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TRANSLATION TODAY

Editor
P.P. Giridhar

NATIONAL TRANSLATION MISSION (CIIL)

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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Annotated and original translations of all literary genres, translated excerpts from novels are accepted where they stand on their own, glossaries in any subject in any language-pair (Indian Languages TO Indian Languages or Indian Languages TO English or English TO Indian Languages), specialties in the translation profession: religious, technical, scientific, legal, commercial, specialities in the interpreting profession: court, conference, medical and community, multimedia, terminology, localization, translation technology: HAMT, translation memory softwares, translation teaching softwares, papers on translation as a category of or a significant dimension of thought, pieces relating translation to society, to culture, to philosophy, to poetics, to aesthetics, to epistemology, to ontology, to movements like feminism, subalternism, to power and so on, translation universals etc., to awareness's like civilisational space, nationalism, identity, the self, the other and so on, on translation pedagogy, translation curriculum, translation syllabus etc., ethics, status, and future of the profession, translator-related issues, translator studies: legal, copyright issues etc., squibs and discussion notes which are short pieces throwing up an interesting problem or analytical puzzle, reviews of translated texts, dictionaries and softwares, Letters to the Editor.

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P. P. Giridhar Ph D
Central Institute of Indian languages,
Hunsur road
Manasagangotri,
Mysore 570006.

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EDITORIAL

This issue of *Translation Today* tables piquantly diverse fare…

To begin with, Amrita Joshi talks of the (un)translatability of what is called 'concrete visual poetry', which constitutes the 'intermedium' between verbal art and pictorial art. She argues that a visual poetic text may be capable of being translated into a piece of music, sculpture, painting and other fine arts. She draws upon the huge database that is available on this topic to make her points. Geetha's piece is an interesting elucidation of the spiritual interpretation of Fitzgerald's English translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubbaiyat*, where Geetha perceives a seamless blending, or a traceless erasure, of the geographical, cultural and religious boundaries of India, England and Persia. Li Chong-Yue uses the 'manipulation theory' to discuss how ideology plays its role in the translation of Mao Zedong's poems. In her article 'The *Sangati* of Translation', Preeti Nair shows how differential the transmission of culture could be as it travels from one Indian language into another language and the same travels from one Indian language into English. Archita Gupta's essay on the translation of comic strips lays out the problematic, averring that illustrations facilitate and resist translation at the same time. Adewuni Salewu's article defines the terminological dynamics of the words for interpreter and commentator in Yoruba and Arabic.

Ashes Gupta's paper researches the questions of 'the identity and authenticity of the voice/voices in a text type in translation', of 'translation as a paradox that seemingly perpetuates cultural imperialism and at the same time subverts such attempts by rendering total

translation impossible', and of 'whether translation is a mere linguistic ventriloquism'. English renderings of Kokborok texts constitute Ashes' database. Anne Hardgrove shows how the translators' pretranslatory ideas tell on her translation in terms of the examples of Burton's English translation of the Sanskrit *Kamasutra* and Iyengar's translation of the same text. Probal Dasgupta's paper is a rarefied discussion of the problematic inhering in the thesis of technical or cognitive discourse being embedded in prose. Alladi Uma's article is an exposition of the English translator's anxieties vis-à-vis notions of the nation etc. In his intervention Sheriff talks about new paradigms of the translator's invisibility, saying the translator's invisibility was an import from the west into India, and a complicated relationship has emerged between the translator, the editor and the publishing house, which in concert with twentieth century phenomena like globalization, has made the translator's task more demanding.

M. Sridhar's article is a plea against homogenized and regional-flavour effacing English translations. In his article on drama text translation, Sue Che argues that a dramatic text is an incomplete entity, and in addition to speakability and performability the translator would do well to draw on the reading strategies of the reader to formulate his own reading strategies. The paper on machine translation in this issue lays out Corpus-based machine translation as opposed to Rule-based and Statistics-based machine translation systems. We need to keep abreast of what is happening in the MT academia even though some of which is wrong. For example, almost the same accuracy that is possible for human translation must be possible for the machine, and to say that a Domain-based MT system is more achievable than general MT systems is not right because, human languages don't operate that way: What is domain-specific is the lexicon and not the linguistic

structure. These are myths prevalent in the MT academia which need to be demythified!We also have the features of interview with translators, this time with the reputed Bangla translator and critic Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri, Book Review, Book Beat and a piece of actual translation. Happy reading!

P. P. Giridhar

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Untranslatability in the Visual Arts
Examples from Visual Concrete Poetry*

Amrita R. Joshi

Abstract

This paper attempts to relate some of the intrinsic and extrinsic criteria implied in the notion and nature of untranslatability in inter-semiotic translation. In particular, this paper attempts to explore the translatability/ untranslatability inherent in certain forms of visual art with specific reference to an intermedium between visual arts and literature, broadly known as Concrete poetry which includes visual, auditory and kinetic forms.

It attempts to explore what kind of semiotic system/s would be able to replace language as the target system and would it then be possible to translate a visual art system into an extra-linguistic one? Without denying the importance of natural languages as the most easily perceived and universally recognized systems, it may be possible for a visual poetic text to be 'translated' into, say, a piece of music, of sculpture, a cinematic image, a painting and so on. Taking individual examples from the international corpus of visual concrete poetry, this paper also examines the nature of untranslatability in such texts with reference to script and language, and iconicity.

Introduction

The paper explores a specialized variant of poetry which is an 'intermedium'[1] between the visual and the verbal, and the practitioners of this poetry include not only poets but also painters, graphic artists, typographers etc. Visual concrete poetry as an intermedium where "two or more discrete media are conceptually fused" and are

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"inseparable in the essence of the artwork" (Higgins 1984:138) signifies the need to revisit the concept of translatability. There have been extensive debates about the application of linguistic concepts to the field of visual art.[2] The motivation, however, in doing so here also results from the intermediality and intersemioticity that visual concrete poetry partakes of. The act of translation thus also needs to address factors of simultaneity, co-functioning, integration and overlap.

In a discussion on 'Translation and the Construction of Identity', a special panel on "The Verbal, The Visual, The Translator", Klaus Kaindl and Riitta Oittinen (2004) remark on how

> far too often translators are assumed to be dealing with the verbal only, which is why visual elements and visual literacy tend to be neglected both in translator training and in research on translation and interpreting.

They add:

> Although the so-called cultural turn has opened up new research angles and opportunities in Translation Studies, scholars in the field still tend to show a distinct preference for researching the linguistic dimension of texts …Today, the verbal is no longer the central means of representing and communicating meaning in many contexts; more often, the verbal and visual modes work together to communicate multiple and complex messages simultaneously.
>
> ("The Verbal, the Visual..." paras:1 and 2)

The responsiveness of visual concrete poetry to this critical enquiry is here carried forward by looking at existing concepts in Translation Studies and alternative approaches. Roman Jakobson identifies 'equivalence' as the central problem in all types of translation stating that there can never be complete equivalence since each unit

contains within itself a set of non-transferable associations and connotations. And therefore, he declares that all poetic art is technically untranslatable.[3] Thus, he states:

> Only creative transposition is possible: either intralingual transposition—from one poetic shape into another, or interlingual transposition—from one language into another, or finally *intersemiotic transposition*—from one system of signs into another, e.g. from verbal art into music, dance, cinema or painting.
>
> (Jakobson qtd. in Brower 1959:238)

When a translation of a particular work or text is to be undertaken, the nature of the form and the possibilities of translation thereof need to be considered. If, as Bassnett points out, extra-linguistic criteria need to be taken into account even for linguistic translation, it follows that in systems which are extra-linguistic, the semiotic processes need to be redefined according to the structures of those systems. Thus, in the case of extra-linguistic systems which possess different kinds of structures, we may call for a systemic equivalence which must concern itself with what Popovic refers to as the 'invariant core' of the text:

> [T]he invariant core...is represented by stable, basic...elements in the text… Transformations, or variants, are those changes which do not modify the core of meaning but influence the expressive form. In short, the invariant can be defined as that which exists in common between all existing translations of a single work.
>
> (Bassnett 1980:26-27)

This idea will be taken up further, when this paper investigates the nature of intersemiotic translation. We now turn to the nature of visual concrete poems whose potential for 'translatability' is taken up and problematised in this paper.

The Concrete Poem

The Concrete Poetry movement with its beginnings in the 1950s and continuing up to the present with post-concrete creations including New Media Poetry and Conceptional Poetry is a manifestation of the avant-garde in the fields of literature and in the visual arts. Concrete Poetry as a movement initially reacted to conventionalized linear syntactic structures, basing its creative expression on the fact that the machine age, the era of technology, the speed and the pace of modern life and the nature of contemporary languages required a different form of expression than what was seen in conventional forms of verse. According to the Concretists, the new world required new modes of reading and expression. This search led them to the individual units—the word and the letter.

Mike weaver (1976) distinguishes three types of Concrete Poetry: visual (optic), phonetic (sound) and kinetic (moving in a visual succession). According to him,

> The act of perception itself is the first preoccupation of concrete poetry. The *optic* or visual poet offers the poem as a constellation in space; the *kinetic* poet offers it as a visual succession; the *phonetic* poet offers it as an auditory succession
>
> (Weaver 1976 (6):294)

Many of these poems require the cultivation of a different approach to reading as they consist of "a single word or phrase" or a minimal text

> which is subjected to systematic alterations in the order and position of the component letters, or else are composed of fragments of words… letters, numbers and marks of punctuation
>
> (Abrams 1993:35)

They explore the spatio-temporality of letterforms and the blank space of the page in their engagement with type fonts and sizes, patterns, colours etc. They seek to incorporate visual, auditory and kinetic elements which are revealed during the 'reading' of such poems. The concrete poem becomes a **'**poem-product.' It deals with the communication of its own structure-content and thus involves a process of metacommunication. In his essay titled "Reflections on Verbivocovisual Ideograms", Cluver (1982) demonstrates how concrete poems "are all spatio-temporal structures" which "exploit the visual, aural, and semantic qualities of their verbal material…" (Cluver 1982 3(3):137).

Forerunners

In "Un coup de dés" (1897), Stephane Mallarme realized the function of the blank space on the page and the poem as a function of that blank space interacting with it and establishing a visual syntax. Ezra Pound was inspired by Ernest Fenollosa's study titled *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (1920) and used the ideogrammic method in his 'Cantos.' Apollinaire is known for his 'calligrams' which is a combination of "script, design and thought", one, which, according to John Massin,

> represents the shortest route which can be taken for expressing a thought in material terms, and for forcing the eye to accept a global view of the printed word
>
> (Massin 1970:157)

Before Apollinaire, these were known as figured verses or pattern poems of different kinds and are seen at different points of time in ancient Greece, in the Far-East, in India, Germany, France and England. [4]

Other forerunners to Concrete poetry include James Joyce and E.E. Cummings. Joyce utilized syntactic subversion and used 'word-ideograms.' It is from Joyce that the movement derives its term

'verbivocovisual' which sums up its essence. E.E. Cummings, known as a typographical poet,[5] experimented with the disruption of conventional syntactic structures and placed great importance on the physical aspects of the word and freedom from punctuation.

In addition to all these, the movement drew its inspiration from various other forms such as Eisenstein's ideogrammic montage technique in cinema, Anton Webern's music and the Concrete Art of Piet Mondrian, Josef Albers and Max Bill.[6]

Translatability in Visual Concrete Poetry: Definition and Scope

The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics defines translatability as "the initial interchangeability of two semiotic entities, pertaining to two different systems, under certain postulated equivalence conditions" (Sebeok 1986). In these visual poems—whether they are constructivist or expressionist—the strategies employed by the poet in rendering them so is a starting point in any attempt at understanding the translation potential of such poems. The nature of such an 'intermedium' stresses that although one may approach it through an all-pervasive linguistic model, the generic features of the system itself such as isomorphism, multi-directionality and meta-communication raise questions about the use of the term 'translation' in this context. One major thread that we can work with is Jakobson's identification of intersemiotic translation and especially his term 'transmutation'.

If one applies the term 'translation' *per se* to an extra-linguistic system, one looks for a recreation or reproduction in another language wherein there are replaceable units although exact replaceability posits a problem and thereby suggests the problem of linguistic equivalence, loss and gain. However, the terms 'transmutation' and 'transposition' provide greater room for maneuver.

Visual Concrete Poetry's complex condition as a fusion of two symbol systems is further dynamized by its generic features which

mark a radical movement away from conventional considerations of reading, meaning and interpretation associated with the comprehension of poetry. The intermedium itself suggests its own intertextualities, incorporating as it does the fusion of two systems and the whole range of textualities that each system brings with it into this fusion. It thus calls for deeper understanding of this synthesis and co-existence of the verbal and the visual and the issues involved in the transposition of such configurations.

Most visual poems like other visual forms such as painting, sculpture etc have tightly composed forms. This means that the form that appears to emerge on the plane or surface or paper is essentially a carefully structured entity meeting certain systemic requirements. Thus, any attempt at transposing these composite structures would involve an attempt at identifying or isolating certain components. In the case of visual poems which use language as material first and then as a conveyor of semantic content, the script, the typeface, the non-verbal signs etc are an integral part of the composite structure. Therefore, untranslatability as also translatability in the case of this visual mode of poetic expression derives from the nature of individual poems, their formal elements and their graphic structure.

Language, Script, Iconicity: Translatability of Visual Concrete Poems

Concrete Poetry: A World View, an anthology edited by Mary Ellen Solt with a comprehensive introduction to the worldwide movement is an important text which draws one's attention to the translatability of visual poems. In this anthology of 140 poems from around the world, three categories are seen in terms of 'translation':

1. There are 13 translations in the interlingual sense i.e from one language into another.
2. Poems that have not been translated are 'interpreted' by means of a word gloss and comments.

3. An overlap is seen here wherein poems concentrating on physical/formal elements are interpreted using the poets' and the editor's comments on these texts.

In a visual poem, script and language are foregrounded over and above semantic issues. Thus the manner in which script contributes to the visual poem and the constraints that language as a system imposes or liberates the text from, are important considerations in the visual poem. The nature of the script and the manner in which the script carries the language, has an influential part to play in determining the iconicity of the text. In the poem "Epithalamium II" (Solt 1970:114) the visual iconicity of the entire poem can be attributed to the typographical choice made by the poet in the context of the script and the language itself which creates distinctive elements 'she' and 'he.'

Figure 1: "maze" by Ronald Johnson, Solt 251

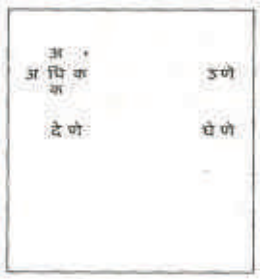


Figure 2: "vyavahar" by R.K. Joshi, Rava 8

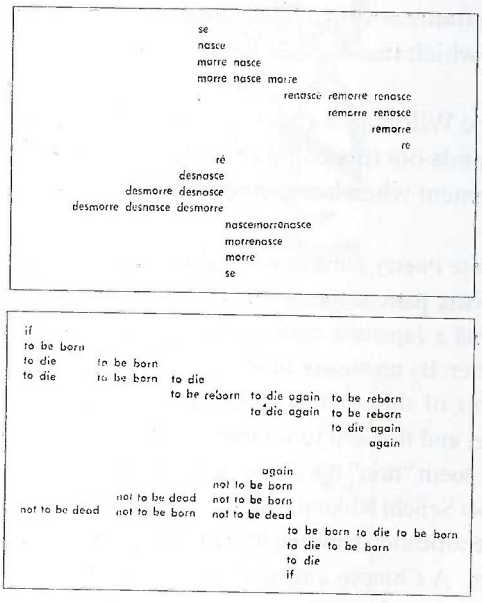
A similar phenomenon is at work in Ronald Johnson's "maze" (Figure 1) and R. K. Joshi's "vyavahar" (Figure 2); as also in Seiichi Nikuni's "Rain" (Wildman 1969:5) and Frans Vanderlinde's "EliminationIncarnation" (Wildman, 1969:77). In Vanderlinde's poem, it is the specificity of the typeface used, which through the basic element of the 'line' creates the journey from elimination to incarnation. In Johnson's **"**maze**"**, the signifiers 'MANE' and 'WANE' emerge out of a vertical reading which is induced after the reader-viewer aborts a 'conventional' left-to-right reading. This inducement of the vertical reading by the typographical choices made by the poet lead to the viewing of the signifiers 'mane' and 'wane' where the 'M', the 'W', and the 'Z' and 'N' are features of mirroring and reversal. In R.K. Joshi's "Vyavahar" ("Dealings"), the gains and the losses affected through life's dealings are visually reinforced by the iconic play of script and language. The signification of addition and subtraction contained by a frame within a frame engages with the activity of giving and receiving which lies outside the frames.

Eugene Wildman's afterword in his *Anthology of Concretism* particularly points out this collaboration between script and the poet's visual achievement when he writes:

> Concrete Poetry aims in general at the ideogrammic state. The poets pattern the letters of words in much the same way that a Japanese calligrapher patterns the strokes of a character. By no means, however, are all Chinese characters pictures of things they represent. Language is not that simple, and this is a too-popular fallacy about ideograms. In the poem "rain" the calligrapher Seiichi Niikuni became the poet Seiichi Niikuni when his design was able to *achieve* the identification between the word-as-picture and the word-as-sign. A Chinese character is not, by itself, a concrete poem. It requires the presence of an artist who will *do something* with the material.
>
> (1969:162-163)

This leads us to two possibilities. Let us see what the issues in translation thereof are:

Same script and different languages: This is a relatively simple situation for the translation of a visual poem relying heavily on word elements. These are thus intralingual translations which syntactically and semantically reproduce the units of the source text in the target text. For instance: Haroldo de Campos' "se nasce morre nasce - if to be born to die" (Figures 3a and 3b). Here, for instance it is important that the translation retains the information area marked by 'se'. Eugen Gomringer's "silencio" (Figure 4) derives its referential meaning from its use of the linguistic vehicle 'silencio', whose substitution could lend the poem a different meaning altogether. What is to be transposed is the exploration of its visual-verbal configuration which is its structure-content, its spatio-temporality, its multi-directionality, its inward focus. Similarly, Arrigo Lora-Totino's "spazio" (Figure 5) can be re-rendered conceptually in other languages.



Figures 3a and *3b:* "se nasce morre nasce" by Haroldo de Campos (Solt 1970:104)

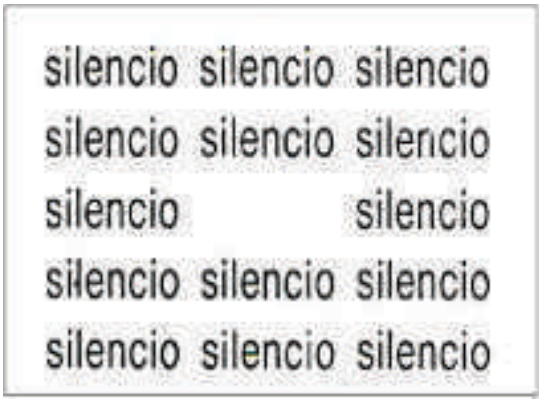


Figure 4: "silencio" by Eugene Gomringer (Solt 1970:104)

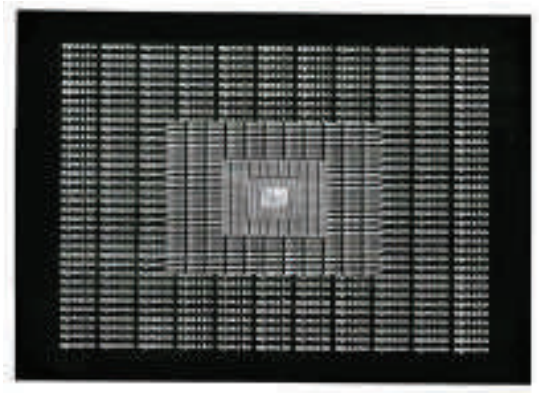


Figure 5: "spazio" by Arrigo Lora Totino (Solt 1970:104)

When one considers the translatability of Decio Pignatari's "beba coca cola" (Solt 1970:108), one needs to look at the use of Roman script and the language features at work.

Script features: usage of lower case. The 'l' in b and 'l' and the shapes of 'e', 'a', 'c' and 'o' all complement one another. Language features heavily contribute to the construction of the poem:

b e b a c o c a c o l a

- Using the same alphabets and combinations of these alphabets, the language itself provides the poem its poeticity and natural rhythm with the 'beba' and the 'babe' and the 'caco', 'coca', 'cola' and 'cloaca' all deriving from the combinations of the alphabets in "beba coca cola".
- When one approaches the English translation, the physical reproduction of the language patterns poses the problem although the script remains the same. However, because the script is the same, the *visual intensity* of the poem is not reduced greatly.
- The translation does show the cumulative effect of such similar looking words such as 'drink', 'drool' and 'cocaine'.
- Typographically, the vertical nature of the alphabets as well as the roundedness is retained by the l's and the o's.
- When we look at the translation of the poem we are considering: a faithful recreation of the same experience in "beba coca cola" which is supported by script - (visual and language - semantic) features.
- The syntax in the source text and the target text is retained with the blank space contributing as the connecting element. The blank space visually specifies the relation that the verbs on the left have with the nouns on the right.
- However, as is the case with visual poems, the logical syntax is broken for dramatic impact and in the last three 'lines'/ 'non-lines' one has three nouns conveying the theme of the poem.
- Visually, the translation faithfully reproduces the 'I', Z and single word pattern except for the fact that the word 'glue' does not visually fit into the column as in the original which is a language constraint.
- The translation also chooses to reverse the color coding from white on red to red on white, which self-referentially calls attention to the poem as object and as translated object.

Different scripts and different languages: An interesting example here is of Cummings' verse. In "brIght" (Solt 1970:217) note the capitalization which is specific to the Latin script. This has been translated by Augusto de Campos to "brIlha**.**" However, any attempt at interlingual translation here must result in a significant visual loss: for instance in the Devanagari script, which does not possess a parallel capitalization. While the Japanese kana can make up for some loss by alternating its scripts Katakana and Hiragana, it has its own sets of constraints as it is a pure syllabary with independent linguistic signs and therefore a different kind of loss occurs here.

In R. K. Joshi's self referential texts, for instance, in 'tikon' and in 'chavakon' and in 'regh' (Figures 6,7,8), the script features of the Devanagari lend themselves to a poetic manifestation which cannot be visually translated by 'square' or 'line' although 'tri an gle' may work to some extent. The angularity or the circularity of the consonants as also the phonetic accompaniment to "ti ko n" as in "1 2 3" or "cha va ko n" as in "1 2 3 4" or in "re gh" as in " " is visually derived from the nature of the script. A similar situation arises in Seiichi Niikuni's "Mouth, Empty, Lie" (Solt 1970:161).

Figures 6, 7, 8: "tikon," "chavakon," "re gh" (Joshi 1972:1,2,4)

Thus, since script and language features carry a predominant significance in the visual poem, any notion of translatability must cover these two areas even before the translatability of the semantic content. Therefore concepts such as equivalence and loss/gain need to be related in the case of these poems not just to the semantic content but to the visible features of the text-script, typography and language.

The Nature of Script: Recreation of Visual Intensity in the Target Text

"Epithalamium II" (Solt 1970:114) has been graphically transposed here into Marathi, Sanskrit, Tamil and Malayalam. In Pedro Xisto's poem, as has been pointed out earlier, the graphic structure of the poem is a tightly bound one. In this poem, the smaller size of the 'h' and the 'e' and their encapsulation in the coiling 'S' where, according to the key, S=serpents; h=homo; e=eva; has two themes, one specifically depicting the fall of man and the second a visual representation of the man-woman relationship; can be used to illustrate the translation possibilities that the script can open up.

To do this, let us consider translation of the visual structure into three Indian scripts: Devanagari, Malayalam and Tamil. Translation into Marathi and Sanskrit which use the Devanagari script shows how language aids script in providing linguistic elements which contribute to the script elements. In "to — tee" (he, she), for instance, the *matra* of 'to' can be ensconced in the 'Velanti' of 'tee' to recreate the visual parallel and thus visually translate the text (Figure 9). Similarly in Sanskrit, *saha* i.e. 'he' fits into *sa* i.e. 'she' (Figure 10). A similar transposition, almost paralleling a superimposition, has been attempted in the Malayalam and Tamil scripts which have the same words, *avan* and *avaL* for 'he' and 'she' (Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 9: Graphic depiction

Figure 10: Graphic depiction

Figure 11: Graphic depiction

Figure 12: Graphic depiction

However, in all these cases, the untranslatability lies in the transfer of the general theme while the specificity of the Fall of Man cannot be visually reproduced unless one works in multimedia, where movement and suggestion could be imparted in several forms.

Constructivist Visual Concrete Poems based on Non-Verbal Modes and the Nature of their Translatability

Like other visual modes of expression such as painting, sculpture, audio-visual modes such as dance, cinema, drama and audio forms such as music, the visual concrete poem strives to provide a sensory experience to the viewer. This sensory experience is created in certain visual poems (also called "semiotic/code" poems by Decio Pignatari) with the use of extra-linguistic elements such as the kind seen in graphic design, logos, symbols in advertising etc. The viewing of some of these poems is facilitated by means of a key (which has language elements like words). Luiz Angelo Pinto's 'code poem' (Solt 1970:111) and Pedro Xisto's "Epithalamium III" (Solt 1970:115) could be cited here as examples.

Another type consists of poems which explore through minimalism. Heinz Gappmayer's "d u" (Figure 13), for instance, in

which 'du' or 'you' is concretized by means of a visual binary within the form of the text itself, created by the black and white spaces marked by a diagonal. Similarly, in R.K. Joshi's "tee ki tuu?" ("she or you?") (Figure 14) the minimalism of the vertical 'maatra' which phonetically marks the 'aa' sound in Devanagari and the 'u' form iconically signify the interrogative stance in a female vs male binary. And a third type is of the rigorously constructivist kind which chooses to convey the sensory experience through their physical/formal structure. For instance, Mary E. Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet" (Solt 1970:242) which uses photographic markings. Similarly, Augusto de Campos' ÔLHO POR ÔLHO ("eye for eye") (Figure 15) is composed of magazine cutouts underscoring the visual through representations of 'eyes' of a wide spectrum of people such as politicians, stars, athletes, poets as also eyes of animals, birds and visual indicators such as traffic signs, the washer-eye of a machine etc. If we take up this last sub-category of extra-linguistic expression, such concrete texts pose the same problems for translatability as paintings do. It is a sensory experience and especially a compact, condensed concept that can seemingly only be interpreted or commented upon. Are these therefore not translatable? We can attempt to answer this by exploring the idea of intersemiotic transmutation/ transposition.

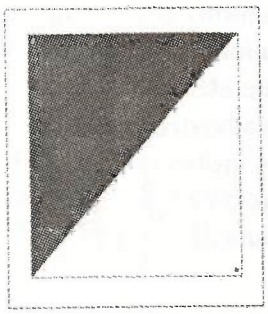


Figure 13: "du" by Heinz Gappmayr, Solt 135

Figure 14: "tee ki tu?" by R.K. Joshi, Rava 6

Figure 15: "ÔLHO POR ÔLHO" by Augusto de Campos, Solt 98

Intersemiotic Transposition

The term derives from the often quoted typology given by Jakobson in his "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" wherein he identifies 'intralingual', 'interlingual' and 'intersemiotic translation' or 'transmutation' (Brower 1959:233). Asimo suggests that intersemiotic translation implies a sort of subdivision of the original into various elements and the "identification of components able to translate said elements within the coherence of the translated text" (Asimo, "Intersemiotic Translation - Part Two") George Steiner argues for a 'totalizing' designation for a theory of translation, an all-inclusivity which marks the wideness of the 'potentially translatable':

> A 'theory' of translation, a 'theory' of semantic transfer, must mean one of two things. It is either an intentionally sharpened, hermeneutically oriented way of the totality of semantic communication (including Jakobson's intersemiotic translation or "transmutation"). Or it is a subsection of such a model with specific reference to interlingual exchanges, to the emission and reception of significant messages between different languages… The "totalizing" designation is the more instructive because it

> argues the fact that all procedures of expressive articulation and interpretative reception are translational, whether, intra- or interlingually.
>
> (Steiner 1992:293-294)

An active claim in intersemiotic transposition is the need to address both verbal and visual aspects of expression. Such intersemioticity thus facilitates the opening up and interaction between individual systems which in a Derridean sense act as 'supplements'.[7] Thus, according to Ira Torressi in her paper titled "Translating the Visual: The Importance of Visual Elements in the Translation/Adaptation of Advertising across Cultures," print advertisements have to be adjusted to different cultures using suitable verbal and pictorial elements which,

> should never be taken for granted or considered universal; their arrangement follows grammar-like rules... and produces a constructed and negotiated meaning which completes the meaning of verbal texts. In the field of advertising, therefore, translation skills should include the ability to 'translate' the visual as well as the verbal.
>
> (Torressi "Translating the Visual" para:3)

Untranslatability then raises the following issues: If a text is recognised as 'untranslatable', does that mean that it simply must not be translated? Is this where notions of translation as 'interpretation' come into play especially in the case of intersemiotic transposition between two systems? When one is dealing with an extra-linguistic system, a systemic problem posed is that of a lack of exactly replaceable units. This, however, should be a given in the context of intersemiotic translation as no two semiotic systems can have such exact units facilitating equivalence. On the other hand, a certain loss is assumed and a certain gain in terms of enrichment or clarification is what needs to be aimed at. Thus, there exist degrees of untranslatability in terms of semantic equivalence in linguistic systems and in the case of non-verbal ones in an attribution owing to the non-existence of a double-

articulation: the non-divisibility of the form into replaceable units of articulation. As Bruno Asimo puts it:

> In intersemiotic translation, like in any kind of translation in general, instead of pretending that it is possible to translate or communicate everything, against the evidence, it is advisable to take the loss into account from the start and, consequently, to work out a translation strategy that rationally enables us to decide what are the most distinctive components of the text and, conversely, those that can be sacrificed in favor of the translatability of another aspect of the text… Textual translation follows the principle according to which an original can possibly have many different translations, all of them potentially accurate; such potentiality is even more developed in intersemiotic translation.
>
> (Asimo "*Intersemiotic Translation -Part 2*" para:1)

Claus Cluver's "On Intersemiotic Transposition" (1989) examines this phenomenon in the context of verbal and visual texts. In his discussion on the nature of symbol systems, Cluver points out the difficulties in establishing a semantic equivalence between verbal and visual forms. But he believes that this does not render intersemiotic transposition impossible. He agrees that the units of a visual system such as painting cannot be as rule-governed as in verbal language.[8] According to Cluver,

> To transpose a painting into a verbal text is to reconstitute its meaning by creating a sign that draws on the codes and conventions of a literary (and not merely a linguistic) system equivalent to the pictorial system operative in the painting.
>
> (Cluver 1989:61)

Thus he states that similar considerations are involved in intersemiotic transposition as in the case of inter-lingual transposition. He illustrates this with the act of the translator who may need to

"sacrifice semantic equivalence on the linguistic level in order to foreground the semantics of the poetic system" and identify those signifying practices in the source system to find "equivalents in the system that is accessible to the audience" (Cluver 1989:61).

Thus, if we stick to the denotative aspects of the term 'translation', as we do in the case of intralingual/interlingual translation, we run into problems, as extra-linguistic systems possess their own structures and units which are not directly compatible with language. Jakobson too, thus, uses the term "transmutation." Film, painting, sculpture belonging as they do to the visual system possess certain shared characteristics such as: surface, plane, background, figure-field, perspective, movement, use of colour, sharpness, depth. It may be possible then to postulate that these shared characteristics which constitute the syntax of these forms can be used to bring about an intersemiotic transposition from one form into another.

Possibilities in Intersemiotic Transposition in the Context of Visual Concrete Poems

According to the "Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry" (1958), a manifesto by the Noigandres group of Decio Pignatari, Haroldo de Campos and Augusto de Campos, visual concrete Poetry is based on a 'direct-analogical', not 'logical-discursive' juxtaposition of elements (Solt 1970:71). Any attempt at inter-semiotic transposition would have to express this analogical spirit. Secondly, if the visual elements in the visual concrete poem are in themselves not recognizable/identifiable units to the viewer, then a translation of these elements into another system can 'evoke' the meaning of the source system.[9] Thus, in the case of constructivist visual concrete poems where the emphasis is on the physical form of the text and its constituents, intersemiotic transposition into another system could be an approach towards translating the 'experience' in the text. Bassnett points out:

> Equivalence in translation, then, should not be approached as a search for sameness" but rather as a "dialectic between the signs and structures within and surrounding the SL and TL texts (1980:29)

In the case of verbal to visual or visual to verbal as is the possibility that Jakobson's third category creates, there is one stable system viz language, which does not create too many choices in terms of the medium which could be writing or speech. However, when one takes up the visual, the myriad possibilities of media that can be used for this purpose indicate that there needs to be some justification of the particular medium that is ultimately chosen for this purpose. Thus, for instance, if one wishes to retain the frame of the compact structure and insert these textual elements in some form, then using a medium which uses or assumes a frame may best suit the transposition. However, creating a compartmentalized classification here would inhibit the transposition potential of the source text. And therefore, it may be best to experiment with different possibilities to achieve such intersemioticity.

Transposition Possibilities

For "if to be born" (Figures 3a and 3b) — cyclical movement — rotation of wheels, movement of feet — motion, ascent, descent, visual effects through the use of light, miming, movement through music.

For "silencio" (Figure 4) — binary — silence amidst noise; single foregrounded sound against host of competing sounds; foregrounding one colour through competing colours, digital simulation of space, silence, noise, activity.

For "du" (you) (Figure 13) — binary — alternating faces in drama — tragedy/comedy; movement of hands — tight-fisted/open; sound effects — cascading waterfall/ river water lapping at edges of the bank, long pause between two modes of music.

For "tee ki tuu?" (Figure 14) — binary — alternating sounds of objects of different intensity, pitch, bird sounds; conversion of interrogation into eye movements — dance, miming, use of gestures, alternating female-centric and male-centric performances from different cinematic sequences.

The Visual Concrete Poem as Intersemiotic Transposition in itself

Claus Cluver refers to Concrete poems as intersemiotic transpositions in being "intermedia works in which the verbal text has been integrated into the new sign" (84). He adds to this the example of the "advertising logo" which "can be viewed as transmutations of letters…into iconic signs of the objects or activities they stand for" (87). Thus intermediality approaches the condition of intersemioticity.

However, we can also identify another category. Some visual poems are created as 'homage' to the works of other visual artists especially painters or are homages to other visual poems or texts. The former are examples of transposition from one medium within the visual system into another. However, for a viewer non-conversant with the style of the source text i.e., the painting that is implicitly referred to in the visual poem, language is used for translation and interpretation in the commentary on the first and second texts. Thus inter-semiotic translation here is three-tiered or multi-leveled and reveals the complexity of the process.

For example, in Ian Hamilton Finlay's "Homage to Malevich" -"blockblack" (Figure 16), the allusion is to Kasimir Malevich's *Homage to the Square* series. Where on the first level, Malevich, the Suprematist painter, is expressing a homage to the 'squareness' of the signifier 'square', Finlay's transposition is based on the Concretist's exploration of the signifiers 'lock', 'black' and 'block' and 'lack'; through the interplay of the signifiers used, where the blackness of Malevich's square is underscored by the usage of blank space between the letterforms. Other examples of this inter-semioticity are Shutaro

Mukai's "Homage to Kitasono Katsue's 'shiro'" (See Mukai, "Morphopoeisis II") and R. K. Joshi's "Vishrantisthane… James Joyce Shaapit" (See Rava 1972:11)

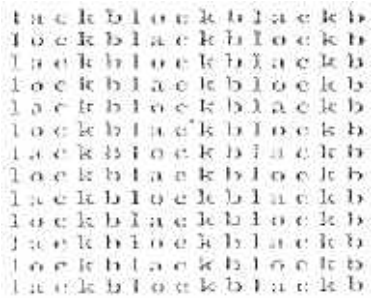


Figure 16: "blockblack" by Ian Hamilton Finlay (Bann 1967:141)

Conclusion

The blurring of boundaries between translation and interpretation brings us back to fundamental issues: Is creation itself an act of transposition, where the artist/ the musician/the performer thus translate sensory experiences in the world into a communicative form? Re-oriented thus, the work of art becomes the Target System and all that operates in its making is the Source. It follows that any enquiry into the nature of translatability needs to go further beyond the physical text itself. Thus, the Visual Concrete poet's transposition of the concept of 'space' to the signifying blank space on the page, which co-exists and interacts with the formal features of the letterforms and other elements used, is already an inter-semiotic phenomenon.

