" she asks, as Rana snatches his hand away when she tries to press it against her breast. Rana's shyness I could understand. I could also understand Alma's initiatives in the game of sex. These are, somehow, archetypal. But her speech seemed too swept by the politics of sex that enters the mind of women who are taught to keep the men- folk happy. True, Alma is doted upon by her father. She is pampered. Her girlhood is glorified in the way the boyhood of the boy is in our society, tribal or non-tribal. But she still comes out in the novel as a man's woman. Her personality shines only by interaction with the men - Rana, Shriram Shastri, Surajbhan, or Dheeraj - not independently, on its own. Despite this, she strikes a parity with the man. She has something like veto power. Her displeasure counts in the general atmosphere of wherever she happens to be.

If this is the woman that the sixteen year old Alma is to become, wouldn't her speech be less given to calculative, pre-scripted queries like "How will you marry me?". And a few sentences later she says "You won't go away from here, will you?" (*Jaaoge to nahin?*) How filmi, you can't help thinking. How craven! The words don't suit the character. It doesn't seem just a question of

craft falling short. It seems a shortfall of awareness on the part of the writer.

And once this happens, once you fall out with the writer in spirit, your task of translating gets blocked. You can only substitute the words from one language to another. You become mechanical, you feel like a hack.

But the tide turns as you read on. Other facets of character and temper make themselves known from the text. You encounter another portrait of Alma. The girl stutters, you realise, despite her verbal glibness. You hear and feel the throes of silence that she feels beset by, despite the freedom of tongue she has been bequeathed. The whole scene of the tryst of Alma and Rana, now, unfolds and gets played in this seethe of silence. The sentences of both dialogue and narration strive against this strident, prevailing force, and set up their own low but carrying voices. You say the short one-line sentences that Alma says. You hear yourself saying them. You feel their breathless, quivery quality. The narration at this point seems to paraphrase the feelings you have about the character of their dialogue. "For the first time Alma seemed to be looking him full in the eye and speaking. The slivers of light in her eyes were saying more than what she was saying. Lips motionless were communicating below lips in motion. This unspoken language -Rana was in a daze".

And now the silence of the character changes. It does not come from the inhibitions that overcome Alma for all her bold manner. It is a celebrative silence going up from the "dense trees of mango, the broad green leaves of the banana trees, dampened with the moist heat of Alma's sweat". Together the two "watched the parrot, the nightingale and the kingfisher. Never had these birds looked as beautiful as they did now". And in the swoon caused by the magic and the enchantment, Rana "reins in his desires. He is keeping control over himself". This private act of will by Rana makes the silence layered. Alma's quivering one liners gain coherence and a more defined context.

What is this context? It lies in and rises from the thematic aspects of the whole book. Fear -stark and ever imminent -forms the warp and woof of the kabootara woman's life. She can be abducted or traded in by the police, by her own clansmen, or by sharp shooting political desperadoes like Surajbhan. Alma is aware of all this. How can she not be? She is aware that the proper, ritual backed marriage with Rana being planned by her father is an event that has to be a miracle pulled off against heavy odds. Would this miracle take place?

This whole mass of un-likelihood created by precedent and history pushes against Alma's conscious-unconscious mind as she stands with Rana in the ring of trees, grappling with fears which are deep within her.

You wake up to this crushing history of uncertainty and fatalism as you read through that scene of the declaration of love between Alma and Rana. Fine-tuned and sharpened of receptivity thus, you hear, register, the semitones and ellipses of the raga of fear below the one line speeches of Alma. She rises above the fear, as you see in the last one-line she speaks in that scene "Always come over here, to this very place when I make a sign". (*Main ishara karun to tum isi jagah a jaya karna*.)

On first reading it is just the plucky tone of voice the author had not hit so far. But in the light of the insights into the history and background of the kabutara woman's life you've woken to, you sense the fathoms of consciousness that the voice has travelled to find articulation. The shortfalls of the earlier one liners spoken by Alma now seem passing errors.

I had transmigrated into and out of Alma, I felt, made a rite of passage, after I had read this scene thus. I could read the offending lines now without feeling offended. I could read my translation of the lines without flinching.

I think this is one of the most valuable gifts of translation - this nudge away from words it gives to the translator.

Let me illustrate this by another scene in *Alma*

Mansaaram and Anandi physically unite at the peak of their hostilities with each other. There is acute hatred between them. By itself this enmeshing of sex and anger is understandable. Sex in a fit of violence or pent up anger is something we have learnt to accept as a part of life and history. But Anandi and Mansaram are not uniting in anger here, though they have enough grounds for it. There's a certain ancient wisdom about it, a bowing to a superior power, a moving away from the base game of blame fixing.

Here's how the deep-seated inner gestures of the scene graph themselves out. Anandi comes up to Mansaram as he lies shattered after his son Jodha's disclosures about the crass misdeeds of Kadam Baai - his kabutari paramour for whom he had been openly slighting his wife. Anandi sits down to press his feet. And she says, with that mixture of humility and pride that only a woman of a certain kind of breeding can command, "Perhaps I am clouding your lustre. You are gold, Raja Kaka says. Don't starve your heart. Let the Kabutari nurture it. Give me the chance to wait upon you. I ask no more". Mansaraam is shaken, struck dumb.

