MAYA BURGER AND NICOLA POZZA

Editors' Introduction

> न हम अपनी भाषा दूसरे से सीख सकते हैं; न दूसरों की भाषा में हम अपने को पहचान सकते हैं। अपनी भाषा सीख और अपने को पहचान कर फिर हमें दूसरों की भाषाएँ भी सीखनी चाहिए, उन का ज्ञान भी ग्रहण करना चाहिए : उस के सहारे अपना शोध भी करना चाहिए।[1]

> We cannot learn our own language from others; nor can we recognize ourselves in the language of others. Having learned our own language and recognized ourselves, we should certainly learn other languages and seek the knowledge available through them, re-examine ourselves in their light.[2]

This publication focuses on the role that translations from Hindi have played and continue to play in shaping and transforming our knowledge about India in its cultural dimension. In the process of the ever-increasing accumulation of information related to India, it is essential to pay attention to and ponder upon the sources of our knowledge about India. Intensifying exchanges between the country and the rest of the world through scholarship, academic agreements, economic partnerships, transfers of "derivative products" (mainly related to spirituality, medicine and cinema), and the important Indian diaspora are part of this knowledge. Literary works, which are the subjects of this book, are also vectors that shape representations of India in the so-called West.

However, most of the texts from Indian authors and traditions available at present belong to the literatures in Sanskrit and Indian English. Literatures in vernaculars are more seldom accessible in translation, though they represent different worldviews and anthropologies of India which thus remain largely inaccessible and unknown to the non-Indian readership. The only way to overcome this one-sidedness and to access the variety and richness of Indian cultures and literatures is through the

1 Ajñeya, *Bhavantī*. Delhi: Rajpal & Sons, 1989 (1971):29.

2 Ajñeya, *Truculent Clay*. New Delhi: Clarion Books, 1982:20–21.

learning of their *bhāṣā* (or "regional languages") and through the translation of their texts.

It is for this reason that the editors of this book have chosen to focus on translation of *bhāṣā* texts, which we consider to be the foremost topic in need at present of scrutiny when approaching the question of the foreign representation of cultural India. Due to institutional preconditions (in Lausanne) and personal qualifications, Hindi (in its widest sense, including its complex relation to Urdu, from premodern to modern and postmodern expressions bundled under this name) is the vernacular we have chosen. If this seems to give special importance to Hindi, this is itself the result of the perception and political presentation of Hindi in its modern development, which has been tightly connected to colonial history and to Western scholarship as well as to India's modern history. This political situation renders Hindi particularly interesting as an object of translation and research. However, although it does have a special status and plays a special role within India, it should not be understood as the only important language of India or constituting an archetype of "the" Indian culture.

In the articles that follow, "translation" is understood in its multiple aspects and meanings: as linguistic and textual translation, as cultural transfer, as a space between connected worlds, as an activity freighted with political and epistemic power-relationships, as an illustration of the situation of authors moving and living in a globalized world, as a necessary and appropriate means of dealing with the rich variety of Indian literatures and cultures. As these aspects form the core of the contributions published here, we do not purpose to develop them at length in this "Introduction".

A thoughtful investigation of the various standpoints that define our respective scholarly enterprises as cultural and/or textual translators might well be considered no more than modish nowadays. Such an approach, however, does allow us to identify and reflect upon the criteria that have guided the selection of works and literary texts to date. From this, we will be in a position to shed light on the contextual issues and hidden intentions that underlay those criteria. Moreover, from what has until now been left out, we may also increase our awareness of what still remains to be done in translation with regard to the processes both of selection and transmission. These considerations accomplished, we will surely be even more conscious of the importance of learning other, less

dominant, languages, as these permit the broadening of our approaches and the increase of our knowledge of India in particular, and of the "Other" in general – as well, of course, as of ourselves, for we are an integral part of the reciprocal connections and transfers implied in the very process of translation.

The symposium

Opening this exploration into the knowledge acquired about India through translation, an international symposium was organized in Lausanne with the following aims. The first four are part of the present publication.