Extra-linguistic systems pose new questions in the context of Translation Studies and occupy a different space and demand a re-examination of the act of translating, the nature of translatability and the nature of the translation itself. What criteria can one apply to the

selection of a suitable medium for transposition? Does this depend on the receptivity potential of the viewer/reader or on the nature of the source?

Visual art forms such as painting, sculpture, calligraphy, pop-art are dynamic and viewer-specific entities. The sign functions that these involve therefore constitute what Eco calls **'**Open Works'. He defines an 'open work' as one that

> produces in the interpreter acts of conscious freedom, putting him at the center of a net of inexhaustible relations among which he inserts his own form (4)

In a more radical manner, Barthes' definition of the 'writable' text in *S/Z* (1974) explores the 'plural' of the text. Any attempt at translating the units contributing to such dynamism cannot be limited therefore to linguistic approaches, to the concept of the text. The enquiry here has focused upon a formalistic approach to the compositional features of Visual Concrete Poetry, its inter-mediality and issues of translatability thereof.

Visual Concrete Poems which are language-based involve the use of a particular script and a particular text. The act of translation would therefore seem to be related to the transfer of semantic content from the source language to the target language. However, in the case of Visual Concrete Poems, even in the case of those that are text-based (leaving aside for a while the structural complexity of those texts which are particularly form-based) since the script and the typological devices at work are an intrinsic part of the text, an integral part of the textual intentionality at work; the act of translation would have to take into account not simply the semantic content but the visuality of the text, its intermediality. The text is in a **'**visualogue'[10] with the viewer and therefore translation cannot overlook this aspect of the text. Visual concrete poetry's intermediality and its responsiveness to intersemiotic exchange thus points to a more fluid

approach towards translatability. Issues of untranslatability or issues related to relativity of semantic transfer in systems other than language indicate a dynamic site where linguistic-cultural-semiotic factors intervene to create complex situations and thereby undermine any notion of a stable ground or closure that the activity of translation may seek to define.

Notes

1. Poet and critic Dick Higgins was the first to use the term 'intermedium' to describe Concrete Poetry. In Visual Concrete Poetry, the visually presented linguistic symbols also work as graphic forms. Higgins points out that the word 'intermedia' is used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1812 "in exactly its contemporary sense—to define works which fall conceptually between media that are already known …" (Higgins 1984:52).

2. Visual forms like painting, sculpture etc belong to a visual *system* of expression using verbal and non-verbal modes and structures based on visual strategies of creation. These are viewed parallel to language as a system possessing a grammar. However, the nature and the scope of a 'visual grammar' poses certain theoretical problems. The debate on this application continues with an insistence on the 'pictorial turn' as against the 'linguistic turn' in theory. See W.J.T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory* (1994) and Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson's (1991) 'Semiotics and Art History,' *The Art Bulletin* 73.2:174-208.

3. Other typologies for the concept of 'equivalence' are those given by Popovic (four types: linguistic, paradigmatic, stylistic and textual) and Nida's formal and dynamic kinds (Bassnett 1980:25-26).

4. See Dick Higgins' (1987) *Pattern Poetry: Guide to an Unknown Literature,* State University of New York Press.

5. Although Cummings' name appears in the lower case in several places, the E E Cummings Society believes that his name should be capitalized. For the debate on capitalization of Cummings' name, see: <http://www.gvsu.edu/english/cummings/caps.html>

6. The Concrete Poetry Movement was also a result of the influences of contemporaneous movements in art and their philosophies. In particular, direct links can be established with Concrete art. However, the Concrete Art Movement itself consisting of artists such as Piet Mondrian and Max Bill in turn evolved through influences operating right from the Post-impressionists such as Cezanne and Van Gogh with their bold, unrealistic colours through Expressionists such as Kandinsky and Klee with their minimalistic use of line and colour, and especially the Cubists such as Picasso, Duchamp and Braque with their multiple perspectives and use of geometric shapes, the 'anti-art' of Dadaism to particular movements such as Suprematism and especially Constructivism with their radical, abstract approach to space and form. These movements explored the material nature of the machine age and the artists believed that new ways were required to interpret the dynamic changes ushered in by Modernism and Industrialization. These movements demonstrated that visual elements such as line, colour, shape and texture possess their own ontological expression. In the fine arts, Constructivism led to other directions such as Abstract Creation group, Kinetic sculpture, Luminism, Op art, Minimalism and Concrete Art which in turn inspired the Concrete Poetry Movement.

7. The term is used as a fundamental starting point by Stephen Scobie in his *Earthquakes and Explorations: Language and Painting from Cubism to Concrete Poetry* (1997) to show how the relationship between language and painting is one of "mutual dependence, cohabitation, necessary implication" (Scobie 1997:3)

8. The nature of 'units' in visual systems has been vigorously debated. Swedish Semiotician Goran Sonesson remarks: "Considered in themselves, the lines and surfaces making up a picture are indeed deprived of meaning, just as phonemes are; but whereas the phonemes, once they have been put together to form a word, continue to lack separate meaning, pictorial traits take on, and distribute among them, the global meaning of the whole configuration. Thus, in the world 'face', the first letter is not the carrier of the meaning 'hair', the second of the meaning 'forehead', etc, but that is precisely the case with the lines making up the drawing of a face." ("Image/Picture")

9. While commenting on the difficulty of achieving equivalence of code-units in inter-lingual translation, Jakobson points out how messages can act as an "adequate interpretation of alien code units." (Jakobson in Brower 1959:233)

10. The theme of the XX Icograda Congress at Nagoya, Japan, October 2003.
http://nagoya.icograda.org <www.visualogue.com> (29 August 2004)

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Translation of the Drama Text as an Incomplete Entity

Suh Joseph Che

Abstract

It is argued and demonstrated in this paper that the distinctive characteristic of the drama text as an incomplete entity is fundamental and central to this genre and ought to be sufficiently highlighted by drama translation scholars and placed at the centre of the debate in the same stead as performability and speakability. It is further argued and suggested that drama translators and drama translation scholars could increasingly focus their attention (thereby ceasing to concentrate exclusively on the performability and speakability dimensions of the play) on the reading strategies of the other persons involved in the drama communication chain in order to determine to what extent the translator can draw from them to more effectively formulate his own reading and transfer strategies.

From the perspective of poststructuralist or deconstructionist approaches to translation, any creative work of art, particularly literature, can be considered to be of an open nature, often subject to multiple or diverse interpretations by the target audience. From this perspective, it can be said that to some extent, such open texts are incomplete as the target audience plays a major role in enriching and completing them (Umberto Eco 1985). However, of all the literary genres, the drama text is an incomplete text par excellence, whose incomplete nature has a significant incidence on its translation.

Bassnett (1991:100) has argued that if the notion of the gestic text is maintained and considered as fundamental to theatre texts, then

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> the task of the translator becomes superhuman—he or she is expected to translate a text that a priori in the source language is incomplete, containing a concealed gestic text.

And to her, what compounds discussion on this issue amongst scholars is the fact that whereas some consider that the responsibility of decoding the gestic text lies with the performers, the assumption in the translation process is that this responsibility can and is often assumed by the translator sitting at a desk and imagining the performance dimension.

Demarcy (1973:369) and Koustas (1988:131) consider the *mise en scène* as the pivotal element around which all the other theatrical elements are structured, and other scholars like Pavis maintain that where translation for the stage is concerned "real translation takes place on the level of the mise en scène as a whole", adding that:

> Translation in general and theatre translation in particular has changed paradigms: it can no longer be assimilated to a mechanism of production of semantic equivalence copied mechanically from the source text. It is rather to be conceived of as an appropriation of one text by another. Translation theory thus follows the general trend of theatre semiotics, reorienting its objectives in the light of a theory of reception. (Pavis 1989:25-45)

Bassnett disagrees with the above assertions by Pavis arguing that:

> Pavis still insists on a hierarchical relationship, repeating the notion that 'real' translation takes place on the level of the mise en scène, in other words, that a theatre text is an incomplete entity. This means that his unfortunate interlingual translator is still left with the task of transforming unrealized text A into unrealized text B, and the assumption here is that the task in hand is somehow of a lower status than that of the person who effects the transposition of written text into performance […]. Translation is and always

> has been a question of power relationships, and the translator has all too often been placed in a position of economic, aesthetic and intellectual inferiority.
>
> (Bassnett 1991:100-101)

In this paper it is argued, contrary to Bassnett, that the drama text is indeed an incomplete entity. Furthermore, the issue of the status of the drama translator is viewed from a different perspective. It is asserted that, though operating at different stages in the drama communication chain, the communication roles of the drama translator and director are distinct but share an identical purpose and that the relationship between these key persons ought to be viewed from the perspectives of collaboration and complementarity rather than inferiority or superiority in status.

Drama specialists and scholars are unanimous in asserting that a play is an incomplete composition and that

> le dramaturge écrit pour qu'un autre (ou une collection d'autres) parle à sa place et actualise par les gestes le sens de son œuvre" [The dramatist writes for another person (or group of persons) to speak in his place and actualize the message of his work through gestures]
>
> (Ubersfeld 1996:18)

Thus, the dramatist writes the play for someone else or other persons to speak in his place and actualize the message of his work through action. In the same vein, Batty (2000:68) has pointed out that

> conventionally the playwright's authorship of the theatrical event ends with the production of a written text and s/he is subsequently reliant upon groups of interpretative artists to complete the work and produce the performance text.

Similarly, Mbom (1988:197) asserts that:

> L'oeuvre dramatique représentée n'appartient plus à son auteur initial seul. Elle est le produit collectif de quatre créateurs: l'auteur, le metteur en scène, les acteurs et les spectateurs. Ne pas comprendre cette réalité aujourd'hui, c'est continuer à se vautrer dans l'empirisme irresponsable et complètement dépassé. Une entente parfaite doit donc s'installer entre les trois premiers créateurs s'ils veulent conquérir le quatrième qui en toute évidence conserve le dernier mot car, la plupart du temps, de sa sanction dépend le succès ou l'échec des trois premiers. [The play when performed no longer belongs to the author alone. It is the collective product of four creators: the author, the producer, the actors and the audience. To ignore this reality, today, is to continue to wallow in irresponsible and completely superseded empiricism. There must, therefore, be a complete understanding and symbiosis between the first three creators if they want to win over the fourth creator who, quite obviously, has the last word, given that most of the time the success or the failure of the first three creators depends on his verdict.]

Thus, the actualization of the play, in other words, the concretization of the message and intention of the playwright as well as the aesthetic dimension of the play depends on the concerted action of several intervening persons. The situation may be diagrammatically represented as follows in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: communication chain in drama in a unilingual situation

Consequently, the problem of performability or speakability notwithstanding and whether the drama translator adequately resolves it or not in the written drama text he has translated, the fact remains that, contrary to a novel, a short story or a poem, in order for the translated version to be performed and for it to be consumed by the target audience just as in the case of the original, it must transit through the other persons involved in the drama communication chain (director, actors, designers, musicians, electricians, etc), who are the people who manipulate, tailor and fine-tune it in accordance with the specific circumstances of each theatricalisation or in order to position the dramatic text within a proposed *mise en scène*. Zuber-Skerritt (1988:485) underscores this situation by asserting that

> as well as being a literary text, the translation of drama as a performing art is mainly dependent on the final production of the play on the stage and on the effectiveness of the play on the audience. A theatre performance is subject to changes according to audience reaction, acting, performance, physical environment and other factors.

Moravkova (1993:35) corroborates Zuber-Skerritt's assertion by stating that:

> L'auteur de la traduction n'est pas capable d'influencer complètement le résultat de sa création; c'est un des traits spécifiques du travail des traducteurs de drames. Ce sont les autres participants de la réalisation scénique, le metteur en scène, les acteurs, l'auteur de la musique, l'auteur des décorations, qui influencent le résultat final. [The author of the translation cannot completely influence the result of his creation; this is one of the specific characteristics inherent in the task of the drama translator. They are the other participants involved in the staging of the play- the producer, the actors, the musician, the decorator- who influence the final result.]

It is for this reason, therefore, that one can argue that the distinctive characteristic of the dramatic text as an incomplete entity is fundamental to this genre and ought to be sufficiently highlighted by drama translation scholars and equally placed at the centre of the debate in the same stead as performability and speakability which have been the focus of drama translation scholars for over three decades. This paper, therefore, analyzes the distinct roles of the drama translator and director, and examines in greater detail, from a theoretical stand-point, the communication situation of the drama translator and the director in order to highlight the implications on the communication of the content and form of the play by both of them to the target audience.

Unlike the unilingual director, actors, other persons in the communication chain as well as the source text audience who are ignorant of the foreign culture and are unaware of the problems of intercultural communication, the drama translator is an expert in cross-cultural communication and his bicultural competence is a basic prerequisite for his work. He effects intercultural communication professionally to communicate the contents and beauty of what is being transmitted through the work and the intention/purpose behind the communicative act of the playwright. In professionally interrelating the two cultures, the translator is in a position to compensate for any possible inappropriate preconceptions and projections on the part of the target audience as well as the inadequate active behaviour patterns such preconceptions and projections may lead to.

Apart from the drama translator, the focus here is specifically on the director of the play (to the exclusion of the other persons in the drama communication chain) for several reasons. In effect, the various components of a theatrical performance involving the intervention of different artists (actors, designers, musicians, electricians, etc) are brought together and coordinated by the director. Concretely, the production of a play goes through a stage of directing in which the director guides them by ensuring that all body movements, intonation, speech rhythm, lighting effects, stage decorations, etc conform to the entire discourse of the production and ties in with the various parts of

the play (acts, scenes, tableaux, sequences, etc) in order to communicate to the audience the effect intended by the dramatist. In this regard,

Batty (2000:68) again points out that,

> the ultimate control over the manner in which the performance text will achieve its utterance lies, of course, in the hands of the director, and it is s/he who authors the play as it is offered to the public.

In addition to the roles of coordination and directing ensured by the director, the latter can equally be considered the real interpreter of the play considering that his reading of the text and his manner of relating the various scenic elements are very determining in revealing the full potential of the message/effect of the play and their communication to the audience. The director interprets the words of the original play or those of the translated version into the language of movement and gesture, of voice and facial expression. In short, he 'translates' them into visible and audible human emotion.

Drama specialists have sufficiently underscored this central and prominent role of the director in the drama communication chain. Pavis (1987:246), for instance, asserts that,

> toute mise en scène est une interprétation du texte (ou du script), une explication du texte en acte; nous n'avons accès à la pièce que par l'intermédiaire de cette lecture du metteur en scène" [Every production is an interpretation of the text (or the script), a transformation of the text into action. We only have access to the play through this reading of the producer].

Dort (1971:55-56) on his part equally emphasizes the primordial role of the director by stating that,

> il devient l'élément fondamental de la représentation théâtrale: la médiation nécessaire entre un texte et un

> spectacle. [He is the fundamental element in the performance: the mediation necessary between the text and the performance].

The dramatist thus writes his play for a target audience but does not necessarily go on to direct or act it out for them. Rather, he entrusts the director and others with the responsibility of interpreting and communicating the work to the target audience through action.

In effect, in drama communication the director occupies, in an intralingual situation, a mediating and communicative position similar to that of the translator in an interlingual situation. He is the intermediary between the playwright and the audience. He is the one who is responsible for interpreting the message/effect to be transmitted to the audience through staging and theatrical performance. To this effect he, in principle, in his conception and endeavour to stage the play strives to capture the dramatist's ideas and message in order to concretise them on stage. In so doing he ensures that it is his actors who are transformed in function of the play and not the play in function of the director, or else the outcome would be the performance of another work and no longer that of the dramatist interpreted. In this regard, his mission and responsibility towards the dramatist, the text and the audience could be considered identical to those of the drama translator.

However, in an interlingual communication situation the communication process is more complex. After translating the original incomplete/unrealized play, the drama translator (as the new author) is also obliged in his turn, just as the dramatist did with the original, to entrust the director with the responsibility of completing, actualizing and communicating through the voices and gestures of the actors the message/effect which he has painstakingly interpreted and re-expressed in the target language. It is evident in such a scenario as illustrated in Figure 3 below that the mediating communication roles of the drama translator and director between the dramatist and the audience are complementary given that in the final analysis, the message/effect of the original play as received by the audience in the target language/ culture is the fruit of the joint transfer endeavour of the drama translator and the director.

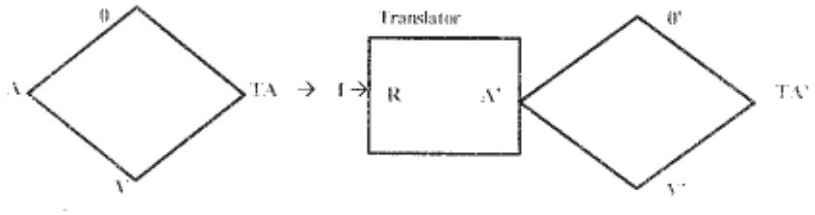

Figure 2: Normal translation communication circuit from one language to another

A = Author of the source text (i.e., original text)
TA = Target Audience (of the source text)
O = Object communicated by A to TA (e.g. message, feelings, effect, etc)
V = Vector (i.e., the language as well as the spatial and temporal conditions through which O is communicated to TA by A).
I = Initiator (i.e., the person who has commissioned the translation).
R = Receptor. The translator is a receptor as he is only an incidental TA given that the message is not originally intended for him.
A', TA', O' and V' are the author, target audience, object and vector respectively in the foreign language/culture.

Figure 2 represents a normal translation communication circuit from one language to another in which the translator is both TA and R as well as A' in the foreign language/culture. This could be considered the normal translation communication circuit in the translation of a novel, poem, short story or a play that ended up not being performed but simply read like any of the other literary genres.

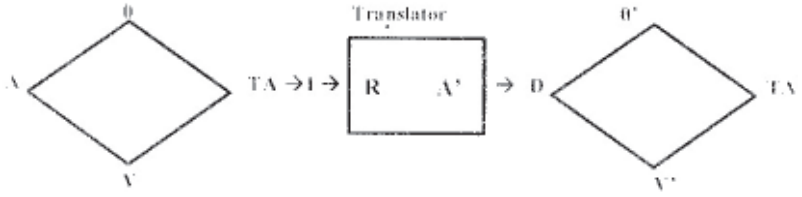

Figure 3: Drama translation communication circuit from one language to another

D = Director

In Figure 3, in addition to the communication parameters already described in Figure 2, there is a new parameter D (the director of the play) as well as actors, designers, decorators, musicians, electricians, etc (not included in the diagram for purposes of simplification). This diagram makes it apparent that in the material conditions (V') employed by the director (D) to communicate the message/effect (O') there are different communication techniques that come into play between the translator and the new target audience (TA') introduced by D and no longer the translator as was the case in the normal communication situation presented in Figure 2.

The above diagram, from a theoretical stand-point, shows in effect that while the drama translator bears in mind and indeed strives to visualize TA' at the time he is effecting the translation, in the final analysis the first person to receive the translation is the director (D) who substitutes himself for the translator and in turn communicates the message/effect, according to his own personal interpretation, to the audience initially targeted by the translator. This prevailing situation is underscored by Gravier (1973:41) when he asserts that,

> chaque auteur stylise à sa manière le langage qu'il emploie, […]. Il appartient donc au traducteur de percevoir cette stylisation et cette individualisation et de les rendre sensibles dans le texte qu'il va proposer au metteur en scène et aux différents comédiens. [Each author stylizes the language he uses in his own way, […]. It is up to the translator to detect this stylization and idiosyncratic usage and to make it manifest in the text he offers to the producer and the various actors].

The most immediate focus of the drama translator is therefore the director and the actors with the audience taken into account only through them. Thus, one of the implications of the incomplete nature of the drama text is its dual destination which is often not sufficiently discussed and highlighted by drama translation scholars. When writing the play, the dramatist targets both the director and the audience. Given that everything being equal a play is normally meant to be performed,

the dramatist normally targets in the first instance the director (and actors etc) with specific instructions in the form of stage directions detailing and indicating to the director the orientation to adopt in his conception of the production and eventual theatrical performance before the audience.

Some drama specialists (Helbo 1987, Pavis 1992, 2000, Ubersfeld 1996) consider stage directions as an essential and integral part of the drama text and even as a sort of metatext which determines and conditions the rest of the text. Consequently, the director is considered 'faithful' to the dramatist when he respects them in his interpretation and staging of the play. It is, therefore, only after attaining the first target (the director) that the play continues its journey and ends up before the audience (the second target).

This dual destination of the drama text implies an incidence on the manner in which the drama translator would communicate the message to each of the targets insofar as, on the one hand, he would have to visualize the director and the actors at work and word the message in such a way that the text is performable to them and, on the other hand, the audience and their reaction at the time they watch the play. Thus, he would not translate in the same way the instructions (stage directions) meant only for the director (and his actors) and the story together with its aesthetic embellishment meant for the audience. In this regard, Hamberg (1969:91-92) has pointed out that "a translator who is careless with stage instructions often places the stage manager in an unfavourable position".

Unfortunately, when drama translation scholars talk about drama translation the tendency quite often is to consider only the audience as the target of the drama piece to the exclusion of the director, who is thus relegated to the background, whereas the appropriate/accurate reconstitution and actualization of the message and aesthetic quality of the work by the latter equally depends on his perfect understanding and meticulous and strict execution of the dramatist's instructions contained in the stage directions.

From a theoretical perspective, therefore, the communication situation of the drama translator is quasi identical to that of the director in that, even though intervening at different stages of the drama communication chain, the translator is both receptor and new author of the message of the play, and the director on his part is also both the target and new author of the message of the same play. In other words, a director usually stands in-between the written text and the performance text as a sort of surrogate author; his role is therefore analogous to that of the translator.

Such a situation implies close collaboration and complementarity between them, given that, as stated earlier, in the final analysis the message and full potential of the original play as received by the audience in the target language/culture is the result of their joint transfer endeavour.

In this regard, Gravier (1973:48) underscores the nature of the relationship between the drama translator and the director by maintaining that:

> une sorte de complicité devrait s'établir entre le traducteur et le metteur en scène. Le traducteur doit aider le metteur en scène à élucider les questions que lui pose le texte. Mais le metteur en scène a une idée de manœuvre, au moment où il s'attaque à la pièce. Et le traducteur doit assister aux répétitions, il tente d'entrer dans les vues du metteur en scène, dont il est devenu le collaborateur. [a sort of symbiosis ought to exist between the translator and the director. The translator should help the director to elucidate the issues that the play raises. The director, on his part, must have an idea of how he is to manoeuvre when putting on the play. And the translator who is his collaborator should attend the rehearsals and try to share his conception of the performance.]

This view is supported by Moravkova (1993:36) who also asserts that:

> Chaque oeuvre dramatique propose au traducteur plusieurs possibilités. Il a la possibilité de choisir l'une des plusieurs interprétations. Dans cette phase du travail, il ressemble à un metteur en scène qui choisit une des possibilités d'après sa vision de la mise en scène. Dans le cas idéal, un traducteur de drame est en contact avec le metteur en scène et les participants de la réalisation scénique. Un résultat réussi dépend d'une conception unique de tous les participants. [Each play offers the translator several possibilities. He has the possibility to choose one of the many possible interpretations. During this phase of his work, he is like the director who chooses one of the many possibilities according to his conception of the production. Ideally, the drama translator is in contact with the director and the production team. A successful performance depends on a convergent conception by all the intervening parties.]

Another implication of such collaboration and complementarity for the drama translator and drama translation researcher is that it could be more fruitful to examine closely and analyze what directors and performers actually do to the text for it to be performable or for it to be performed and then from that stand-point to determine and describe the criteria that render the text performable. It is, thus, underscored here that the drama translator or scholar definitely stands to gain deeper insight into the drama translation phenomenon by getting involved in the process of transforming the translated text into a dramatic event which is what the audience actually live when they go to watch a performance.

Finally, the incomplete nature of the drama text gives rise to various levels of reading of the same text by different persons involved in the drama communication chain, a situation which further underlines the need for collaboration between them. In effect, recent work in theatre semiotics (Bassnett 1991:106) has revealed variations in the

reading of drama texts, for example, the pre-performance literary reading which involves an imaginative spatial dimension by the individual as in the reading of a novel, the director's reading which involves shaping the text within a larger system of theatrical signs, a performer's reading which focuses on one role and other similarly focused readings by lighting technicians, designers, etc. In a more recent study, Aaltonen (2000:6) corroborates and reiterates this by asserting that

> readers, translators, directors, actors designers and technicians all construct their own readings, which are then coordinated in the stage production for audiences to use as basis for their meaning construction.

Also emanating from this variation in the reading of the drama text and therefore equally conferring on this genre its distinct nature are the resultant models of expression or 'languages' inherent in the same text which have to be decoded and actualised. In effect, in drama communication, in addition to the words or utterances, there are also the languages of gesture, costumes, make-up, décor, props, sound effects, lighting, etc to be taken into account by all those involved (including the drama translator) in the drama chain. In this regard, it can, therefore, be asserted that this clearly suggests that drama translators and drama translation scholars could increasingly focus their attention (thereby ceasing to concentrate exclusively on the performability dimension of the play) on the reading strategies of the other persons involved in the chain and to determine to what extent the translator can draw from them in the more effective formulation of his own reading and transfer strategies.

Given the distinct but complementary roles of the drama translator and director as described and highlighted above, and the fact that in interlingual communication the director accedes to the original work only through the translator, it equally implies that it is the duty of the drama translator as a true specialist at translating to talk to the director, if the need arises, into accepting his expert view of textual reality and securing from him maximum formal leeway. In other words,

in his professional relationship with the director, it is necessary for the translator to secure or earn the director's trust and respect as a specialist at mediated interlingual communication.

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Are All Translations from Indian Languages into English "homogenized"? From the Translators' Perspective

M. Sridhar

Abstract

There is an assumption made in certain quarters that points almost to a nexus between the publishers of translation who produce 'homogenized' English translations that narrativise the nation and the translators who end up in "eradicating multiplicities and destroying regional flavours". As a practising translator, I feel that it is possible to produce English translations that need not become 'homogenized' and those that strive hard to retain multiplicities and their unique Indian language (I refuse to call them 'regional') flavours. My paper reflects on some of the translations I have been involved with.

It is an ironic fact that we are all divided by the various languages we speak, while language per se is supposed to allow us to come together. It is equally ironic that in India we try to circumvent the problem of multiplicity of languages by having one or two languages as lingua franca, languages which are not spoken by even the largest majority. We have accepted Hindi as an official language and English as an associate official language out of an administrative necessity. However, it is not clear as to why or how when it comes to literature, the rich multiplicity of Indian languages should be re-presented even to other Indian languages mainly through Hindi or English. The motto of Sahitya Akademi that prides itself of being the world's largest publishing house is: Indian literature is one though written in many languages. Both in the many years preceding the political independence and the years after independence, we seem to have been compelled to take the political slogan of 'Unity in Diversity' to its logical extreme, in that it is extended to other areas including the representation of the rich

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linguistic multiplicity of our country. We are so caught up in translating the diversity of our languages first and foremost into the official languages of our country that it follows that we find it convenient to render any future translations even between let us say two languages within the same state via Hindi or English. To me these are the chief reasons for the homogenization of translations into Hindi or English. With English, we have the additional problem of contending with its wider reach as a global language. The wider a language's reach, the more homogenized it may have to become for its accessibility. Also, the wider the reach of a language, the greater its power to command other languages. The infusion of English words into all Indian languages is just an instance of such power. A similar process is at work between the standard variety of any language and its so-called dialects.

What are the implications of the power relations between Indian languages and English to the process and product of translations from Indian languages into English? When literary texts are translated from an Indian language into English, they seem to come so much under the pressure to conform to the forces of homogenization that they lose their linguistic and cultural specificities. The absurd consequences of such a process would be that an English translation of a Telugu text and an English translation of an Assamese text will read more or less similar in terms of the variety of English they choose to write themselves into. I am not denying that such a thing is happening to a great extent. I am also not denying the role of the publisher for whom the texts' readability in English and its wider reach and acceptance are very important. Nor am I discounting in this act of homogenizing the role of the translator whose anxiety is to get across a significant text in her/his language to a wider audience. But I am not sure whether there is a nexus between the translators and the publishers. As a translator I would like to believe that translators are aware of these forces of homogenization and try their best to resist them. I would like to illustrate it with a few examples of translations from Telugu to English.

In the poem titled "Avval Kalma", Yakoob, a Telugu Muslim poet, gives expression to the predicament of backward class Hindu converts into Islam:

> We don't know that we are supposed to call
> our mothers ammijan whom we address as oyamma
> and our fathers as abbu, abbajan or pappa—
> How do we know—even our ayyalu haven't taught us
> any of this.
> Haveli, char deewar, quilwat, purdah—
> How do we who live in bamboo palaces know all this?
> My grandfather used to tell me that namaz meant only
> to kneel down and get up,
> but I never learnt the language of Bismillah hir Rahman,
> Allaho Akbar, jihad.
>
> Festivals for us only mean rice with pickle.
> Biryani, talavs, pulavs, sheer kurmas are all for you.
> Sherwanis, roomitopis, and saleemshahi shoes
>
> Your clothes perfumed with attar,
> Whereas, we decorated with airy tattered clothes.
> (Yakoob 2000:ll. 16-28)

A poem replete with such pure Urdu as well as Telugized expressions would have normally resulted in an English translation that would have used many italicized words and footnotes running into several pages. However, the long poem in our English translation does not use any italicization, and has only eight footnotes in all.

Or, consider the use of a variation of an idiomatic expression like 'Chandruniko Noolupogu' by Prasada Murthy, a Telugu poet. This expression succinctly brings out the inadequacy the poet-narrator feels about saying anything meaningful concerning his grandfather, a master weaver, from whom he has learnt a great deal, not to weave cloth, as he has moved away from his traditional profession, but to weave poems. When Uma and I translated this poem into English, we decided to substitute this expression by 'A Token Piece for Thatha' in the title

where the expression appears in its variation. Nor had we given a footnote to it at the end of the poem. We must have felt it is quite cumbersome not only to explain the original idiom in Telugu, but also its variation to our readers. We have chosen the easier option of inventing the nearest equivalent to suggest that the poem is just a 'token' appreciation of his regard for his grandfather and satisfied ourselves that the 'piece' would stand both for the cloth piece suggested in the Telugu expression as well as the 'piece' standing for the poem. But shouldn't we have used the Telugu expression, 'Thathako Noolupogu', which itself is a variation of another Telugu expression, 'Chandruniko Noolupogu', and given appropriate footnotes, thus retaining the culturally loaded expression? Prasada Murthy says:

> Thatha, my thatha!
> Weaver of zaree sarees of silver moonlight
> A carrier all your life of sackfuls of pain
> You are a padmashali you are the skillful one
> You are the primeval artist
> Who folded a six and a half yard poem into a match box.
>
> (Murthy 2000:ll. 4-9)

The poem is thus both a celebration of his grandfather's skill as well as a statement of his own inability at the same time to do something similar and different that is sure to remind an English reader of Seamus Heaney's "Digging".

Denchanala Srinivas, a Dalit-Bahujan poet ends his poem, "Svadehalu" ("My Own Bodies") in the following manner:

> *Mankena* flower is red *donda* fruit is red tender milky lips
> are red
> sweetheart's cheek is red heart's song is red earth's
> womb is red sunrise is

> red sunset is red fire is red acid running through a human being is red the
> poem writing me is red the pyre I burn on is red the unmoving foundation
> even after the walls are collapsed is red the sharpness of a knife even after the handle is lost is red though the humans have lost vigour the redness is
> not lost redness is *kirpan* that's the only truth you son of a dog in a country where I was annihilated for calling you a total lie why do you still worship before unfurling the red flag
>
> (Srinivas 2000:ll. 30-39)

How does one work out the repetition of words and the rhythm of a source text such as the above, except by way of a literal translation?

Could homogenization in a translation from an Indian language into English lead to its being sanitized? I feel like asking this question when I look at descriptions such as the following from a powerful feminist writer like Volga:

> The same task three days a week. I find my yoni disgusting. In my childhood, my amma and ammamma would hide it very carefully. Even I had not seen it except during my bath. I knew nothing about it. Nobody told me about it. My amma and ammamma told me in many ways that I should not touch and not allow anybody else to touch it or even see it. I only knew that it was "shame, shame." But I used to like it. Especially when I saw boys naked I used to feel at peace with myself for being a girl and not having a horrible tail hanging between my legs like that. It was as if I had escaped a great disaster. I used to pity boys. I used to feel sorry that the poor things had to put up with that sickening tail dangling between their legs all their lives. Beyond that

> I knew nothing about these organs. Nor did I know their names. Once Radharani said she knew their names and would tell me, but for some reason she didn't.
>
> (Volga 2001:187)

I have a strong feeling that a bold and direct passage like this is sure to be sanitized in an Indian English translation. But how could we not keep closely to the source, especially when Volga takes on Freud and reverses his concept of 'penis envy' here[1]. This is a significant contribution to feminist criticism by Volga that needs to be taken to a wider audience.

In the past, we had 'domesticated' translations from foreign languages into Indian languages, where we successfully transplanted them culturally on our soil giving them a local habitation and a name. Even the names of characters and places were changed to become part of our culture. I would like to advocate a sort of reverse process of domestication to counter the forces of homogenization that seem to threaten the existence of our languages in their own right. Let us infuse the English translations with as much of our cultural and linguistic material to sufficiently domesticate them and provide a useful glossary or footnotes. I must hasten to say that neither the glossary nor the footnotes should substitute for the homogenizing tendency.

The other way of countering the force of homogenization is to practice literal, word for word translation. The advantage of such a translation will help retain the flavour of the Indian language texts in their new English locale. Both the practice of domestication and literal translation may be unacceptable to publishers as well as readers in the name of easy readability. We are used to reading translations in English from different cultures outside India through prestigious publishing houses like the Heinemann and we don't complain. I do not know why we are up in arms when it comes to receiving culturally loaded translations from our own languages into English?

I would end by suggesting a couple of thumb rules for the kind of translation practice I would like to advocate drawing on my own

experience of collaborative translation with my friend and colleague, Uma.

1. **Editing:** In the name of greater readability, some translators wish to edit the source text. We have often heard fellow translators justifying their editing out portions of texts saying that there is a lot of repetition in the source and it may not be acceptable in English. To our shock, we have heard and seen translators justify changing the endings of texts, sometimes bringing in the authors of the source texts who they claim have acceded to their request for change. We believe that we have no right to tamper with the source in the name of editing.

2. **Structure of the source text:** We all know that English sentence structure is different from the structure of our own languages and therefore there is no way we can retain the Indian language structure in the English translation. However, there is every possibility of retaining the structure of the sentences in terms of their length. We would like to suggest that we do **not** break down long sentences in the source into shorter sentences in the target language, even if a sentence in the source is as long as a page. Never break down the structure of the source text in terms of dividing it into different new paragraphs or combining them. These to us are some aspects of the style of the source text which we can try to preserve in English.

3. **Proverbs and Idioms:** We are all used to translating proverbs and idiomatic expressions by looking for suitable equivalents in English wherever available and translating only those that have no ready equivalents. Proverbs and idioms, as all of us are aware, are deeply rooted in cultures. Therefore, there is a need to translate them perhaps even

literally into English to carry our cultures across into that language.

The problem of proverbs and idioms reminds me of our slow acceptance of Achebe's works. But we need to remember that the acceptance has perhaps come because he writes in English. We have also accepted Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, though we have taken our own time to do it and now even talk proudly of his 'foreword'. This too was written in English, in Indian Writing in English. But we have not been able to accept translations from Indian languages into English if they do not follow 'proper' English. Translations from other languages into English brought out by reputed publishers like Heinemann are exceptions. There is a need to become very conscious of this dichotomy in us. As translators we need to not only put pressure on our publishers to accept the need for a change in our translations, but also collectively voice our concern, not only in academic seminars, but also in other forums.

Notes

1. I acknowledge the insight of K. Suneetha Rani, who discusses this in one of the lessons she has written for Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, Andhra Pradesh.

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Literary Translation in India
New Paradigms of the Translator's Invisibility

K. M. Sherrif

Abstract

The translator's invisibility haunted translation scholars like Lawrence Venuti who tried to account for it by both the traditional notions of translation in the West as well as existing copyright laws. Simultaneous commissioning of translations in several languages by the same MNC publisher reduced the visibility of the translator to decimal points. The counterpoising of domesticating and foreignizing translations in discussions on the translator's visibility by translation scholars like Venuti, however, needs to be re-examined. The translator's invisibility was introduced as a phenomenon in India by colonial cultural intervention. The production and marketing of literary translations in India during the last quarter of a century have produced a complicated relationship between translators and editors, and the publishing houses that employ them. Translations produced outside the mainstream have been observed to give more visibility to the translator. Translators who operate as part of a collective with its ideology and/or poetics have shown themselves capable of shedding their cloak of invisibility. In any case, the convergence of cultures in a globalizing work has made the translator's task more demanding.