But he understands this humility. He understands the specific feminine angst of this behaviour. And he understands the privacy of it, a privacy that goes deeper than the privacy of husband and wife. It is to this deeper, inherited temper that combines submission and longing -like religion - that Mansaram pays homage when he says in a hushed tone after the love-making: “Silly! Who in this world can take your place?” And it is in the same fervent blend of the personal and the impersonal that Anandi responds, her voice even more of a whisper than Mansaram's: "Don't pay heed to the ranting of the boy. This *maya* is just between you and I".

Those two lines of dialogue are very beautiful. The word 'maya' avows and disavows the dharma of conjugal love. It is both affirmation and negation. Along with the lines of dialogue it makes

the ideology of feminine pliancy poetic, which seemed abasing when Anandi presses her husband's feet and begs for the continued privilege of waiting upon him.

What is the secret of the stature that comes to Anandi, I wonder. How has an ideology that I've learnt to abhor, acquired this unsuspected depth? Other questions come tumbling into my mind. What do I know, really, of the psychology of submission, of the meaning it holds in the life of millions of women in this country, I ask myself, Is the ability to submit just a question of killing personal preferences?

A flood of ambiguities assail me, and I see this whole scene of Anandi's submissive behaviour in chastened neutrality.

Sometimes, of course, this neutralisation of personal thought and disposition by the power and mystique of established thought does not take place: the gap remains. In *Alma*, for instance, in its last sections that depict Shriram Shastri's death and cremation, Alma, on hearing of the news of his death, cries out "Shastrijeeeee!" and collapses against the wall.

I found this not just a theatrical but also regressive behaviour, even atavistic. As the scene of the cremation unfolds, this gesture of Alma's gets negated, and she emerges as the self-contained, self-propelled and liberated woman as visualised by the author. This makes the gesture even more of an aberration Let us consider her behaviour and action after that loud gesture. She tells the *purohits* conducting the ceremony that she herself would perform the rite of *mukhagni* - placing the fire into the mouth of the dead man. *Mukhagni* is performed by males only, usually the eldest son of the deceased. Shriram Shastri has no son, nor any male relative. But Alma's action does not seem to be an 'in lieu of' action. It is deliberate, issuing from long-dreamed of opportunities for breaching the strongholds of kajja (mainstream) beliefs and faith, and thereby their supremacy. A grand, well-choreographed and

significant sequence of action takes place from this inner commitment of hers. Let's trace this sequence.

Alma performs the *mukhagni* rite. The priests are outraged. Rumbles of protest go up from the vast crowd assembled for the cremation. Alma brushes them aside. She has the power and the personality to do this. She is the close, exclusive associate of Shriram Shastri, who had been the social welfare minister, and had possessed solid political clout. The fortunes of many *netas* were subject to his moods and temper. And she is beautiful. It is a combination of factors just too dynamic and unassailable for the slowed down reflexes of traditional, established power, become flabby by the habit of power. The priests keep up their chants. From the swirls of smoke rising from the holy fire, and the mesmeric sounds of recitation, Alma, woman, untouchable by caste and gender both, emerges transcended. She walks through the crowds. The crowds part to make way for her. Bathed by the holy fire and the holy sounds of ancient chants, yet unbound by either, she walks to the clansmen of her tribe who came to the funeral of the powerful state social welfare minister. It is a proclamation of loyalties and ties. It is a proclamation of a levelling of the heretofore low and the heretofore high. It is a proclamation of power, of feminine empowerment that has climaxed to a gender-free status. It is a political act par excellence. The cremation of Shriram Shastri has become a political arena.

Where, in this setting, does Alma's piercing cry and collapsing against the wall fit in? Was it a ruse of hers? But Alma had always been above ruse! Was it a fit of real grief? Alma was never really selflessly attached to him. There had been just too much violence in the events preceding her liaison with him. You live again the genuine drama of the scene that ensues after the melodrama of her crashing against the wall. You recall and re-relish the taut and controlled writing of that genuine drama by the author. But this flashy act of Alma's sticks out unimbibable by your critical sympathies which are to guide you in your translation.

I can still feel the distaste with which I wrote the words: "Alma gave a full-throated cry -- 'Shastrijeeeeee!'. She collapsed against the wall". In the original there are three sentences. It reads "Alma gave a full-throated cry -- Shastrijeeeee! Her eyes closed. She collapsed against the wall". I wanted to get past the scene quickly, in one bound. So I made the `crying` and the `collapsing against the wall` into be one continuous action without break. To show any intermediate action would be embellishment. It would be laying it on even more thick than it was already, I felt. So I cut out "Her eyes closed".

But this sawing off only highlights that which is sawn off, even if it is saw-able. Long after the deed, even today, when I re-invoke and recall the original --a reflex action of a translator -- I feel the discordance of that gesture of Alma's. And I hastily summon the sweep and grandeur of her subsequent behaviour. That is still available to me, the stratum of solid worth I talked about earlier.