1. To stimulate a critical approach to the past and present roles played by translators and/or scholars in the transmission and representation of India through the medium of Hindi literature in translation. An important part of the issue that we particularly wanted to address was constituted by the historical and epistemological criteria that have until now informed translation. Speakers were afforded the opportunity to cast light on authors' and translators' motivations, or on political and editorial mechanisms, or on the historical events that allowed certain texts to become what are termed "classics" through their translation and reception in India and abroad.
2. To deal with aspects of Indian literatures that are usually not taken account of – or only through the vector of English translations – by giving voice to vernacular literatures.
3. To bring together scholars, writers, editors and translators issued from different linguistic origins in order, i) to make manifest the plurality of languages and voices present in the translation process; ii) to properly account for the different steps of the translation process by including contributions dealing with editorial issues and creative writing; iii) to bring, through the presence of representatives of various academic traditions – from India, Europe and the USA – their respective epistemological preconceptions dynamically into perspective.

4. To link, through a historical perspective, the different periods of Hindi literature, which are often separated in scholarship. For this reason, the selected scholars and authors were required to cover different periods and contexts from the premodern period to contemporary productions.
5. Finally, to promote Hindi literature to a wider public, as yet unfamiliar with this literary universe. To this end and as an introduction to the symposium, a public lecture was organized. Geetanjali Shree and Annie Montaut read excerpts of Geetanjali Shree's *Māī* in Hindi and French. This incidentally served to launch the French translation of the work by a Swiss publishing house.

Animated discussion was very much a hallmark of the symposium. This animation demonstrated the accuracy and the pertinence of the questions we had raised, as well as the reality of the widespread desire to reflect critically on current categories and terms – mostly inherited from a colonial past – used when speaking about India. The study of the translation of Hindi literature has helped us, on the one hand, to understand the challenges related to translation and, on the other hand, to grasp better the illustrative role Hindi can play in the future understanding of the complex relations between India, its languages and literatures, and the world in postcolonial times. Our goal of apprehending old and new forms of Hindi and Hindi literatures in a single space and context turned out to constitute a valuable step towards building a critical history of Hindi culture(s).

The publication

While the perspectives, findings, and challenges inherent to translation studies and postcolonial studies constitute parts of the individual papers according to the authors' methodological options, they do not constitute an aim in and of themselves. Rather they reverberate through the volume as an indispensable counterpoint to the discussion.

The contributions that constitute this volume present many of the motives, mechanics, and issues that have contextualized and informed

the translations of Hindi literature thus far. Beyond being a circumscribed linguistic activity, the examples used by the authors clearly show the extent to which translation is integral to creative exchange and encounter. The complex task of translation surely gains in depth and profundity when this creative dimension is also taken into account.

The particular and yet exemplary situation of Hindi, in regard of its history and its linguistic and cultural relations with Indian and non-Indian languages and literatures, provides a perfect illustration of the multidirectional and multilayered process in which consists any text and its translation(s). For centuries it has formed the ground for composite cultures and languages (Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, English, etc.), all of which deserve greater attention. Modern Hindi also exemplifies the long and intricate relationship of the West and India. When dealing with translation, Hindi can never be separated completely from its historical links with English. And though it constitutes a specific case, yet it is also an example that invites comparison with analogous though different cases from other historical and geographical contexts.

Hindi also offers an illustration of the concealed place that can be attributed to "regional" languages by more privileged, more valued, and more widespread languages such as English. If this publication has succeeded in putting a special emphasis on a particular *bhāṣā*, the choice of the Hindi language and its literature should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a starting point into a wider study of vernacular literatures – and in the case of Hindi, of its various non-standardized idioms, historically and regionally.