The notion of the translator's invisibility is deeply embedded in the Western literary system. This is because the translator, as Willard Trask has put it, is only a role- player in translation, acting out the role of the author, willingly submitting to the make-believe that the translation *is* the original text, while producing a 'crib' of the original (Venuti 1998:7). Lawrence Venuti blames the predominance of the ideal of domestication for the invisibility of the translator in western cultures. In domesticating

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translations, certain fluency is demanded from the translator, a fluency that makes the text read more like a primary text than a translation:

> The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effort to insure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing precise meaning. What is so remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made, starting with the translator's crucial intervention in the foreign text. The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer, or meaning of the foreign text.
>
> (Venuti 1998:2)

Venuti recommends the use of foreignizing as a strategy for the translator to regain his identity as an active interventionist and to prevent the perpetration of ethno-centric violence when the translation is from a marginalized literature into a hegemonic literature. However, a closer analysis of Venuti's observations will show that the notion of the visibility of the author of the antecedent text at the expense of the translator's is problematic. The paradox is that there is more intervention by the translator in a domesticating translation than in a foreignizing translation, in that in the former a text is wrenched from its cultural moorings to conform to the predominant ideology and/or poetics of the target culture. Venuti proposes an active intervention by the foreignizing translator in clear terms:

> Foreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language. In its effort to do right abroad, this translation must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience…
>
> (Venuti 1998:21)

What Venuti describes as a 'disruption' of the cultural codes of the target language is often no more than literal translation, a strategy employed by both bad translators and translators wary of perpetrating ethno-centric violence. In popular perception, even if a domesticating translation conceals the translator's intervention, its fluency is the mark of the translator's success. Thus, while the fluency of a domesticating translation conceals the translator's intervention, a foreignizing translation often gives the translator more visibility than he deserves - and bad publicity. The distinction that should be made is that in fluent domesticating translations, the translator's intervention is in deference to what is perceived as the hegemonic ideology and/or poetics of the target audience, not in the service of his/her personal ideology and/or poetics. The translator is thus only the worker bee, not the queen. A translator's manipulation of the source text in the interests of his personal ideology and/or poetics (especially if these diverge radically from the hegemonic ideology and/or poetics of the target culture and is potentially subversive in nature) is likely to leave more visible marks on the translation. This is the kind of visibility that postcolonial translators revel in.[1]

Copyright laws which assert the hegemony of the author of the original text over the translator often make the translator the dark matter of the literary universe whose existence can only be verified by a close observation of inter-textual gravitational pulls. A fastidious bilingual author often subjects a translator's manuscript to close scrutiny before allowing it to be published. Piotr Kuhiwczak (1990) in his study of the different translations of Milan Kundera's *The Joke* observes how the author's dissatisfaction with the first English translation of the novel made him force the publishers to make alterations in the text and request a new translation thirteen years later. Globalizing trends in the publishing industry, especially the simultaneous commissioning of translations of the same text in several languages by multi-national publishing houses, have made the translator's situation more precarious.

The tradition of literary translation in India before colonial intervention never marginalized the translator. In fact there were no 'translations' in pre-colonial India—in the sense in which they were understood in the West. There were only rewritings and renderings which conferred on their authors a literary status in no way inferior to that of the author of the antecedent text. Thus Ezhuthachan in Malayalam, Kambar in Tamil or Tulsidas in Hindi were epic poets in their own rights. The history of translations in post-colonized India, however show the translator being relegated to the same inferior status as his/her Western counterpart. Although a comparative study of the translator's visibility in Indian and Western literary systems would be a rewarding exercise, in this paper I am confining myself to a few observations on the continuing invisibility of the translator in Indian literatures, especially Indian Writing in English Literature (which Sujit Mukherjee called 'a link literature for India').

Domestication has not been taken as the ideal in Indian writing in English translation. On the contrary, in its professed aim to serve as a link literature for India, the attempt is almost always to present the text as culturally representative. Occasionally, as in the case of canonized writers like Basheer, M. T. Vasudevan Nair or U. R. Ananthamurthy, the translations are intended to present them as 'universally' relevant writers. In all cases the translator is virtually invisible. Most of the translations published by commercial publishers are commissioned translations in which the translator, willingly or otherwise, follow the in-house editor's instructions. In-house editors too, like the translators, remain invisible while executing the official publishing policy. There are a few editors like Mini Krishnan of Macmillan India Ltd. who keep a high profile, writing fairly long introductions for the translation. In many cases such editors are systematically groomed and projected as part of the marketing strategy of the publishing house.

Occasionally translators also write introductions. But when they do, they speak not in their own voices, but in the voice of the editor. Such introductions often discuss the author and the source

literature at length. V. Abdulla's introduction to *Poovan Banana and Other Stories*, a selection of short fiction by Basheer in English translation, for instance, is a fairly long essay of Basheer's life and works. But this introduction is typical of translators' introductions in that it maintains a deafening silence about the process of translation, carefully avoiding even casual statements about the problems of translation.

Where the translator dwells at some length on the translation, his/her visibility is often derived from other sources. R. E. Asher's translation of three Basheer novels published as a single volume was not a commissioned work. First published by Edinburgh University Press in 1976, it was an amateur translation of a professional linguist. This status of Asher's seems to have facilitated his long discussion on cultural relativity in translation, the particular translation problems he faced and the strategies he employed to circumvent them. It is also possible for a translator working outside the mainstream to indulge himself in this manner, as this writer did in the introduction to one of his volumes of translations:

> *Reverberations of Spring Thunder* is not, to use the American translation scholar Lawrence Venuti's phrase, a 'domestic translation', a translation that is so completely assimilated that it does not read like a translation. That would be hardly desirable, even if it were possible. The translation is addressed to a target audience whose first language is not English, and as link literature it is *intended* to be read as translation. Much of the 'remainder' (a term used by Venuti to indicate those elements in a translated text which mark it as a translation)—not only the transliterations, but also the occasional deviation from standard English idiomatic usage—is there by design, not by accident.
>
> (Sherrif 2000)

When the translator is part of a collective with a larger agenda, it is possible to go even further. The introduction then virtually becomes a translator's extra-textual rewriting of the antecedent text. The following extract is from J. Devika's introduction to her English translation of Nalini Jameela's autobiographical narrative in Malayalam *Oru Laingika Thozhilaliyude Athmakatha* as *Autobiography of a Sex Worker*:

> As a translator I struggled to retain the complexities of the argument—in which a neo-liberal political language often jostled for space with contrary positions—as well as Jameela's personal writing style, Jameela's meandering, casually conversational manner, her method of suddenly bringing the ironic laughter of resistance right into the middle of descriptions of shocking oppression had to be transferred carefully. Her trick of discussing past events in the present tense was difficult to retain. Also, while Jameela follows a broadly linear narrative, she often digresses into the past and moves into the future. Most of these shifts have been retained in the text, with a few exceptions in which the jump appeared too awkward and disruptive to retain. As she herself mentions in the interview appended, the last chapter is not really a last chapter at all.
>
> (Devika 2005)

The appropriation of the text by the translator in the service of her ideology and poetics has been facilitated by the nature of the text which often eludes the notice of the readers: it is an edited transcript by a journalist of the oral account of the subject. That the translation was the result of an initiative by a feminist collective is a pointer to the ways in which translators can shed their cloak of invisibility.

Although it is easy to see that all translations are meant for readers who do not know the source language, given the process of globalization and the increasing awareness about other cultures in all

cultures, no form of rewriting including translation is taken for granted by a community of readers. Translators have to speak to the target audience not only about the target text, the target literary system or the target culture. Like professional scholars they too have to discuss how texts, authors and cultures are rewritten in translation—just as they are in other forms of rewriting.

Notes

1. For a detailed discussion on the issue see: Else Ribeiro Pires Vieira (1998) "Liberating Calibans: Readings of Antropofagia and Haroldo de Campos; Poetics of Transcreation" in Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (eds), *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge.

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'Anxiety' of an English Translator!

Alladi Uma

Abstract

I have been translating into English for some time now. One of the main reasons is that I know only my mother tongue, Telugu, and English. Should I then not translate into English at all, knowing fully well that English has 'power' over all other languages? How do I negotiate these 'anxieties'—not to let English have a stranglehold and the desire to take a text that I consider significant in understanding the multiple dimensions of the concept of the 'nation'? My 'anxiety' is also that of an English teacher who teaches "Indian Writing in English". How long am I to rest content with the narration of the nation that the privileged speakers of English in India (I do not exclude myself from this group) provide to the world? My paper attempts to grapple with these 'anxieties' and 'desires' from the perspective of a translator, a reader and an academic.

I will begin as a reader. I read Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales in English. I did not know then that these were originally written in Danish. I did not ask even later, when I came to know that they were translations, if the "Ugly Duckling" or "Thumbelina" were in Danish the way they were in the books in English I so adored in my childhood. In school I read "Bishop's Candlesticks" as a short story, not caring whether it was a translation of a piece from Victor Hugo's much acclaimed French work *Les Miserables*. As I grew up and began to read translations, be they of Dostoevsky or of Kafka or of Camus, I was aware they were translations but I never paid attention to the translators. Only Dostoevsky was speaking to me, only Kafka was speaking to me, only Camus was speaking to me. When I read the *Panchatantra Tales* in English or the *Andhra Mahabharatam* in Telugu, I never questioned their 'authenticity' (a term I find very

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problematic). But if any one were to ask me who the author of *Mahabharatam* was, I would have answered Vyasa. If I did not consider the Telugu text a kind of translation but an 'original', why should my answer have been Vyasa? The hierarchy of Sanskrit over Telugu perhaps! I am no longer such a naïve reader. I know the power politics that lies in the very act of translation. Especially of translating into English in this globalised world. Therefore, I can read a Telugu text like Kesava Reddy's *Atadu Adavini Jayinchadu*, a text that the writer openly acknowledges as having been inspired in its theme by Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, as an 'original' text and its translation into English not as unnecessary but as crucial for an understanding of the specific culture of the Yerukula community in Andhra Pradesh.

This may be the right place for me to move on to my perspective as a teacher. I have used this text in an Indian Writing in English class. One may ask the question why a translated text in such a course. I will come to it in a little while. I have been asked by students—what is so great about a text that borrows so heavily on another text (a canonical text in English) that it should be brought *back* into English? Mine was not an isolated instance. My colleague and co-translator, Sridhar would corroborate this view when he tried to take this text to not just students in an M. A. class but also to faculty in a refresher course. (In fact, I borrow some of his ideas on the book) The word 'back' in 'brought back' is a vital one. If one reads the English text *He Conquered the Jungle* translated by C. L. L. Jayaprada, one can see how difficult it is to negotiate the socio-cultural intricacies of the Telugu text in English. But this desire to bring out the cultural specificities is what makes the reading of such a text all the more challenging! We do not see Hemingway brought back to us into English via Telugu but Kesava Reddy, the old man, the sow, the jungle, the Yerukula community brought to us in English. May be something of the Telugu is lost but something is gained too!

Now to Indian Writing in English. I have taught that course many times. Initially, I was not happy with the course consisting only

of the triumvirate, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan, and others, predominantly male along with a couple of women writers included like Kamala Markandaya and Kamala Das. So I consciously added a number of women writers and tried to include writers, both male and female, who represented different sections of society, all of whom were writing in English. This made us conscious of the multiplicity of voices and the varied genres that were fighting for 'respectability' in the academia. But an uneasiness still lurked within me. It made me wonder how 'representative' of the 'nation' even such an inclusive list would be, considering that all these have been written 'originally' in English. And then the charge by 'respected globally known' writers like Rushdie who made statements that nothing significant is happening in Indian languages.

I began to think more about the nomenclature "Indian Writing in English" and to interrogate it. Is writing itself an act of translation? What happens when an Indian whose mother tongue is not English writes in English? Do the experiences get translated? Do we not applaud the efforts of the likes of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and Salman Rushdie who tend to adapt English, to make it our own and to suit the rhythms and the pulse of 'India'? Also, how often have we stopped to ask ourselves if we should be teaching Rabindranath Tagore, Vijay Tendulkar or Girish Karnad in an Indian Writing in English classroom? Since the time I have been consciously thinking of these issues, I have looked at translated texts into English also as 'original' English texts.

My understanding of the woman question, the patriarchal stranglehold of religion and language is furthered by my reading of the English poem "Genderole" by Rukmini Bhaya Nair (Nair 1992). I also see how she subverts the form and breaks down boundaries to challenge the existing hegemonic traditions. Let me quote a few lines from the poem (the full effect of it can be felt only when we view the poem visually):

> Considerthefemalebodyyourmost
> Basictextanddontforgetitsslokas |

Whatpalmleafscandoforusitdoes
Therealgapsremainforwomentoclose।

Spacesbetweenwordspreservesenses
Intactbutweneedtomeetineverysense ।

Comingtogetherisnoverbalmatter
Howeveroursagespraisepativrata ।

Katavkantakasteputrasamsaroyam
*Ativavichitra*waswrittenformenbyaman । (ll. 1-10)

This is no intellectual game she is playing. She has demonstrated how language, culture and religion have left no space for women. We are reminded here of Toni Morrison who in her very first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970) uses the primer to good effect (beginning with 'proper' grammatical rules, punctuation and space between words and ending in the erasure of all rules of grammar and punctuation, and of the spaces) to show how a dominant culture can completely annihilate the psyche of an individual. To come back to "Genderole", such a text helps us re-look at our notions of concepts like culture and nation, of terms like readability, and (for us in the academia) of the very concept of literature.

Now, let us turn to "Ayoni", a Telugu short story by Volga (2001) translated into English. The very first sentence of the translation reads:

My beginning to write this story today is itself the
reason for this story. (183)

The sentence has been criticised as awkward, as 'un-English'. Perhaps that is so. But this sentence too is awkward and 'un-Telugu' in the Telugu source. It is therefore necessary to go into the why of such a sentence rather than to cast it aside as bad English (for we are here concerned with the translated text). The story is of a young girl who has not yet attained puberty being kidnapped, about child

prostitution-all this from the victim's perspective. As the narrator herself claims, she wanted to write a beautiful, pleasant story that would be published in *Chandamama*, primarily read by children, but she knows now that the only story she can write is this kind of a story that such a grotesque society produces. How then can we expect a proper, 'aesthetic' sentence as an opener, an eye-opener to the horrible trauma of a child? As readers of 'original' English we have rarely encountered such a gruesome tale. We have read of the importance of the body in both literary and theoretical texts. But such an invasion of the body that she cries out:

> Yoni, Yonija, ayonija…something was happening to me. A sudden pain shot through my head.
>
> Sita's an ayonija. I don't know anything about being born like that. But I can now write about what I have been wanting to all these days. How wonderful it would have been if I were born an Ayoni! How I love the word Ayoni! Are you angry? Are you disgusted? Do you find it distasteful? But you don't know anything about my anger and disgust. If you did, you would wish that my desire was fulfilled. You are all good mothers, aren't you? (185-186)

This denial of the very organ that is used for s/exploitation, the very outspokenness cannot be missed. The above quote also raises questions of readability, of what constitutes aesthetics, to name just a few. Would we not be missing out on all these if we were not to include the translated texts in our Indian Writing in English course?

As we have broached the topic of aesthetics, let me move on to another course I offer in the English department-"Reading Dalit, Reading Black". How was I able to teach such a course? Most of the Dalit writers write in their own languages (we have exceptions in people like Ambedkar, Chandrabhan Prasad and Meena Kandaswamy). But there are a growing number of books available in English now. I

am therefore able to read the Dalit texts and am able to connect two cultures, so far yet so near, only because the texts are available to me in English. But one may ask why is it so important that an English academic like me get to teach Dalit texts. That was not the reason for their being written in the first place. Granted that's true. But why should such a vast body of knowledge be denied to me? Let us consider the likes of Aristotle and Plato or the likes of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. They surely did not write for scholars of English, but perceptions of those very scholars have been enriched by their exposure to such a variety of writers. Of course, we in the English Departments cannot even think of contemporary theory without the aid of translation into English. Should we not feel that our understanding of theory will get an added dimension if we get to know Sharankumar Limbale's notion of Dalit Aesthetics through a translation by Alok Mukherjee (even as we are aware that the translation is by an upper caste person who has settled down in an academic institution in Canada) or Sivakami's views on writing, women's writing, Dalit women's writing through the 'Author's Notes' from her book *The Grip of Change* (a book translated by herself with, should I say, editorial intervention)? Take for instance the following statement by Limbale:

> They [Dalit writers] believe that traditional Marathi aesthetics which is primarily based on Sanskrit or English literary theories cannot do justice to Dalit literature.
>
> (Limbale 2004:106)

They raise fundamental questions of the concept of universality, of the very definition of literature, of the yardsticks for judgement. Among other questions Sivakami grapples with in the "Author's Notes", she discusses the issue of language: "What language is the language of one's own experience, what then is Dalit language, or the language of the oppressed?" (Sivakami 2006:188). This is a very significant question not only in the 'original' text of the Dalit writer but in the English translation too.

Some of the questions I constantly encounter are—Now that they are in English, haven't the Dalit texts lost their 'original' flavour and power? Have they not been negotiated? Have they not been appropriated by the English speaking/knowing elite? Yes, they are not the same as they were in the language they were first written in. But does that mean they have no 'flavour' or 'power' in the English version? Yes, they are negotiated, but which text is not negotiated—by the author, the publisher, the reader etc? How does one respond to the question of appropriation? While there is certain truth in the charge, can one say that every translator does so with the idea of appropriating a text or co-opting it? When Suneetha Rani translates a text like Vinodini's "The Single Pole Hut", she is trying to capture the Dalit Christian girl's experience of being wooed and rejected by a Brahmin boy. She does not look for readability but asks the reader to put her/his elitist self away and make a conscious effort to participate in the text. She may have given footnotes for culture-specific terms but she does not dither from her purpose of taking the text to the English readers with all its complexities. Consider the following lines:

> I packed my boundless hopes as folds of trust in my suitcase
> like the wise men walking with the stars as guides
> I stepped into that *agrahara*
> searching for the footprints
> *suprabhatam* heard on entering the street, asafoetida smell
> and *madi* sarees
> looked at me as if I was a bat settled on the worshipping
> paraphernalia
>
> (ll. 35-40)

Of course, she gives footnotes for *agrahara* (Brahmin residential area), *suprabhatam* (devotional songs to wake up gods) and *madi* ('ritual purity'; cloth worn while cooking and performing other rituals). But these explanations are only the tip of the iceberg. The reader must go into the resonances and the wider implications of those terms to fully participate in the text. Suneetha Rani's translation is for the most part not 'readable' in the sense most people understand the term, but it is 'readable' in the sense that it draws the reader into

the very intricacies of Dalit experience. This is what she does remarkably in her translation of Dalit women's oral narratives, where she finds she has to translate at very many different levels including from the oral to the written. But once we as readers negotiate such texts, we gain a fuller understanding of the cultural complexities of Dalit life, of the many, varied and complex Indias.

Sridhar and I are working on the last drafts of a very powerful Telugu text produced in 2000, *Antarani Vasantam* (Untouchable Spring) by G. Kalyana Rao, another Dalit writer with strong Marxist leanings. It defies generic classification. Apart from all the cultural, social, political aspects of the novel, he has been able to catch the oral tradition in his text. So how does one capture this orality? We were conscious of our subject positions. We were conscious that we could never have experienced the humiliation and trauma the characters in the text experience. And yet we tried. We tried to get at the root of the text. I give just an instance of one of the many problems we encountered while translating this text. This is about the Urumula Nrityam (Urumula dance) and the song associated with it. I wonder how many of us are aware of such an art form. How does one capture the visual in the oral that is written down? Consider the following:

> The song began.
>
> The musicians of the Urumula dance began their song. In that song, Ganga was overflowing. […] The cracked earth must drink greedily. Ganga must fill up. Ganga must swell. Ganga must touch all the worlds. Till then thunder will not stop. Dance will not stop. Song will not stop.
>
> The era was not born. The world was not born. Ganga was born. That was the cunning Ganga. That was the jealous and mean Ganga. That was the devil that ate corpses. Abuses. Curses. Getting upset with Ganga. For a mouthful of water. […] The song was continuing. On Ganga, on Ganga's word, on Ganga's life.

> […]
> The vermillion dance began.
>
> […]
>
> A ferocious land. Bloodied. Dance. As if a war was taking place. As if it was the world's battlefield and nothing else. Swords hitting the chest, for Ganga, for a mouthful of water, postures, many furious Sivas seeming to dance the *tandavam* of deluge…illusion, reality, dance, war, the grotesque, life-like dance, like song…Urumula dance.

There will always be a lingering doubt as to whether we have been able to capture the nuances and the tone of the language. But something tells us that the struggle must continue. For if it does not, we will not be able to get to know even a small percentage of the powerful literature that is being produced in our country.

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Retrieving the Cognitive From the Industrial
The Translator as Apprentice

Probal Dasgupta

Abstract

In this intervention, face to face with a certain globalized context that tells us what shall and what shall not count as knowledge and as translation of cognitive texts, an attempt is made to tease out the assumptions that underpin this enterprise. In particular, it is taken for granted that the technical is embedded in prose. We propose a semiotic approach to the issues within which such a presupposition is embedded. Without such methodological caution at the very outset, a project of cognitive translation will have trouble getting off the ground at a serious level.

1. Listening as the ocean globalizes

We have had a lot of practice Suspecting. Let us see what happens if we Listen as the ocean invites us to globalize on some apparently archimedean basis. Postulate the Good and not the Bad Mother in this exercise. To be concrete about how to do this, assume that we translators and translatologists are going to help the planet turn all its swords into ploughshares. What the material sciences and weapon technologies did for humankind in the period of inventing the methods of competition will now be done by the cultural studies disciplines and conversation arts for a renascent humankind as we go about inventing the surely equally labour-worthy methods of cooperation.

The important point to hang on to is that such a globalization presumes you will be accountable. Even if we switch to the Suspect mode, and redescribe it as a Public Relations racket emanating from a private and thus situated stash of capital, that picture still subtends at

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least Games that wear an accountable form. Either way (for concreteness, assume the utopian and not the instrumental version), accounting will require translation mediating between reckonings, between matheses.

This visualization makes the relevant translator an apprentice sitting at the feet of both the matheses involved.

The present analysis ponders some issues we face as we become (or see that we already are) such translators, among the various other hats we wear.

Here is how the analysis is arranged. Our goal is to tease out the possibility of a real, pre-sellout, local, pre-globalization knowledge as the semantic core of a mathetic that helps seriously (sustainably) mediate between it and other mathetics for the accountability-maximizing purposes of real translators. We first visit some images of rationality—global, regional, interlocal. This leaves us wondering if rational convergence may not have become too much to ask for. We then ask how to reconstruct a basis of convergence in these times. This inquiry leads to some thoughts about locality, the technical, and the utopian. The counterpoint to the utopian, the Apparatus from which emanate the industrial effusions of the technical, engages our thoughts next, leading to some last moves. And we begin to see, if not quite how to disengage, the local from the trans-local, at least some of the factors that real, agonized translators grapple with as they work in today's environments.

2. Rationalities: global, regional, interlocal

Voice A: Dear author, please prove to hard-nosed readers like me that you are not wasting my time. This is a small planet. We are all in the same boat. We have room and time only for one rationality. Let us zero in on the one right way of doing things. We can then save time by switching to that unique method, or rather by letting the market softly compel all participants to do so.

Accountability will require translation between reckonings only when you deal with the anachronistic rarities who do their reckoning work in weird systems. Weird is our rational name for whatever deviates from the Universalese that this global rationality chooses for us.

Voice B: Dear author, do not heed the pseudo-universal voice of A. Surely this is a fake neutrality—cloaking the special interests of such central lobbies as Christian, White, Male, Anti-X, Anti-Y, Anti-Z—trying to take over the public space. This effort is being contested by regions, which alone are real. Some of us in line B are nativists, some of us are postmodern, but we agree on the specificity of reason as a practice. Only in a region do you ever see a situated rationality practised as a reasoning by a community that is conscious of itself as a bearer of reason. Please relativize whatever you wish to say to one or more regions that can underwrite your postulates.

Voice C: Dear author, neither globally nor interregionally is there any public space. Please stay away from the trap of believing in one. Nor does it help to call spaces Private. For that term would subtend Public as its other. There are only Locations. And your labour must be interlocal. Regions are really pre-Nations, and globality is actually an imperialized mega-Nation. Furthermore, the Nation always presents itself as a State, with Formal or Serious systems or apparatuses working for repressive and ideological purposes. It does not matter quite how you formulate this diversity of initiatives. Nor does it matter whether the sectors of the state meet as foes (institutional adversaries, as in a democratic set of checks and balances) or as friends (complicit pieces of a fascist machinery). Cutting across all these classical heterogeneities within a Nation-State, notice the common managerial postulate. This amounts to a belief that some Social Science with its weather forecasts can drive a rational State. But that belief is patently false. No known or imaginable Social Science can predict human behaviour delicately enough to underpin a bureaucratic, non-

participatory representation system responsive to real needs and interests. Therefore only local self-government can provide a sustainable politics. And all constructs that cross the boundaries of such communities must be resolutely interlocal. So your translators may indeed want to claim to be apprentices at both the places they serve. But this picture falsely shows the translator as learning Something. There is in fact no specific Thing s/he can ever learn. For that would involve postulating Meanings or Essences. What your translator does is intervene, between two locations, on a given Occasion. No repeat performances please. We are contingent creatures of our events. So even Apprenticeship overstates what your translator humbly does. The only reasonable course of action is to Suspect all rationalities, global or regional, and all public space claims, for they are demonstrably Unintelligible. Please don't try to trap me into glossing this as False in your language. My consistent anti-essentialism does not permit me to make such concessions to you even in this generous game I'm playing, you see.

Voice D, as in Dasgupta: Sorry to cut off your very Interesting discussion which we would Love to continue, notice the Consumerism of the Capitalized verbs. (Discussion of obvious tangent omitted.) But we are running out of reading time and writing space. (Off on a tangent planet, some potential reader tightens this aperçu into a book about how writing milks the spatiality of the document more effectively than reading does, since reading identifies more closely with the reader as a receiving and invokes a temporal organization of attention and not a spatial organization of memory. That this or other tightening remains optional goes to show that this paper is on the right track.) We recommend to the interested reader the exercise of steeping herself in each of the knowledges voiced as A, B, C. But we deny the possibility of a Teacherish Enlightenment seriously setting up such universalities as might underwrite a valid mediation between all possible reckonings and therefore provide any generally usable type of

Translation Training. Neither public spaces as in A or B, nor an interprivate nonspace as in C, if you construe these voices as Knowledgeable Speaking, will bring back a usable general Enlightenment that can Teach every translator a systematic, and ubiquitous, art of bridge-building. If I say apprenticeship, it is because I'm afraid the translator has to find her own way of doing things relative to the completely specific locale of the texts and faces s/he decides to serve. This way may not come out rational in the sense of demonstrably adding up with the efforts of all other translators and producing an aggregate rationality of types A, B, C, whatever. It may have rhyme rather than reason. Maybe the translator will at best feel that s/he is in tune with others.

Why can't we visualize even an idealized translator-figure as a counterfactual teacher of the peoples? Why this impossibility of visualizing a teacherly enlightenment that will set up the necessary universalities permitting an engineering that will build bridges across all rivers, to return to the watery metaphor of the ocean sponsoring globalization?

My answer to this has to do with the goal of accountability itself. Let us do this reasoning in the form of a reductio ad absurdum.

Let there be K, then, as in Knowledge. K is a steady stretch of speaking that produces and/or manifests knowledge. You will see K emerge from the mountain of opacity as a stream, if these watery metaphors are compatible with the book-keeping solidities of Accounting. Now, K grows non-accountable when—as must inevitably come to pass—the initiating impulse from that mountain becomes tired of staying grossly the Same River. Why or how does K grow non-accountable? By becoming a defensive and codifying formation. K becomes incapable of further learning, and thus technically un-Intelligent. Unfortunately, by sheer inertia, K remains an efficient formulator, for that skill grows independently of the capacity to learn. These formulations, detached from the contact with novel and thus real material, become merely verbal. Thus, K ceases to say anything,

in the sense in which only true interventions coming from a source that understands what it is about count as saying something.

Hang on to this sense. We will revisit it from various vantage points. To keep it identifiable in this text, we will put it down as a matter of an Erzeugung (a Making by someone) turning into an Erzeugtes (a something that is Made and congeals with other Mades into a system). Feel free to substitute buzzwords from the scriptures you prefer. K grows for a while. In that erzeugend season K still makes real sense. Then K's growth slows down. But even when it has really stopped, K unfortunately continues to talk. By that time this talk is empty, merely verbal, a stretch of Erzeugtes. And this emptiness bothers someone, call that someone L. L tries to take over from K. There are various scenarios. If K lets L take over, K may try to sponsor L, and L may let K do this, whereupon you get an appearance of continuity, which becomes an unfortunate reality if L completely buys into the form of K's sponsorship. If L lets K simply lose a battle, L looks like a victor crowing over the ruins of some predecessor, and other pathologies ensue. And so on. Sorry to cut off yet another promising tangent. The point is that the K/L interface is a precious and hard-to-map site of the Necessary Novelty of significant speaking. And knowledge exists only as a burden carried by some stretch of significant speaking, which makes all this crucial to any serious epistemology.

Perhaps you notice that this reasoning uses tools from a certain pragmatics of conversation. It may be important to bring to your attention its reliance on themes that have been explored only in the context of the generative revolution in linguistics. Generative syntax, unlike most other work, has persistently kept asking—seldom loudly, and never in continuity with Borges or in the theatrical tones of wide-eyed wonder—where to place the fact that practically all the sentences we speak and hear are unprecedented in our lives, coming as they do from a formally infinite pool of sentences, and from the substantively nbounded streams of our experience.

If you are unused to the discipline of generative syntax, you may respond to this thinking by wondering: Is there, then, no good reason to expect the efforts of diverse translators to converge?

3. Reconstructing a rational basis for convergence

Translation studies can take heart from the experience of generative syntactic research itself. The people who have successively worked in the generative syntax traditions have been fiercely independent and come from a variety of ethnic and intellectual backgrounds. But these distinct subjectivities have consented to keep revisiting zones of overlapping interest, zones which they renegotiate as they work. The experience of this enterprise shows that a series of apprenticeships can converge, can creatively continue an action-series as a Knowledge, without succumbing to the standard temptations. Note, however, that this experience also shows on what basis it has been possible to do this. Generative syntacticians have consistently sought a parsimonious account that builds clear bridges between local detail and local detail. Collective pursuit of the joint goals of understanding and economy provides the shared ethos that allows independent minds to horizontally, non-disciplishly, converge on widely understood and endorsed outcomes.

This type of theorizing shares with the cultural-literary work of the Theoreticals, a useful term for some intellectuals in the humanities today, the hope that learners who horizontally congregate while retaining the independence of their apprenticeships can share serious purposes and results. Stylistic differences do divide these enterprises in practice. But they have a common enemy: the old rationality. Embodied in the modern nation-state's mainstream institutions like the media, the old Enlightenment's rationality represents the tired and possibly spent force of teachers who feel obliged to organize harmony and persuade learners to at least appear to think alike. Now, linguists and the Theoreticals share at least the firm belief that those of us who want to provide a serious account of language and literature phenomena can no longer afford to base our work on what the media and their literary appendages

regard as the common sense notions shaping the public domain. On such grounds, one may then still hope that theorists of these and other kinds can together help reinvent the Enlightenment, this time from the viewpoint of learners representing various communities whose mutual, consciously barrier-crossing and symmetry-maximizing hospitality brings about real convergence.

Such hope is a familiar sentiment. But it fails to exhibit any new basis on which language scientists and Theoreticals can work jointly. Linguists have grown into a commitment to the scientific style. They regard a phenomenon as Understood when a parsimonious formal explanation is constructed for it and an account as Interesting when explorations surrounding it seem likely to increase such Understanding. The Theoreticals find such Interest and Understanding amusing and useless because trapped in the metaphysics of presence. Have I found a way around or through this impasse? If I haven't, why do I steer your readerly attention to these zones between paradigms, zones long known to be embarrassingly acrimony-ridden and ill-defined?

My reasons for optimism are that both linguistics and most of the postmodern approaches to culture seem (A) to be compatible with the parsimony-assuming notions of the pragmatics of conversation and (B) to be trying to develop characterizations of naturalness, economy, and the basis of understanding in their own specific domains of inquiry. This construal of the scene is in keeping with the basic charge that the common sense on each side of the main divide seems to make against the other side. Postmodern work and linguistics hold each other guilty of some sort of extravagance. Let me try to show that this is so, and that this makes it reasonable to hope.

Each side seems to agree that the basic type of move that the other side begins with is legitimate. Yes, says the Theoretical to the linguist, you can ask if an adjective sandwiched between a verb and a noun works with the verb or with the noun. Yes, says the linguist to the Theoretical, you can suspect that the apologetic activity on behalf of a culture protesteth too much, and ask explicitly quite how to cut this

crap. But then each side hears the other side as making that basic move too many times, to the exclusion of other ingredients of story-telling, and thus producing extravagant noise instead of music. Now, notice that this complaint indicates that one would like to hear natural, optimal, economical story-telling on all sides. Notice, too, that the details of the technical work on both sides of the divide show all parties to these disputes agreeing that the study of every location must respect its specificity and use narrowly local or specifiedly interlocal tools. Of course people so committed to localism, so acutely sensitive to inappropriately gross or bureaucratic tools of a centralizing sort, will want specificity-respecting, non-extravagant, natural characterizations of the phenomena. Their impatience with each other's initial approximations to specificity thus understandably reflects their own concentrated effort patterns. Once each side learns how to read work coming from the other as localist/interlocalist inquiry, it may become possible to see that common goals are being pursued in partly parallel ways.

I am not just proposing to read localism as a political leitmotif associating linguistics with postmodernist writings in opposition to the media-anointed Common Sense. My claim has to do with the shared style of thinking that localism gives rise to.

Everyone who for any reason suspects appearances knows that one important reason why things are never as they appear is that those appearances are produced by the centralizers who run Polite Society and write your etiquette books for you. It is Not Done to look or to see in an impolite fashion. Now, inquiry can penetrate such socially constructed façades in at least two ways. One path takes you into the backroom of the cultural process of making these quasi-natural appearances tick—a point that need not be laboured for this audience. Another leads you to the analysis of what, in fact, the patterns of natural and unnatural begin to look like when you take on the real global array of languages; set aside the old myths handed down by the language teaching system that most of us, including radicals in the cultural studies professions, have been brought up on and have never

quite outgrown; keep asking pattern questions; refrain from flinching when you see the initially bewildering and opaque diversity of answers coming from habitual users of very different languages; and keep steadily working when the answers look less and less opaque because enough languages are represented on the map of generative syntactic research to make the macropatterns, for the first time, amenable to sustained inquiry. Both of these paths respond to the problem of socially constructed naturalness. And both responses are obliged to seek constitutively local means, avoiding the currency that is macrosocially 'given', for the analysis of the phenomena at stake.

Both the generative and the postmodernist responses to the discovery that human intention is so heavily dressed up in manifestly conventional constructs tend to feed a question that one might naively pose as follows. Take a person. Confront her with the fact that her speech-intentions as embodied in her speaking are always thoroughly dressed up in convention posing as nature. Listen to her ask herself what she really intends when one refuses to take that dress seriously. And then let us ask, with her, what kind of question this is. This effort of ours, as a community working with the individual asker, is the really localist moment which self-consciously sets up the location of our joint work. I submit that this localist moment cannot occur without a coalition, as yet unavailable, of the energies of generative, postmodernist, feminist, environmentalist, postcolonial, and other alternative forms of inquiry into the realities of language and culture. In the present analysis, we stress the potential linguistic contribution to this joint effort. Linguists want to know what the natural components are that precede and ground the cultural actions and distortions. For linguists are the keepers of the phenomenon that people, unlike apes and other fellow creatures, do have a species-specific biology that makes all this possible, a natural base whose existence—and whose independence of cultural actions and effects—a fuller account of our humanity cannot wish away. Not only is it impossible to wish it away. We would like, surely, to welcome our awareness of the specificity of this body into the fold of our general inquiries. Surely a thoughtful cultural studies enterprise will be mature

enough to welcome the thoughtful linguistics that has been available for a while.

Why should such a welcome be important for anything outside the narrow technical question of relations between linguists and other colleagues? Because having a real sense of nature will help us all to ask more carefully what is involved when the accountable, responsible speaker—to revisit the beginning of this analysis—wishes to speak as naturally as possible, with recognition and up-to-the-limit elimination of the avoidable surrenders to convention and ideology. For naturalness, in this sense of non-distortion, is a known prerequisite of truthful communication.