Let me consider in more detail this stratum of solid worth I find in the book. It is, as I said, constituted by a certain relish of violence present in the author's own make up. I think I have it in my make up too. I share with her this relish of the cutting edge of violence - it is like the sharp, cutting taste of chilli in food. Some of the most enjoyable stretches of work came to me from these sections in the book where the raw beauty of violence bursts out of the skin of the narrative. There's the scene where Kadam Bai is teaching Rana the use of arms. The savage beauty of violence packs this scene from all sides. Without skill in the wielding of axe and club the Kabutaras cannot hunt, cannot eat, cannot survive. To this steady throb of violence set up by the ever-present threat of death, is added the desperate, energetic violence of Kadam Bai demonstrating and explaining the use of the weapons to her reluctant, dreamy-eyed son. Further, this desperation and the breathless motor energy it is fuelling originate from a woman which makes the violence charismatic, gendered. Amidst the thwacks of the club coming

down, the axe swinging through the air, we get the image of a woman tempestuous and tearing along, ghagra flouncing, odhni made fast at the waist, her warbly woman's voice stretched to commanding pitch, wrapped around and borne by the flying weapons.

Buoyed by this lyrical violence employed strictly for survival, and hence ethical, I luxuriated in the precise visions of the damage the weapons could inflict, which come to Rana. The English words leapt out of the guts of the Hindi words. The words broke into my ears in both languages. Neither language came before or after. They were parallel, separate, but warm and close with each other: '*…kaam to kanpati phodney ki hai*". From the rat-tat of those Hindi words of violence sprang the English words in matching staccato: "..the job was to smash the temples above the ears…" Again, "*Is tarah maro to pasliyan chatak jayengi, us tarah to …nabhi phutegi*…" "..shot this way the ribs cracked, that way the belly button burst…" The inflections of violence and violent expression in both languages rhymed, in what I felt was a perfect fit. It was a translator's dream coming true.

Another place where the English words tumbled out with the push and sense of the Hindi originals is the one where Mansaram rushes up to Kadam Bai's hut carrying a gun and asks her to keep it safe for him. 'Can you keep this gun?' How and why this happened is due to a lot of complex events, the upshot of which is that Mansaram is beset by fears for his life. The enemies he has made because of his unrepentant liaison with Kadam Bai, are stalking him, are closing in on him. He is in search of an asylum, in search of protection, and Kadam Bai's smelly dark hut is the only hideaway he can think of. He is fortifying this hideaway with the gun. Guns are not allowed in the kabootara basti. But the bare sight of the gun charges Kadam Bai, the woman only too familiar with the inciting touch of weaponry, with a sense of invincibility. Her confidence flows into Mansaram, feeds him, redoubles his faith in her, makes him think

this sublime thought: Love is an emotion fit only for the strong `*Pyaar bhi vohi kar sakta hai jo takatwar hai*'. I remember reading that sentence again when I came to it, stopping and reading it again. This was my feeling, my thought. I was not the translator at that moment. I was the original writer. I was Maitreyi Pushpa. And I wrote the English words with the ease of ownership.

The elation helped me through some subsequent passages where the spirit of the writing was not mine, and I had to consciously translate, had to summon skill, to match my words with Maitreyi's feeling and intent.

"I should have forgotten you, Mansa Maatey, How better things would have been then! But how could I forget - that one night has put me in a maze for life. That one night has not let me forget either Jangalia or you. Memories of that sweet tyrant and of you have been tumbling into me one after the other. The sound of your laughter has alternated with the burning of my breast. Rana grew in my womb. I would have put you out of my mind if I hadn't been a mother, maatey! Would have finished off Rana, but would that have lessened my wretchedness? So, for me, both living and dying got bound to you. At that time I didn't want to live or to let live. Now I don't want to die, nor want your death. What a bondage Rana has become, an unbreakable bondage and bond".

Looking at that passage now, months afterwards, I see how differently it has turned out. The anguish in Kadam Bai's plaint to Mansaram comes out toned down -urbane - in the translation, I feel. The language barrier tells however gamely I have tried to deal with it. In the original Kadam Bai's voice rushes and rises with the words she hurls. This hurl of voice I have not been able to bring into the English. At the end of each barrage of words from her in the original, you feel you can hear her sharp breathing and collecting of breath for the next tirade. The sentences are neither short nor broken. But you feel they are. Further, the sentiments of undying love she expresses are in a mode to which I have grown culturally alien. I

cannot take the declamatory tone. I cannot take the cries of 'what could I do?', nor the tear-filled confessions of helpless love made in an accusatory tone.

To these inhibitions of attitude are added the language-specific difficulties. Take the sentence, "*Us bairi ko yad kar karke tumhe yad karti rahi*". A word-for-word rendering, would be "Thinking again and again of that tyrant I kept remembering you". Travesty unpardonable! But how is one to convey the idea of incessant utterance contained in the phrases *'kar karke'* and *'karti rahi'* without recourse to 'kept' and 'again and again', and the utter flatness they bring in?

Eventually, of course, I did work out a solution. I focussed on the time factor contained in the sentence. Kadam Bai thinks about Jangalia (the tyrant) and Mansaram one after the other in quick succession. Basing myself on this image of fast alternation I built the sentence, "Memories of that sweet tyrant and of you have been tumbling into me one after the other". Viable. At least passable, let's say. But too sane, lost of the hot keening tones of the Hindi.