Papers are divided into three sections according to their main focus. After the Introduction, Part I ("Selection and Issues of Translation") deals with the question of the political, cultural, and linguistic criteria and issues germane to the selection and translation of Hindi works. Parallel to this question, the nature of the enduring links between India and Europe represents a central topic to most of the papers. Some of them also offer suggestions as to how the image of India so far transmitted to non-Indian readers might be expanded. Part II ("Reception and Book History") is dedicated to the reception of Hindi literature through its past translations and discusses various episodes of this literature as viewed from the perspective of the history of books. Covering translations made in India, Europe and in the USA, the papers analyze modern receptions of authors and texts belonging to the "bhakti period" as well

as to the modern one. The articles insist on the importance of contextualizing and historicizing the process and reception of translation. Finally, Part III ("Practices of Translation and Writing Experiences") is intended to provide more personal essays, either on the writing process itself or on the practice of translation. By the order of these four essays, we want to illustrate various perceptions of the idea and practice of translation, from the situation of a physically and personally concrete "translation" for a writer issued from the diaspora, to a translation taking the form of a highly internalized process, and from the compunctions and compulsions guiding the selection of a text to the literary personal choices of a translator.

Part I: Selection and issues of translation

Maya Burger ("Encountering Translation: Translational Historiography in the Connected History of India and Europe," p. 25) uses the perspective of the connected history in her approach to translation of medieval Hindi texts made both at the time and later, an approach which invites scholars to work simultaneously on both cultural backgrounds, India and Europe. Her examples draw from missionaries and from Indology, the latter being represented by the Bhakti Group as translators of a sensitive period of the history of Hindi and India. Thus translational historiography in the connected histories of India and Europe throws light on the role played by translation when seen against the historical and epistemological backgrounds that made the choices and selections of specific translations possible and desirable.

After this introductory perspective, Sudhir Chandra ("Translations and the Making of Colonial Indian Consciousness", p. 47) focuses "on the making of colonial Indian consciousness during the 19th century" and "seeks to outline that dimension of the historiography of cultural India which relates to the introduction of a new language and, as a sequel, to the making of a different kind of social consciousness" (p. 47). Starting with the presupposition that, prior to the colonial period, India did not need to be translated to India, Chandra argues that the colonial presence "created precisely that kind of a situation for growing numbers of Indians" (p. 48), in which such translation was necessary. The reason

for this change was to be found in the "hegemonizing project" of the colonizers and in the establishment of English as a language of prestige and power. Mahadev Govind Ranade and Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi are used as illustrations of the way the English language then dominated the literary and political scenes in North India, without force but with the "free" will of the Indians. One of the results of the presence of English was the rise of a "bilingual consciousness" and a "new cognitive structure" among educated Indians. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay is another example used by Chandra "to highlight the significance of that defeatist translation project" (p. 53). One more instance is the defeat of Gandhi's world-view in the face of the Western model used for evaluating Indian literatures and Indian world-views. The new social consciousness was thus highly influential on the selection and treatment of texts for translation.

Pursuing this paper and pushing its argument to its logical conclusion, Madan Soni's article ("Before the Translation", p. 65) clearly shares the postcolonial point of view and brings an incisive perspective to the question of India in translation. Ideally, argues its author, a translation should be seen as an opportunity for the "target language" to "witness itself from the site of the other," at an "intimate distance" to use Nirmal Verma's phrase – a writer who is invoked on several occasions in this volume. However, says Soni, the expression "translating India" – to recall the name of the 2008 Symposium – should be read literally: "A major translator called colonialism has been at work. So, perhaps what remains to be done, and what we do most of the time in the name of translation, is a sort of transliteration of an already translated India" (p. 67). One of the effects of this relationship of power between Europe and India, as is well known, has been the way in which the latter has started to interpret its tradition in the light of Western modernity and its categories. Thus in the case of the "modern Hindi literature," prose should be seen as its founding form, but a form whose origin comes from a translation and/or a transformation of the standards of Western modernity. Further evidence cited by Soni is the fact that Hindi criticism has also been oblivious to its own very long tradition of Indian poetics. Therefore, when a European translator finds himself confronted by need to make a selection of Hindi texts for translation, the question regarding the link of Hindi literature to modernity – as an evident link or as the result

of a cultural translation and transformation – should be kept in mind, in order to avoid a false identification between them.