At the heart of this naturalness telos of symmetric, truth-maximizing communication lies a sense also of parsimony where the scientific ideal of economic explanation and the narrative ideal of austere story-telling meet. Semiotic minimalism is the only potentially universally basis for sense-making. For only when the message eliminates all the crap does it stand out as a message one can take seriously and interpret. These are formal phenomena, which wait for our inquiry, in various disciplines, as we get tired of our antics that come out of the process of disciplinary growth, as we move towards the austere core of each discipline as it comes to terms with its task and its neighbours, and as we discover that there are natural barriers to extravagance both in the scientific pursuit of parsimonious explanation and in a cultural narrative that seeks Interesting and thus effective ways to present what one Understands. Recall that we are trying to find a fresh, nonauthoritarian route to these notions. Perhaps our practice, in its ordinary drift, is taking us to desirable goals that our careful road maps know nothing about.

4. Locality, the Technical, and Utopia

Considerations such as these might make some of us want to actually work with notions of locality without having a heavy-duty

story about quite what their details should come out as. I will rustle up a rough draft here mainly to enable us to proceed, without any perennial claims for pictures of this kind. A stretch of talking or writing action—that you translate from or into—is connected to other stretches of action in ways that the stretch is seen as referring or alluding to. These connections are visualized in terms of locations. Space and time coordinates are frequently seen as defining locations, but so are ethnicities, personal or place names, and other idiographic identifiers. In linguistics, the advent of minimalism as a style of asking and addressing questions has made it important to look much more tightly than in earlier work at local relations between each item in a structure—for instance, in a particular constituent of a sentence—and items structurally 'close' to it in ways that can be defined in terms of the coordinates that shape structural locations. Once it becomes compulsory to say everything in terms of neighbour to neighbour relations, linguistics ends up accountable to the reality of words as naively produced and understood by speakers, and certain desirable equations between expertise and the public follow, a topic left unexplored here. Let us return to our neighbourliness.

The coordinates that put people's speaking and writing acts in touch with other acts as neighbours in locations are obliged to run a sort of conversational metaflow that manages and negotiates the conversations as they happen, or fail to happen. Here the characterization of the necessary, context-providing localities finds itself forced into the specific shape of a conversation-bound pragmatics, or a text-bound discourse analysis, or an attempt to work out ways in which conversations and discourses are different but overlap in crucial ways. And some managerial imperative leads most efforts of this type towards a technicalization. If we 'know', in therapy or adult-child control scenes or educated-uneducated dyads or other well-defined contexts, or in self-help contexts where we give ourselves a picture of the Natural Me Before or After I Go and Find Meself,—if we 'know' how to run real conversations or make sense of the way some of them become more real than others, then we inevitably try to do this running or this interpreting better and better as we keep doing it self-consciously. And this of course technicalizes what we are doing.

Let us take from this the lesson that Pragmatics is a next-door neighbour to the Technical.

There is however at least one other enterprise that bears on our speech and writing. Semiotics studies some ways in which explicit or tacit messages, intended or unintended messages, in language or other modes of expression, carry significance. It does not often equate one significance, carried by one message, with another. Outside language and translation, people find it notoriously difficult to establish significance or to set up exact equivalences. But semiotics does have a lot to say about the fact that, under examinable conditions, significance can grow or decay, can seem to be artificially imposed by significance-giving agencies like advertisers or to flow naturally with the cultural practices of the people who see the messages as 'their own'. This business is curiously orthogonal to pragmatics.

Please let us jump from these remarks to the completely unwarranted conclusion that Semiotics is a next-door neighbour to the Utopian. Dear referees, dear editors, dear readers, dear other company present and/or sleeping through this, please hold your various horses through this non sequitur.

Now, I will try and pack these ideas under the rubrics of Poetry and Prose. The way it is organized is quite transparent as of now. Pragmatics treats language as essentially prosaic acts, Semiotics treats it as basically poetic documents. So far, so banal. Now for some 'moves'. Some of them are not mine, but I am the one who is asking you to look at them and see which parts of this sequence you want to re/visit.

The Sharing and Language Paradox

Suppose X and Y share everything. Then they need no language. For there is nothing they need to communicate. Now suppose X and Y share nothing. Now they cannot have language. Because bridge-building

grinds to a halt. So language lives in the gap between that Everything and that Nothing.

Prose and Poetry as Oriented Sharing

When you (Y, for You) speak, you send a message to, and thus share some content with, X (the interlocutor, short for Ex-you, think of the interlocutor as "There, but for the grace of God, go I" and you see why X is short for Ex-you). This message must orient itself either to the everything or to the nothing. These orientations yield poetry and prose, respectively.

Let us unpack this move more expansively. Suppose you address X and put the message in the orientation that goes: Boy, Am I glad we share so much that you and I can talk and make so much sense of each other. Manifestly, that's Poetry, you are orienting the message-sharing to the potential for sharing Everything—which is why Poetry sits next door to the speech of young people in love, if you permit a theoretician to make the same corny and faceless, depthless cracks as a comedian, and for the same reasons (abstraction). What about Prose? Prose happens when you go: Wait a minute, you aren't going to get this, there is so much distance between us. Lemme explain this to you. There's this playground, see? And most of it's mine, see? So you'd better listen to what I say if you want to play here, okay? In other words, you stress what you do not share with X, whereby you orient the message-sharing to the possibility that Y could have shared Nothing with X.

This was prose, in case you didn't notice. But the humour was supposed to turn it into something more sharing and caring, in the unlikely event that you managed not to notice that. And the metatextual mockery is supposed to put all this corny humour into scare quotes. This performs three tasks. One, it shields my poor humour production abilities from censure. Two, it also produces a certain critique of the advertising industry which uses good (and well produced) humour for insidious purposes. (I can only yearn for readers who read so intelligently and

sensitively, far surpassing my scores, that for them the second function wipes out the first. End of mock-modest intervention pretending that it matters exactly who the writer and the reader are in an exchange like this). And three, it gives us a starting point from which to approach the stunning, and difficulty-multiplying, Metatextual Fact. Here comes our next move:

The Metatextual Fact is that many texts today are asking questions precisely about what is being shared and not shared in the messages that proliferate, exactly how these sharings and nonsharings are negotiated, and what, if anything, the orientation to the local Everythings and the local Nothings in such Poetry and Prose has to do with the many mediations between such verbal exchanges and the economic traffic of commodities, weapons, knowledges, drug-lulled ignorances, and other interlocal items of human interest. Consequently, the devices of Pragmatics and Semiotics are actually on the line in much of contemporary creative writing and criticism.

To unpack this one is fatally easy. Most of the interesting writers today are displaced in some sense. They are in exile, or their whole nation has turned into a nightmare making the experience of staying in your homeland look like exile, or there is some lethal gap between where you are and where you think you could make sense of yourself. Displacement produces distances. You then feel that you are not speaking directly to or with a community that does or can come to know who you are and where you are coming from. Consequently you get this Metatextual business. This unpacking has been doing the rounds, in various shapes and forms. I would like to note that, while important, this point leads only to journalism about the interesting writers and turns their lives into sob stories of victimhood. We want to think past Point Sob, well into regions of agency. So let us press the Pragmatics of locations into real service, if this is permitted.

The fundamental issue in the pragmatic putting together of a location has to do with how far You (capital Y to remind You of your Y status) think You are from X. For, as in feeling the need for sharing but

finding that it requires effort to do that sharing. Metonymically, or in some other way, including or making symbolic use of physical distance as a summary of all types of remoteness. And remoteness here does duty for opacity, for the failure of language to signify, okay. Our next move, then, is to underscore that point about Prose:

The Height of Prose is Technicality

When you overdo the prose bit, you exaggerate the distances that need bridging, you appeal to the normative authority of real or imagined third parties to fix unambiguous technical term systems, and you wax technical.

This springboard enables you to follow prior lines of academic interest, of course. If you are into hermeneutics-sprinkled philosophical sociology, then you may want to think of technical terms as mobilized words, press this into your regions of thinking about the army and the bureaucracy as intimidating embodiments of rationality, and that gives you one trip. If you prefer to think that the physical and mathematical style treats a word like a sentence while the poetic use of language treats a sentence like a word, then you might do a density of content routine, and the enterprise changes. If you believe in the modalities of language planning for third world societies, you will be angry with me for sidetracking the worthy efforts of terminology committees and their verbal police force by airing the suggestion that committee-made words are technical. You will then argue that of course they are not all technical, and that my remarks fail to makes distinctions like established vs less established languages, committee work vs the authority of the diffuse body of scientists, and other important distinctions which you will say must feed a better story. Then I will, in complete sympathy and dialogue with you—a friendship you are unlikely to desire—note that the plight of third world languages and the surely different scene of technical term proliferation in the industrial economies are rarely discussed in the same context but need to be, for greater mutual understanding, and I will invite you to tell all your exciting and surely nonbureaucratic tales in a story continuous—or creatively discontinuous, how's that for word—with the one proposed here.

Remembering the complicity between Pragmatics and the Technical, of course, we now add yet another move, as the plot thickens:

The Loudness of Exactitude: The more technical and precise You get, the louder Your talking sounds, for loudness is what happens to a stretch of speaking that presumes You are reaching X across great distances of whatever nature.

When you do even a kneejerk reaction to this, you obtain a very simple theorem:

Low Volume and Situatedness

When you talk within a location, to yourself or to those with whom you have mutual transparency, your talk becomes soft and quiet, or even ceases, possibly drifting into the articulate silence that certain types of poetry try to provide. This argument makes such poetry, or its close relatives, obligatory to a story-telling that wishes to make Locations tangibly available in discourse. Analysis is thus rigorously, demonstrably Not Enough, for exactitude is antilocal.

Given these considerations, we can return to the jump from semiotics to the utopian, which now looks less like a non sequitur. A Pragmatics is concerned with the participants and the turns in a conversation and tends to pit them against each other, focusing on how each of them, for often transitory reasons, views the transactions. A Semiotics looks instead, more diffusely, at the reality of the transaction, or transaction as such, as an entirety. Therefore the semiotic gaze is focused nowhere and becomes utopian in the etymological sense, liberated from the instrumentality of prose, towards the sharedness-emphasizing orientation that keeps poetry going. Let us pause at this Keeps Going. We take it that, given the infinity of language, every contribution to a conversation carries on its sleeve the fact that it is potentially and probably new in the experience of the speakers and listeners (hence for instance the cleavage between the Topic, which

anchors a sentence in previous discourse, and the Comment, which highlights the novel contribution it offers), but that this fact feeds both the prose of contributors looking at each other's contributions and the poetry of a community of tributaries construing themselves as one dispersed river. In other words, we would like our entire discussion to be read in the context of the Generative linguistic meditation on the constitutive novelty of speaking in the context of a community whose substantive continuity plus formal endorsement of a particular embodiment of the human language faculty makes the construction and sharing of messages possible.

We are suggesting that, when you contribute to a conversation, your message lends itself (sometimes equally and sometimes unequally well) to a prosaic and a poetic reading. The prosaic construal sees you pragmatically as a transactor agonistically related to other transactors. The poetic one semiotically takes in the whole show, thus providing a way to consider the location as a reality. When our prosaic labour requires foregrounding of a location in this vein, for example when our instrumental purposes make us want to stage a nation, we find it necessary to use poetry to run that subshow in our transactions. Even if we are being very rational about our planning, this comes in as a matter of course. It is sobering to have to deal with a theory that tells us a story about this, even if the effect is that we jump up and down to deny this story and present our own self-image, outshouting the other side, thus demonstrating that loudness has such uses as creating distance between disputants.

5. The apparatus and its purposes

We can now begin to grapple with the question driving this investigation: how to retrieve the cognitive from its hijack by the industrial.

Our main problem is not the existence of the state or its industriality. Our problem is that forces poorly understood perpetuate these institutions and reinvent them when they are clobbered. Why do

we persistently succumb to the Formal? What is the Apparatus supposed to be for? If the locations require, to remain tangible, that people speak softly, why do people persistently lapse into the erroneous high volumes of the technical register?

One answer, possibly worth exploring in the context of the project of retrieving location-based cognition from the industrial hijack, brings back the motif of accountability that our inquiry started out with. When you find that someone is not accountable, and you absolutely have to hold them to account, you may end up having to go to war with them, has been the old idea. If war is unacceptable, you can try satyagraha, or ostracism, or walking away from them, separating yourselves from them or them from you depending on how you do it and how you and others look at what is done. These equivalents share with war the Political, for the old teachings have shown us some ways in which the Military and the Political are continuous with each other.

Even if you turn swords into ploughshares, your mobilization remains in place if you assume that the army must deal with emergencies in a systematic fashion, ensuring that the population is safe and secure. This theme verges on the economic through the cognate-pair Safe, Savings. Remember that accountability requires accountants. Industry is the warlike mobilization whose way of totalizing peace to the point of a Japanese sublimation of warfare into peacefare seems to have a total hold on the imaginations of the contemporary global population.

(This is going to be a period when globalization makes translation easy, because as you see everybody thinks alike, and what's a few lexical differences between the likeminded. This weather will last until even the Japanese demobilize and begin to spread the word to their competitors, whereupon populations will start falling over each other to compete with the new Japanese mañana practices, giving us back a plural planet and some worthwhile translation difficulties!)

Mobilization amounts to the assumption that a state or other system can get total accountability by ensuring that actions are properly coordinated in the aggregates, if necessary by working around the often slow and unreliable understanding available to individuals. This assumption is in an important sense Conceptual. It does not route its activities through the Perceptions of its participants. The Conceptual ties in with the Political through the classical architecture of an Aristotle or a Confucius.

Today, when the LELs (Less Equipped Languages) prepare to cannibalize the MELs (More Equipped Languages) and to take an express route to lexical riches and join the fraternity of intertranslatable modern languages, we see this ancient régime of the Conceptual completing its conquest of all the populations. This conquest turns every group into a total or partial ethnicity organized as or under some fully mobilized nation-state, whose industriality or 'rational' mobilization its linguistic equipment is merely supposed to embody, without necessary subjective or local participation from the subject populations involved. The presuppositions of this project make it necessary to marginalize such participation and the locations where subjects transact with each other. For this totalizing project makes discourse the carrier of an Apparatus of technical correctness at a macro-social level which is seen as preceding the micro-social. This, in a nutshell, is the normal answer to the question of what the Apparatus is for. The default-nationalist answer, in a world where the names of languages indicate that we still think Swedish and Japanese belong to Sweden and Japan, and that French and English would have belonged to France and England respectively if they had not gone imperializing and spreading themselves all over the place.

In such a world, evidently, absolute locations are taken for granted; ethnic identities are given the first choice of real estate; they are invited to organize into nation-states with military and industrial muscle, primary if possible, borrowed if necessary; and linguistics is ordered to go and write up Codes for the national or subnational

languages that provide common local currency in such Locations whose official givenness is not questioned. Technicality and other kinds of microphonic loudness are taken for granted in a world where the presuppositions masquerade as common sense.

Fortunately, inquiry creates its own spaces, if only to a limited extent. The considerations we have been taking seriously here allow us to visualize a broad-based cultural inquiry which, forging an alliance of a generative linguistics with cultural studies, can recognize the moribund routineness of the Code and interrogate its sponsor, the industrial State, which proposes to be generous with the material and cultural resources of a national We.

In this interrogation, cultural inquirers ask the State: Dear State, Thank you for playing host to us all, thank you for providing a coded space for us all to live. May we ask where all this is supposed to be happening? Who is whose guest?

Contemporary linguistics in coalition with cultural studies provides background material and tools for a characterization which, perhaps along the lines of the rough draft we have been sketching here for concreteness, identifies locations relative to the self and otherness perceptions of participants in the conversations—whose lines of quietness semiotically congregate in order to make sense pragmatically of the dissociations within that community. Given such a background, cultural inquiry can support a new politics of Percepts. And then a resistance to the domination of Concepts can begin.

Working from below, on the basis of free, voluntary, and self-consciously loudness-resisting associations of subjectivities for whom understanding and perception are valuable in themselves and as bridges to personal growth, this new politics can work its way out of the continuation of warfare by other means, and also begin to challenge the industriality which writes the imperatives of the old military into the

economy and perpetuates the hold of macro constructs on the imagination of individuals.

The epistemology corresponding to this politics might wish to work with the notion that an action series, creatively continuable, embodies a local knowledge line. A Location is then also a congregation of knowledge lines. Centralizing or industrializing manoeuvres, which put knowledge lines together in Codes, are always possible, but will henceforth require justification vis-à-vis the default case, which is localistic and takes the quiet, poetic grasp of the locale as the basis of human understanding, leaving the drawing up of explicit contracts as an option for situations where it may be necessary to declare that a breach did open up and did require repair.

Such an epistemology makes new norms possible for equations of teaching and learning, as well as for the kind of accountability where translators learn how to build seriously sustainable bridges across different modes of reckoning. Translators start out as apprentices at different locations, different not only in skin colour or ethnic naming style, but in disciplinary affiliation, in industrial or anti-industrial work/leisure ethic, or along other dimensions which begin to count once we abandon the ancient primacy of the national and other Conceptual categories that once fed Codes. As apprentices for two or more patterns of traffic, translators get used to the circulation itself providing cues for creative continuation, and stop wanting helpful Codes to tell them how to formulate equivalences.

At the theoretical level, such translators will also be able to drop the postulate of a semantical mapping between expressions and states-of-affairs. Their work of building a bridge between a linguistic LF (syntactic) and a philosophical pragmatics/semiotics will be done by the traffic itself, once perception succeeds. Until perception succeeds, there will be a hovering notion of a semantics embodying the hope that perception is going to work some day. This semantics reflects the accepted opacities that keep the boundary sentries active

in a world whose ethnic and absolutist common currency remains unexamined.

To help along the process whereby absolute locations face the circulation of percepts theoretically, a Code-dismantling linguistics needs to raise the joint question of a Discourse/Praxis. This 'needs to' is only partly an exhortation to people who are being encouraged to do something that is not being done. It also amounts to an attempt to bring into words the felt Need that shapes, even when it does not drive, current agendas. A Discourse in the sense invoked here is a talking that speaks its own conventions as it goes along. A Praxis is a social cumulus of individual action norms that writes its own rules as it goes along. Between these, the Semantics, a utopian registration of the gaps in the actual, must at all times hold the equations between the messy face to face Speaking and the cleaner but not always quieter Writing that settles and resettles after nightfall, when the faces are distant for nonhostile reasons.

I close with a provisional and frankly personal response to that joint question of a Discourse/Praxis.

On the seven days of my weekly cycle, a conventional metonymy for all my cycles, I break down into several local circuits with those I live closely with. I have no Sunday to summate and retrieve myself. The local knowledges I drink from, on the local fronts, are equally unsummated, as are the little social groupings that the knowledges produce as they work. The knowledges flow as action ——>action——>lines which write the creative dis/continuities of action type as knowledges without claiming to contribute to any global megawriting.

I may or may not capitulate, depending on my courage levels. But the knowledges, in their trade-friendly moments, do lend themselves to aggregation. Centralization, industrialization, pools their world-facing moments into the big time traffic of action/action, of action exerting

effects on other action, that has been called Power/Knowledge. By this process, which has managed to look natural, industriality has hijacked cognition, and made its locality, where apparent, seem an aberration to be superseded by appropriately modern and mobilized rewritings of every Practice relative to some Meta-Practice that coaches it into a teamwork that can win, remote from a dreamwork that remembers how to rhyme. Under the long dark hijack by industriality, knowledge has turned the thoughts of us Knowers to a certain National detour. This detour hooked us on a mode of collecting our week days into, please celebrate the pun, a Strong Day of mobilized Strength. The macho ideal of this Strength casts the Nation in the role of the Place that we are supposed to take seriously as the basic principle of action meeting action. Some of us are through with that detour. We go through the motions our colleagues force us into. But we have quietly started looking for alternative spaces the way secularism once began looking for non-church anchors for thought. And in our pursuit we seem to find that I can get my Week Days to meet without the strength of Reason, in the cyclicity of Rhyme. This works, specifically, in terms of the mutual hospitality of Reperception, seen as follows:

The Last Move

You see me and I see you as our gazes make room for each other. You expect my moves to make sense first to me, in terms of the temperature of my normal pool and what I feel to be perceptibly hotter or colder, and then to you, in terms of your reperception. And I reciprocally expect you to first make sense of your moves, in terms of your pool and your accustomed levels relative to which you act and experience, and only then to allow me to reperceive. But both you and I know that we are not there as singular creatures. For we know that we both refer our pieced-out individuations to the Week Days we play around on, and to our playmate circles locally on each Week Day, as well as to the counterfactual Industrial Summations that our Week Day Local Cognitions routinely sell out to, compromising our actions by subjecting the traffic of our activities to those centralized idealizations

with our routine nonconsent. We know that the systems are naughty, and we are routinely trying to pull them up and give them a Piece of our Mind. Since each of us does this and knows each other to be doing this. So there is a hide-and-seek within each me and you as we appear to face other unitary yous and mes. This leads us to require each other to make massive and unspecified allowances. You are supposed—in my intentions beamed to you by the most outrageously modern communication technologies—to interpret my moves as coming from where I am and how hot my pool is, to the extent that you can figure out these parameters and what I intend you, from my situatedness, to reperceive based on my own perceptions of my intentions. And vice versa. In this arduous task of reperceiving according to the message sender's intentions, we routinely fail, and our reperceptions are contested as routinely as the sellouts of local knowledges to the industrial rationalizations are. This contesting makes up further verses for the poetry, and the attempt to find rhyme—a metonym for the many pattern postulates of modern verse-making—continues.

The job of the translator as apprentice, in the context of this Last Move of the construction we are offering here, is to gauge the most generous potentially intended reperceptibles of each atelier and to help the designated Other Party to Reperceive as hospitably as they—to the best of their Knowledge, half Local, half Sold-out—possibly can. In these times, of contested Sellouts, it is hard to be an apprentice at two places at once. But that is the only cross-barrier Rationality we've got, it seems to me.

Nationalist Interpretations of the *Kama Sutra*
K. Rangaswami Iyengar and the Respectability of Ancient Texts

Anne Hardgrove

Abstract

The text known as Kama Sutra *often brings to mind the ancient treatise on Indian sexuality brought to the attention of the West via notorious Victorian colonial wanderlust. The explorer Richard F. Burton is frequently credited with translating the book into English, although numerous and varied interpretations followed. This article examines the efforts and effects of the* Kama Sutra *by K. Rangaswami Iyengar, Pundit of the Mysore Palace, as the first Indian to translate the* Kama Sutra *into English. His rendition of the Sanskrit masterpiece is a far cry from Burton's voyeuristic edition. Iyengar uses the text to reinforce what he sees as the essential purity of Indian sexuality bound within the conventions of early nationalist ideas of the family and prescribed gender roles. Iyengar positions* Kama Sutra *as a marriage manual for keeping the Indian conjugal couple strong, and suggests that the 'unsavory' parts were meant as a warning of what to avoid when temptation strikes.*

Introduction

In 1921, K. Rangaswami Iyengar became the first Indian to publish a translation of Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra* into English. His translation of the *Kama Sutra*, notably subtitled *The Science of Love,* was published under the name of Punjab Sanskrit Book Depot in far-off Lahore and printed by B.V. Narasimha Iyengar at the Royal Press, Mysore. Far from simply reprinting Sir Richard F. Burton's 1883 translation of *Kama Sutra* (albeit a team project of unacknowledged

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Pundits Bhugwanlal Indrajit and Shivaram Parashuram Bhide) which even today remains the standard, although a highly imperfect work, Iyengar presumably translated the text himself, and as a result, his text reads much differently. By examining Iyengar's edition of the *Kama Sutra* taking into consideration his preface, his word choices, and the extent to which he incorporates earlier commentaries, particularly the 13th century work of Yashodhara, my aim is to consider the significance of the first English translation of the *Kama Sutra* done after Richard Burton.

The *Kama Sutra* is far from being a static and fixed text, either in ancient and medieval India, and particularly so after Burton's translation in 1883. While travel writer James Commachie contends in his new book that *Kama Sutra* simply went underground from Burton's time until legal publications appeared from the early 1960s onward, my research suggests otherwise. Rather, by looking at the content and context of post-Burton translations, I wish to show how each subsequent translators of *Kama Sutra* breathed a new life into the text quite different from the Victorian context of Burton. By situating Iyengar and his translation of *Kama Sutra* into the context of 1920s India, I hope to show how this work can be read as a social palimpsest reflecting the social and cultural life of the translator's times.

About the Translator

Like Vatsyayana himself, the original compiler and author of the *Kama Sutra*, almost nothing is known about K. Rangaswami Iyengar other than what he reports to us in his translation. The only bits of documentation that we do have about Iyengar are his work on two other texts. Two years after publishing his *Kama Sutra*, Iyengar published an English translation of the *Rati-ratna-Pradipika* of Sri Devaraja Maharaja, a well-known shorter and chronologically-later Kashmiri text also concerning sexuality. The other reference to Iyengar's work that I have located is an 81-page *Bala Ramayana* or children's version of the classic *Ramayana* epic mentioned in the list of records held by the Karnataka State Archives Department.

Framing *Kama Sutra*: Iyengar's Preface

Turning now to the text itself, I would like to look closely at Iyengar's preface to the work from where we can try to hear Iyengar's own voice as he writes about the Kama Sutra. In my research project which considers the history of post-Burton translations of the *Kama Sutra* into English and vernacular languages, I have found that translators' prefaces contain invaluable information about the motivations for translating the book. A common thread in most prefaces is the author's attempt to both instill a sense of timelessness into the text while at the same time to show their readers the relevance of the book to their own contemporary times. This trend of establishing timelessness was particularly relevant in the examination of ancient texts in colonial India where the struggle to interpret ancient history was in itself an act of anti-colonial nationalism against the British.

Iyengar begins his preface with both warning and frustration about the task of translating the text. He writes:

> It is with little hesitation that I allow this work of mine to be published. Firstly because a work on sexology [sic] or erotics is generally viewed with aversion, though there is every reason for a man or woman to understand the subject well. Secondly, ideas concerning matters of love as also the habits of the people which prevail in oriental countries being somewhat different from those in western countries, there is a great difficulty in finding expressions in English—a language, so foreign to the sentiments expressed and the subjects treated of in the present work—exactly corresponding with the words and phrases used in the Sanskrit text. And lastly because of the shortcomings that may be found in the work which I however leave to the generous indulgence of scholars, and the defects if kindly pointed out will thankfully be noted and remedied in a subsequent edition of this work.
>
> (Iyengar 1921)

After the usual warnings about the possible reception of the work by people other than scholars of Ethnology and the History of Morals, Iyengar makes an intriguing comment about the inherent western-bias of English as a language inappropriate for the communication of both Indian intellectual ideas and particular sexual habits. His solution to this problem, which turns out to be a wonderful aid to future historians, is to include the hard-to-translate Sanskrit terms alongside his English translation. While we cannot be sure which version of the text Iyengar used in making his translation, his incorporation of Sanskrit at places is a help to us in understanding how to chose to render the text.

So why did Iyengar feel the need to produce a copy of the *Kama Sutra* in English? While Iyengar never comes out and says directly why, one can speculate that his aim is to try to reclaim the *Kama Sutra* away from the Victorian bias of the Burton translation available widely in both Indian and western contexts. Instead of an Englishman fetishizing the text as part of the elaborate sexual discourses of Indian subjects, a South Indian Brahmin such as Iyengar can posit the text as part of the backdrop of a more glorious Indian civilization.

The Language of Science

In order to reinforce the respectability of *Kama Sutra* as an ancient Indian text, Iyengar casts it into an early Hindu science of morals, employing a language that tends to be more clinical as to distinguish it either from the pornographic or romantic terms of Burton. By stating in his title page that the book "is intended for the benefit of scholars interested in research work in Ethnology and the History of Morals", Iyengar follows the lead of other translators of erotica in providing such a warning. While other writers of the time might place what they consider to be obscene portions in Latin—such as German translator Richard Schmidt—(oddly contextualizing them in the classical language of the west), Iyengar seeks to domesticate such sections as not to detract from the intent of the treatise. By repeating words in the original Sanskrit, the classical language of scholarship in India, Iyengar

creates a textual effect not unlike that of western translators. Rather than show a lack of facility in English, Iyengar speaks to an imaginary audience of experts who would also have access to Sanskrit.

Iyengar is quick to explain and defend the value of parts of the *Kama Sutra* which contain what he describes as 'bad and immoral practices'. These parts, he argues, were included in the book in order to bring such matters to light and to put "righteous people on guard against these vile practices" (Iyengar 1921). These include certain 'depraved' sexual practices such as *Auparistaka* (oral sex), which he later defines as "sexual action in the upper cavity of the body i.e. mouth."[1] Forbidden sections also include the entire content of Book V on seducing other men's wives and all of Book VI on Courtesans. In justifying this interpretation, Iyengar refers to and echoes the conclusion of a teacher, Sri Vedante Desika, of eight centuries past who wrote in his work *Paramatabhanga* that Vatsyayana included these passages only to warn his readers about such 'evil practices.'

By utilizing the civilizing language of science as his interpretive mode, Iyengar joins other writers of his time in helping to cast India's tradition as part of scientific reason. India is no longer the 'muddle' of E.M. Forster's world, but from its very ancient past it is part of a documentable, understandable, rational world-view, completely able to fall into step with western rational thought and the scientific method which was at the very center of enlightenment thinking. For instance, Iyengar doubts whether much of Vatsyayana's theory (aka the positions) is actually doable in practice, but leaves it as 'data for scientists to investigate.'[2] References to the *Kama Sutra* as a scientific text are found in all the pages of Iyengar's translation, whereas other Victorian-inspired writers including Burton would only refer to the contents of the text as a 'subject'. Elsewhere, when the text comments briefly on the sexual lives of animals whose breeding depends only upon biology and not intelligence or culture, Iyengar uses more Darwinian terms of 'crossings', 'instinct', and 'season of menses' (Iyengar 1921:13). By choosing language which is more clinical than

poetic such as 'sexual intercourse' rather than the more poetic 'union,' Iyengar attempts to cast his interpretation as an ancient Hindu science which can become part of a modern body of scientific knowledge. Interestingly, Iyengar seems more at ease with the medical and scientific names for male body parts and fluids, using the terms 'penis' and 'semen'. For women, however, Iyengar is much less explicit, using the terms 'private parts' and 'love fluid' (Iyengar 1921:230) for female genitalia and secretions.

Iyengar's focus on science also extends to his classification of various instructions from the *Kama Sutra* in terms of hygiene. As for the description of furniture and furnishings of the bed-room, while other translators say that in addition to the elaborately dressed bed there is a couch[3], Iyengar writes that there is to be an identical second bed 'intended for sexual intercourse' (Iyengar 1921:28). Later in the same section, when describing Vatsyayana's prescription/description of the daily bath, Iyengar offers an elaboration of the scientific basis behind the need to wipe ones armpits—arising from the bad smell caused by perspiration (Iyengar 1921:29). For a final example, when describing a woman's proper response to a man's sneeze, Iyengar gives the English 'Bless You!' instead of the 'Live Long!' salutation used by other translators. This is an example of Iyengar's mastery in the art of translation or an attempt to show mastery in English idioms.

Colonial Misogyny, Indian Misogyny

In addition to using such clinical vocabulary, Iyengar's word choices and explanations reflect the prevailing attitude toward the 'Veshyas' (courtesans), denigrating them by claiming that "their very livelihood depends on money earned by prostitution" (Iyengar 1921:13). It seems here that, Iyengar glosses over the difference between 'veshya' and more-educated and sophisticated 'ganika'. In pointing out some men's warnings that women should not study the *Kama Sutra* except in one's youth or after marriage with consent of her husband, Iyengar's translation echoes Manu's maxim that women should be

banned from reading the foundational Sastras, that women are not suited for higher education and that they have in no need of receiving the training of this book (Iyengar 1921:17).

Various translations of the *Kama Sutra* include a range of interpretations as to the agency of women in social and sexual life. In Iyengar's time, Burton's translation of the *Kama Sutra* was the only known English rendering of the text and it is at the far extreme of denying women much power to act in their own interests. In their translation of the *Kama Sutra*, Wendy and Kakar (2002) point to the Victorian male bias found in Burton's work. To illustrate their example they point to the difference in translation between their own and Burton's phrasing of a particular line. Burton's text reads:

> In the event of any misconduct on the part of her husband, she should not blame him excessively, though she be a little displeased. She should not use abusive language toward him, but rebuke him with conciliatory words, whether he be in the company of friends or alone. Moreover, she should not be a scold, for, says Gonardiya, 'there is no cause of dislike on the part of a husband so great as this characteristic in a wife.
>
> (qtd. in Doniger and Kakar 2002:lvi)

Iyengar's version of the same passage, from the chapter entitled 'The Duties of a Faithful Wife' reads quite differently. He writes:

> If at any time she becomes a little displeased through some offence of her husband, she should not remonstrate with him too much about it.
>
> She may however, reproach him even in stern language when he is alone or only in the company of his friends. But she should never have recourse to the methods of a Mulakariaka (a woman administering medicinal roots to gain mastery or influences over a person)
>
> (Iyengar 1921:136)

In Iyengar's reading of the aphorism, with which Doniger and Kakar's translation also concurs, the woman is not kept silent as in the Burton phrase which only allows women the choice to 'rebuke with conciliatory words'. Iyengar's translation allows for reproachment of the man, 'even in stern language,' whether he is alone or with friends.

Sometimes, Iyengar gives more explicit detail than other translators, for instance, in his list of the 64 arts of essential knowledge, he extrapolates on the skill of 'carpentry' to include the making of wooden male organs to use as substitutes in love-making (Iyengar 1921:23).

At other places, however, Iyengar interprets the Sanskrit in ways that raise questions about Iyengar's attitude towards women and women's sexuality. In the part of the *Kama Sutra* concerning the royal harem of the King, Iyengar uses the Mughal/Persian term *Zenana* to discuss the frustrations of multiple wives who are obligated to share one husband. (Such referents to the Arabic 'harem' and Persian 'zenana', of course, postdate the *Kama Sutra* by several hundred years). In reiterating Vatsyayana's instructions for the women of the harem to please each other, Iyengar notes various substitutes for the male organ, including those for kings who 'out of pity' try to satisfy all their wives despite their own lack of inclination. He notes that kings who desire children must, however, be au naturel for their wives, but here Iyengar adds the hygienic qualifier of women "who have just bathed after their menses". Iyengar continues by glossing over the text's suggestion that such frustrated harem women can lie atop statues of male figures in order to satisfy their passion only adding this element to the ending verse which specifies that men can try similar techniques, including using artificial images, when they have no access to women (Iyengar 1921:174).

In certain places, Iyengar's text follows Burton's in his choice of words, echoing the colonial sentiments. In thinking through the complex web of relationships between colonial power and colonial translation, I find the recent work of Sanskritist Andrea Pinckley to be

helpful. Pinkley points about Burton's use of the word 'shampooing' instead of 'caressing' or 'massage' to be indicative of the power of colonial difference. She notes that the word 'shampoo' itself came into English from Hindi during the middle of the eighteenth century as an anglicized form of the informal command 'champo', meaning 'to press'. In Burton's time, a shampooer was a masseuse; and the language itself is suggestive of an imperial context where the one who gave the orders learned only enough Hindi to issue commands (Pinckley and Dane 2002:31).

Brahmin/Non-Brahmin: The Language of Caste

For my final point, I will focus on the issue of caste. Perhaps the most striking dimension of Iyengar's work is in its emphasis on the caste system where he chooses to echo later commentaries such as the 13th century scholar Yashodhara. This is most clear in Chapter IV concerning 'Nagaravrittam' or The Life of the Citizen. In discussing the four life stages, Iyengar, like Yashodhara, provides caste-specific instructions on what means each of the four varnas should use in gaining money in order to take up the life of the citizen (explains what each of the four castes should do). In the context in which he completed his translation, South India of 1920s was a hotbed of bourgeoning anti-Brahmin caste protest. Lower castes protested for social and religious rights alike, demonstrating 'self-respect' as they fought upper-castes for access to public spaces ranging from school education, employment, and temple-entries.

As a Brahmin, Iyengar would have found their demands insulting. He reiterated commentary about his own time and place while creating a version of the *Kama Sutra* both different from the original, and relevant to his setting. The likelihood that his audience would be primarily high-caste means that his readers would affirm his claims, ensuring a ready acceptance of the authoritativeness of his edition. Here we see one of the most powerful elements of translation—by embedding strongly held and widely accepted opinion to a receptive audience, the opinion is assigned a timelessness no different than Burton's own Victorian claims to British superiority in his edition.