I couldn't have managed even this approximation without deep identification from the statement I discussed earlier, "Love is an emotion fit only for the strong". The same deep identification afforded me the pleasures of translation once again in the same chapter just a few paras off the one considered above.

The idea of strength and love is carried forward here. Mansaram is invigorated with the frenzied, generous and yet personal love making that Kadam Bai is capable of. He is exorcised of his fears. 'Nobody can kill me now, Kadam', he exults. And from this strength of freedom from the fear of death, he drifts into a nirvanic state of waking and dreaming together. A short spell of dialogue takes place between him and Kadam Bai.

> Come, let's go out. Let me see you in the light.
> Kadam, what are you saying?

Nothing.
The moon is on the soles of your feet. Turn
your feet towards me.
Maatey! What did you say?
Nothing.
Who was talking to whom?

That is a word for word rendering of the Hindi. Very rarely does a word for word rendering capture the spirit, mood and emotional timbre of the original. Here it does. The prose in the original is beautiful here, for one thing. Add to this my own thraldom to Mansaram's grand thought about love and strength that this scene extends and dramatises further. Word and idea fused for me. Once more I became the alter ego and amanuensis of the original writer, erasing the language gap.

These rapturous moments came to me again and again while translating *Alma.* Like fireflies they faded and rose. But they never fully extinguished, even when faded. They had to be alive to re-appear. And for this re-appearance the basic attachment between me and the book had to be strong. This ground level attachment is necessary if translation is to be a fulfilling and consummating experience.

Signs of Inconsistency

The Sign: Vachanas of 12th century

O. L. Nagabhushana Swamy (ed.)
O. L. Nagabhushana Swamy, Laxmi Chandrasekhar, Vijaya Guttal (trns)
Hampi: Prasaranga, Kannada University.

Sometime in 2002 at Neenasam, the cultural centre at Heggodu, S N Balagangadhara and a few others[1] questioned the interpretations of the vachanas of the 12th century as anti-caste literature. They had prepared statistics for each of the 14 volumes of vachanas (published by Kannada Pustaka Praadhikaara or Kannada Book Authority) along the following lines -- How many vachanas from each vachanakaara contained vachanas that had the words or speak of '*jaati'* and '*kula'*? And how did these vachanas speak of *jaati* or *kula*? They argued that the interpretations that modern Kannada scholars have thus far given us were based on a simplistic formula in which anti-brahminism equaled anti-caste (anti-brahminism=anti-caste) and since the vachanas supposedly were anti-brahmin, they were anti-caste too. Contrary to this formula, they demonstrated that vachanas that could count as anti-shudra and those that abused people who did not worship the Linga outnumbered the vachanas that were supposedly anti-brahminical. The anti-shudra vachanas had not been used by the Kannada scholars to make any argument at all and their interpretations were based on selective readings. Possibly, these selective readings were influenced by orientalist scholars. S N Balaganagadara (Prof. Balu) and others working from within his research programme have shown that our understanding of 'brahmin', 'caste system', 'shudra' etc are based in the West's experience of us, while Indian scholars have tended to take the west's experience of us for objective descriptions of our realities. To my mind, any book on the vachanas must engage with this significant breakthrough. Unfortunately the book under review, *The Sign: Vachanas of the 12th century*, 2007 does not do this.

It however displays a certain amount of awareness regarding the possibility of anachronistic readings and the preoccupations that influence the selections and readings of the vachanas by its various editors. This awareness is somewhat new with regard to the vachanas and is possibly the most refreshing aspect of the book. Postcolonial critiques like Lata Mani's (1991), Vishvanathan (1989) and even historical criticism of the traditional Literature Studies have all possibly led to this awareness. Also worth recalling here is Tejaswini Niranjana's *Siting Translation* (1991) that showed to us how Ramanujan's translations of the vachanas was shaped by notions of modernist poetry that anticipated a Western Christian appreciation. The introduction demarcates three categories of translations of the vachanas. The first was influenced by linguistic fervour, religious zeal and nationalistic tendencies. The second was a compilation based on theological point of view and the third gave importance to their 'secular' nature. And,

> [d]uring the 20th century the vachana discourse was understood from four important standpoints: as an important source of Veerashiavism, as an expression of the main concerns of Hinduism in Kannada language, as the finest example of poetry according to the ideals of the modernist movement in Kannada literature, and as ancient texts inspiring the fight against social inequality and annihilation of caste system (5).

The Sign itself, we are told, is guided by, among other things, the preoccupation "to foreground the vachana expressions instead of attempting to bend the texts for the Anglo-American readership." (16-17).

The Sign gives translations of about 468 vachanas of 60 vachanakaras along with an introduction and an index of first lines. The selection has vachanas that are rare as well as a few familiar ones and includes vachanas that are socially relevant as well as philosophically so. In this sense, the selection is not biased against including some vachanas or vachanakaras and excluding others, as

have some recent activists; say by asking for anti-shudra vachanas to be boycotted while retaining the anti-brahminical ones. The editorial displays openness towards new readings and different meanings and this is definitely one of the virtues of the book. But one is not sure if this approach has contributed anything new to the translations.