The next paper addresses the topic from the "other pole" of the process, i.e. Europe. More precisely, Thomas de Bruijn's paper ("Lost Voices: The Creation of Images of India through Translation", p. 77) looks at the way translations from Hindi literature shaped a "monological" image of India, an image in fact that corresponded only to the expectations of the European readership. If in the two previous papers we perceive, through literal and cultural translations, the impact of Western modernity on the foundation of so-called modern Hindi literature, de Bruijn's paper shows how Europe continued to play an active role in its representation by selecting texts that echoed the Western European fascination with topics such as mysticism or religion. An early publication of Rabindranath Tagore's translation of Kabir's poetry (in 1915) is taken as a first example in order to analyze translation at the beginning of the 20th century. The second example is taken from Nirmal Verma's essays at the end of the same century. Nevertheless, even if translations have mainly been made by Indian authors, "the translation into English led to the foregrounding of one dominant theme: the alienation of Indian characters in response to the encounter with Western lifestyles" (p. 92). De Bruijn concludes his article by citing the contemporary Hindi writer Sara Rai in order to show that this tension has been superseded in her writings and translations by her distancing herself, like most contemporary Hindi writing, "from the ideological habitus that characterized the early modern period" (p. 77).

Continuing the themes of the previous paper, Annie Montaut ("Translating a Literary Text as Voicing Its Poetics Without Metalanguage: With Reference to Nirmal Verma and Krishna Baldev Vaid", p. 103) analyzes the texts of Nirmal Verma and Krishna Baldev Vaid in order to show "the subdued yet not extinct voice of the traditional indigenous culture [, which stands] in contradiction, or beyond, or beneath, their apparent, structural or stylistic, modernity: in contention with it" (p. 105). The textual analysis of Montaut's contribution deals with the question of the complex interactions of reinterpreted traditional culture and modernity created in the cited works. Examining their respective thematic and stylistic devices, the author aims to demonstrate the task specific to translators of such literatures. She argues for translations faithful to

the specific styles of such writers, "without 'oiling' the text into a more 'legible' and marketable piece of writing" (p. 123).

Nicola Pozza's paper ("Translating from India and the Moving Space of Translation (Illustrated by the Works of Ajñeya)," p. 127) questions the relevance of the common dichotomy between the so-called "source culture" and the "target culture" in the context of Hindi literature, and tries to explain the misleading understanding of Indian literatures that result from this binary model. With the illustration of Ajñeya's novel *Nadī ke dvīp* (1951) – together with its English translation, *Islands in the Stream* (1980) – the author shows that as long as translation is viewed "as a linear, binary (source and target texts) and oppositional (dominated vs. dominant literatures) system we can only oversimplify or neglect the multiple linguistic and cultural transfers inherent to the formation of modern Indian (and non-Indian as well) texts and literatures" (p. 148). Moreover, instead of looking at the question of the "target" readership, one should ask from where, in which space, and from what perspective a text is translated. It then appears that translations of Hindi texts are mainly made in India by Indian authors, and that, because of the nature of "modern Hindi literature," one should better think of the "original" Hindi texts as being themselves more or less hybrid texts. Therefore, the space of translation becomes an intermediate and moving space, requiring both the reader of the Hindi version and the reader of the translated version to quit "their usual spaces for a new and intermediate space, set in a constant moving tension between various cultural and linguistic worlds" (p. 149).

Part II: Reception and book history

In the first article ("Translation, Book History, and the Afterlife of a Text: Growse's *The Rámáyana of Tulsi Dás*," p. 155), Ulrike Stark attempts "to map the material geographies of Hindi texts as they first travelled westward to be received by European audiences" at the end of the 19th century (p. 157). The author seeks to "demonstrate how the study of translation and transmission can benefit from a book history approach" (p. 178). She first shows the discrepancy between the vibran-