Notes

1. Iyengar, Contents, p 5.
2. Iyengar, Preface, ii.
3. Burton pg 21, Doniger and Kakar pg 17.

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Translation as an Act of Ventriloquism
The Author-Translator Hegemony in English Translations of Kokborok Poetry

Ashes Gupta

Abstract

The paper is based on the researcher's empirical study as a translator of modern Kokborok poetry to English. The paper hypothesizes the following:

1. Translation initiates a dialogue across cultures in the dialectical space of the text being translated, through an act of conversion via language, from a source culture to a target culture, with the translator's essential position being that of an involved outsider interested in the language and culture to be translated.
2. However, the process of translation of Kokborok tribal poetry to English creates a hierarchy situating the translator at a higher position than the author by virtue of being a privileged language user (here English) and a representative of the dominant culture (here Bengali).
3. This perpetuates a hegemony based on such factors as economic superiority; political power; long history of oppression, exploitation, imperialism, cultural domination and the like, of the translator's culture (read the researcher's) vis-à-vis the author's /tribal culture.

Translation in such a case might be conceptualized as a one-way non-reciprocative movement (Kokborok to English only). The translator acts as an involved outsider interested in tribal language and culture who attempts at negating his/her own voice and identity to assume that of the author. However, since complete negation of the translator's identity/voice is impossible in any translation, the translator ends up appropriating the author's voice. Translation in such a case entails replacement of the author's voice by the translator's voice (the author being metaphorically dead). The tribal culture and language (here Kokbarak) has its own

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defense mechanism too. It renders every translational attempt incomplete by retaining certain ambiguity in translation and resists simplistic and reductionist understanding of language/culture. Hence this paper focuses on the following issues/problems of such a translation:

1. The identity and authenticity of the voice/voices in such a text in translation.
2. Translation as a paradox that seemingly perpetuates cultural imperialism and at the same time subverts such attempts by rendering total translation impossible.
3. Whether translation is a mere linguistic ventriloquism?

It all started with sporadic attempts at translating Kokborok poetry to English. Kokborok is the language spoken by the ethnic majority of Tripura. A small, green speck of a state in the remote north-eastern corner of this country, Tripura has been made 'famous' by the national and international media as a Texas-sans-glamour where gun-trotting extremists have set up a jungle regime. No doubt this is true but only fractionally, since flowers still bloom here in the valleys, tribal belles are seen fording the pitcher by distant mountain brooks and love floats in the air like the sweet fragrance of wild orchids. Wandering minstrels sing lays of forgotten tribal war heroes and poets in the language write verses whose theme is not always essentially terrorism, exploitation and anti-terrorism. The impetus to translation was therefore contagious. Eight different tribes of Tripura speak Kokborok which is categorized under the Bodo branch of the Tibetan-Burmese language family. Organised writing in Kokborok began much later in the Bengali script though it is believed that there was a Kokborok script long ago which was eventually lost. Hence the necessity for presenting this treasure trove of compositions in Kokborok, both oral and written, ancient and modern, to the rest of the world in English and preserve them from oblivion was immediate.

This curtain raiser was necessitated as a prelude to the problematic of translation, especially the author-translator hegemony, which this paper attempts to address. The researcher's empirical study

as a translator provides the required perspective both for examining/ analysing the translation process as well as the corresponding problematic. Translation as a process poses a few issues that a translator has to negotiate. And the perspective is even more problematised if the languages involved are Kokborok and English, the former essentially marginalized by the ethnic minority-mainstream majority divide, while the latter has enjoyed (and is still enjoying) a privileged position due to its mainstream status and its international currency. Moreover this also brings to scrutiny the position of the author vis-à-vis the translator (the researcher himself), the former being a member of the ethnic minority of Kokborok speakers and the latter being a representative of the Bangla speaking majority in the context of Tripura. The corresponding history of the two has been a saga of oppression, exploitation, imperialism, cultural domination, extremism and terrorism on one hand, and a unique cultural blend through matrimony, acculturation and interactive coexistence on the other. The resultant response which this attempt at translating Kokborok poetry to English generated among the ethnic minority of Kokborok speakers, writers and readers has itself been a fusion of encouragement and suspicion (as another exercise towards cultural domination and imperialism with the automatic enquiry—Why is he doing it?). These add up to the dynamics of the problem of translation that this paper intends to examine.

This paper is an attempt at comprehending translation as a process through which a dialogue across cultures (that of the author and the translator) is initiated in the dialectical space of the text in translation, by an act of conversion via language, from a source culture and language to a target culture and corresponding language. Hence the emphasis is essentially on translation not merely of one language to another, but of one culture to another (the term could be trans-culturation). Any translation for that reason necessitates that a translator negotiates the intricate network of cultural matrices that the text in translation and the language of the author presents. The position of the translator in this context that this paper proposes is essentially that of an involved outsider interested in the language and culture to be translated. Moreover translation of Kokborok poetry to English automatically creates a hierarchy situating the translator at a higher

position than the author by virtue of being a member of the mainstream majority and a user of a privileged language English with all its corresponding political, cultural and international 'superiority'. The researcher/ translator's psyche on analysis revealed two motives—a sympathetic cause in trying to absolve a part of the guilt evoked by the consciousness of a troubled past and a tense present, due to a long history of oppression of the ethnic community. The other was of exploring a lesser known and therefore academically viable area for research. These factors are essential for comprehending the power equations involved in the author-translator hegemony and for avoiding the trap of any simplistic and reductionist reading of the ensuing translation process.

Translation in this context could be conceptualized as a one way non-reciprocative movement i.e. Kokborok to English only, as the researcher failed to locate English to Kokborok translations of texts (except for certain chapters of the Bible, courtesy missionary zeal).The researcher/ translator undertook translation as an involved outsider who tends to negate his own identity and voice in order to assume those of the author. The Keatsian concept of negative capability comes handy here to comprehend the position of the translator. But the problem arises with 'capability' of negation as it implies both quantitative and qualitative paradigm—to what extent and to what intensity? Since complete negation of the translator's identity and voice is impossible in any such translation, the translator ends up appropriating the author's voice and identity, the author being metaphorically dead in terms of Roland Barthes' famous proposition. This even leads to a replacement of the author's voice and identity by those of the translator in extreme cases.

The obvious question that ensues is whether translation is ultimately an act of cultural and linguistic 'ventriloquism', where the author's voice and identity in translation are those of the translator's, conveniently replaced. Hence the first hurdle that the researcher/ translator in this context of translating from Kokborok to English had

to negotiate was to control this tendency of appropriation and ventriloquism as well as the resultant author-translator hegemony within safe limits. This paper therefore opines that the efficacy of translation depends on the minimization of this gap and in turn, controlling the unavoidable author-translator hegemony. As far as the translation of Kokborok poetry to English by the researcher/translator (that forms the empirical basis of this study) is concerned, doubts persist as to what extent this trap of ventriloquism has been avoided.

The concept of translation as a cultural and linguistic ventriloquism being an unavoidable reality and the difference between 'good' and 'bad' translations being only a difference in the degree of ventriloquism and not in kind, this paper further proposes to highlight the resultant paradox viz. the saving grace in any such translational process. The history of cultural domination and exploitation of the ethnic minority by the majority Bangla-speaking population in Tripura reveals that this was accentuated by the fact that Bengali culture was patronized by the kings of the State. Hence historically Bengali culture and language enjoyed a pride of position vis-à-vis Kokborok. The attitude towards Kokborok language and the corresponding culture has always been one of contempt. The worst part is that a sizeable fraction of the tribals themselves can neither speak nor read and write in this language. The fact that both S.D. Burman and R.D. Burman, the famous father-son duo of Hindi film music avoided writing Sachin Devburman and Rahul Devburman respectively ('Devburman' or 'Debbarma' indicates a Tripura tribal surname while 'Burman' indicates a Bengali identity with the 'Dev' part conveniently abbreviated) though they hailed from the tribal royal stock of Tripura, points out to the extreme efforts of assimilation in the stronger mainstream culture and language i.e. Bengali. Against this historical backdrop it is but imperative to view any such translation attempt as a neo-imperialistic stance that shall perpetuate the tacit top-down hierarchy between the translator and the author and also between the two cultures. The idea of the translator (as also the reader from mainstream culture) could be to go for a simplistic and bare literary understanding of the text to be translated

(minus a holistic comprehension of the intricacies of corresponding cultural nuances), thus demeaning the text and the culture in translation. If total translation would be possible then the integrity of the ethnic cultures such as those of the Kokborok speaking minority would be threatened by total understanding/comprehension/assimilation in the majority mainstream culture. Any such attempt gets dissipated into possibilities of cultural and linguistic ventriloquism and the resultant author-translator hegemony whose minimization and controllability determines the efficacy of translation. This acts as a saving grace by countering such neo-imperialistic tendencies and rendering each translation a 'trans-creation' from the translator's point of view. The role of constructing meaning is very crucial here. A certain ambiguity in translation delimits the scope of every entity as far as meaning is concerned. This could be expressed in the following manner:

Meaning	**=**	**Meaning**	**+**	**Ambiguity**
(in original text)		(in translation)		(non-translatable cultural connotations)

For instance, the researcher encountered the Kokborok word *maichung* (pronounced 'maichu'). The immediate effort of finding a one-word equivalent in English having failed, the only alternative was to retain the original word in the translated text with a footnoting in the form of an explanatory phrasal construct of the type:

> a bundle of boiled rice packed in banana leaves fastened with a string of bamboo twig.

But the original word connotes certain cultural-specifics that such a translation or any translation for that matter fails to convey. The fact that preparing *maichung* is an essential activity of the women of the family, who wrap up along with it their love and concern for the male member of the family—the bread earner—whom *maichung* is supposed to sustain throughout the day, is unaccounted for in this translation. So is also the remembrance of the mother or the wife back

home which the *maichung* triggers as an emotionally sustaining throw-back. These and much more together contribute to the intricate network of culture-specific connotations, social and emotional bondings that lead to an untranslatable space in the construction of meaning in translation. The idea is that a mere reading of such a text of a poem in translation fails to lead to a complete understanding of the culture as a whole. These untranslatable spaces in meaning serve as defense mechanism for preserving the integrity of such cultures under threat by guaranteeing a certain loss in connotation during translation and rendering all translations trans-creations.

At the same time this loss in translation due to untranslatable spaces guarantees scope for a one-to-one dialogue between the author, the translator and the reader in the dialectical space of the text being translated. This paper proposes that, theoretically this also ensures that the translator and reader make no attempts at a simplistic and reductionist comprehension of the author's cultural specifics from a hegemonic position of cultural superiority and privileged sympathy. Rather the translator and reader of such a text in translation, faced with a deadlock of untranslatable ambiguous spaces in meaning (working as defense mechanism/counter strategies of the culture and language in translation, threatened to assimilation and extinction/merger), is bound to negate the top-down and vertical hierarchy of the translator-author and reader-author. The result is an essential feeling of respect towards the language and culture being translated, thus subverting the author-translator hegemony which a mainstream majority culture and language (that of the translator/ researcher) in such a case perpetuates.

However, this paper only proposes these as theoretical postulates as was felt by the researcher/translator during his attempts at translating Kokborok poetry to English with all the contextual variables playing a very significant role both in the process of translation as well as in the analysis of the empirical data thus generated.

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A Mufassir
Not Just an Interpreter

Adewuni Salawu

Abstract

In most Muslim spiritual gatherings in Southwest Nigeria, as observed today, preaching is in a mixed Yoruba and Arabic languages. The leading preacher or Mufasiru *is often compelled to interpret all Arabic words and sentences to the Yoruba crowd, which does not speak, read and write Arabic language.* Ajanansi *who is like* Mufasiru *a bilingual (Yoruba and Arabic) assists the latter in his spiritual work.* Arowasi *is also part of the team of* Tafseer *but he is not necessarily a bilingual.* Ajanansi *and* Arowasi *are invention of Yoruba Muslim circles necessitated by the adaptation of* Tafsiri[1] *and* Mufassir *in Yoruba lands. People often give the trio of* Mufasiru, Ajanansi *and* Arowasi *mixed and conflicting meaning of interpreter and commentator. The objective of this study is to clarify the meaning of* Mufasiru, Ajanansi *and* Arowasi. *Questionnaires were administered. Data were collated and sorted. A 60% of the respondents were of the view that* Arowasi *is an interpreter while 10% attribute the interpreter status to* Mufasiru *and* Ajanansi. *The study concludes that most grassroots Muslim in Southwest Nigeria give wrong meaning to* Mufasiru *who combines the function of interpreter and Qur'aan commentator.*

Introduction

Mufassir is a loanword from Arabic often used in Yoruba Muslim circles of Southwest Nigeria. The word has not only metamorphosed morphologically to *Mufasiru*[2] to satisfy the Yoruba standard of pronunciation, it specially has conflicting meanings. *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi* are three different words often

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translated by interpreter. But *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi* are composed words necessitated by the adoption and adaptation of *Mufassir* into the Yoruba vocabulary. *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi* are three different personalities that work for the same purpose, viz the spread and better understanding of Islam in Southwest Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The work attempts to clarify the meaning attached to the three words of *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi* as regards its interpretation.

Research Methodology

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria to seek their views on the appellation and understanding of the three words, *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi*, and *Ajanansi*. Five video cassettes were also viewed to ascertain the functions attributed to the three characters of *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi*.

Contacts with the Arabs

The trans-Saharan impact on people of West Africa in general and Southwest Nigeria in particular is not negligible and it has spread deep from the towns to the rural villages. Its impact persists in West African life and has greatly affected the orientation and thought of people of the sub-region. At the beginning, Arabs and Berbers were the first and regular business partners of African peoples south of the Sahara. The presence of Europeans in the Bilad-as-Sudan (land of the Blacks) through the Sahara was minimal with Arabs playing the role of middlemen in the exchange of goods and technologies.

The contacts, forceful or peaceful, led to the spread of Islamic religion and Arab culture. Whatever may be their mission, almost all

Arabs who found themselves in the land of the Blacks worked directly or indirectly for the spread of Islam and the culture of Arabs. This resulted in the silent Muslim colonization of Sudan.

In fact, before the introduction of Islamic education and the advancement of the Arabic language, the only form of literature available in traditional Africa in the absence of the scriptures was oral literature. The spoken word appeared to have been of primary importance in the traditional African set up (Seymour 1988:170).

In some parts of West Africa people are so acculturated to Islam that they can hardly believe their ancestors had their own culture. Reflecting on the position of Islamic culture in Sudan, Jan Knappert (1970:85) concluded that the influence of Islam and Arabic words on Hausa, Fula, Manding, Swahili and Somali languages was profound with loanwords. These loanwords such as *Mufasiru* and *Tafsiri* are also remarkable among Yorubas.

In West Africa today, there is a class of Muslim clerics or Marabouts who are always identified with Islam. They know the Qur'aan and are familiar with the Arab culture. They speak Arabic and are privileged to have advanced instruction in their faith. They also speak their African language. Their principal role is to assist in coordinating Islamic activities such as to be an *Imam*, Islamic spiritual leader and a *Mufassir*. Sometimes they play the role of *Cadi* when necessary. This social class was transposed to West Africa across the Sahara (O'Brien1971:24-29).

During the reign of Askia Muhammed, the *ulama* or Islamic teachers multiplied, and became powerful and influential in the state because they were learned people. Arabic was then the official language (Hodgking 1969:362). Cruise O'Brien thus describes the situation in Senegal:

> The marabouts, from an early date, played an important part in the Wolof states as secretaries and advisors to the chiefs. Their ability to read and write was valued increasingly as a means of contacts with neighbouring rulers.
>
> (O'Brien 1971:28)

These *ulama* persist in all corners of Yoruba lands and some are prominent among them and known as leading preachers or *Mufasiru*, that is an *ulama* that masters the spiritual language of Islam, the Arabic and the local language or the language of the converts.

Every mosque is automatically a centre of training and learning. In the medieval era, the historic mosques of Timbuktu and Sankore were centres of excellence during the rule of the Mali and Songhai empires. Generally, the teaching was based on the commentaries of the *Qur'aan.* Its interpretation (*Tafseer*) was the order of the day. Grammar constituted a core of the study. Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and the *hadiths*[3] of Prophet Muhammad were at the centre of the lectures. This practice is common even today but some open air schools have metamorphosed into more organised institutions affiliated to modern universities. Today, the trio of *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi* have added new dimensions in the spread of Islam by means of preaching in radios, televisions and video cassettes.

Data collation and Discussion

It all started with observation[4] during public Muslim spiritual gatherings and in the newspapers where different meanings are attributed to *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi*. In most cases, the trio of *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi* are bilingual that is, they speak and write both Arabic and Yoruba language. They all compliment each other during a *tafseer* or Nasiat[5]. In recent times, with the advancement in technology the position of *Arowasi* is being made redundant.

Arowasi is a composed word of *Aro* and *Wasi*. *Ro* means to transmit, while *Aro* means transmitter. *Wasi* means preaching. Arowasi

is the transmitter of preaching. Then, *Arowasi* was transmitting to the large public or crowd, the preaching of *Mufasiru*, the leading preacher. *Arowasi* may not be necessarily a bilingual. He may not know Arabic. He was only there to repeat in Yoruba what *Mufasiru* is saying in Yoruba. Yet the survey carried out, shows a misconception of the public on the functions of *Arowasi*. Out of 100 questionnaires, 60% of the respondents look at *Arowasi* as interpreter and 70% as transmitter of the message of the leading preacher (Appendix 1). Some respondents see no difference between *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi* perhaps because the two characters sometimes interchange their function. While the function of *Arowasi* is phasing out gradually, *Ajanansi* is indispensable for the smooth preaching by *Mufasiru*.

Ajanansi (from Arabic word *Nasu* which means narration) commonly used in Yoruba Muslim circles is a composed word of *Aja* and *Nansi*. *Nansi* having metamorphosed from *NASU*, *Aja* is a Yoruba prefix, which means the person that brings or adds. He is fully playing the role of *Qoori*, the Qur'aan reciter. *Ajanansi* is bilingual. He speaks Arabic and Yoruba going by his function. He is a learned Islamic scholar, younger compared to *Mufasiru*. He reads in Arabic verses from the Holy Qur'aan at the request of *Mufassir*. With the survey carried out, 50% admit that *Ajanansi* is a Qur'aan reciter, 30% a spiritual commentator and 10% an interpreter (Appendix 1). By and large, *Ajanansi* helps *Mufasiru* during his religious lecture.

In fact *Mufasiru* according to Abu Ammenah Bilal Philips is 'a person who makes *tafseer* of the Qur'aan' (Philips 1997:83). Going by the definition of *Mufassir* by Philips that he is a maker of *tafseer*[6], literally we can conclude that a *Mufassir* is an interpreter. Islamically, a *Mufassir* is more than an interpreter, he also engages in explaining the meanings of the Qur'aan. It goes in line with the data collected from the respondents to our questionnaires. Only 10% of the respondents are of the view that *Mufasiru* is an interpreter while 50% agree that he explains and comments on the meaning of the Qur'aan. A higher percentage of 70 from the respondents say that *Mufasiru* is a preacher. There is no doubt about the preacher status of *Mufassir* known to

spread the goodwill of Islam. But the public undermines the interpreter's status of *Mufasiru* with only 10% looking at him as that. This misconception of the public is mirrored in the data collated from the questionnaires. Going by his function, *Mufassir* is first an interpreter because he first interprets in Yoruba what *Ajanansi* reads for him in Arabic and then he goes further to explain. A *Mufassir* or *Mufasiru* (Yoruba pronunciation) is not just an interpreter. There is a similar respondents' reaction regarding *tafseer* with 10% of them looking at *tafseer* as interpretation of the Qur'aan and 50% as commentary or explanation of the meaning of the Qur'aan (Appendix 1). The trend, if not checked, may interchange the meaning of *Mufasiru*, *Arowasi* and *Ajanansi* with time.

Examples of *Mufasiru*: Sheik (Dr.) Alhaji Muhyideen Ajani Bello, Alhaji Sheik Buhari Musa and Alhaji Abd. Ganiyi Abd. Raheem Lafenwa

The records of the three Islamic scholars are video cassettes digitally mastered. The title of Sheik Muhyideen A. Bello's track is *Esan* (Nemesis) (2007) while the ones of Sheik Buhari Musa are *Eto Igbeyawo l'Aiye* (Marriage) (2006), *Eto Igbeyin fun Oku* (Last respect for the Deceased) (2006), *Iselu Iro* (False politics) (2007). Alhaji Abd. Ganiyi Abd. Raheem Lafenwa is the third Islamic scholar in his *Suratu-l Munafiqum* (The Hypocrites) (2007).

Having carefully watched the VCD of the chosen *Mufasiru* in their preaching it is noted that they have different approach in the interpretation, explanation and commentary of the Islamic books written in Arabic. Their status of interpreter is carried out differently. Bello employed two *Ajanansi* while Musa is seen always assisted by only one *Ajanansi*. Lafenwa is with no *Ajanansi*. Yet they all are *Mufasiru* in the service of Islam playing the same role. The three *Mufasiru* employed no *Arowasi* whose function has been made redundant with the advancement in technology. The electronic speaker can be heard better than *Arowasi* who had only his voice for the job. Lafenwa combines the function of *Ajanansi* with the function of *Mufasiru*. He reads

first in Arabic, then interprets and finally explains in Yoruba. Musa rather interprets what his only *Ajanansi* reads to him before any explanation. The VCD made the study clearer because one could see how the three characters relate during the preaching. The reading of the Arabic words and their interpretation by *Ajanansi* and *Mufasiru* are done in a musical way perhaps to attract and increase the level of concentration of the public.

Conclusion

Mufasiru, *Ajanansi* and *Arowasi* are three important personalities in Yoruba Muslim circles of Southwest Nigeria. Although, having been replaced by the electronic speaker, *Arowasi* is no longer needed, he is stil being addressed as the interpreter by the respondents narrowing the function of *Mufasiru* to just a commentator. Also *Ajanansi*, who is just a *Qoori* or a Qur'aan reciter, is sometimes regarded as an interpreter. *Ajanansi* and *Arowasi* are designed to assist *Mufasiru* in his job as interpreter and commentator. *Mufasiru* is not just an interpreter, but he is also a Qur'aan commentator.

Notes

1. *Tafsiri* is the Yoruba pronunciation of *Tafsir*.

2. Mufasiru is a Yoruba word metamorphosed from the Arabic word Mufassir to satisfy the Yoruba alignment of words and sound. Both have the same meaning but differ in spelling.

3. Hadith and Sunna: The tradition of the Holy Prophet, better known as Sunna or Hadith is the second and undoubtedly secondary source from which the teachings of Islam are drawn. The first source is the Qur'aan. The two words Hadith and Sunna are commonly used and differ in their significance. Hadith really means a story or a report, and so represents an account of what happened, whereas Sunna means a practice or a custom. Within the community of Islam, it is only natural these words come to be applied more particularly to matters related to the Prophet and to the customs followed by him

and his immediate followers. Records were collected telling what the Prophet said and did and his reactions to things said and done in his presence (Sambo and Alimiyah 1976:32).

4. Observation can be defined as contact with the world through the use of the senses. ..Observation equips us with the material for thought, reflection, and judgment. What we experience by means of our senses—the sights, smells, touches, noises, and tastes—provides us with the data we require in order to survive. We report our observations in sentences called observation statements…. The observation gives the raw data of the situation. We know the data because we have experienced it with our senses. We report it in a strictly simple sentence form. How we interpret observation material is quite another matter (Gerald, M. and Nancy, S, 1974:44-45).

5. Nasiat: Islamic public lecture (preaching).

6. There are different types of *tafseer*:

   Tafseer of Qur'aan by Qur'aan: There are many places in the Qur'aan where questions are asked in order to catch the mind of the reader and subsequently answered to increase the impact of the concept in question… This self-explanatory process is referred to as *tafseer* of the Qur'aan by Qur'aan.

   Tafseer of Qur'aan by the *Sunnah*: On many occasions, the prophet added further clarification to various verses of the Qur'aan. Allah has entrusted the job of explaining the Qur'aan to the Prophet. This trust was expressed in the Qur'aan in no uncertain terms. "I have revealed the Reminder (Qur'aan) to you (O Muhammad) so that you may explain to the people what has been revealed to them" (*Surah an-Nahl* 16: 44). "I have only revealed the Book to you (O Muhammad) in order that you clarify for them the things about which they differ (*Surah an-Nahl* 16:64).

   Tafseer of Qur'aan by *Aathaar*: Whenever the *sahaabah* could not find the *tafseer* of a passage in the Qur'aan itself or in the *Sunnah*, they would use their own reasoning based on their knowledge of

the contexts of the verses and the intricacies of the Arabic language in which the Qur'aan was revealed.

Tafseer of Qur'aan by Language: With the passage of time words took on new meanings and old meanings were lost; foreign words entered into the language; and vast sections of vocabulary fell into disuse. This natural process necessitated the explanation of some of the Qur'aanic words according to their literal and grammatical meanings.

Tafseer of Qur'aan by Opinion: Opinions based on a careful study of the first four steps can be considered valid as long as they do not contradict any of those steps.

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Cassettes

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Lafenwa, G. R. (2007) *Suratul-l-Munafiqun* (*The Hypocrites*), marketed and distributed by Jislad Music, Lagos.

Musa, B. (2006) *Eto Igbeyawo l'Aiye*, marketed and distributed by Bablaje Music, Lagos.

Musa, B. (2006) *Eto Igbeyin fun oku (Last respect for the Deceased)*, produced and marketed by Oracle Music Int'l, Lagos.

Musa, B. (2007) *Iselu Iro* (*False politics*), produced and marketed by Moh-Saheed Audio Visuals & Comm., Ibadan.

Appendix 1

Table: Evaluation of *Mufasiru* and *Tafsiri*

	Qur'aanic interpreter	Qur'aanic Commentator	Islamic Preacher	Qur'aanic Reciter	Repeat the words of Mufassir
Mufasiru	10	50	70	0	0
Ajanaasi	10	30	0	50	10
Arowaasi	60	0	0	0	70

	Interpretation of Qur'aan	Commentary/explanation of Qur'aan	Preaching of Islam
Tafsiri	10	50	40

Paradox of Illustration
Facilitating/resisting Translation in Comic Strips

Archita Gupta

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to comprehend the problematic involved in translating comic strips. Since the use of illustration in comics works as a vehicle for communicating cultural values, the scope of investigating comic strips such as Tintin's Adventures *in translation from English to Bengali becomes a valid project and this paper attempts to do the same. The very fact that translation of a comic strip entails no translation of the anchorage text but the relay text only presents itself as an interesting problematic. The illustration paradoxically facilitates and resists translation in comic strips.*

The process of translation presents itself as an interesting paradigm when the praxis is translation of comic strips. The concept of language-codification and pictorial codification in comic strips—in the form of illustration and familiar comic strip iconography such as, stars for pain, speech bubbles and thought balloons, sawing logs for snoring etc—have evolved a new pictorial language that remains valid and meaningful across cultures and languages in the form of modern and popular archetypal constructs. Hence, translating a comic strip would require translation of the language part only, leaving the rest consisting of illustration, speech balloon and thought bubble etc as it is. This then leads to a part of the hypothesis that this paper attempts to arrive at, that is, illustration facilitates translation in comic strips. Moreover illustrations in a comic strip help in grounding the text in a specific socio-cultural milieu. This could be read as a strategy of resistance that ensures safeguarding its original cultural identity since

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trans-culturation is denied. The result is a paradox—a binary of help and hindrance. In this context, a popular comic strip such as *Tintin's Adventures* translated from English to Bengali and published and marketed by Ananda Publishers, Kolkata presents an interesting case study.

Since this paper is an attempt to comprehend the dynamics of the problem involved in translating comic strips via language and illustration, it becomes pertinent to understand the multiple levels at which a comic strip operates to generate meaning. The subtext operates in comic medium more emphatically through its action-oriented progression of plots. Comic medium is more akin to film medium than it is to the photographic image. Using Barthes' analogies in "The Rhetoric of Image", one can see that while photographic reality involves an awareness of 'having been there' or 'the stupefying evidence of this is how it was, giving us, by a precious miracle of reality from which we are sheltered' [1], the dramatic element or the progress in action is constituted by the 'de-stilling' of the images through the continuity of images in the comic medium. Just as the photographic image is related to a 'pure spectatorial consciousness', the film medium depends on "a more projective, more 'magical' fictional consciousness" [2].

The film medium consequently involves an awareness of 'being there' rather than 'having been there'. The photograph can at best represent a 'flat anthropological fact'. The film on the other hand, with its present continuous narratives can establish links and therefore construct a story. Hence, there is a similarity between comic strip and film medium.

It is to be remembered here that considering the authority that is invested in the written word, it is very difficult to find a text that is exclusively made of images. There is almost invariably a minimal written caption. Barthes delineates two functions from the linguistic message that accompanies any image, namely, anchorage and relay. While the 'anchorage text', i.e. the illustration/image, is meant to

> direct the reader through the signified of the image causing him to avoid some and receive others, by means of an often subtle dispatching, it remote controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance.[3]

The anchorage text, in other words, becomes an occasion to display its overt ideology, in consonance with dominant social structure. The 'relay text', i.e. the linguistic message that is found in cartoon and comic strips is not more than 'a scratch of dialogue' and it is complimentary to the image.

> …the words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realised at a higher level than that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis.[4]

The idea is to use dialogues for advancing the action and to add only those meanings that are not to be found in the image itself. In comic strips, the relay function of linguistic text operates along with its action-oriented medium. The awareness of 'being there' involves the reader at once.

In 1967, UNESCO endorsed the use of comics as a vehicle for communicating cultural values. As a consequence, the scope of investigating comic strips such as *Tintin's Adventures* in translation from English to Bengali becomes a valid project and this paper attempts to do the same. The discourse originates from the concept of translation as a process that refers to and involves a transformation from a source language to a target language along with the cultural nuances of the former.

When translation of a comic strip is undertaken, it is inevitably the translation of the relay text that is attempted while the anchorage text is left untranslated. Tintin comics in translation from English to Bengali conforms to this paradigm and hence, only the relay text in

speech balloons etc is translated into Bengali. The looks of the characters, their behavioral pattern and mannerisms, the setting, the locale as depicted in the anchorage text remains untranslated. Rather it could be said that the task of the translator in translating the source culture of which the language/relay text is a part, for assuring proper translation, is made easy as the anchorage text visually communicates the cultural nuances involved.

The anchorage text of a comic strip, by remaining untranslated or by not requiring translation, communicates to a target reader the essential nuances of the source culture. Thus translation is facilitated by illustration or the anchorage text in a comic strip as it negotiates the degree of difficulty/problematic of translation to a considerable extent. This is because the anchorage text generates cultural connotations through illustrations and images that remain unchanged in translation and also works through modern and popular comic strip archetypal iconography such as stars for pain, speech bubbles and thought balloons, sawing logs for snoring etc that are understood across cultures. Certain cultural connotations that are unique and typical to a source culture and therefore language, and have no linguistic equivalence in the target language render themselves untranslatable. The only way out in the translation of a conventional text-sans-illustration is footnoting. A comic strip in translation can negotiate this translational problematic to a considerable extent on account of the anchorage text of illustration no doubt, but this is only a part of the paradigm. Two panels from *Tintin's Adventures,* 'The Crab with the Golden Claws' and its Bengali version 'Kankra Rahasya' would emphasize this hypothesis. In the second and third panel of the third row, the relay text is translated not literally but by maintaining the same connotation, whereas the anchorage text consisting of illustration and images remains intact with stars around Tintin's figure in both English and Bengali versions communicating pain via the popular archetypal comic strips iconography of stars symbolizing pain.

The very fact that translation of a comic strip entails no translation of the anchorage text but the relay text only, presents itself as an interesting problematic. In any translation, the most significant responsibility of the translator is to translate and convey the cultural traces that are unique and representative of the source culture and language. Hence, the efficiency of translation depends on accomplishing

this task properly. The translator automatically runs the risk of loosing many or a few of these traces in the translation of a text-sans-illustration since the target language and culture, shaped by different geographical, climatic and other parameters, may not have equivalent morphological and semantic devices to convey those traces in the target language. This leads to approximation and ambiguity. The anchorage text consisting of images and illustrations in the case of a comic strip in translation would firmly and definitively ground itself in the source culture and leave no scope for such cultural ambiguity and linguistic approximation. The anchorage text would thus resist translation and preserve the cultural purity of the source culture by rendering itself untranslatable. The Tintin comic strip in translation from English to Bengali also shows the same tendency of resisting a loss of cultural connotations by retaining the anchorage text intact and unchanged, though the name of Tintin's pet dog gets translated from Snowy to Kuttush, and Thomson and Thompson, the detective duo, become Johnson and Ronson in the relay text.

In the second panel of the first row in page 35 of the translated Bengali version of the same adventure, the anchorage text consisting of illustration communicates the cultural traces and nuances of the deserts of Arabia through a depiction of the topography consisting of sand dunes, camels and turbaned figures. In this panel, though the relay text is translated from English to Bengali, the anchorage text anchors the cultural connotations firmly in the root culture and resists any loss or ambiguity which is otherwise inevitable in the translation of the relay text only.

However there are a few exceptional cases and instances where, due to certain extra-linguistic and purely cultural and political reasons, the relay text accompanying the anchorage text in a comic strip is omitted, modified or silenced.

This is the other side of the paradigm where translation involves a deliberate loss/omission on the part of the translator. This happens due to a difference in the perspective, ideology and political indoctrination between the source culture and language and target culture and language, between the author and the translator.

Tintin comics in English version often make use of racist terms such as 'niger' etc for an African or an Arab. These terms are racially prejudiced and represent a white Eurocentric racist viewpoint. But, in Bengali translation such terms are not only avoided but the relay text, accompanying the anchorage text, is also silenced. This could be viewed as a clash of ideologies between the oriental and the occidental. Bengali being an oriental language and the language of the translator, she would sympathise with and relate to an Arab or an African rather than to a white European or white American. Therefore, it would only be politically correct to deliberately silence the racist relay text accompanying the anchorage text in the Bengali translation. Moreover, this also reverses the author-translator hierarchy by bestowing in the translator the authority to change/modify the original text while translating.

In the first panel of the third row in the English version of 'The Crab with Golden Claws', Captain Haddock uses the word 'bunch of savages' in the relay text to denote the turbaned and robed oriental others of the original text. This is a purely racist abuse used from the white Eurocentric point of view. The same panel in page 41 of translated Bengali version totally silences this racist abuse and communicates a far safer connotation of just losing Tintin. In fact, in the original version, the relay text communicated two messages—one of racial connotation and the other of losing Tintin, and captain Haddock being bewildered. The translated Bengali version translates only the second message of the relay text and annihilates the first message. It goes against the ethos of Bengali culture which is oriental and non-Eurocentric. Moreover, this racist message would have gone against the sentiments of the Bengali reader.

Thus, an analysis of comic strips in translation such as Tintin comics from English to Bengali reveals that under its apparent simplicity it conceals varied cultural, social and political forces at play. The process of translation of comic strips involves further complications since the anchorage text comprising of images and illustrations paradoxically facilitates and resists translation at the same time. This paper was an

attempt at reading into this essential binary of help and hindrance that translation of a comic strip generates.

Notes

1 Barthes, Roland (1993) "The Rhetoric of Image", in Ann Gray and Jim McGerigan (eds) *Studying Culture*: *An Introductory Reader,* London: Edward Arnold.
2 *ibid*
3 *ibid*
4 *ibid*

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Translation Corpora and Machine Aided Translation

Niladri Sekhar Dash

Abstract

The modification of the goal from holistic automatic machine translation to domain-specific machine-aided translation has been the outcome of our rude realization of the fact that the development of a fully automatic machine translation system, which will work equally effectively for all kinds of text and for all kinds of natural language, is actually a myth. The long history of failures recorded in last six decades in the act of developing an automatic machine translation system for any two natural languages has eventually forced us to think of developing domain-based machine translation system, which gives us a better assurance of success among related languages. Against this back-drop I have made an attempt here to show how linguistic data and information intelligently extracted from systematically designed translation corpora can lead us a few steps forward towards our goal. The method proposed here will be highly useful in the Indian context if we complete the ground work necessary for achieving success before we venture on the voyage.

1. Introduction

A Machine Aided Translation (MAT) system is a man-machine interactive interface that takes linguistic inputs in the form of full sentences from the source language text to generate corresponding full sentences in the target language text (not necessarily of a very high quality). MAT technique may be considered as an inevitable

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offshoot of Artificial Intelligence, which is evolving in wide dimensions in tandem with the meteoric progress in the field of Information Technology. In this new millennium, MAT technology may be considered as one of the key technologies that can have direct as well as lasting impact on the global market of inter-lingual communication, cross-lingual information retrieval and multi-disciplinary information exchange. The MAT technology is thus turning up into a domain of cross-disciplinary application with direct functional relevance in e-commerce, knowledge localisation, and socio-economic progress of societies.