Keeping the Kannada language syntax in the translation is an interesting move, but is more relevant for Indian readers rather than for the international South Asian Studies departments who are part of the readership aimed at. Indian readers, particularly those who are endowed with language syntaxes similar to that of Kannada will benefit from this move. Retaining the Kannada syntax possibly offers the reader a somewhat literal translation and allows for different and new interpretations. This choice is slightly different from saying that translations are always already ideological, wherein meaning cannot be deferred. However, the following quote shows a problem peculiar to the vachanas. We do not understand the vachanas and must begin to do so. "We believe that translation is a process of understanding and interpreting a text, and each act of translation is a creation of a new and tentative text." (18)

There are obviously advantages and disadvantages to retaining the Kannada syntax; however mistranslations or good translations are not issues that can be fully discussed until one has a theory about the vachanas. Unfortunately, the scholarship available thus far has so many inconsistencies that they can hardly be called theories. The ideas about spirituality/bhakti and the claims about the caste system are two areas where one can clearly see the lack of rigor. The lack of a theory of vachanas is somewhat recognized when in the introduction we are the following: "All that one can safely state here is that 12th century Karnataka was a site where differing ideologies and philosophies were in dialogue and vachanas reflect this dialogue" (6). But do we really know what the dialogue was about? For example, in the famous Akka-Allama conversation is it clear to us that Akka has 'answered' Allama's question? Or how is Akka's mere saying-so, with the help of a metaphor, proof enough

of her knowledge? Exactly how is it that Allama is convinced? We do not have answers to these questions and therefore it is not clear if we know that these were *dialogues* or if there were *ideologies* and *philosophies* then in the same way in which we understand them now, as if they continuous in time and space, from then and now and from India and the rest of the world.

The introduction to the Series says, "The new occupation-based communities seem to have been the backbone of the movement for an egalitarian society based on monotheism, i.e., worshipping of Shiva" (xii) and then proposes that it is a decentralized monotheism where different personal gods exist. Incomplete speculations about the caste system and the 12th century society influence the conclusions about occupation-based communities, while ethnographies have revealed for at least two decades now that caste system was not based on occupations. And monotheism was anyway a reading imposed on the vachanas by the oriental scholars. We would not be able to say what is different between a Basava encouraging the worship of Shiva only and a Shankara encouraging the worship of six gods only. And then again, the assumption that Indian society was a barbaric one and needed egalitarianism is direct pull-off from oriental scholarship that was, in mapping the time lag of India's civilization, saw bhakti as a protest movement parallel to the protestant revolution in the history of the West. Thus one can see that theses that claim that bhakti was about the triumph of the regional language versus Sanskrit and the 'lower-caste' versus the 'upper-caste' unthinkingly pursue an orientalist preoccupation that is irrelevant to Indian society and scholarship. One will find it shocking to see the numerous Sanskrit words and descriptive phrases in the vachanas and numerous critiques of 'lower-caste' people, as of 'upper-caste' people. Part of this book acknowledges the problem but not entirely, because the introduction to the vachanakaras is caught up in labeling them along very problematic frameworks. So it could be said that in the actual translation, this awareness has been futile. See for example this

quote where we are told that the vachanas do reject discrimination based on caste, but consist prejudices. Thus the speculation about caste system is saved while the vachanas themselves are sacrificed and declared inconsistent!

> Though vachanas unambiguously reject discrimination based on caste and uphold social equality, we also find in the vachanas intolerance about those who are not within the sharana fold, prejudices against gods and religious practices of 'other' communities (8)

There is also inconsistency in so far as the vachanas are considered as "personal reactions to this-worldly life brief utterances" and then are also "didactic" in nature and then again also as that which "evolved as a distinct mode of expression as part of the Veerashaiva followers' desire to propagate a new philosophy, and through it effect social change, in the process foregrounding their subjectivity and personal experience in their utterance" (1). And then all over again, we are told that the vachanakaras, "…have expressed themselves in these vachanas using their every-day experience to communicate their thoughts on religion, philosophy and society" and that "their Vachanas express the trauma of change of faith" (2). If the vachanas are all of these at once, then do we have the critical resources required to differentiate each? The answer is no. All of these are merely speculations floating around, none of which we need to believe, unless we can arrive at a sociological elucidation of what enlightenment is, without mystifying it wherever we lack understanding.

The questions I am raising can be best illustrated through an examination of the translation of Basava's vachana "Kalabeda, Kolabeda…" which sounds like the laws of Moses. The translation has rendered normative what is only ethical or instructional.

> You shall not steal
> you shall not kill
> you shall not lie

you shall not get angry…(122)

NOTE

1. Vivek Dhareshwar, J S Sadananda and Rajaram Hegde were scholars who were part of this group.

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BOOK REVIEW

Two Teats of Translation

Lives in Translation: Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity

Isabelle de Courtivron (ed.)
Palgrave Macmillan, 2003
pp.171

Translation lives!

Translation is alive and well. However, the exclamation mark could as well be about the wonderful stories of texts living in translation, or about people who lived the enterprise of translation.