cy of Hindi literary culture in Benares in 1885 and the contemporary European indifference towards it. The "vernacular manuscripts" were then disregarded by European philologists as well as American scholars, who viewed them as full of "deficiency" and "indecent erotics," as opposed to texts written in Sanskrit and other "traditional" languages, which were held in great esteem. After recalling the role played by the German publishing house of Trübner and its British equivalent Luzac in the distribution of Oriental literature, Stark deals in the second part of her paper with the early reception of the *Rāmcaritmānas* in the West, and more precisely of its first English translation by Frederic Growse, published in three volumes between 1877 and 1880. Thanks to Growse's translation, "Tulsi's *Mānas* was once again read for its reconciliatory spirit [… and] its status as a unifying text acquired a new significance" (p. 177). Thus, the perception of India in Britain began to change: moving from denigration to sympathy.

Purushottam Agrawal ("'Something Will Ring …': Translating Kabir and his 'Life'", p. 181), focusing on the translations of Kabir's poems (or poems attributed to him in anthologies), bases his article on Ramanujan's famous sentence, "A translator is an artist on oath". He claims that Kabir has too often been used by translators as "an instrument to 'prove' a pre-determined conclusion about the nature of Indian cultural and religious history" (p. 184). Reviewing most of the English translations of Kabir, from Marco Della Tomba's in the late 18th century to Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh's in 1983, the author describes how the preconceptions and worldviews present at the core of each of these translations worked to influence the selection and the translation of Kabir's poems. As a consequence of these interpretations, the poet has respectively been read and presented as a Brahmin, as the founder of the Kabir Panth, or as a mystic. However, according to Agrawal, it is only the recent translation by Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh which, while focusing on the poetry, highlights the poet's "social criticism". Agrawal also asserts that their translation, because it keeps the "integrity of the poet's personality," should be considered as an instance of the work of artists "on oath". Notwithstanding his position, being more that of a critic than of an historian, Agrawal foregrounds the importance of the context of reception in regard to the way one translates a poet of the early modern period.

Working on the same period, Florence Pasche Guignard's paper ("Go West, Mira! Translating Medieval Bhakti Poetry," p. 195) explores the translation into European languages of Mirabai's *Padāvalī* and its subsequent reception. The author views the poetess as "a representative example of what is at stake in translation and of the many difficulties of this process" (p. 195). Thus she points at the difficulties of translating and adapting oral performance into a literary genre, or into a modern and Western context in which poetry exists within a tradition valuing books. Based on an interpretation of translations of Mirabai into European languages – which are chronologically listed in a table at the end of her article – Pasche Guignard's article offers several examples of the important questions unavoidably inherent to the practice of translation, questions such as "the influence of gender studies, the inclusion of Mirabai's poetry in series or collections, the significance of translated titles, the importance of the location of publishers, and the Indian diaspora as a new readership of Mirabai in English" (p. 195).

Continuing this exploration of the reception of Hindi literature, Galina Rousseva-Sokolova's paper ("Behind and beyond the Iron Curtain: Reception of Hindi Literature in Eastern and Central Europe," p. 235) brings us to the European countries of the former communist block through a survey of the translations available in them. Starting with the former USSR, as the assumed centre of influence in Eastern Europe, the essay aims to analyze the impact of the political context on the selection and translation of Hindi works, the nature and extent of their influence, and the way the political context changed over time. Behind the apparent uniformity of policy towards Indian literatures, Rousseva-Sokolova points out the particularities characteristic of each country. Her paper therefore shows that, beyond political diktat, individual interests also played an important role in the selection and publication of Hindi works. Despite these individual and political preconditions, however, translations from Hindi hardly succeeded in changing the general, *a priori* public image of India behind the Iron Curtain. The question remains, then: how are we scholars and translators able – if this is an aim – to exert any influence on this image?