MAT is not a simple form-to-form (i.e., word-to-word, phrase-to-phrase, sentence-to-sentence, etc.) replacement of the source language text into the target language. By its default definition, it gives a kind of assurance that the texts of the source language should be 'grammatically correct, linguistically valid, and semantically or conceptually acceptable' in the translated outputs of the target language. Moreover the outputs in the target language should be nearest to the source language—both in sense and content—if not identical. Furthermore, information embedded within the source language text should not be lost in the target language, and no extra information, which was not originally present in the source language text, will be added in the target language.

With these basic assumptions, in this paper, I have made an attempt to address the issue of MAT from the perspective of end-users with a focus on its general goals (Section 2). In Section 3, I have proposed using translation corpora for the purpose of developing a MAT system. In Section 4, I have discussed the issues related to translation corpora design in Indian languages. In Section 5, I have identified the immediate tasks which we need to complete before we can think of developing a workable MAT system for Indian languages. In this paper, I have addressed only two major issues of MAT system: (a) generation of translation corpora in Indian languages, and (b) alignment of these translation corpora. Other issues related to the MAT system are elaborately addressed elsewhere (cf. Dash and Basu 2009).

2. The Goal of a Machine Aided Translation System

In the present context of designing a MAT system the question that stands tall is: why do we need such a system when human beings have already proved to be far more competent than the machine in the business? Perhaps, we do not have a complete answer to the question. Hutchins (1986:15), however, provides the following arguments in support of a MAT system:

(a) The professional world of scientists and technologists requires quick and accurate translation of documents.
(b) MAT becomes useful in those situations where there is paucity of human translators.
(c) MAT helps in promotion of international co-operation through translation of texts and documents meant for global access.
(d) MAT helps to promote mutual co-operation, in removing language barriers by faster, easier, and cheaper transmission of scientific, technical, agricultural, and medical information to the poor and the developing countries.
(e) MAT is useful for military purposes; for pure theoretical and applied research; and of course, for the purpose of commercialisation.

These are valid reasons. Yet, the global scenario of the 1980s, when Hutchins tried to justify the need of a MAT technology has changed to a great extent. Now, demands for linguistic singularity, growth of mass literacy and readership, expansion of multilingualism, globalisation of information and the revolution in the area of computer technology have united the computer scientists and the linguists together to develop a robust MAT system that will be able to meet the requirements of the market worth millions of dollars. We can, perhaps, summarise both types of need in the following way to justify the need of a MAT technology in the present Indian context: revolution in computer technology, expansion of multi-lingualism, demand for linguistic singularity, scarcity of human translators, globalisation of knowledge and information, professional need for translated documents, promotion of international co-operation, growth of mass literacy and global

readership, promotion of international peace, removal of language barriers, all round growth of Indian states through faster, easier and cheaper transmission of scientific, technical, agricultural, medical information to the poor and developing countries, military needs, commercial needs and research challenge in language technology.

Within the last six decades, the MAT technology has recorded remarkable growth with many diversions both in the use of techniques as well as in their application in various domains of human knowledge. In the era of internet-domination, our prime objective is to develop a MAT system that is accurate and effective; robust and versatile; and user-friendly and customizable. The huge amount of text available for immediate translation warrants a robust MAT technology that will be able to produce translations of workable standard, if not the ideal one. Definitely, there are many obstacles in the path of achieving a high rate of accuracy in MAT. These obstacles come not only from the fields of morphology, lexicology, syntax, and semantics, but also from the world of culture, pragmatics, discourse, and cognition. That means developing a MAT system which is endowed with the abilities of a human translator is an elusive dream for which we have to travel many miles.

However, the availability of digital translation corpora in the form of parallel bilingual texts seems to offer a highly promising solution to MAT system developers, due to the features of close generic, structural as well as semantic similarities between the texts used to develop translation corpora. Besides advanced computational techniques used to fine-tune the translation corpora in alignment of text samples also enable the system developers to extract relevant translation equivalents from translation corpora to enhance the performance level of the MAT system. This implies that a corpus-based approach may bring us nearer to the dream by enhancing inherent efficiency of a MAT system we are striving hard to design for Indian languages (Dash 2005a:ch.9).

Since a MAT system is not meant to produce perfect translations, outputs are most often put to manual post-editing to an

acceptable standard in the target language. Moreover, these can be used in unedited form as a source of rough linguistic outputs, the analysis of which will yield better insight into dealing with the intricate problems related to the development of MAT for Indic languages. A MAT system aims at linguistic and cognitive approximation where the goal is to find out ways and means to get as close as possible in as many cases as feasible. The goal is achievable through a long process of trial and error and it requires regular evaluation of existing systems, identification of faults, refinement of existing tools and techniques, enhancement of past experience, and augmentation of linguistic knowledgebase. Obviously, the path is full of thorns. But it is tantalising, since it throws challenges before the linguists and the technologists.

We argue that a MAT system that aspires to claim some success as a commercial product as well as a research prototype must have customisation capabilities. Moreover, it should have an ability to add translations of new words and phrases; should have provisions for including more sophisticated functionalities to adapt to new syntactic structures and writing styles; and have the capability for acquiring the knowledgebase from earlier translation outputs. We are waiting to see if MAT developers are able to incorporate all the aspects to enhance the capabilities of their systems—to address the diverse needs of the translation world.

3. Use of Translation Corpora in Machine Aided Translation

From the experience gathered during the last six decades, we have learnt that designing a MAT system with the support of only a set of rules is not realistic at all. Only a set of rules is not enough to encompass the wide versatility of a natural language exhibited in diversified discourse of life. This eventually leads us to think about the Corpus-based Machine Translation approach that tends to combine fruits of Rule-based Machine Translation (Lewis and Stearns 1968, Gildea 2003, Chiang 2005), Example-based Machine Translation (Furuse and Lida 1992, Jones 1992, McLean 1992, Somers 1999) and Statistics-based Machine Translation (Brown et al.1990, Brown, Pietra, and

Mercer 1993) to achieve the goal still elusive to system designers. Let us investigate how the Corpus-based Machine Translation dares to reap good harvest while other systems are content with limited success.

One of the very first results obtained from the use of translation corpora is the development of algorithms, which are capable of aligning sentences of bilingual texts. It turns out as one of the fundamental properties in the MAT system, since it provides indispensable resources for the development of various translation support tools. The corpus-based approach begins with the parallel translation corpora already produced by human translators to discover linguistic similarities in the internal structures of source and target language texts, either completely or partially, to use in the MAT system. This analysis-oriented perspective lends heavily to the development of translator's aids, as the MAT system, at its initial stage, is not actually expected to 'produce' translations, but to 'understand' enough about the internal forms and structures of the language to become eventually helpful in subsequent translation tasks.

The idea of using translation corpora in MAT is not entirely a new thing. Although it dates back to the early days of machine translation, it was not used in practice until 1984 (Kay and Röscheisen 1993). Now, careful attention is redirected to translation corpora because it is ultimately realized that data and information acquired from analysis of translation corpora make the MAT system more equipped and robust to acquire greater percentage of accuracy in translation outputs. In general, translation corpora are richer with information about the languages than monolingual corpora, because these can provide better translational equivalency information between the languages used to design translation corpora as well as to be considered for translation. Thus, a Corpus-based MAT system is practically more efficient to achieve a unique status of distinction as it combines the features of Rule-based Translation, Example-based Translation, and Statistics-based Translation keeping alive a mutual interactive interface between the three systems.

Conceptually, a Corpus-based MAT system is grounded on a range of resources developed from exhaustive empirical analysis of translation corpora designed systematically both from the source and the target

language. The analysis of translation corpora involves morphological, lexical, semantic, and cognitive interpretations of words, phrases, idioms, sentences, and paragraphs as well as other linguistic items available within the corpora. Moreover, direct employment of various statistical techniques on translation corpora is capable of generating probability measurements for the linguistic items from the texts to identify the translational equivalents required for translation between the two languages.

The Corpus-based MAT system stands on the assumption that there are no pre-established solutions to translation, but the most possible solutions may be found in the translation corpora, which are already developed by human translators. In other words, a large portion of the competence of a human translator is encoded in the text equivalencies found in translation corpora. Success achieved in this method in restricted domains leads us to argue that both linguistic and extralinguistic information extracted from translation corpora can be used as essential ingredients to achieve similar success in general domains (Teubert 2002).

At present, although it is too early to make any prediction about its success in all domains of human knowledge, it may be argued that a MAT system designed with proper utilisation of information acquired from well designed translation corpora can be more robust and useful both in restricted and general domains (Su and Chang 1992). In essence, the system will operate with information and examples obtained from an analysis of translation corpora made with texts of the languages involved in translation, as it will utilize translation corpora to enhance its usability in restricted and general domains.

4. Issues Related to Corpus-based Machine Aided Translation

A Corpus-based MAT system addresses the requirement of a functionally competent system in the present context of global upsurge for information localisation and exchange. It learns from the history about the milestones of success and failure, and therefore, anchors on

the technical and linguistic issues involved in the development of the system with reference to translation corpora. For achieving this goal it argues for generating tools and resources necessary for developing useful Corpus-based MAT systems for Indian languages.

The proposed Corpus-based MAT system makes considerable amount of advancement by means of extensive analysis of translation corpora. Till date, several translation corpora are developed and analysed in English and other languages like French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Japanese, etc. to yield important insights that can help system developers to design useful techniques and strategies. Normally, translation corpora represent a large collection of naturally occurring texts accumulated by including text samples that reflect on the needs of the end-users. These become particularly useful for those target end-users who want to select a MAT system that will translate specific texts to suit their requirements. It, therefore, becomes clear that in a Corpus-based MAT system, utilisation of translation corpora is mandatory, since these can supply numerous linguistic and extralinguistic examples and information to system designers as well as the end-users. In the following sub-sections, I have focused only on two issues related to the Corpus-based MAT system with reference to the Indian languages and English (Dash 2005b).

4.1 Generation of Translation Corpora

Translation corpora generally consist of original texts obtained from a source language and their translations obtained from the target language. By virtue of their composition these corpora usually keep the meaning and function of words, phrases, and other linguistic items constant across the languages, and as a result of this, these become highly capable for offering an ideal basis for comparing meanings of the linguistic items of the two languages under identical conditions. Moreover, these make it possible to discover all kinds of cross-linguistic variants, i.e., alternative forms of particular words and terms from both parts of the corpora. Thus, translation corpora provide fruitful examples for cross-linguistic equivalents, the alignment of which can provide solid empirical base for formulation of rules for translation (Altenberg and Aijmer 2000:17).

The construction of translation corpora is, however, a complicated task. It requires constant careful guidance from experienced corpus linguists who have sound knowledge in the tasks of corpora generation and processing. Translation corpora are made in such a way that these become suitable to combine advantages both of comparable corpora (Dash 2008:75) and parallel corpora (Dash 2008:81). Text samples considered for this kind of corpora should be taken in equal proportion or amount from the source and the target language, and the text samples should be matched, as far as possible, in terms of their text types, subject matters, purposes, and register variations. The basic structure of translation corpora between any two natural languages can be envisaged in the following manner (Fig. 1) keeping in mind the aim of the work and the components to be integrated within translation corpora.

(A): English Text
(C): Bengali Translation
(B): Bengali Text
(D): English Translation

(A): English Text
(C): Bengali Translation
(B): Bengali Text
(D): English Translation

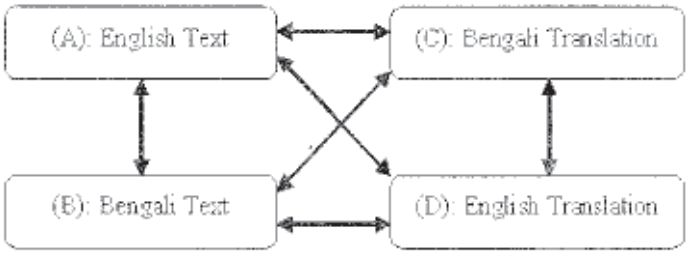

Fig. 1: Structure of Translation corpora

The diagram shows that translation corpora between any two languages can be developed in such a way that they may be used as

comparable corpora (A:B); translation corpora (A:C, B:D); as original and translated texts (A:D, B:C), and for comparing the translated texts in the two languages (C:D). Since so many functionalities can be achieved by way of developing translation corpora, utmost attention is required in the selection of texts which should adhere to the following principles:

(a) Only language samples of written texts should be included in translation corpora. At present there is no scope for spoken texts as the present MAT research targets written texts only.
(b) Included texts should reflect contemporary language use although texts of old times have relevance in the translation of historical texts.
(c) Translation corpora should not be confined within texts of specific language variety. They should include a wide range of text types obtained from all possible domains and disciplines of language use.
(d) Texts of both the languages should be comparable as far as possible. They should be matched in genre (e.g., news), type (e.g., political), content (e.g., election), and form (e.g., report). They should also match in terms of purpose, type of user, subject matter, and register.
(e) Texts should also match in terms of purpose, types of users, subject matters, and register.
(f) Text included in translation corpora will consist of fairly large and coherent extracts taken from the beginning to the end at a natural breaking point of a text (e.g., chapters, sections, paragraphs, etc.).

At the time of compiling translation corpora no human intervention is invited although humans are actually engaged in the task. That means, there should be no modification of the original source texts considered for translation. The translator will translate the source text in the target language without distorting the actual form, texture and meaning of the source text. They should also try to maintain semantic as well as structural parallelism between the source language text and the target language text as far as it is possible and feasible. However, they may get some liberty to make the translation 'natural' in the target language by way of rearrangement of word orders, replacement of

some semantically equivalent forms, or restructuring the output sentences in the target language. On the other hand, if previously made translations are available it should have a kind of advantage in the sense that whatever is available in the form of translation should be put in translation corpora, because any kind of interference on the part of corpora developers will severely damage the naturalness and originality of the texts procured from external physical sources. However, gross typological or syntactic errors of the source texts should be corrected before these are put into translation corpora.

4.2 Alignment of Translation Corpora

Aligning translation corpora means making each 'translation unit' of the source text correspond to an equivalent unit in the target text (McEnery and Oakes 1996). The term 'translation unit' does not only cover the shorter sequences like words, phrases, and sentences (Dagan, Church and Gale 1993), but also covers larger text sequences such as paragraphs and chapters (Simard et al. 2000). However, selection of the 'translation units' depends largely on the point of view selected for linguistic analysis and the type of corpus used as the database. If a translated corpus asks for a high level of faithfulness to the original, as it happens in case of legal documents and technical texts, the point of departure is a close alignment of the two corpora, considering sentences, or even words as the basic units.

On the other hand, if the corpus is an adaptation, rather than literal translation of the original text, attempts may be made to align the larger units such as paragraphs and chapters (Véronis 2000:12) rather than the smaller units like words, phrases, and sentences. Thus, operation of alignment may be refined based on the type of corpora used in the work. The faithfulness and linearity of human translations may guide one to align translation corpora, although this is predominantly true for the technical corpora. Literary translation corpora, on the other hand, lend themselves to reliable alignment of units below the sentence level if the types of translational equivalency observed in corpora are previously formalised (Chen and Chen 1995).

It is obvious that the initial hypothesis, which allows these translation corpora to be used, is the correspondence, if not equivalence, where the contents of texts and their mutual relationships are put under consideration for comparison. We can call these as 'free translations', which, however, may posit a serious processing problem due to their missing sequences, changes in word order, changes in order of phrases, and modifications of content, etc. Although these operations are common in everyday translation practice, their frequencies usually vary according to the field of the texts.

These observations lead us to consider aligned translation corpora not as sets of some 'structurally and semantically equivalent sequences', but as the 'corresponding texts having mutual conceptual parallelism'. At any level of the texts (e.g., word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc), these translation corpora are considered as language databases studded with parallel linguistic units. Here the main objective is not to show the structural equivalencies found between the two languages, but pragmatically, to search for the target text units, which appear to be the closest to the source text units. To do so, the starting point is a preliminary alignment of words with a bilingual dictionary, if available. Definitely, a rough alignment will yield satisfactory results at the sentence level (Kay and Röscheisen 1993) especially when it is directly supported by various statistical methods (Brown and Alii 1990) with minimal formalisation of the major syntactic phenomena of the texts of the languages concerned (Brown and Alii 1993). The main advantage of this method may be realized in the use of 'translation memory'—a temporary database of translational equivalents developed from the data found in the bilingual texts. The task may be further simplified by using the Reference Corpora of the specialised fields (e.g., medical science, legal proceedings, computer science, etc) from both the languages. The message is thus 'machine-translated' by using a customised 'machine-readable dictionary' to create a translation memory during the training phase.

Sentence level alignment is another important part of the translation corpora development and analysis. It aims at showing the

correspondences down to the level of sentences, and not beyond that (Brown, Lai, and Mercer 1991). For this work, a weak translation model can serve the purpose, since this is one of the primary tools required at the initial stage of translation corpora analysis (Simard, Foster, and Isabelle 1992). Therefore attempts are made to develop translation analyser, which can account for translational correspondences between morphemes, words, idioms, and phrases found in the translation corpora.

Another interesting activity of translation alignment is the use of statistical techniques for searching the matching candidates from the translation corpora. Statistical searching algorithms use the key words to retrieve the equivalent units from two different texts. Once these are found, these are verified and formalised by human translators as the model inputs before these are stored in bilingual translation memory. This process is usually used for automatizing the training phase, and not for any kind of validation of translational outputs. This has been one of the basic criteria that mark out the differences between the so-called automatic translation system and the Corpus-based MAT system supported by parallel translation corpora.

5. Need for Indian Languages

In the case of Indian languages, the generation of bilingual translation corpora has been one of the bottlenecks in MAT. Although considerable amount of written texts in the form of monolingual corpora is available, there has never been any sincere attempt to redesign the monolingual corpora into parallel translation corpora due to following reasons:

(a) Corpus generation: The generation of translation corpora of various types among Indian languages has been a long-standing requirement (Dash 2003). Although some monolingual corpora, which are developed following the same designing principles and similar text types, are available for some Indian languages, these are not yet used systematically to develop good translation corpora.

(b) Acquisition: Even when there are a few manually developed translation corpora in the form of parallel texts published by National Book Trust, Sahitya Akademi and others, these are not available in electronic form for translation purposes.

(c) Conversion: Text corpora of different origins, text types, samples, and formats available in Indian languages may be processed to convert them into parallel translation corpora.

(d) Sanitation: The monolingual corpora, which are to be converted into translation corpora, also need proper cleaning and sanitation of the texts to be used for the purpose of text alignment, matching, processing, access, and utilisation.

(e) Alignment: Translation corpora need to be aligned in a highly systematic manner so that all the corresponding sections of both the texts are identified. It involves identification of translation units and deployment of various knowledgebase (e.g., formal, lexical, semantic and conceptual, etc) for eventual pairing and alignment of the linguistic units used in the translation corpora.

Most of the issues stated above are linguistic issues, which are not taken into consideration even if raw monolingual corpora are available in Indian languages. Therefore, at the present situation, our main problem is the procurement of translation corpora in Indian languages, and defining their correspondences within the linguistic units. After the procurement of these monolingual corpora, these can be put to linguistic analysis and alignment of the components before these are submitted to the task of 'item search'—a statistical technique that reduces the hurdles produced from translation analysis.

The critics of the Corpus-based MAT approach point out that paucity of translation corpora is a real problem in Indian context since the researchers of the Corpus-based MAT system require information obtained from detailed analysis of translation corpora by human experts (Elliott 2002). Information obtained from analysis of translation corpora allows scientists to design systems as well as to test the reliability of their systems. It is, therefore, understood that we need to compile translation corpora in major Indian languages—not only to meet the

research requirements but also to evaluate the efficiency and usefulness of the MAT systems developed so far for Indian languages (Dash 2010).

In this case, however, information obtained from analysis of translation corpora of other languages may provide necessary direction to Indian scientists. For instance, information about how translation corpora is used in translation from English to other European languages may help scientists working for Indian languages (Rajapurohit 1994). Access of information from these sources will provide clues to identify the patterns about how languages are interlinked to each other (Baker 1993) and how the information encoded in one text is transferred into another text. Exposure to this kind of knowledgebase may help to improve the standard of the MAT systems designed for Indian languages as well as result in gathering new insights into the intricate linguistic relationships existing between the two languages used in translation.

For achieving success in MAT for Indian languages, I strongly argue that we should first start developing translation corpora for it because linguistic data and information derived from these corpora will increase our knowledgebase about the languages as well as will enhance the efficiency and productivity of the MAT system. Recently the MAT workers' diversion in this direction is noted as commercial MAT systems with standard language transfer architecture are being developed with regular manual updating of the lexicon and the lexical information extracted from translation corpora. These systems appear to have greater acceptance and usability due to their ability to incorporate language-specific linguistic aids for end-users through the medium of internet and web-pages.

6. Conclusion

The proposal here is that if we want to develop a robust MAT system for Indian languages, we need to justify the two basic questions related to this enterprise: (a) the objective of this mission, and (b) the immediate beneficiaries for whom we are striving to commit ourselves.

With regard to objective, we can visualize that the development of a MAT system may help us disseminate information and knowledge found in English texts into Indian languages; help create high authentic quality knowledgebase in Indian languages; to generate translation support tools such as dictionaries, thesauri, idiom datasets, proverb database, term-banks, word-finders, word-nets, synsets, etc. After these goals are realised, we can think of promoting MAT systems between English and Indian languages and between Indian languages.

With regard to identifying the beneficiaries, I find that development of MAT system as a stand-alone device can help the rural and poor students having little access to the knowledgebase available mostly in English; help teachers in teaching various subjects at various levels; help people who are working in different areas like public health, environment, popular science, medical services etc to gather and share data and information; help people eager to read literary and non-literary knowledge texts in their own languages; help publishers eager to produce knowledge/informative texts in various Indian languages; help various Indian institutes and organizations engaged in theoretical and commercial translation activities; and help the scientists engaged in the development of software and systems for automatic translation systems, etc.

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The *Sangati* of Translation

Preethi Nair

Abstract

India is a multi lingual country. Indian literatures are a product of a multicultural social-historical mélange. Those who have their roots in a common linguistic stock and those who have stemmed from different linguistic stocks, share and are bound together by common socio-cultural and historical bonds. Thus translating a text from one regional language into another is a far more natural and satisfactory activity both for the translator and the reader than when the same works are translated to English. In the latter, negotiating cultural hurdles to achieve equivalence of meaning tends to be a relatively difficult task. Since even neighbouring languages do not inhabit identical universes, intersecting penumbras of meaning between two regional languages are more likely to generate a richer resonance of recognition and discovery than translated into English. Moreover the target audience is also different in each case.

The paper intends to study how culture gets translated when a text gets translated into English and when the same text gets translated into a regional language. For this purpose, the paper focuses on the Malayalam translation of Bama's novel Sangati *(Tamil) by Vijayakumar Kunnissery and its English translation by Lakshmi Holmstrom.*

The Indian subcontinent is marked by a plurality of cultures and languages providing a unique mosaic of verbal communication. Right from the Vedic ages, there are references that many languages, many religions and many people co-existed in India. Though these many languages still co-exist in India, they do not fully represent the same social reality. This diversity is because each language carries

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with it an unspoken network of cultural values. These values, though they operate on a subliminal level, are a major force in the shaping of a person's self-awareness, identity and interpersonal relationships (Scollon 1981). Various Indian languages voice the many cultures and subcultures that have shaped its millennia-old civilization. These in turn get reflected in the literature of the land. Indian literatures are thus a product of multiracial and multicultural social historical mélange.

This opens us to certain questions: How then can the act of communication are consummated across cultural barriers? How then can a common idea of India be made possible through its various literatures? How can we establish the concept of Indian literature as one literature? The answer is: only through translation. Translation forms an integral and an indispensible part of the Indian psyche. Translation is of paramount importance for exchanging ideas and thoughts. In a multilingual nation, the translation of classics into various languages has led to emotional integration of the people. In India, during the freedom struggle *Bhagavad Gita* was translated into so many regional languages. This may be seen as the reflection of the integrated national psyche that prevailed in the society. Translation is thus an important field of academic pursuit that helps not only in the dissemination of knowledge but also in the diffusion of culture. In other words, translation is not just linguistic transference but the transference of a whole socio-cultural matrix.

Translation, as we said, is a collaborative creative enterprise, whose purpose is to communicate the meaning of the original text in a different language and to a different audience. But the process of translation is however not bereft of problems. The problem of translating a text can be broadly divided into two—linguistic and cultural. The problematic, according to Catford, is that:

> Translation fails—or untranslatability occurs—when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into contextual meanings of the target language text. Broadly speaking, the cases where this happens fall

> into two categories. Those where the difficulty is linguistic and those where it is cultural.
>
> (Catford 1965)

All creative literature is expressed in a language having its own phonological, grammatical and semantic structures. It is also rooted in a particular culture and carries significant information about its socio-cultural milieu. Thus the meaning of a language/text/sentence depends not only on its concept in the text but also on factors outside the text, that is, meaning is culturally conditioned and is intricately woven into the texture of the language. Thus the manner in which people choose their vocabulary, construct their sentences, speak, reveals much about their culture.

In the opinion of Newmark, translation is a craft in which an attempt is made to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement into another language (Newmark 1981:7). As cultural meanings are intricately woven into the texture of language, translation becomes all the more difficult. For a writer, a word is essentially a cultural memory. The words that the writer uses are always strongly linked to the specific cultural context from where the text originates. The translator must be able to capture and project a similar situation and culture of primary importance and that should be reflected in the translated work.

A translator has to recreate the participatory experience of the readers of the original text. This enables the readers of the translated text to participate in the alien cultural experience. Announcing the cultural turn in Translation Studies, Andre Lefevre and Susan Bassnett remark that, it is neither the word nor the text but the culture that becomes the operational unit of translation.

Caught between the need to capture the local culture and the need to be understood by an audience outside the original cultural and linguistic situation, a translation must be aware of both cultures. Thus, according to Homi K. Bhaba what is theoretically innovative and

politically crucial is the need to think beyond narratives of ordinary and initial subjectivities. One should focus on the moments of processes in the articulation of cultural differences (Bhaba 2004). One of the main goals of literary translation then is to initiate the target language (TL) reader into the sensibilities of the source language culture.

The enterprise of translation is thus an interpretation/conversion of a text encoded in one semiotic system into another. The difficulties in translation are not only linguistic but also cultural and political. Transmitting cultural elements through literary translation is a complicated and vital task. Culture is a complex collection of experiences which condition daily life. It includes history, social structure, religion, traditional customs and everyday usage. This is difficult to comprehend. As the word in the source text (ST) may be strongly rooted in the source culture (SC), it may be too difficult for the addressed readers. In addition, translation may have to deal not only with lexical expressions, but also with problems of register, syntactic order, regional varieties (dialects) etc which are culture specific. The interpretation/translation should be based not just on the words of the text, but on the intent of the author, the relationship of the author with the intended audience, the culture and worldview of the author and original audience, and the receptor audience. The similarity of the cultural structures of the source and target language thus determines the degree of translatability. Therefore translating a text from one regional language to another is a far more natural and satisfactory activity both for the translator and the reader. This is because they share more or less common socio-cultural and historical bonds. But when the same text is rendered into English, it will be different. In the latter, negotiating semantic and cultural hurdles to achieve equivalence of meaning tends to be a relatively uphill task. According to Sapir, "no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality" (Sapir 1956:69). Even neighbouring languages do not inhabit identical universes. Intersecting penumbras of meaning between two languages in the subcontinent is likely to generate a richer resonance of recognition and discovery than when translated into English. The target audience is also different in each

case. The potential readers for an English translation would be an indeterminate mass. As a result, the anxiety of communication gets reflected in an explicatory or dilutionary tendency. But in the translation from one regional language to another, the nervous uncertainty of decoding culture would be less evident.

This paper intends to study how culture gets translated when a text is translated into English and the same text translated into a regional language. For this purpose I chose Bama's *Sangati* (Tamil), its Malayalam translation by Vijayakumar Kunnisserry and its English translation by Lakshmi Holmstrom.

Pastino Mary alias Bama was born in 1958 at Puthupetty near Madurai. Though her family were converted Christians, she was a constant witness to the hardships the Dalits, especially the Paraiyas, had to face. After her post graduation she decided to become a nun so as to be of service to the downtrodden. While working as a teacher in a Christian convent school she realized that Dalits, even after conversion, were being discriminated. Disenchanted she parted ways with the church and decided to concentrate on the upliftment of the marginalized. Through her literary works she reveals how caste informs and runs through all aspects of life. Bama is one of the first Dalit women writers to be widely recognized and translated.

Bama's *Karukku* was published in 1992, *Sangati* in 1994 and *Vanmam* in 2000. If in *Karukku* the tension is between the self and the community, *Sangati* voices the community's identity. The word *sangati* means 'events' and thus the novel, through individual stories, anecdotes and memories, portrays the events that take place in the life of women in the Paraiya community. The novel also reveals how the Paraiya women are doubly oppressed. Women are presented as wage earners and it is upon them that the burden of running the family falls. Men on the other hand can spend the money they earn as they please. In addition, the women are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and harassment. They are thus economically, physically and psychologically tortured. A Dalit woman is never considered a 'subject.' The novel

then creates a Dalit feminist perspective. At the same time, the novel takes one to the inner premises of Dalit culture asserting its richness and tradition. According to Francis Gros:

> Dalit communities do indeed have a very rich and deep cultural heritage, a folk tradition of tales, songs… and a wonderful world of Gods, Goddesses and devils, all elements contributing to the creation of an original, imaginary world, which is in no way less important nor less fascinating than … orthodox manners and customs.
>
> (Gros 2004:14)

For this purpose, Bama makes use of the local Dalit register. By eliding words and joining them differently, by overthrowing the rules of grammar, she demands a novel pattern of reading, thus creating a unique style of her own. Bama narrates the story by making use of a colloquial style with its regional and caste inflections thereby overturning the aesthetics of the dominant group. By resorting to this method she reveals before the readers the cultural identity of the Dalits who resist the other caste norms. Thus the privileged-caste readers can enter this language only with a degree of effort and with a sense of unfamiliarity. Bama is able to convey the experience faced by the Dalits as the language she uses is the language of affect. It is the language that captures the intense, everyday violence of caste. Here the language of pain works as an act of persuasion and appeal.

The languages of Dalit writers are 'in-between' languages which occupy a space 'in between' and challenge the conventional notions of translation. Through their language they seek to decolonize themselves from two oppressors: the western ex-colonizer and the traditional 'national' culture that deny them their importance. Bama, in describing the violence and deprivation of Dalit women, often takes recourse to a language of abuse that is replete with sexual references. This, according to Limbale, is because the reality of Dalit literature being distinct expresses itself in a distinct language. This language does not conform to the (refined?) language of the elite. It rejects the

aesthetic writing coming from the previliged castes. This rejection gets expressed in a language full of sexual references. Bama seems to find a reason for the kind of language they use:

> No matter what the quarrel is about, once they open their mouths, the same four-letter words spill out. …they have neither pleasure, nor fulfillment in their own sexual lives, they derive a sort of bitter comfort by using these terms of abuse which are actually names of body parts.
>
> (Bama 2005)

The language of Dalit women is rich and resourceful consisting of proverbs, folklore and folksongs. Bama also makes use of a language full of vigour. Proverbs and folk songs are constantly made use of to explicate their situation. She also makes use of jokes and lampoons, thereby daring to make fun of the dominant classes that oppressed them.

Sangati was translated into Malayalam by Vijayakumar Kunnissery. Born in a remote village in Palghat, Vijayakumar was brought up in Coimbatore which made him have close association with Tamil language, customs and manners.

In India, society is stratified into different castes. These castes are clearly named groups and are rigidly separated from each other. There is very little possibility of movement from one caste to another. Each caste has its own dialect. Vijayakumar in his translation makes use of the slang of Palaghat Paraiya community. This has close affinities with the slang used by Kuppuvachan in *Khazakkinte Ithihasam*. By retaining the slang of the Dalits, Vijayakumar brings the translated text closer to the original. It also reveals the close association between Tamil and Malayalam.

In the historical past proto-Dravidian was spoken possibly throughout India. When the Turanians and the Aryans came to India and mingled with the local population of the north, the north Indian languages changed to a great extent. Thus it lost its ground there and

confined itself to the south. Even in south India it did not remain as one single language for a long time. Dialectal differences arose partly due to the political division of the Tamil country into three distinct Tamil kingdoms and partly due to the natural barriers created by rivers and mountains. The absence of proper land communication among the three Tamil kingdoms also accentuated this process of dialectal differences. As a result, the Dravidian language spoken by the people who lived in the regions north and south of the Tirupati mountains varied to such an extent that it became two independent languages: Tamil and Telugu. The language spoken in the region of Mysore came to be known as Kannada. Malayalam emerged as yet another distinct language in Kerala. All these far-reaching changes occurred at different periods of time in the history of the Dravidian languages. However, these languages came to be known as Dravidian languages. Many common linguistic features are still discernible among these Dravidian languages. Some five thousand words are common to these languages. Many grammatical forms are common. The overwhelming influence of Sanskrit scholars and the indiscriminate borrowing of Sanskrit words resulted in the emergence of Kannada and Telugu as distinct languages from Tamil. The influence of Sanskrit on Malayalam language came to be felt only about eight centuries ago and therefore, the areas of difference between Tamil and Malayalam are not many. Tamil was the language of bureaucracy, of literati and of culture for several centuries in Kerala. In fact, fifteen centuries ago the rulers of Kerala were all Tamils. Up to the tenth century the Pandya kings ruled Kerala with royal titles such as 'Perumaankal' and 'Perumaankanar'. From the third century BC to the first century AD many poets from Kerala composed poems in Tamil and their compositions are included in Tamil anthologies such as *Akananaru* and *Purananaru*. All the one hundred poems in the anthology *Patitruppathu* extol the greatness of the kings of Kerala region. Many scholars and pundits from Kerala contributed much to the Tamil language and literature and historical evidence shows that the region now known as the State of Kerala was once an integral part of Tamil Nadu. Because of these reasons there is greater affinity between Tamil and Malayalam than between Tamil and Kannada or Telugu.

Historical evidences show that languages of the Dalits are in fact the primordial Dravidian language. The Paraiyars, the Pulayars were actually a learned sect of people. They were referred to as 'Pulayimar vazhnavar' meaning, 'those who are learned.' It was with the Aryan invasion that they were marginalized. There was a conscious effort to separate them from the king and his followers. Thus the Pariayars and the Pulayars were driven out from the mainstream and later on they were treated as untouchables. It is this Dravidian language that is discernible in Malayalam even today. Thus the words used by the Dalits in Tamil Nadu can be found in the Malayalam spoken today. For example 'Gouli' (lizard), a common word in Malayalam, is a term used by the Dalits of Tamil Nadu. While retaining the background and geographical features of the novel, Vijayakumar narrates the story from the perspective of a Palghat Paraiya community. By retaining the dialect of the Dalits, Vijayakumar is thus successful in being faithful to the original text.

The Malayalam translation was first serialized in *Mathrubhumi Weekly* before being published in book form. Hence while both Bama and Lakshmi do not title their chapters, Vijayakumar makes use of titles for every chapter. These titles according to Vijayakumar were added with the consent of the writer. The titles however help in bringing the readers closer to the native culture of the land and accounts for readability.

According to Vijayakumar, a good translation must be able to convey the essence of the text to be translated. To prove his point he narrates the meeting between Gandhiji and Sree Narayana Guru. In the course of their meeting Gandhiji told Sree Narayana Guru that a world devoid of caste differences was impossible. Even the leaves of the same tree are different from each other. Sree Narayana Guru told Gandhiji to bring all the leaves of a tree and crush it so as to extract its juice. The juice extracted from all the leaves will be the same. Similarly, a translator has to find the essence of the text to be translated and then convey it in another language without losing the essence. The Malayalam translation of *Sangati* has been able to convey the essence of Bama's text.

Bama's *Sangati* has been translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom. Her translation of *Karukku*, Bama's first novel, won her the Crossword Book Award for the year 2000. It is this book that was instrumental in bringing Bama's works to the limelight. It is the translator who transforms a vernacular text for readers to bask in its literary light. But for these translations many of the literary works in India would be out of reach to a wide community of readers.