Naamalingaanushaasana

Among texts, consider Amarasimha's *Naamalingaanu-shaasana* which has had such a rich life in travel and translation since the 6th-7th century. Its editions and vernacular translations are legion. What is called the Weber Fragment No. 6 is the first large portion of the incomplete manuscript (5 folios of woolly Nepalese paper cut to the format of Indian palm-leaf codices) to survive. It was unearthed by an Afghan merchant in E. Turkmenistan, acquired by a Moravian missionary in Leh, and sold to A.F.R. Hoernle. The text was translated in Tibetan, revised between 1441 and 1528, and, in the 17th century, into Mongolian. Commentaries on the text from Andhra, published later with Telugu explanations, have appeared since the middle of the 12th century, and since then, in Newari, Sinhalese, Malyalam, in Bengal, Maihar and elsewhere, and continue to be published.[1]

Like this life in travel and translation of a text, there have been people who lived in travel and translation, and have either

transplanted texts from one language to another, or perhaps even altered the text of history with their life in translation. Among people who lived the enterprise of translation and about whom some information is relatively easily available, consider Xuanzang.

Xuanzang

In the first half of the seventh century, when elsewhere a new religion, a new text, and a new context - which would leave indelible impressions on the linguistic atlas of the world subsequently - were in the throes of creation, Xuanzang was looking for a path into the past, and the authentic texts of an old religion. This Chinese child prodigy was fully ordained as a Buddhist monk at the age of twenty in the year 622. However, he had been deeply confused by myriad contradictions and discrepancies in the texts, and not receiving any solutions from his Chinese masters, Xuanzang decided to go to India and study in the cradle of Buddhism.

An imperial decree by the Emperor Taizong (T'ai-tsung) forbade Xuanzang's proposed visit to India on the grounds of preserving national security. Instead of feeling deterred from his long-standing dream, Xuanzang is said to have experienced a vision that strengthened his resolve. In 629, defying imperial proscription, he secretly set out on his epochal journey to the land of the Buddha.

Xuanzang reports that he travelled by night, hiding during the day, enduring many dangers, and bereft of a guide after being abandoned by his companions. After some time in the Gobi Desert, he arrived in Liangzhou in modern Gansu province, the westernmost extent of the Chinese frontier at that time and the southern terminus of the Silk Road trade route connecting China with Central Asia. Here he spent approximately a month preaching the Buddhist message before being invited to Hami by King Qu Wentai (Ch'u Wen-tai) of Turfan, a pious Buddhist of Chinese extraction.

It soon became apparent to Xuanzang that Qu Wentai, although most hospitable and respectful, planned to detain him for

life in his Court as its ecclesiastical head. In response, Xuanzang undertook a hunger strike until the king relented, extracting from Xuanzang a promise to return and spend three years in the kingdom upon his return.

Traditional sources report that on Xuanzang's return to China after sixteen years, his arrival in Chang'an was greeted with an imperial audience and an offer of an official position (which Xuanzang declined), followed by an assembly of all the Buddhist monks of the capital city, who accepted the manuscripts, relics, and statues brought back by the pilgrim and deposited them in the Temple of Great Happiness. It was in this Temple that Xuanzang devoted the rest of his life to the translation of the Sanskrit works that he had brought back out of the wide west, assisted by a staff of more than twenty translators, all well-versed in the knowledge of Chinese, Sanskrit, and Buddhism itself. Besides translating Buddhist texts and dictating the Da tang xi yu ji in 646, Xuanzang also translated the Dao de jing (Tao-te Ching) of Laozi (Lao-tzu) into Sanskrit and sent it to India in 647.[2]

Or consider another case of a life lived in the enterprise of translation nearly a millennium later, one which left its own indelible impression on the future linguistic atlas of the world.

Malinche

Malinche[3] was an Amerindian woman who translated for Hernán Cortés and helped him to conquer the Mexicas, more commonly known as the Aztecs. Malinche appears to be an ambiguous figure in both Spanish and Nahuatl (Mexica) accounts of her. The ambiguity about her in these records says a great deal about class and gender in the 1500s.

Hernán Cortés arrived on the Tabasco coast after sailing from Cuba. At first, it appears that he was merely interested in finding gold, but when he learned of the existence of Moctezuma’s Empire, he became determined to conquer the whole kingdom. Once

he decided on defeating the Mexicas, he tried to acquire as much information about his enemy as he could. He heard some natives speaking Spanish, and concluded that there must be some Spanish living among them. He made inquiries and found two Spaniards who had survived a recent shipwreck. He sent for them, but only Jerónimo de Aguilar, now dressed as an Indian, appeared. Aguilar, fluent in Mayan, became Cortés's chief interpreter. However, he did not speak Nahuatl, the language of the Mexica. Cortés was, thus, at a loss until some Mayan-speaking Tabasco caciques (Indian Chiefs) gave the Spanish twenty women, including Malinche, who was born in a Nahuatl-speaking region of southern Mexico but who had also learned Mayan as a slave. At first, Cortés spoke to Aguilar, who then translated Spanish into Mayan for Malinche, who in turn would speak to the Mexicas. Malinche, however, quickly learned Spanish and soon replaced Aguilar as Cortés' chief interpreter.