Part III: Practices of translation and writing experiences

The first paper, by Susham Bedi ("Looking in from the Outside: Writing and Teaching in the Diasporic Setting", p. 249), shows a Hindi writer whose translation process is explicitly imbedded in her own life. Being a writer of the diaspora (in the USA), Bedi seeks her original Indian identity and wants to explain it to her students. Her activity both as a writer and as a teacher of Hindi is illustrated by her paper, which "focuses on the dual role of a diaspora writer in translating her culture to the adopted country as well as exporting the reconstituted culture back to her native country" (p. 249). Bedi uses her own novels and short stories in English versions – to which we have added the corresponding excerpts in the original Hindi versions – in order to comment on the way she experiences the process of translation in her life and writing. Experiences of life, teaching and writing are thus continuously swinging between the "inside" and the "outside," between being at once an observer and a participant in both her cultures. Her paper can be seen as an example of a writer "translated" to, and translating from, the diaspora while pursuing an existential quest for identity in a hybrid world.

From a diametrically opposing perspective, Geetanjali Shree's paper ("Writing Is Translating Is Writing Is Translating Is …," p. 267) offers an illustration of the hybridity with which a "Hindi writer" living in India continuously experiments and lives. Echoing Chandra's and Soni's theoretical approaches, Shree offers a creative response. Her contribution is illustrative of our topic on two levels. Firstly, on the level of writing, when the author asserts: "From the never easy moment of choosing the language of writing to the always agonising act of writing, there constantly occurs an embroiled interplay of selection and writing, of translating and writing" (p. 269). Second, on the level of translation, as she herself experienced the challenge of translating into "English" her own novel *Kh̲ālī jagah*: "From writing in a 'hybrid' Hindi to translating in a 'hybrid' English, I have landed myself in a mess!" (p. 275). Besides these more personal remarks, Shree deals at some length with general issues linked to translation. Thus, questions raised and dealt with previously in the book are approached anew from her personal and insightful perspective.

Girdhar Rathi ("Compunctions in the Act of Translation", p. 277) examines the role played by editors in the translation process by dealing with the topic of compulsion and compunction in translation. The author offers his reflections on the question of whether a particular choice for translation is a free one or whether it in fact depends on racial, national, linguistic, cultural, editorial, religious, etc. compunctions. He underlines the fact that the selection of a given text for translation is (almost) never the result of a free choice; rather it was and still is patronage-driven or ideologically informed. As a result, the images of India which "have emerged from the literary translations must be quite fragmented" (p. 282). Nonetheless, Rathi concludes, the progressive decrease in the linguistic knowledge of younger generations bodes well for future translation projects.

To conclude the book, the voice of the translator is located at the heart of the matter. In his paper ("'…The Savage Silence of Different Languages' or Translating from South Asian Literatures", p. 285), Rainer Kimmig prefers to avoid theorization, because, though it may be appropriate for academic discussion, it is according to him of no use for literary works. Furthermore, and although a translator has to know virtually everything about it, for Kimmig translation is not about cultural background: "Literary translation is about the unique voice of an individual writer, not about cultural or literary history" (p. 287). For him, translation is above all an activity which should let the "I" of the writer speak through the translator's personal recreation of that "I": "I, for that matter, never translated Indian or Muslim culture, I always translated Ajñeya, Nirmal Verma, Geetanjali Shree or Intizar Husain" (p. 287). Moreover, the selection and translation of texts in Hindi and Urdu – Kimmig rightly points out that they are two halves of a whole – depends on the translator's life and his/her literary personality. Rejecting thus the scholarly practice of translation – which tends to submerge the text with notes – and its emphasis on the system, *la langue* (language), Kimmig instead favours the individual voice, *la parole* (speech).

Given that translation constitutes the core of this publication, we did not want to homogenize or standardize the individual styles and languages found in the papers it contains. Uniformity according to Western academic criteria could have appeared as a species of colonialism, which this publication clearly could not condone. It would, moreover, have

gone against the very aim of the book, which views translation as an activity that allows and reveals a *plurality of voices*. We thought it fruitful and relevant to let the multiplicity of the contributors' origins speak out in their writings and ideas. This implies however that every author bears sole responsibility for his/her ideas and English style.

We hope that the reflections collected in this volume will convince translators no less than scholars and readers that the encounter with translations from Hindi is indeed a rich and rewarding one.