Lakshmi Holmstrom in her translations carefully positions her approach within a historical debate in Tamil and in a post-independence consciousness of being multilingual. She points to the contemporary vogue in India for reading Indian literature in English translation. But English not being an Indian language, it is extremely difficult to map a non-western meaning system on to English. Tamil and English are languages with completely different grammatical structures, cultural settings and assumptions and literary traditions. Thus while translating from the very different grammatical structures of Tamil, the translator strives to retain the writer's individuality. The very structure of the language poses problems to the translator. There is a great difference in the syntactical and lexical organization between Tamil and English. Tamil follows a left branching pattern whereas English follows a right branching pattern. Tamil also makes use of double words like adjectives, adverbs and even verbs either to intensify their meaning or to indicate the boring or annoying repetitive part of the action. Thus Bama writes 'Taali geeli' which is lamely translated the same way into English by Holmstrom.

If the problems relating to linguistic translations are vexing, cultural translations pose a greater dilemma to the translator. Mythological allusions and characters, fashion, dress code, food items, rituals and religious practices are distinctively identifiable with a specific culture. Therefore it becomes untranslatable. This is then retained in transliteration and is acclimatized in the target culture by way of glossary. Thus while both Tamil and Malayalam can convey with one word the differences in gender and status, English has either to use the

Indian word as such, provided with a glossary or give suitable explanations. Thus in *Sangati,* Holmstrom has to depend on glossary to explain relationships such as 'patti', 'perimma' etc. Kitchen utensils have been explained within the text itself. Thus Holmstrom writes: "The girl's mother's brother's family had to donate a sari and ravikkai, and big cooking vessels, andas and gundas". On the other hand the Malayalam translation goes as follows: "Chadangin thaiman chela, jumper, andavgundav banduma kodukkanam".

There is no need of explanation or a glossary as 'chela', 'jumper', 'andav' are part of the Malayalam vocabulary and culture. Again, a community address, that is a noun derived from a particular caste, will sound bizarre to the western readers who are not aware of the stratification in the Hindu society in India. These community addressee forms, food items, terms related to cultural practices, dress etc are retained in their native form and explained with the help of glossary. This is because of the inability of the target text—English—to come up with suitable equivalents for customs or lifestyles specific to the culture described in the source text. For example, Bama gives in detail the ceremony conducted in connection with a girl attaining puberty. It tells how the girl is confined to a little hut away from the household—'kuchulu'. As this custom is not in practice in the west, the translator has to depend on transliteration which is later explained in the glossary. But this is not required in a Malayalam translation as this was a practice followed in Kerala also.

Folk songs are also used in *Sangati.* Folklore/folksongs have an important place in the culture of every tribal society. They are used as a medium to transmit its tradition and traditional knowledge systems from one generation to another. They are a form of cultural expression of the group whose identity it expresses. The beauty of the song lies in the word music elicited by means of assonance, alliteration, internal and end rhymes, refrains. This rhythmical relation and the meanings and association of meanings which depend upon rhymes and sounds are difficult to translate into English. Thus Holmstrom focuses on

rendering as accurately as possible images, similes and metaphors. She attempts to reproduce the lyrical quality by reproducing approximate refrains, consonances, alliterations wherever possible. Bama also makes use of proverbs and idiomatic expressions. These idiomatic expressions are repositories of the cumulative inherited wisdom of the speech community. Hence they are culturally significant. This cannot be mapped onto another cultural space without giving a pragmatic paraphrase. This becomes all the more difficult while translating Dalit literature. Through their works, the Dalit writers raise matters of class and caste, question power and privilege and thereby challenge translation, especially when rewriting texts into English—the language of globalised imperialism. Thus what one captures/feels while reading a text in Tamil with its regional caste and class variation gets lost while translated into English.

Sangati makes use of the Dalit Tamil language throughout the book. This language rejects the theoretical and aesthetic writing coming from the high caste segment of society which tends to be a generalized universal language. It refuses an easy accessibility to those outside the culture. Never does Bama try to sanitise the language. The linguistic nuance she makes use of is culturally loaded and is of paramount importance making it an uphill task for the translator. Thus in the translation, Holmstrom has to overcome the challenges of rewriting a Dalit language of abuse into Indian English which is middle class in nature. It results in a massive reduction as the emotive quality of Bama's description is lost. Dalit dialect cannot be expressed in a faulty language as every dialect is a "self-contained variety of language, not a deviation from a standard language" (Newmark 1981:195). Thus making use of the standard Indian English damages the effectiveness of the original. What Holmstrom did was to,

> preserve the state in which… language happens to be instead of allowing… language to be powerfully affected by a foreign tongue.
>
> (Benjamin 1973:80-81)

This is the basic error of a translator. It is the duty of the translator to expand/ deepen his/her language by means of a foreign tongue. This will enable the language to accommodate the emotions/ ideas of source language. This is expressed by Bama herself in her interview with T.D. Ramakrishnan where she says that the language that she had used in *Sangati* was hard to translate. However Lakshmi Holmstrom has very deftly overcome these difficulties. She has,

> translated it without losing the beauty and texture of the language. But it has not come to the level of the Malayalam translation… It will be difficult to find apt words in a European language. Their very culture is different. *(translation mine)*
>
> (Sangati 2005:135)

Thus though the novel has been translated with meticulous care, it has not been able to capture the spirit of the language. This might be one of the reasons for a bleak response to O.V.Vijayan's own translation of his historic Malayalam novel *Khasakkinte Itihasam.* In his own words,

> But I have chosen to write in Malayalam and not in English, although it would have been more profitable to…Indo-Anglian writing… is culturally untenable.
>
> (*Outlook* October 1997:126)

Thus literatures written in Indian languages enjoy a social and cultural rootedness. But at the same time, Indian writing in English and translations of regional literatures into English give these literatures a 'national' character and the status of a national literature. Translations promote national understanding of the different regional 'selfs' in the country. It opens out new vistas to readers. Similarly it brings new readers to writers. It is through these translations that both Indians and non-Indians can become aware of the undercurrent of unity that runs through all regional literatures. Thus through literatures in translation, the idea of a certain social vision is possible.

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Wine of the Mystic
Paramahansa Yogananda's Spiritual Interpretation of Fitzgerald's *The Rubbaiyat*

S Geetha

Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to see how the geographical, religious and cultural boundaries of Persia, England and India vanish in Sri Paramahansa Yogananda's philosophic and mystical interpretation of the first edition of FitzGerald's translation (or to put in his own words—'transmogrifying') of The Rubbaiyat *of Omar Khayyam leading the readers into an endless labyrinth of spiritual truth.*

"Paroksha Vâda Rishayaha
Paroksham mama cha priyam"
Canto XI:Part II — Chap 21:35
Srimad Bhagavatham

Paramahamsa Yogananda, a renowned spiritual leader of the twentieth century was a disciple of Sri Yukteswar Giri, a great master of Yoga. He spent ten years in his hermitage before receiving the formal vows of a sanyasi of the venerable monastic swami order. He learnt from a Persian poet that Persian poetry, like the Sanskrit scriptures, also has two meanings—the literal and the metaphoric, 'an inner and one outer' (Yogananda 1997:vii). Having had good exposure to symbolic poetry along with sound knowledge of yoga, when Sri Yogananda read FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubaiyyat* of Omar Khayyam, he felt that the "outer meanings crumble away" and the poetic work comes as,

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> a dream castle of truth, which can be seen by any penetrating eye… a haven for many shelter-seeking souls invaded by enemy armies of ignorance.
>
> (Yogananda 1997:vii)

Edward FitzGerald's translation, rather adaptation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyyat,* is available in about two hundred editions which speaks of its enduring popularity throughout the world. Translating (or to put in his own words—'transmogrifying') the *Rubaiyyat* in 1860s, Edward FitzGerald initiated the veritable Fitz-Omar cult. FitzGerald was of the contention that the "…translator is one who paraphrases the original work while conserving the author's spirit" (qtd. in Ali-Shah 1967:10). He had no high regard for the Persian poets; according to him, they needed "a little Art to shape them" (Briggs 1998:xvii). Taking liberties with, he transformed the *Rubaiyyat* for amusement. His translation led the western world to believe that Khayyam was more of a reveler and his mystical work got labeled as a drunkard's rambling. However, one needs to acknowledge that it was FitzGerald who brought fame to Omar who was till then merely known as an astronomer and mathematician.

It is already an accepted fact that no two translators can ever arrive at the same version and "…if a dozen translators tackle the same poem, they will produce a dozen different versions" (Bassnett 2003:33). The sustained interest in *Rubaiyyat* led to hundreds of editions of the text with many variations and almost a century later in 1967, Robert Graves collaborating with a Sufi poet and scholar Omar Ali-Shah published a new version from the manuscript handed down in Ali-Shah's family. Graves had several reasons to depreciate FitzGerald's translation. Graves claimed that only he has translated the most authoritative *Rubaiyyat* which was the family manuscript of the Sufi poet and classical Persian scholar Omar Ali-Shah and that in their version they freed the *Rubaiyyat* "of all accretions, interpolations and misunderstandings". Graves went on to question George Saintsbury, an acclaimed critic of the early twentieth century who praised Fitzgerald's work as a magnificent work, accusing him of being "blind

to Fitzgerald's obvious shortcomings to verse craftsmanship" (Ali-Shah 1967:11). He quoted instances of conceptual errors. Besides these, Graves finds unacceptable 'accretions' and also deliberate omission of stanzas which give clue to the fact that Khayyam was a Sufi. And Omar Ali-Shah under whose surveillance Graves translated, goes on to instruct that,

> 'Khayyam' should be treated as a generic term for a Sufi way of teaching which is necessarily misleading unless learned with the guidance of an accepted sheikh.
>
> (Ali-Shah 1967:45).

Whatever the justifications, it was not the work of Graves but only the first edition of FitzGerald that was found fit for the philosophic and mystical interpretation of Paramahansa Yogananda. Though he attempted another literal translation with the help of a Persian scholar, he found the 'fiery spirit' of FitzGerald missing in his work.

When we read the western critics or translators, one finds certain striking similarities even in the choice of words and metaphors when poets, especially mystic poets, talk of divine experience.

The recurrent reference to wine had already been acknowledged by the western scholars as a mystical vocabulary to refer to the intoxication of divine love. The imagery of wine is clearly translated as a vitalizing divine bliss. Paramahamsa Yogananda equates it to 'god intoxication' and in stanza XLVIII, the phrase 'Ruby Vintage' is interpreted as 'Wine of *Samadhi'*. This wine of divine bliss must be quaffed to enable one to forget the ignoble past.

Since Yogananda has undergone the scientific discipline of Yoga, he could give an unparalleled interpretation unveiling completely "the spiritual truths behind Omar's enigmatic symbolism" (Yogananda 1969:xxi). The phrase 'Sev'n ring'd Cup' instantaneously makes him perceive that it is "the cerebrospinal receptacle with its seven ring-like centers of consciousness" which are defined by the Yogic treatises as *'Chakras'* (wheels) or '*padmas'* (lotuses) or 'spokes' or 'petals',

which "radiate life and consciousness to the body" (Yogananda 1969:10). The soul of man is perceived to be residing in the cerebrum when it attains cosmic consciousness. The word 'bough' in the opening line of Stanza XI "Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough" makes him visualize the "cerebrospinal tree of consciousness (whose trunk is the *pranic* pathway of life into the body, and (whose branches are the nervous system)" (Yogananda 1969:21). Sri Yogananda gradually leads one to different stages in the Yogic system and the phrase 'lovely lip' in stanza XIX, although sounds erotic, leads the Yogi to give a more insightful interpretation:

> And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
> Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean —
> Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
> From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!
> (Yogananda 1969:36)

The 'lovely lip' is the subtle divine consciousness in the individualized soul which is very lovely, and it is the "unseen lips of the Spirit, whose voice speaks to him through the soul and imbues his nervous system with vitality" (Yogananda 1969:38).

The phrase 'earth's centre' in the line "Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate" (Yogananda 1969:57) suggests the *Muladhara Chakra* which is the lowest spiritual center in the spine and the 'the seventh gate' as the *Sahasrara* which is the highest of the yogic centers. It is also figuratively expressed as thousand-petalled lotus. Being a true spiritualist Paramahamsa Yogananda's inclusive vision is obvious in his drawing parallels from Christianity where the seven spiritual centers in mans's body is spoken of as 'the mystery of the seven stars' and the 'seven churches' in the Bible (Revelation 1:20) (Yogananda 1969:60).

In the concluding remarks to the explication of stanza XXXI, with authority, he declares that Omar Khayyam is advanced in 'the path of yoga—not of wine!' (Yogananda 1969:62). Further, many other basic concepts which are at the very core of *Sanatana Dharma* are

explicated with ease. 'Time and Fate' are 'death and *karma*' and in stanza XXIII death is presented as,

> Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
> *Sans* Wine, *sans* Song, *sans* Singer, and—sans End.
> (Yogananda 1969:43)

's*ans* end' is a belief in the Indian thought where birth and death are considered as an endless cycle "as souls bound by the law of karma reincarnation new bodies, life after life" (Yogananda 1969:44).

In another context the parallel is between 'Aum' vibration in meditation and 'Amen' which is the Word of God in Bible (John 1:1). In stanza XXXIV, Khayyam talks of the need for a drink 'for once dead you never shall return' (68). Death often makes us think of a lifeless body. To a Yogi it is a state when the individual soul is completely free—without any "residual seeds of actions or stored-up tendencies for future lives" (68). This state is the state of 'samadi'. In this context Sri Yogananda gets a chance to bring out the subtle difference between 'sabikalpa' and 'nirbikalpa samadhi'—the former is condition where the soul is lost in God consciousness 'oblivious of cosmic creation' and the latter where in the absence of ego, the devotee "intuitively feels in bodily 'bowl' the Well of eternal Life" (69).

In the Hindu philosophy 'lilâ' is the term used to refer to entire creation which is a cosmic dance or a drama. Khayyam has used the metaphor of game to refer to the creator's 'lilâ' in stanza XLV "Make game of that which makes as much of Thee" (89). The concept of 'mâya' or the cosmic illusion is conveyed in XLVI where Khayyam calls the creation 'Magic Shadow-show' where we 'Phantom figures come and go' (90). The 'River Brink' (XLVIII) (95) is identified as the "current of life force in the *sushumna*, the astral spine insulated within the spinal cord" (96). And the 'Chequer-board' where destiny plays with men is the law of karma which removes at will people from the 'Checker board of life'.

This extraordinary work of spiritual interpretation ends with stanza LXXV:

> And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
> Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
> And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
> Where I made one—turn down an empty Glass! (145)

In this stanza Khayyam imparts his wisdom to all the mortals to empty their wine glass of delusions and allow their self to pass through the luminous astral region to reach the core of cosmic consciousness when all the divisions and circumscriptions would vanish allowing one to experience "universal brotherhood with all life; and thence attains everlasting union with the One Life" (147).

In continuation of this philosophic interpretation, Sri Yogananda's short piece titled "Omar's Dream-Wine of Love" is made available in the text. Here he elevated Omar Khayyam's work as a 'Scripture of Love'. He pictures the journey of a human soul trapped in many roles such as an infant, child, man, mother, master, servant, guru-preceptor and endlessly in quest of the finite love, reaching the stage of absence of want when one is "in love with love—with God—alone." (150) One who has experienced God's love no more loves individuals but realizing God's presence everywhere begins to love him 'equally *in* all' and 'equally *as* all' (151). In the concluding remarks to the explication of stanza XXXI, with authority, he declares that Omar Khayyam is advanced in "the path of yoga—not of wine!" (Yogananda 1969:62).

Thus we see how the geographical, religious and cultural boundaries of Persia, England and India vanish in Sri Yogananda's mystical interpretation. We find ourselves being led into an endless labyrinth of spiritual truth. But for the 'divinely inspired writings of FitzGerald' this insightful interpretation by this renowned Indian Yogi would not have been available to the spiritual seekers of the world.

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The Influence of Ideology on the Translation of Mao Zedong's Poems

LI Chong-yue

Abstract

Mao Zedong's poems hold an important place in the history of Chinese literature. From the perspective of 'manipulation theory', the paper aims at exploring the influences that ideology exerted on the translation of Mao Zedong's poems. These influences have manifested themselves mainly in such aspects as the organization of translation activity, the selection of source texts, the comprehension of the texts and the freedom translators enjoy in rendering the poems.

Introduction

Translation is viewed as a product of history, society and culture, and there always exists a social context in which the translation activity can't escape the influence of nonlinguistic variables and factors. Andre Lefevere, one of the major advocates of the 'cultural turn' in Translation Studies and one of the most influential thinkers of the discipline, connected the study of translation to power and patronage, ideology and poetics, and he put forward the thesis that the study of translation is a social and historical study. Social background and ideology must therefore be considered. In the light of manipulation theory of the ideological influence on translation, the paper studies the influences that ideology has exerted on the translation of poems written by Mao Zedong (or Mao Tsetung).

Mao Zedong's Poems

As a prominent statesman, distinctive strategist, brilliant thinker and great leader of the Chinese Communist Party and the New China,

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Mao Zedong (1893-1976) has influenced generations of people throughout the world. However, this unique status that distinguishes him from his predecessors and contemporaries lies not merely in his revolutionary accomplishments, but also in his literary achievements. The poetry Mao created during his political practice of more than five decades constitutes the peak of classical Chinese poetry, occupying as it does an important place in the history of Chinese literature. They are not only a brilliant record of history, but also a crystallization of wisdom abounding in philosophic implications. The poems are a poetic representation of Mao Zedong Thought, and his rich experience of revolutionary struggle also provides an inexhaustible source for his poetry.

Mao's poems not only inherit the fine qualities of classical Chinese poems, but also make some innovations. Though a lover and master of classical Chinese poetry, a traditional genre of Chinese poems, Mao proves convincingly that classical Chinese poetry can fully reflect modern life and serve realism by filling classical Chinese poems with fresh new ideas and artistic conceptions conforming to the traditional tonal patterns and rhyme schemes.

Mao's poetic works are a vivid reflection of his literary or artistic ideas, and a harmonious integration of revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism. With the lofty ideas, profound philosophy and artistic representation, it is no wonder that people world wide appreciate and cherish Mao's poems.

The English Versions of Mao's Poems Published in China

Mao's personal charm and the great appeal of Chinese literature have inspired many people at home and abroad to translate Mao's poems into different languages. Of all the foreign versions the world has read, those made by the Chinese translators are undoubtedly the most authoritative.

So far as the English versions are concerned, the scene is stimulating. The earliest version was *18 Poems of Mao Zedong* published in *Chinese Literature* Vol. 3, 1958. This version was co-translated by Ye Junjian and Yu Baoju and the source texts were published in *Shikan* or *Poetry*, a prestigious magazine of Chinese poetry. Closely following this, in September 1958, *19 Poems of Chairman Mao* was published by Foreign Language Press in Beijing. In addition to those in *18 Poems of Mao Zedong*, the poem *The Immortal - Reply to Li Shuyi* was included in the English version for the first time.

In 1960s, a special translation censorship group of outstanding Chinese and foreign scholars was officially organized to ensure an elegant and faithful translation of the poems. Through conscientious consultancy and finetuning and polishing for the sake of both accuracy and expressiveness, the translation group brought out a revised draft titled *Mao Tsetung Poems* which comprised 37 poems and was published by Foreign Languages Press in 1976. Compared with the former versions, this one enjoyed much more acclaim from the academic community and common readers. As a result, this version was called the 'official' version and became the source text for versions of other foreign languages.

Besides the above, there are some other English versions. In 1978, Wu Xianglin completed his *39 Poems of Chairman Mao* which was published for inside circulation only in Nanjing University. In 1992, Zhao Zengtao published his *Mao Zedong Poems*. As Mao's centennial birth anniversary fell in 1993, several translators came up with their new versions such as Huang Long's *An English Version of Mao's Poems*, Xu Yuanchong's *Selected Poems of Mao Zedong*, Gu Zhengkun's *Poems of Mao Zedong with Rhymed Versions and Annotations*.

The Influence of Ideology on the Translation of Mao's Poems

Ideology is,

> a conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time, and through which readers and translators approach texts. (Lefevere 2004:5)

The study of translation is a social, historical study in itself and therefore social background and ideology must be considered. However, there are different ideologies in different historical times and in different cultural contexts and, different translators at different historical times have different understandings of the political implications and artistic features in *Mao Zedong's Poems*. This has resulted in the production of different versions. In the following sections the author provides an analysis of the influences that ideology has exerted on different English versions of *Mao Zedong's poems*.

- **The Special Translation Censorship Group in China**

The English version of *Mao Zedong's Poems* in 1976 was completed by an intellectual collaboration. It was considered as the highest achievement of literary translation during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when the translation of *Mao Zedong's Poems* took on the dual task of literary export and ideological export (Ma Shikui 2006:19-20). Because of Mao's unique position and special quality of the source text, the method and procedure of translating his poems in this period of time are different from that of other ordinary literary works, and the version of 1976 also has different traits from other English versions in some aspects.

(1) Selection of poems

Any translation activity has its purpose, either to serve special groups or to satisfy translator's own interests, preferences and ideological predilections. But whatever they are for, the publication of

translated texts must meet the demands of patronage as well as expectation horizons of the publisher and the society. It is closely related to the acceptance of target readers and target readers' ideology. To translate *Mao Zedong's Poems* into English is to introduce to foreign people its poetic art, Mao Zedong Thought and modern Chinese culture. Foreign translation of Mao's poems can gain its ends of exporting domestic ideology in a relatively acceptable literary form. The 1976 version produced against this special historical background accordingly became the literary text with a special political mission, and its production reflected the requirement of 'ultimate version' which represented the source society's authoritative views to some extent.

(2) Political mission

The methods and strategies of translation depend on the status of the original writer, the quality of the original text and the historical background of the translation activity. Mao Zedong was the top leader of New China during the period when translation activity occurred and its participants were all professionals working in China, the methods and strategies of translating Mao's poems during this period of time were different from other literary works. Translating Mao's poems during the Cultural Revolution was a serious political mission. It was organized by the central government, every move of the translation group being directed by the government. It was published by the prestigious official publishing agency in China. The attention that was paid to translating Mao's poems is very rare in modern history of translation. The organization of the translation was similar to those of religious and political classics such as the translation of Buddhist sutras in ancient China, the early translation of the *Bible* in Europe, the translation of the works of Karl Marx into Chinese in new China and the foreign translations of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*.

(3) The Translation Group

During the Cultural Revolution, translation of Mao's poems was carried out in a collective way. In early 1960s, a translation censorship group was organized, among which were Yuan Shuipai,

Qiao Guanhua, Qian Zhongshu, Zhao Chupu, Ye Junjian and English expert Suul Adler. The group was responsible for revising old translations, and translating the newly-published poems. During this period the work of the translation group was stopped several times and it was not resumed until 1974. Because of Mao's unique position and special quality of the source texts, the visage of translation of Mao's poems was to a certain degree related to the image of China and the leader Mao himself in the foreign culture. Compared to the translation of other works, creating the English version of Mao's poems was more complicated in method and more demanding in the quality. In the attempt of creating an 'official' version in 1976, the translation activity was regarded as holy and sacred. The members of the translation group were all authorities from different backgrounds. As for the assignment of tasks, Qian Zhongshu, a great scholar who had taken part in the translation of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, and Ye Junjian, a renowned translator and the editor-in-chief of *Chinese Literature*, were in charge of translating; Qiao Guanhua, working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Yuan Shuipai, a poet and translator and the head of the group, shouldered the duty of elaborating the poems, and Suul Adler polished the English versions. The translation and revision of 'official' version in 1976 nearly copied the practice of the English version of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*. It was further proved that translating Mao's poems had its political dimension (Wu Xianglin 1978:1).

- **The Russian Version in 1957**

In January 1957, the Chinese magazine *Poetry* edited chiefly by Zang Kejia was published. In the magazine's inaugural issue, Mao Zedong's *Eighteen Classical Poems* were officially published, so did Mao's *A Letter About Poetry* written in January 12th 1957. This was the first time when Mao agreed to officially publish his poetic works which were examined, and transcribed personally. The publication begot strong reactions at home and abroad, and it was the former Soviet Union that first introduced it immediately to the world. In September 1957, the earliest foreign translation of *Mao Zedong's poems*, the

Russian version of *Eighteen Poems of Mao Zedong,* was published in Moscow by *Pravda*, a leading newspaper and an official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Soviet Union was the first country that recognized and established diplomatic relations with the new China. In the light of the international situation and out of consideration of strategies, the first generation of leaders of new China adopted the policy of following the Soviet Union. In the 1950s, the two nations maintained a good relation of fraternal parties and allies and had close cooperation in the economic and cultural fields. In the early 1950s, the Soviet Union put forward the literary principle of 'social realism'. In that entire decade, the principle became a political tool with which literary and artistic creations were manipulated. Literary translation was no exception. The mainstream ideology in both China and Soviet Union asked the translators to introduce 'artistically excellent' and 'politically progressive' literary works. On the scale of political ideology in the 1950s, the so-called 'artistically excellent' and 'politically progressive' works were those that accorded with socialistic and communistic ideology and reflected realism in the way of production, especially the writing principle of socialistic realism. And *Mao Zedong's poems* to be translated were, no doubt, in accordance with this standard. Influenced by the political ideology of the time, the translators of the Soviet Union paid close attention to the publication of Mao's poems, and the Russian versions came out shortly after the publication of the Chinese versions.

- **Acceptance of *Mao Zedong's Poems* in Asia, Africa and Latin America**

As a great patriot and internationalist, Mao Zedong dislayed devout care for the Chinese people, but also expressed in his poems sympathy and support for all nations around the world, especially the weaker nations and people facing oppression and bullying. In his poem *Kun Lun* produced during the Long March, Mao Zedong wrote:

How could I wield a heaven-high sword,
Cutting you in three to afford
One piece to Europe,
One piece to America,
And the final piece to Asia.
Ah, what a peaceful world we would see,
And alike warm and cold the earth would be!
(Gu Zhengkun:87-88)

He would use 'a heaven-high sword' to rebuild the freezing and snowy Mountain Kun Lun, to make the globe 'alike warm and cold' and to realize his lofty ideal of human equality.

Mao Zedong's unbounded feelings became stronger as he approached old age. His wonderful lines such as "the Golden Monkey wrathfully swung his massive cudgel, / and the jade-like firmament was cleared out of dust", "only heroes can quell tigers and leopards, / and wild bears never daunt the brave" and "the Four Seas are rising, clouds and waters raging, / the Five Continents are rocking, wind and thunder roaring", not only showed the heroic spirit and national spirit of the Chinese, but also expressed scorn and indignation for the violent act of international hegemonism of that time. They not only bestowed enthusiastic praise for liberation movement and the storm of people's revolution in the developing countries like Asia, Africa and Latin America, but also delivered passionate blessing and eager anticipation to national independence and social progress of the third world people.

In June 1960 when Mao Zedong received the delegation from Cuba, Brazil and Argentina, a foreign guest said:

> One fact that the imperialists haven't noticed is that Chairman Mao's poems are spreading widely in Latin America and becoming very popular.

And he also earnestly requested creation of more pieces (Jin Chen 1997:15). In his statement after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, Bhutto, the ex-president of Pakistan, passionately said:

> His name will forever be used synonymously with the great, just undertaking of the poor and the oppressed, be a brilliant symbol of people's fights against opposing the oppression and exploitation, colonialism and imperialism. And our Pakistan will memorialize immortal Mao Zedong with great reverence for ever.
>
> (Jin Chen 1997:20)

Mao Zedong's poems left behind the greatest intellectual treasures of opposing oppression: advancing bravely and unceasingly, self-improvement for the third world people.

- **The Translator's freedom to translate *Mao's Poems* after reform and opening-up**

After the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of CPC in 1978, the starting point from which China implemented the policy of opening to the outside world, not a few different English versions of *Mao Zedong's Poems* have been published in mainland China. The translation of Mao's poems took on a new pattern of multi-subject, multi-style and multi-publication.

In the wake of reform and opening up to the outside world, policies concerning intellectuals and literatures have been liberalized drastically. The idea of 'let a hundred flowers blossom and let a hundred schools of thought contend', a policy set forth by Mao in 1956, was received and enriched in the 1978 constitution. With political restrictions being lifted, art could be pursued for its own sake. More and more literary works came to the fore and a new round of translation activities was triggered. People began to realize the real value of literary translation as a work of art. In this climate of literary liberalism, there came a set of translations of *Mao Zedong's Poems*, which have many new traits when compared with the 'official' version in 1976. Under the influence of social ideology in that particular period, the translators of the 'official' version consequently attached disproportionate importance to adherence to the political content and philosophic connotations at the cost of artistic qualities.

Three-Beauty Theory of translating poetry—beauty in sense, beauty in sound and beauty in form—is put forward by Prof. Xu Yuanchong, which serves as a guiding theory for poetry translation. As a distinguished translator of poetry, Prof. Xu pursued this theory of his in his translation of Mao Zedong's poems, which also revealed his pursuit of perfection. *Mao Zedong Poems* by Zhao Zengtao translated Chinese metrical poems into English metrical verse, and was considered to exactly express "the excellent taste of character of Mao Zedong's poems".

Conclusion

It is easy to see that ideology has exerted its influence on the translations of Mao Zedong's poems. These influences have manifested themselves in its every aspect including the organization of translation activity, the selection of source texts, the comprehension of the text and the application of translation strategies. As a bridge between different cultures, translation is not only a linguistic exchange but a site of cultural give and take, in which ideology could also be at play. When commenting on the translated texts, the translation critics should not only lay emphasis on the 'linguistic fidelity' to the source text but consider those language-external factors from a macroscopic perspective.

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INTERVIEWING THE TRANSLATOR

"I am not trying to move into an ivory tower of pure art..."

An interview with Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri

Sukanta Chaudhuri *(born 1950) is an internationally renowned scholar of English literature of the Renaissance period. He works in the fields of European Renaissance studies, Translation, and Textual Studies. He has authored several books like* Infirm Glory: Shakespeare and the Renaissance Image of Man *(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981),* Renaissance Pastoral and Its English Developments *(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989),* Select Nonsense of Sukumar Ray *(New Delhi: OUP, 1998)*, Translation and Understanding *(New Delhi: OUP, 1999),* Shakespeare without English *(New Delhi: Pearson Education, 2006), edited select Elizabethan poetry and essays by Francis Bacon for Oxford University Press.*

He has edited and co-edited several collections of essays on the Renaissance period. He had also remained General Editor of the Oxford Tagore Translations *(five volumes published between 2000 and 2006). He has translated extensively from Bengali writers and Bengali poets like Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Sukumar Ray, Rajshekhar Bose and others.*

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Sukanta Chaudhuri is currently teaching at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
He talks about the various issues of translation ranging from his experience as a translator to the translation of knowledge texts in the country. Here is an excerpt from the interview with Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri.*

Q: How do the models or theoretical intricacies of the text impact the translator while translating, does it do so at all?

SC: I would say it does not or at least it should not. I can say this certainly happens when I do translation myself. I find myself focusing entirely on the text, the nature of the text, and the challenges of the text. I try to see the intricacies of the source language and how I can render it into the target language. The challenges that concern me are the actual verbal problems, the problems of language, etc. I do not, at all, think of any kind of theoretical model, any agenda or any purpose for which I am undertaking the translation. Frankly, I would go so far as to say that if a translator starts translating with some kind of exterior purpose in mind then that is bad for a translation.

One may say that any author, when he writes, should think only about what he is writing. He should not, at that point, think of the target reader. And even for translation, it is true. It is perhaps especially true because, after all any exercise in translation is an exercise in cultural politics. Two languages, two cultures conveyed by those languages have a kind of encounter when they meet. Afterwards either you can theorize about it, or other people can theorize about it. But if at the moment of translation, you are taken up with those matters of broader cultural encounter or cultural politics, then that will certainly affect the actual nature of your translation. It will be fatal, I think. Not only I think along these lines, but if anybody tries to suggest it to me, I think I would also deliberately reject that suggestion and try to keep all these considerations out of my mind.

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* Interviewed by Abhishek Sarkar, Sanhita Dasgupta and Chandan Biswas of National Translation Mission, an initiative by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India with Central Institute of Indian Languages as its nodal agency.

Q: How does the political underpinning of the text influence the process of translation?

SC: There can be a political and theoretical underpinning to a text. Not only there can be, but there should be and there must be such an underpinning both when writing the original text and necessarily while translating the text. Since translation is an exercise in cultural politics, obviously I am not denying that role. I am not trying to move into an ivory tower of pure art; far from it. The factor of social engagement or even political engagement—by political, of course, I don't mean particular political party or electoral politics, but in the broader sense those are the forces which shape and guide our society—must be there in any writing, even if that is a love poem or a novel. But while engaged with the act of translation rendering the language should be the uppermost consideration not the ultimate purpose. The original writer might certainly had had the purpose in mind, but even he, I should say, was also paying attention to language in which he was expressing his views and shaping his agenda. Concentrating on the ultimate purpose at the moment of writing definitely affects the quality of writing, and therefore the purposes are also likely to suffer. Your writing will not be convincing to the target readership. Same is the case with translation. If I am translating political texts or even a propaganda, it is very likely that my purpose would also be propagandist. I share the ideology of the original writer; therefore I want to reach it to the target reader who may not be able to access the original texts. So my ultimate purpose may certainly be political; but during the execution, I would definitely think of considering the means rather than the end.

Q: The current translation scenario in India—your observations…

SC: I am not fully aware or well informed about the total scenario. One thing has certainly struck all of us who do any translation at all that, there seems to be a much greater demand for translation now. Over the last few years, every now and then, major, important publishers have approached us not only with proposals for us to translate but also

wanted our suggestions about other people whom they can contact for the same. So, it certainly seems that there is a much bigger demand and market for translation than there was in the past. I try to think about the possible reasons for this. One reason, I think, has to do with the great international rise of Indian writing in English. This has created the very unfortunate impression that all significant Indian literature is written in English language. But at the same time, there are people who are trying to correct this impression. Many major publishers in India and abroad would be actually interested in undertaking major translation programs to create a list of important translations from Indian languages into English. So that way, the outlook is certainly promising. If anybody wants to publish good English translation of any major Indian literature, they would readily find publishers.

Another issue to ponder about is that though there is a demand for translation, on the whole, the reward of translation, both financial and by way of fame and recognition, is less than original writing. That is why in our country we practically do not have professional translators. In the West, there are many people who earn excellent living by doing translations. But there are few such people in our country. Therefore, the demand is hardly met and this continues to foster that unfortunate impression that not enough good literature is being written in the Indian languages. I, sitting in Bengal, may not know what good literature is coming out in Marathi or Tamil or in Hindi. So there are problems with meeting this demand and in such a situation, some translations are published to fulfill the demand which may not be very good and lead to damage either the reputation of original writers or put people off reading translations.

Q: How would you define a good translator?

SC: The problem is that there are relatively few good translators available. Somebody who may know both languages very well may still not make a good translator. There is a remark by Rabindranath that if two able bodied men lean on each other's shoulders they don't walk faster—they hold up each other's progress. In the same way, I

think the person might know very good Bengali, he may know very good English and is able to write very good English himself. But that does not necessarily make him a good translator. His translation will be too independent to follow its own course and he will not pay enough attention to the original; or else he may feel that he needs to follow the original so closely that the translations will not be very attractive and readable. In fact, if somebody knows good English, this latter danger might increase. That is why finding a good translator is really a very difficult task. It's a very rare discovery.

Q: Translators are licensed to transcreate—your comments…

SC: On the whole NO. I think the translator should not go very much for original creation. Let us think of two different types of translators. One is an original writer in her own right or at least, she has the creative power. She may not have actually published much but she has a creative power. Such creative writers might actually use another person's writing for translation as a kind of launching pad for their own creative process. So works produced under such circumstances are technically translations; but their actual purpose is not simply to make a work available to read in another language. Their actual purpose is to relieve creative energy in the translation where the translator is actually setting about the task as a creator. Let that be one model. The other model might be a person who has less talent, less capacity, does not have any truly creative spark. Her purpose in translating is chiefly to act as a mediator—to take a work from one language and make it accessible to readers in other languages. You will never find a translator who is 100% conforming to one model or the other. These are the two extremes and there is a whole range in between. It's a matter of the degree to which they are balanced or combined.

To this day, one of the least successful functions of the computer has been machine translation. Two languages obviously can't ever completely overlap. Even within the same language, no two words have the same semiotic range and obviously between two different languages you will never find two words with the same semiotic range. The translator essentially has to use her judgment. There has to be a

constant exercise of judgment, a constant response to the implications of both Source and Target Languages. So in that sense you may say any translator has to be not less creative but more creative than an original writer. If the translator therefore says, "I want to produce a work which has become an independent interest, I will translate author X. But I want my reader to read that work in order to read me, rather than the author X"—that is something dangerous. It argues for a degree of self-assertion in a translator where she wants to prove herself more important than the original writer. Otherwise the basic virtue of a translator has to be humility. The translator always has to hasten to keep herself a little humble. She is ultimately aiming to project the original writer not herself.