Although she has appeared in both Spanish and Mexican literary accounts of the conquest, Malinche, la lengua, Cortés's translator and mistress has only recently been mentioned in history texts as one of the factors which allowed Cortés to claim victory. In the words of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a Spaniard who was with Cortés during the conquest, La Malinche "knew the language of Coatzacoalcos, which is that of Mexico [Nahuatl], and she knew the Tabascan language also. This language is common to Tabasco and Yucatan [the Yucatan dialect of Mayan], and Jerónimo de Aguilar spoke it also." As Bernal Díaz explained, "this was the great beginning of our conquests, and thus, praise be to God, all things prospered with us. I have made a point of telling this story, because without [La Malinche] we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico."

La Malinche is an historical figure who aided the Spanish and gave birth to Cortés' son, Martin, sometimes considered to be the first mestizo. But she is far more significant as a symbol for everything, both good and bad, about the conquest: "some call her a traitor, others consider her the foundress of our nationality. . . ."

Reflecting the view of her as a traitor, a variation of her name has become the word for the individual who sells out to the foreigner: la malinchista. As the mother of Don Martín, she has been called La Chingada, the submissive one or the mother taken by force. Was she a desirable whore or a disgraced mother? Is it possible for the historian to know the truth or is her story the story of many more ordinary women, the story of woman as a powerful cultural symbol which will always remain both more and less than her historical persona?

In the first place, historians cannot establish with any real certainty what her name might have been before she encountered the Spanish. Destined to sleep with the women given to them as presents, the Spanish insisted that they be baptized as Christians. They had Aguilar interpret a sermon which explained Christianity to them, then baptized them. *La lengua*, the translator, was given the Spanish name Marina. At least one linguist has determined that Malintzin was a reasonable Nahuatl pronunciation of Marina in that the Nahuatl speakers replaced the Spanish *r* with an *l*, so that Marina becomes Malina. The Nahuatl speakers then added to that name, an ending which indicates respect: *-tzin*. This ending is similar to the Spanish Dõna, which is also used for respect. Just as Bernal Díaz del Castillo called the translator Dõna Marina, so Nahuatl speakers called her Malintzin. Similarly, the Spanish had difficulty pronouncing the Nahuatl *–tz*, so changed it to *–ch*, at the same time that they dropped the silent *n* at the end of her name. In this way, one can argue that *la lengua*, the translator, became Dõna Marina, Malintzin, and Malinche all at once, ironically through a series of mistranslations or mispronunciations. There is little evidence that the Spanish either knew or cared what name her parents had given her. Interestingly, she sometimes appears in Indian accounts as La Malinche, while Cortés was often called El Malinche after her.

On the basis of letters from her children found in Spanish archives, it appears that she died some time between 1551 and 1552.

Almost nothing else is known about her. Representations of her in subsequent art and literature have made her as real and as controversial as the historical evidence.

In the beginning was thus the life in translation. (Then there was also the life in retranslation.[4]) And now, ***Lives in Translation***, more than half a millennium later. Lives in translation in the post-colonial, 'post-historical' present, not in history. Lives in translation from the inside if you will, not looked at from outside as contained within history.

Lives in Translation

As you read this book you may find yourself readily agreeing that indeed many of today's most well-regarded writers do seem to have suckled at one tit – that of the mother tongue - before arousing sensations in another elsewhere, by the use of the other tongue in the writing of their creative fiction.

This book, of a series of lyrical essays by noted writers, explores the role that bilingualism has played in their creative lives. Personal experiences are like the pixels which make up the larger patterns: the stuff of history, of colonialism for example, or of exile. And the experience of a private emotional expression in uneasy cohabitation with a public formal expression creates the historical chasms among people that languages straddle. In the process some languages become comforting private chambers of the mind, others confining enclosures, while still others may open doors for some people.

However in this attempt of an internationally selected and highly regarded group of writers to examine their creative processes in the book -while they struggle to maintain a coherent sense of self through all those tongues and tits- what seems to get short shrift is history. One feels as if one is looking at pixels without a picture. Thus, while the subtitle of the book is justified, one wonders about

the title, whether the last word on lives in translation is to be found here.

Taken together these reflections do shed light on the creative process, and the complex ways in which languages get mixed up with the forging (pun unintended) of identities, in the "contemporary, globalized world" as the blurb on the jacket puts it. But can lives in translation be lived only in the 'contemporary, globalized world' for some reason? Has history ended? What about the globalized world of other times and lives in translation other than the compulsive mass navel gazing of today's involuted bilingual individuals in the postmodern metropolis?

"The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the failure of individual men and women….Neither the life of the individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both", said C. Wright Mills[5]. It is "the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world…. (T)he sociological imagination (which) enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals."

Living in Translation

What is the experience of these gifted wordsmiths? Anita Desai ("Various Lives") who had picked up words, languages, customs, costumes, and cuisines from the litter left behind by the tides of history as a magpie might pick up bright objects to line its nest', finds that the need to bring them into her writing 'created lingual unease'.

Experience of travel and novelty lend vividness to writing, but you need new language for unfamiliar places and experiences, 'the old language does not always do.' At first she flounders. 'Having plunged off one coast, I had not really arrived on another'.

To make her world comprehensible to readers who did not share her precise inheritance, she finds the key: 'to use transparency so that it would allow the buried languages to appear beneath the glass of my prose.'

To bring out the German (her 'mother tongue') strand in her being, she allows one of her characters Baumgartner, 'this golem', to become her guide. Baumgartner, a German émigré who escapes to India, found that he had to build a new language to suit his conditions. German no longer sufficed, and English was elusive. The language around him he had trouble in recognizing as English; 'it had seemed to him more like the seed of a red hot chilli exploding out of its pod into his face….Languages sprouted around him like tropical foliage and he picked out words from it without knowing if they were English, or Hindi or Bengali- they were simply words he needed.'

After that initial floundering, now she finds her bearing and explores a continent, one where she finds herself a stranger and a native. 'To live in that state one needs to make oneself porous and let languages and impressions flow in and flow through, to become the element in which one floats.'

Assia Djebar ("Writing in the Language of the Other") finds her speech 'doubling and trebling, participating in many cultures' even though she has but one manner of writing: the French one'. However she finds herself using the French language as a veil over her individual self and her woman's body, a veil over her voice. 'A veil neither of dissimulation nor of masking, but of suggestion and ambiguity, a barrier-veil to desires certainly, but also a veil subsuming the desire of men.'

"As if I were trying, entangled in this silk veil symbolically evoked, to pull away from the French language without altogether leaving it! To go around it, then choose to reenter it. To repossess it as a landlady, not as an occupant with hereditary rights." She thus traverses a 'territory of language between two peoples'.

Ariel Dorfman ("The Wandering Bigamists of Language") speaks of migrants 'condemned to live a bilingual fate'. Ilan Stavans ("My Love Affair with Spanglish") like Baumgartner, finds the seeds of another red hot language 'Ganga Spanglish' exploding in his face from its pod in Manhattan. José F. A. Oliver ("To Write and Eye Words") like the other contributors, finds

> "Both searching for a tongue,
> I and the Other:
> He-moon and She-moon. Lunesa Luna Mondin Mond."

Lives in Translation ,written as it is by talented word jugglers living in, between, or on the overlap of two languages, (even if in the perpetual climax of the present so to speak) makes for a delightfully readable exploration of tits and tongues.

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NOTES

1. Vogel, Claus
   A History of Indian Literature --v. 5, fasc. 4
   Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz , 1979
   ISBN 3447020105

2. Information about Xuanzang based on the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy at http://www.iep.utm.edu/x/xuanzang.htm#top

3. See *THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO* at http://www.historians.org/tl/LessonPlans/ca/Fitch/index.htm

4. See James St. André *RETRANSLATION AS ARGUMENT: CANON FORMATION, PROFESSIONALIZATION, AND INTERNATIONAL RIVALRY IN 19TH CENTURY SINOLOGICAL TRANSLATION* at http://www.cadernos.ufsc.br/online/cadernos11/james.pdf

5. C. Wright Mills *The Sociological Imagination* Oxford University Press, Inc., 1959; reprint Pelican Books, 1980.

BOOK BEAT

Constructing a Sociology of Translation

Michaela Wolf, Alexandra Fukari (eds)
Benjamins Library
pp. 229 + vi
Rs. 6426.00

This book seeks to construct a sociology of translation for Translation Studies, as its title suggests, and also to develop a methodological framework for the same by drawing on the concept of interdisciplinarity. The volume, which is a compilation of ten papers, is divided into four sections with an elaborate 'Introduction' by Michaela Wolf, who is also a co-editor of the volume. The first section, *The Debate on the Translator's Position in an Emerging Sociology of Translation*, has articles by Erich Prunc and Theo Hermans. Eric Prunc in his article, "Priests, Princes and Pariahs. Constructing the Professional Field of Translation", retraces the importance that has been attributed to the translator in translation theory and practice. Theo Hermans in his contribution "Translation Irritation and Resonance" brings the translated text to the core of the debate and discusses the role of translation within society. The second section, *Bourdieu's influence in conceptualizing a sociology of translation*, has articles by Jean-Marc Gouanvic, Johan Heilbron and Gisele Sapiro and Michaela Wolf. The section opens with the article of Jean-Marc Gouanvic, which is written in French. Johan Heilbron and Gisele Sapiro in their contribution, "Outline for a Sociology of Translation. Current Issues and Future Prospect", discuss the contribution of sociology to translation studies. Michaela Wolf in her paper, "The Location of the 'Translation Field'. Negotiating Borderlines between Pierre Bourdieu and Homi Bhabha", engages with Bourdieu's work but at the same time draws attention to some of the drawbacks of application of Bourdieu's concepts to translation as a social practice and argues that Homi Bhabha's notion of *Third Space* might enable for a better analyses of

translation as a social practice. The third section, *Mapping the Field: Issues of Method and Translation* P*ractice* begins with Mirella Agorni's paper, "Locating Systems and Individuals in Translation Studies", in which she points out an important direction for further research in sociologically oriented translation studies. The second paper "Translations 'in the Making'" by Helene Buzelin argues for a process oriented view of translation. Andrew Chesterman's "Bridge Concepts in Translation Sociology" identifies the need for 'bridge concepts' to link up multiple approaches to the conceptualization of a sociology of translation. The concluding section, *Constructing a Sociology of Translation Studies: Overviews and Perspectives*, has two contributions by Daniel Simeoni and Yves Gambier which focus on sociologically oriented meta-discussion of translation studies.

CONTRIBUTORS

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