Q: Your experience as a translator…

SC: I have mostly translated poems. I translated a good deal of Rabindranath's poetry for the *Oxford Tagore Translation*. I'm the General Editor of the *Oxford Tagore Translation*. I have also translated a lot from Sukumar Ray and Jibanananda Das. I have translated Nirendranath Chakrabartee's *Ulanga Raja* (*The Naked King*) and I have done some stray translations of many other Bengali poets and edited volumes of such translations. I have also translated a lot of nonfictional prose.

Let me share a very interesting experiment in translation in which I took part. This was carried out in the English Department, Jadavpur University. The person who really inspired this whole exercise and was in charge of the project was my late colleague Prof. Arup Rudra. It was his idea that we might try to translate Sharathchandra's novel *Shesh Prasna* (*Final Question*) which had never been translated before. The actual translation was done under Arup Babu's supervision by a number of our research students; not as a formal research project but just as an exercise, for pleasure. Each of them translated a part of that book according to some of the initial instructions that Arup Babu had given. Arup Babu monitored the whole translation to make sure that there is parity of treatment. After the whole book

was complete, I went over the entire translation because Arup Babu said he was too involved with the text to make any impartial judgment. So I took a look at that whole translation and tried to induce a basic note, a basic register at the level of the translation. This translation was published by Ravi Dayal Publishers with the title *Final Question*. It is now reprinted by Penguin Translations. It has proved quite successful.

Q: Your experience of translating *Abol-Tabol* **…**

SC: I did it chiefly for my own amusement. Apart from a few stray poems, *Abol-Tabol* and *Ha-ia-ba-ra-la* were the first major translations I ever undertook. That time my son was very small. I used to read it to him in Bengali and one day I just felt that I could try and see how it works in English. It was just for my own satisfaction. At that time I had no idea that I would ever complete the whole book or publish it. My chief purpose was to see how far I could bring out these effects of the Bengali in English. Now, in one way it was relatively easy because they were nonsense verses. One could take liberty which one can't take with serious verses. While translating Rabindranath or Jibanananda, my policy at least would be to try to stick as closely as possible to the original. I cannot depart very far from Rabindranath, because I would be falsifying a text, which many people read seriously, sometimes almost with the worshipful sprit. Since nonsense literature is written for fun, one can take liberty. So in some cases, I have had more freedom while translating nonsense verses of Sukumar Ray than I would have dared to take while translating other poets. To give one example, sometimes I've even introduced a couple of things which was not there in the original. For instance, in the poem "chayabaji", there is the bang who makes a living by capturing shadows of trees. There is one point where in my translation the man says that the juice or sap of a particular tree induces sound sleep and a musical snore. Now the idea of musical snore is not there in Sukumar Ray actually; but I thought it was a nice and interesting idea. Though, at some points I could not even employ this method. I think, in fact, there are some half-a-dozen poems which I could not translate. I tried but I failed. So

I left those out. Rather than produce a translation that clearly did not work, I thought it would be best to omit them all together. Since I could take more liberty in translating some of the poems, there was a kind of exhilaration.

According to my experience, the real challenge was not finding the equivalence of particular words. The biggest challenge is finding equivalence for the tone, the movement, the spirit of the whole piece. If once you capture that, the words will come or even if the words don't come, the total effect will come. Then if a particular rendering is not exactly accurate, it does not matter much. Especially with nonsense, comic poetry the movement of the verse is very important. There must be no faltering, no vagueness, no hesitation. It must be very smooth, very brisk and my greatest challenge really was to try to preserve that in the translations as much as I could. Well, I've done the best I could.

Q: It is commonly believed that prose is easier to translate than poetry—your comments…

SC: Well YES and NO. I mean there is one huge challenge in translating poetry, which is not there in prose obviously. In poetry there is the matter of rhymes, stanza form, prosody, metrics etc. But apart from that, I would really say that the challenges of prose translation are not few or less. They are simply subtle; especially in fiction involving dialogues. If there are dialogues, there would be characters. If the original is written by a good author, then the dialogue of each character would have particular flavor, register or angle. No two characters speak alike. So the translation should also bring out the differences. This can be extremely difficult because if there are some slight differences in idiom, choice of words, increase in sentence structure between the various speakers of the original, then you have to find the equivalent in translation. The same problem arises in drama also. If there is a character in drama who speaks in dialect or who speaks some kind of broken Bengali—who is not a Bengali but speaks the language, or speaks Bengali with particular accents, then it would be a challenge to translate that dialogue. Dialogues can be extremely tricky. Even non-fictional prose produces challenges.

The sentence structures of each language are different. So if you have some intricate thoughts, which in one language might be expressible in a single long sentence since the grammatical rules of that languages allow long sentence structure to carry complex thought, the reader can follow it. But if translated into other languages using the same sentence structure, then that may not work. I translated some of Rabindranath's critical writings of literature into English. I had found what in Rabindranath was a single long sentence had to be broken up in English into maybe two shorter sentences, because if I wanted to keep the sentence structure intact then it would become very cumbersome in English and difficult to follow.

There is another related problem which in fact relates both to prose and poetry, but may be more important in case of prose where the idea communicated is more important. There is a kind of translators' fetish that one word in the original must always be translated by the same word in the translation. I myself don't agree and I found it is not possible. No two words have same semantic range; especially between two languages. So the same word in original language might have five different implications which in the target language are better represented by five different words. If I use the same word in all five cases, then maybe only in one case I might get the correct nuance whereas there might be some better word/s in the target language which will allow me to express the nuance properly. So at least I would not hesitate to change the rendering if I knew some better word, if the context demanded it. Prose translation especially has to be contextual. There are two contexts: one meaning and other grammatical. Every word in a sentence takes its place in a total grammatical structure with other words. Depending on the other words of the sentence, the relationship which it is in with those words, the function, the meaning of this word would change. That is to be reflected in different sentence structure or may be in choice of different words.

Q: Do you think a translator should be culturally more equipped than linguistically?

SC: I don't think you can prioritize. Both are equally important. I don't seek to separate them. I simply say that these are aspects of one

single quality. Language is a social phenomenon. To understand the way language works is to understand the way society works; the way people use and understand it. Especially in case of translation, this is important because you are not simply rendering one language to the speakers/readers of another language; you are also rendering one culture and society to the members of another culture and society. So, social awareness should get communicated through languages.

Q: Knowledge text translation* —your comments…

SC: Let me make two or three points. If we talk about text books, then there is a huge need. First of all, a text book should be translated by somebody who has specialized domain knowledge. For example, if it is a Physics text book, then the translator should know about Physics. It's not enough if she knows English and Bengali well. Very sadly in our society, we have not yet developed the need for a specialized translator. Given the vast market for text books at all levels, one would imagine that a person would make a very good living by translating text books or other books in a particular subject. But this also has something to do with the way our society and our educational system is compartmentalized. Somebody who studies Physics is cut off from Linguistics. Somebody who knows the particular subject does not have commensurate command over a language. So they cannot balance these two skills. Of course there are exceptions, but they are few. I think this is a moment of maturity requiring grand development of human resources. Firstly, courses need to be set up which would train people. But of course if people are trained, then the implication is that they must have something to do. So that demand for work needs to be created. There is however another point to be made. Some attempts have been made in our country, at least at the college level, to translate

* Translating the knowledge texts used at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the education system of India has been one of the chief objectives of National Translation Mission.

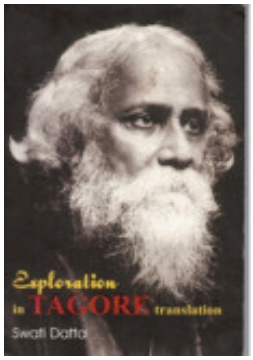
text books from English into Bengali or some other Indian languages. Later, the publishers were disappointed because their books had not been popular.

Q: Your suggestions for translating a knowledge text…

SC: I don't think you can just translate a text book, word for word, from of one language and society into another. A text book written in English for students in England or America will not do even for English medium school students in India. Even if you leave the language issue, you need to adapt the material for the students in India. Even in a text book in a supposedly neutral subject like Mathematics, Physics you imagine that sociological or geographical differences do not matter; but they do. Partly they do in the matter of examples. Say the problems in a Mathematical text book involve names such as John has 25 cattle and Tom has 40 cattle, so on and so forth. In this case, you use Indian names. That is easily done, but it is not as simple as that. It is difficult to pin point these with examples, but there is a kind of deeper social adaptation which is also necessary. And with textbooks, which concerns ideas, this is even more necessary. So in fact what is required is the production of what would be original text books. But again paradoxically, one might almost say that the translator of such text books needs more creative input than the translator of a poetry.

BOOK REVIEW

Problematising Tagore Translation



Exploration in Tagore Translation
Swati Dutta
Kolkata: K P Bagchi & Company, 2009
Pp 365; Rs. 450/-

Swati Dutta's book titled *Exploration in Tagore Translation* looks at translation as a phenomenon in general and explores the English translation of Rabindranath Tagore's short stories in particular. The author has carefully examined the short stories from the volumes which are originally titled as *Galpaguchchha* and *Tin Sangi***.** The author, in a novel way, has tried to analyse the need and demand of these translations in the present day scenario. She has also attempted to evaluate the rationale behind selecting these stories for translation in English with special reference to pre and post independence periods, the influence of colonialism on translations, so on and so forth.

The book opens with interesting questions like to what extent can a translator successfully negotiate a particular passage from grammar, syntax, and lexicon of one language; the world view or mindset of such structures and then transfer those to another language.

For a long time linguists and literary historians were intrigued by the capability with which Polish-born Joseph Conrad was able to compose narratives in his adopted language, English, and by the complexity of the inter-lingual games played by novelist Vladimir

Nabokov, whose earliest texts were composed in Russian, who also wrote in French and after escaping the Russian Revolution, turned to English. Rarer still are cases like Irish-born Samuel Beckett who appropriated for his adopted language French, the pattern of the English-language in his breakthrough play, *En Attendant Godot*, before translating his highly successful French text into English as *Waiting for Godot*.

This brief introduction helps us to contextualize the need of translation creating the notion of global literature. With such examples abound, it is no wonder that a prolific and versatile writer like Tagore would be translated to critical acclaim.

Taking her cue from George Steiner, the author agrees that the functional importance of translation is explicit in the coexistence and mutual contact of the thousands of languages spoken on earth from the literary point of view. Translation not only plays a vital role in the field of trade and commerce, but it also plays a major role in establishing, delineating and transferring cultural codes. The spatio-temporal constraints have been possible to bridge due to the important role of translation; where translation help create a shared, and therefore, a pluralistic literary culture. And especially in a multilingual country like India, translation also works as a unifying force. According to the author, Tagore's idea of universal harmony and humanism can find a way of becoming a reality through translation.

The author observes that Literature Studies and Translation has complemented each other where the practice and influence of the above mentioned has given rise to disciplines like Comparative Literature, Culture Studies, Post Colonial Studies and more emphatically Translation Studies. She maintains the point that in studying the phenomena of translation, one learns to appreciate and acknowledge the complexities of the languages concerned. She implicates her point by stating that the dimensions of Tagore's language—the innate subtleties that are his signatures—unveil only when one attempts to translate it from Bengali.

The author further adds that a native speaker might not easily understand how deeply rooted the language is into its source culture because of her proximity to the language. She explains her point by quoting one example: 'mathar kapor'. This simple term finds an expression 'the obligatory end of her sari over her head' in Kalpana Bardhan's translation of the story "Shasti". Obviously, this is neither a correct nor a happy equivalent of 'mathar kapor'.

Next she goes on to explain why examining the English translations has been a focal point in her book. She argues that as English has become established as the link language in the country, it becomes beneficial to translate into English in order to address a wider readership. She further argues that English being the legacy of colonialism, translations in English also offer a post-colonial perspective to the reading. She defends her cause of focusing on short stories as a genre. Apart from the obvious reasons which are generally the motives for studying short stories as a genre of literary importance, Tagore, who wrote almost 100 short stories, has a marked influence on Bangla literature. He was the first Bengali writer to elevate the short story to a serious art form. Tagore easily mingled stark realism and poetic idealism in his stories which reflected the contemporary life in rural and urban Bengal. Many of the stories portray conflicts or tensions between the new and the old, cruelty and sensitivity, solitude and crowd, male and female.

Chronologically documenting the progress of the publication of the translations of Tagore's short stories into English, the author tries to focus on the point that to the non-Bengali readers, the translated stories of Tagore present a vista of new cultural and social perceptions. According to her, translations of Tagore's short stories function as a 'viable medium of cross linguistic and cross-cultural encounters' and help the non-bilingual or non-multilingual readers discover such experiences. She also says that Tagore's short stories play a crucial part in Culture Studies. Reading translations of Tagore's short stories could be edifying for post-Tagore generations. Through translation,

the author hopes to convey Indian culture to multilingual, multinational and multicultural readership.

The author details the happenings of the era in socio-political and economic terms. She shows how Tagore was engrossed in the nationalist movement, his discontentment about the same and several other important incidents that bear a major influence on his writings and consequently reflected in his short stories. She shows how the changing times find its way in various forms in the stories and how these changes are reflected in a variety ranging from landlord-tenant relationship to shifts in occupations like farmers, land labourers, deputy magistrates, judges aka statutory civilian, college professors, etc. Various diseases like malaria, TB, plague; social evils like poverty, dowry system, caste system, untouchability, child marriage, polygamy, patriarchy—almost everything is mirrored in the stories. She correctly points out that, 'many of the stories, if considered in a progression, portray the various segments of society and tell of the life and attitude of people living there'. According to the author the greatness of Tagore's short stories lies in the fact that they 'out live the age that produced them even while being strongly representative of it'. This uniqueness itself stresses the importance or validity of translating Tagore's stories; especially when his greatness lies in the fact that though his stories attempt at capturing a particular time at a particular space through a particular language, his perception and capability both appeal to the sensibilities that are essentially human truths, beyond any boundaries. The author feels that the mature and adept handling of the 'form' (short story) through the 'content' has given Tagore's short stories a flavour that goes beyond the regional, and therefore, stands every reason to be translated, to be transported beyond the linguistic and geographical boundary.

The author painstakingly maintains a chronology in which she documents that some of Tagore's initial short stories received strong criticism since the non-Bengali readers had to rely on poor translations. She claims that translated short stories of Tagore led to the belief in West that he was an idealist and a mystic rather than a realist. She

furthers her claims that Tagore himself was one of the reasons for such (mis)conceptions. Though some of his short stories were translated and published into English during the beginning of the twentieth century, translation of noble winning *Gitanjali* changed the scenario as the *English Gitanjali* is laced with philosophy and mysticism unlike his short stories that mostly deal with realism. However, Tagore's genius as a short story writer was not recognized for years. Mary Lago in her work *Imperfect Encounter* searched for the reasons for these unsatisfactory translations. C. F. Andrews did not maintain Tagore's relations with the English publishers very correctly. Due to poor interpersonal relations managed by Andrews, very many potential competent translators turned away from the process.

Tagore himself weakened some of his powerful stories in translation by leaving out details of Indian life that he thought would be too foreign to non-Indian readers. Edward Thompson, an English poet and critic having long association with Tagore and a number of other luminaries of Bengali culture, wrote in Tagore's obituary in 1941:

> More and more he toned down or omitted whatever seemed to him characteristically Indian, which very often was what was gripping and powerful. He despaired too much of ever persuading our people to be interested in what was strange to them. His work will one day have to be retranslated and properly edited. I am sure that then there will be a revival of his reputation.

His mystic image also added to the poor reception of his short stories. The author makes an informed remark that this particular 'mystic' image was cultivated and propagated by the West in their interest and substantiates her point by quoting from several sources. She established the fact that *English Gitanjali* fell into the customary stereotypical perception of the East by the West, and therefore the mystic Tagore got more represented in the western mind than the realist

Tagore. Tagore as a receiver of Noble Prize for literature was already a question for political considerations of Britain and therefore Britain's greatest colony, India. Looking at Tagore as a mystic rather than a realist helps the coloniser's cause as his stories would not have supported the projected image of Britain with respect to India. The mystic image was a 'safe other' which of course is a manipulated image of the Orient. Translated short stories of Tagore helped change this misconception to a great respect.

In this context, the translated short stories of Tagore encounter the imperial gaze and thereby establish its re-presentation of Tagore as a writer from the East. Translation of Tagore's short stories into English, thus, was a deliberate political move to manipulate the language of the colonisers to express the lived experience of the colonised. Apart from this logic, the author elaborates the role of English in India where it not only plays the active role of a major language as defined by Prof. Sisir Das to establish connection both internationally and intranationally. Through English translations, Tagore's short stories succeeded in achieving readership both at home and outside.

The book is an enjoyable reading. It has thoroughly researched documents and a rather exhaustive bibliography to justify the claims made in the course of the book. It is a pleasure to come across such a meticulous research work; especially in the portion where she outlines the details of the translated texts starling from 1901 to 2000. Painstakingly she has shown how over the century, Tagore's short stories had been translated into English and published by Indians and foreigners, how they have opened up new vistas to explore and study.

A couple of things to be noted though! The way the author mentions the problems, the intricacies and possibilities of Tagore translation leads the reader to ponder if those points are related specifically to Tagore translations only. The points noted by the author can be and are generally applicable to most literary works. There have also been assumptions where Bengali culture specific notions have

been termed as Indian. Take for example the term, 'mathar kapor'. The reader is made to understand that this term means a way of dressing that is common for 'Indian Hindu women'. 'Mathar kapor' is not at all common to women from southern parts of India. One also wonders about the author's claim that Tagore's stories gains significance as they represent 'the then Bengal/India' or that his stories represent 'realistic image of India'. Such claims give rise to a sense of discomfiture which partly stems from the Marxist observation that, time and again, has blamed Tagore for being in his ivory tower and observing life from a distance beneath the protection of social security and financial stability. He has been heavily critiqued that though his stories are laced with human philosophy and a kind of intellect which can be best defined as elite and urban, the true sufferings of common mass had not been captured in its entirety. Under such circumstances, equating Bengal with India seems a bit inappropriate. In today's scenario, where conscious efforts are being made to represent identities in their all-round correctness, these types of slips do create a jarring mental impact. Another thing to be noted is that the book permeates the smell of a dissertation throughout. Though the author confesses in the preface that it had been her doctoral work which has been given the shape of this book, it needs further adjusting to be able to read as a book, not a thesis. It is also worth mentioning here that the author could have analysed the editorial policies—the presence or absence thereof—and its ensuing affects on the translations itself.

Apart from these few drawbacks, however, the author, in summary, must be congratulated for an excellent effort. There is no denying the fact that this book has been a product of rigorous hard work. We would hope that this volume would regenerate interest in Tagore's works and re-introduce to the world the multi-faceted genius of Tagore, who is among the greatest Indian writers ever.

Sriparna Das
National Translation Mission
CIIL, Mysore.

TRANSLATIONS

An excerpt from the English translation of Amrit Lal Nagar's Hindi novel *Nachyo Bahut Gopal*

Sheeba Rakesh

Published in the year 1978, N(achyo)B(ahut) G(opal) brought with it a new wave—of literary and sociological consciousness. It talks about the problem of casteism in the Indian society, the ravages caused by the white ants of untouchability and the hollowness that has crept up in the wake of such an attack in the modern Indian society. NBG is a story that moves on two levels: a) Gender and b) Caste and Class. It chronicles the life story of Smt. Nirguniya—a Brahmin woman. A blend of autobiography and reportage, the story relates her trials in the aftermath of her 'voluntary conversion' to Dalit way of life. Several social/psychological/philosophical questions have been answered by Nagar by making Smt. Nirguniya not a victim, but a stoic agent of social change who realizes that casteism is nothing but a farce and refuses to come back into the 'elite' mould of the Brahmin narrator (who is the author's mouthpiece), accepting her own achoot/ bhangi/ dalit identity with pride and integrity...

*…The content and the form have achieved a perfect fusion in Nagar and this translation has tried the best to preserve this uniqueness which grants Nachyo Bahut Gopal a high place in the pantheon of Hindi literature… although literal translations have not been possible (and linguistic originality retained where essential) the translation has been an attempt at unraveling or more appropriately popularizing Nagar's art and aesthetics. It is hoped that the translation will be successful in its attempt.**

* extracts from Sheeba Rakesh's proposal for publication to Columbia University Press.

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She was counting the coins for the rickshawallah when I alighted. Elated on seeing me she said, "…I am so glad you have come, I knew you would…"

I paid my rickshawallah, picked her heavy bag and proceeded towards the verandah. Smt. Nirguniya said, "… I had an intuition that you would come today … therefore came back …"

She unlocked the door. There was an envelope lying inside. Her face blossomed as she read it, "…it's Shakun's… my daughter's…!!"

Instructing me to keep the bag in the inner room she continued to unlock the inner rooms. Sunlight had filled the inner sanctum of the house. She went and came back with a covered bowl, removed the lid and said, "…I brought this *Nimish* from the grain *mandi*… thought it would be a befitting gift for winter"

I asked, "…Where did you learn to speak Urdu…?"

She laughed, "…We have patrons in all religions… the one to help me out on my rainy days resided in a Muslim locality; but *babuji*!... generally *bhangis* do speak well…"

"…Please don't call me *babuji*…I feel ashamed…"

"…How else do I address you then…?"

"Call me Anshu…or maybe… Anshudhar…"

"…It is a sin to call Brahmins, kings and pundits by their names…"

"…I am hardly surprised at your wise repartees …call me Sharma…"

"…How can a *besharm* woman call you …Sharma! Sharma! …it would make you feel *sharm*…"

She laughed, but her eyes reflected intense pain. I struck the hot iron, "…Smt. Nirguniya!... what if you happen to meet somebody from your early life now…?"

"…but they must all be dead…"

"Answer…suppose your husband Aryaputra Masuriyadin…?"

"…my Mohna sent him to hell long back…ha! ha!...", she laughed a hard laugh.

"…Then maybe *Chhote babu* or Master Basantlal…?"

She contemptuously retorted, "…Nobody can harm a shameless woman …these bastards were responsible for turning my body into a pot of shit…."

"…*Chhote babu* could be blamed, but as for master Basantlal or the others… you dirtied them… and you can't blame them…"

She was comfortably seated on the settee. Suddenly getting flustered by my taut remarks she got up, then turned to me and snatching a *bidi* from the bundle said, "…I am so ashamed that I feel like burying myself in the womb of the earth or atleast get drunk to the extent of tippling so that I may answer back… don't take it otherwise… I mean that's what I felt... so…! you were on… what if *Chhote babu* saw me like this?... so what? Infact, I happened to meet Master Basantlal once… but of that… I shall speak later… but in sharing my story with you… I had overcome all the guilt, sin as well as suffocation of my life... Today, I am happy being a *bhangi* … I want to remain a *bhangi*… not a Brahmin anymore…"

I countered, "…was not your inner Brahmin attracted to me?... the temple of my house and your recitation of the sacred Sanskrit *shlokas* …was this not an attempt at awaking the Brahmin within….?"

Silence. The twitching of the face and an intense restlessness to hide behind a new façade—I should not have been so blunt. Staring at me, eye into eye, she spoke, "…I will not lie to you… yes!... you are right…"

Her acknowledgement encouraged my bluntness. Had *I* been questioned like this, my ego too would have run amuck to save its face… just like Smt. Nirguniya… after all… every human being tries to protect his ego. I continued, "…How did you feel as Smt. Mohna?... A *bhangin* venturing into the bylanes with a *tokra* of dirt and shit…?"

"…I get your question… working as a *bhangin* among the Brahmins was shameful to me… but I never felt like disclosing my antecedents to any of them…"

"…How then could you do it with me…?"

"…That's an easy question …let me take out my *tharra*… I want to be shameless now…" She went ahead and opened an almirah full of desi and foreign liquor bottles. Old Scotch. She got some glasses and water, "…This bottle is forty years old… My Shakun's first birthday… Mohna was wanted by the police… but he was a courageous father… came as a *bhangi* to see his Shakuntala… *Jhaadu* and *tokra*… he managed to ditch the authorities… brought two whisky bottles, *mithai*, toys… In all these years I never touched it more than twice… the last time I had it was with him…!" Her emotional trance seemed to turn the bottle into Mohna for her.

I questioned, "…so you only drink this, when trapped in dire situations…?"

"…Yes… your questions make my heart sink… have some…"
Politely declining the offer I continued to question her on her emotional state when she must have gone as a *bhangi* to the Brahmin houses.

She said, "…Initially, I felt like chopping off my own neck… I could not stand to do this… but then I read Kabir…

Sees kaat bhuin maa dhare,
Taa par raakhe paawn...

So ultimately, I did cut off my head and placed my foot on it. Brahmin and *chamar* …where was the difference? …everyone was a patron… I never thought of it this way… and today in front of you…

She seemed to gaze into eternity. Lighting a cigarette I asked, "…but why before me?... I look like an average Indian… not a *tripunddhari* pundit"

She seemed to have been caught by the 'enchanted by Mohna' mood and spoke, "…your Brahmanism was secondary… I was impressed by your interest in the *bhangi* community, culture and lifestyle… that sent me into thinking about the reality of my own caste!... who indeed was I…? …*Chamars* have innumerable castes and sub-castes… whose rituals did I follow?... do I tell you about the caste of my *birth* or the caste of my *karma*? ...perhaps, this would not have mattered much if you had not persisted in meeting me …eventually, the human connection that we established resurrected my inner Brahmin …and that is why an urge to enact a psyche striptease before you… *babuji*! This glass of liquor is *Gangajal* to me… and I will not lie… you are an extraordinary human being… and that is why I felt like unburdening myself…"

A suggestive tone, facility of dialogue and the appropriate texture of tested and defeated character—a *bhangin* had amalgamated all the essential ingredients to touch my Brahmin soul. Silence again. I broke it, "…I am curious about your past… give me the file…"

Smiling and holding her magnetic gaze steady she said, "…I have written a lot… but it is all in bits and pieces…recollections and strewn expressions…."

"…Oh! You've left me stranded in a mirage… why don't you write an autobiography…?"

"…I feel tired…since the last two years…I have not touched the pen…."

"… was it because you expressed only the bitter experiences of your life…?"

"…No *babuji*!… but the urge for expression has waned …"

"…How did you feel with Masuriyadin…?"

"…It was weird…like craving for satisfaction in heat and being denied …."

"I understand! …the need must have driven you mad…."

"…suffice it to say that I was kept under lock and key …*haraami*! …sorry *babuji*!… but, he did everything possible to avoid my meeting with other men …had even locked the terrace door…denied me a chance for suicide… *babuji*! fate punished me hard… I suffered two births in one…and Oh! what an immeasurable pain!!..."

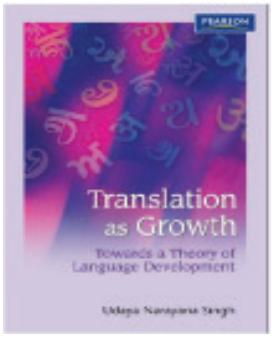
"…So you believe in fate …?"

"…Can't say…man masters fate …but I was not responsible for my mother's death…I was a good girl with sacred values but got a bitchy mother and a pimp-like father… had *I* asked for it?... fate showed me the roads and I took them…"

Today I saw the real Smt. Nirguniya. Heat tempers gold. The heat of time had tempered her as well. She cooked and we talked… before I left I requested her to start writing about her life once again. She refused and asked me to put her life story into words.

What a strange thing!! …can I peep into somebody's soul? But I think I have begun to understand her…and the evil star influencing her life. I started writing—that very night!

BOOK BEAT



Translation as Growth
Udaya Narayana Singh
Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd.
2010

Udaya Narayana Singh explores a vast expanse of ideas ranging from language planning to cultural legacy across communities in *Translation as Growth* and relates them to the very act and the philosophy of translation and text. It opens with a detailed account of how translation could be an important tool in language planning and eventually navigates through the debates of epistemological and creative hierarchy of the 'original' over the 'translation' and finally brings to the reader a critique of a wide range of theories and issues spanning from the classical philosophy of the orient and the occident to the postmodern theories of recent times and delivers an extensive discourse on language, text and society from the point of view of a translation theorist.

The reader is provided with an insightful study of the distinction between metaphrase ('literal' translation) and paraphrase, that had been originally drawn by the ancient Greeks and later adopted by the English poet and translator John Dryden. The reader observes the emergence of a 'sociological theory of text' vis-à-vis the role of the translator. This work urges the conscious reader to recall Lefevere's description of translation as being "a rewriting of an original text." It examines theories like 'reader's response', 'deconstruction' in order to arrive at a discursive ground that situates translation as being a necessary and perhaps the most significant vehicle for the sustenance of the otherwise 'self-destructing' text.

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The author also takes into consideration the 'culture industry' where a translator and his work have to survive. He asserts that translation works not merely as a twice removed replication, it fosters and preserves culture; *ipso facto* opens a discourse on the definition of translation. The translator is also looked upon as someone bridging cultural gaps and differences without threatening individualities.

This work portrays and examines the reader's participation in the process of continuous 're-creation' and goes on to venture into the contemporary reader's psyche—the reader who is equipped with technology. We find ourselves face to face with a panoramic view of the modern world of media and its power and influence instantiated in various forms. It also deals with metaphors emerging from various translation theories.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Alladi Uma teaches English at the University of Hyderabad. Her research interests include African-American Studies, Indian Writing in English, Translation, Comparative Literature and Women's Studies. She has taught, supervised research, and published extensively in all these areas. She translates from Telugu to English and English to Telugu. Her most recent translation is of a collection of Telugu short stories titled *Bhoomi* by Allam Rajaiah and *Pandita Parameswara Sastry's Will* by Gopichand published by the Sahitya Akademi, and *Untouchable Spring* by G. Kalyana Rao published by Orient Blackswan.

Amrita R. Joshi holds a doctorate from IIT Bombay, Mumbai. Her areas of interest include literary semiotics, visual semiotics and intermediality. She lives and works in Mumbai.

Anne Hardgrove earned a PhD in the Interdepartmental PhD Program in Anthropology and History at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA in 1999. Her first book, *Community and Public Culture: The Marwaris in Calcutta c.1897-1997* was published in South Asia by Oxford University Press. Dr. Hardgrove is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at San Antonio, USA, where she teaches courses on the history of India, history theory, gender history and world history. She is working on a history of translations of the *Kama Sutra* into vernacular Indian and western languages, 1883 to the present. Her book is tentatively titled: *Close your Eyes and Think of India: Translating the Kamasutra.*

Archita Gupta is Research Scholar at the Department of English, Tripura University, Agartala,Tripura. The title of her proposed thesis is

'Comic Strip as a Mode of Cultural Production and Cultural Dissemination'. Her areas of interest include Culture Studies, popular media, comic strips, cartoons, translation, Feminism and gender.

Ashes Gupta is Reader at the Department of English, Tripura University, Tripura. He has been a Resource person at the Refresher Course in Comparative Literature, Academic Staff College, University of Burwan. He held the associateship of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla in 2001. He has directed some documentaries like '*Vanaj*: in search of green' and 'Fading Melodies: Ethnic Musical Instruments of Tripura'. Dr. Gupta has edited and translated *The Fragrant Joom: A Translation of Kokborok Poetry in English.* His translations from Kokborok and Tripura Bangla to English are published in 3 vols. of *Indian Literature*, the Sahitya Akademi bi-monthly journal. He is currently translating the Bangla work *Kumar Sachin Debbarman Satabarshiki Smarak Grantha* into English.

K.M. Sheriff writes in Malayalam and English and translates among Malayalam, English, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil. His publications include *Kunhupaathumma's Tryst with Destiny,* the first study of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's fiction in English and *Ekalavyas with Thumbs,* the first selection of Gujarati Dalit writing in English translation. Sheriff teaches English at the University of Calicut.

LI Chongyue earned his MA degree in Translation Theory & Practice from Sichuan University, P.R. of China in 1996. He made an academic visit to the Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Wolverhampton, UK during 2005-2006. He was the leading researcher of some translation research projects and has published many academic papers. He currently teaches and researches Translation Studies, and supervises MA candidates specializing in Translation Studies at the School of Foreign Studies, Jiangsu University, People's Republic of China.

M. Sridhar is Professor in the Department of English at University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. He has authored *Literary Theory and F.R. Leavis* (1999) and *Reception of English: Cultural Responses in Telugu Documents* (2008). He has won the Jyeshtha Literary Award, 1993 and the Katha Commendation Prize, 1996 for joint translations from Telugu to English. He has jointly translated (with Alladi Uma) many works that include *Ayoni and Other Stories* (2001), *Mohana! Oh Mohana! and Other Poems* (2005) and *Bhoomi* (2008). His main areas of interest are Literary Criticism, English studies, Indian Literature and Translation. He writes poetry in Telugu and English.

Niladri Sekhar Dash is currently Assistant Professor in Linguistic Research Unit of Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata. He specializes in Corpus Linguistics, Natural Language Processing, Language Technology, and Applied Linguistics. To his credit he has published 10 books and nearly hundred research papers in peer-reviewed national and international journals. He has taught as Guest Faculty in several Indian universities like Madras University, Chennai; Jadavpur University, Kolkata; Punjabi University, Patiala; Sanskrit University, Tirupati; Telugu University, Hyderabad, etc and acted as Expert in the ASI@IT&C of the Localization of Language Technology, of the European Commission. At present he acts as the Principal Investigator for the ILCI Project, Govt. of India; Co-Principal Investigator for the Indradhanush WordNet, Govt. of India, and as Advisor for International Scientific Research Network. He is an Editorial Board Member for two international academic journals on linguistics and language technology; the Guest Editor of one international journal; and the Consultant for three research laboratories located in Sweden, USA, and Canada.

Preethi Nair is Selection Grade Lecturer at the Department of English in Sree Sankara College, Ernakulam, Kerala. Her Ph.D topic was 'Colonial/Patriarchal Ideology in Literature and Film'. Her other areas of interest include Translation Studies and Dalit Studies.

Probal Dasgupta earned his Ph.D. on Bangla generative syntax at the New York University (1980), and has taught linguistics at New York, Melbourne, Kolkata, Pune, and Hyderabad. He is currently based at the Indian Statistical Institute's (Kolkata) Linguistic Research Unit. He is an Honorary Member of the Linguistic Society of America (2004-), a member of the Akademio de Esperanto (1983-), and the current president of World Esperanto Association (2007-). His book-length publications include Kathaar kriyakarmo (in Bangla, 1987), Primico (Esperanto translations from Tagore's poetry, 1977), The Otherness of English: India's Auntie Tongue Syndrome (1993), and After Etymology: Towards a Substantivist Linguistics (with Alan Ford and Rajendra Singh, 2000).

Salawu Adewuni acquired Ph.D. (2005) in French Studies from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He was Research Translator at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria from 1990 to April 2008. His research interests include finding the relevance of linguistics, culture, society, and language in translation; to study translation issues embedded in agricultural texts within the African context. He has published in international journals such as *Journal of translation*, *Translation journal* and *International Journal of Translation*. He is currently teaching in the French Department at the University of Ado-Ekiti, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

S. Geetha is Associate Professor in the Department of English, Fatima College, Madurai. Her doctoral thesis titled 'Search for form in the works of Langston Hughes' won the Best Doctoral Thesis Award from ASRC in the year 1984. She visited U.K. as the Group Studies Exchange member and was sent by British Council to attend the XIth Oxford Conference for English Teachers Overseas in 1996. She was invited by the State Dept. for Education and Cultural Affairs U.S.A as International Visitor on an American Studies Program in 2000. She has published two research articles in *A Bio-Bibliographical Source*

(Greenwood Press, U.S.A) and presented about 50 papers in national and international conferences. She received the Best Faculty Award from Cognizant solutions Ltd., in the year 2007.

Sheeba Rakesh is a research scholar in the Department of English and Modern European languages, University of Lucknow. She teaches English and is the coordinator of Centre of Women's Studies at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Girls' Degree College. She has completed her doctoral thesis on 'Problems in Cross-Cultural Translation' and has published internationally on Translation Studies and Women's Studies. She will soon be releasing the translation of the classic Hindi novel *Nachyo Bahut Gopal* into English.

Sriparna Das has completed her doctoral research in Translation Studies from C.A.L.T.S., University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. Her dissertation is titled 'Domestic Realms: A Translation of Bengali Women Writers' Short Stories (1970-2000)'. Her areas of academic interest are Translation Studies, Culture Studies, English Studies, Gender Studies, etc. She is currently working in National Translation Mission, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore.

Suh Joseph Che is Associate Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Buea, Cameroon. He holds a DLitt et Phil in Linguistics (Translation Studies) from the University of South Africa, an M.A. in Translation from the University of Ottawa, Canada and a DEA en traductologie from ESIT, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris III, France.

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