

INDIA IN TRANSLATION THROUGH HINDI LITERATURE

A Plurality of Voices

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Translating from India and the Moving Space of Translation (Illustrated by the Works of Ajñeya)

The inadequacies and obsolescence of Eurocentric theories based on a binary and static worldview have become a staple topic of postcolonial studies, and to some extent also of translation studies. Nonetheless, the literary texts that are called upon in order to show the dynamism and hybridity of (post)modern works belong for the most part to the languages of the former colonial powers, especially English, and remain inserted in a system that construes literatures in terms of opposition. As a consequence, there is outside India a doubly misleading understanding of Indian literatures other than those written in English: firstly, that translations of works in Hindi and in the Indian bhāṣā seem to be lacking, if not inexistent, and secondly, that these “minor” literatures – as they are regularly termed – are still often viewed as being highly dependent on the idea of “tradition,” in opposition to the “postmodern” hybridity of the literatures written in the “dominant” languages, such as English or French. Against these views and supported by the analysis of Ajñeya’s works in Hindi together with their English translations, this paper aims to show: 1) that translations from Hindi, which are not in fact non-existent, are mainly carried out in India, and 2) that Ajñeya’s works, while representing a significant instance of the effective hybridity present in Indian literatures, help to illustrate the moving space of translation. This demonstration effectively invalidates the above-mentioned oppositional standpoint.

Introduction

Without doubt, translation in India has played and continues to play an important role in the modern development of its literatures as well as in the daily interactions between its many official languages – twenty-two in January 2010. As a result of the multiplicity of Indian “regional lan-

guages” (i.e. *bhāṣā* such as Bengali, Tamil, Kannada, etc.)¹ and of “foreign” languages (such as Persian, Arabic, English, etc.) in the Subcontinent, translation – or “adaptation,” according to periods and literary criteria – has always been present, from the time preceding the British colonization and up to the present day.²

If the problems related to translation also exist in India – politically because of the inequality of power between the Indian languages, culturally because of India’s history, and theoretically because of the different views regarding the nature of these “translations” – the topic becomes highly problematical when a narrow Western point of view is applied to the Indian context. The following questions illuminate some of the problems raised by such a view. What are the limits and inadequacies of the still common linear and binary process of translation when applied to the Indian context? Is an Indian translation in English necessarily meant for a foreign readership?³ How are we to know and value Indian literatures, other than the Indian English one, when postcolonial studies systematically work on texts written in the languages of the “former” colonial powers? How can we link the act of linguistic translation to a wider dynamic process, one which would integrate the several steps of cultural and textual “translations” in the life (or rather, the lives) of a text?

These are the questions I would like to deal with in the following pages, while taking the Hindi writer S.H. Vatsyayan “Ajñeya” (1911–87) as an illustration of the situation regarding Hindi literature in transla-

- 1 “*bhāṣā*” is regularly translated, for want of anything better, by “regional language”. The adjective “regional” can be appropriate as long as one is ready to consider German, Italian or Swedish as equivalent “regional” languages ...
- 2 This assertion somehow contradicts what Chandra says in this volume: “commentaries and adaptations notwithstanding, Indians did not have to translate their own literature and knowledge for themselves” (p. 48). In fact, the question is a matter of terminology: are we speaking of “translation,” “adaptation,” “plagiarism,” etc.?. This paper does not aim at solving this question; therefore it will be left on hold.
- 3 Even if English is constitutionally an “associate official language,” the question of whether it should be considered an Indian language or not is still at the origin of several debates in India. I will not explore the topic here, but confine myself to the question relevant to the issue of this paper: should translations into English made in India be considered as translations mainly meant for a non-Indian readership or not?

tion.⁴ Indeed, Ajñeya offers a very interesting illustration of the central place of translation within Hindi literature in the 20th century. Although his works have not been much translated outside India, he still remains one of the most translated Hindi writers. Where translations of his works are available, they are essentially self-translations, made alone or in collaboration – at least for works in English, a language he was competent in.⁵ On the other hand, Ajñeya also helped to enrich Hindi literature through his various translations from other Indian and European languages. Thus, he is the author of three translations into Hindi from Bengali – one of which being Tagore’s *Gorā* (1910), translated in 1961⁶ –, one translation into English of Jainendra Kumar’s *Tyāgpatr* (1937),⁷ and three translations into Hindi from English versions of novels by the Swedish writer Pär Lagerkvist. This variety of sources and target languages is not peculiar to Ajñeya, but reflects a general Indian attitude to translation within the frame of its multilingual context.⁸

- 4 The locutions “Hindi writer” and “Hindi literature,” when used in this paper, should not be considered as clearly defined and essentialist entities, which would be the result of some standardization or linguistic orthodoxy (avoiding for instance the usage of Urdu words). They only mean a writer who uses Hindi, with all its varieties, as the main medium of his/her creation, and a literature that is made of works in the so-called Hindi language.
- 5 The few translations available in German, French, Italian and other European languages are almost exclusively the results of Western teachers of Hindi. In an interesting analysis of the Italian publishing policy regarding Indian authors, Alessandra Consolaro underlines the fact that most of the renowned Hindi writers have been translated into Italian, even if it is only to a small extent. However, these writers will remain unknown to the wide public, as “their translations are not easily available and even in libraries they are difficult to find. In fact, a peculiarity of translations from Indian languages other than English is that they are almost always confined to the academic environment” (CONSOLARO, 2007:6). For translations done into Eastern European languages, see Rousseva-Sokolova’s article in this volume.
- 6 The other two are Tagore’s *Rājā* and Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s *Śrīkānt*.
- 7 Entitled *The Resignation* (1946, new edition in 1980).
- 8 For one particularly striking example of this practice of translating from various languages into no less various ones, see Prabhakar Machwe’s self-presentation quoted by ST. PIERRE, 2007:135.

Systems of translation

The linear process of the binary system

When dealing with the question of translation, the binary system still occupies a prevailing position in the academy.⁹ The system is based on the assumption that the translation of a text is a kind of linear and binary process, whose target is necessarily a foreign readership. The process can be outlined in the following way: a “source” text written by an author X in a culture A is translated into the “target” language by a translator Y belonging to a culture B – language, literature, culture, and sometimes nation, being seen as belonging to a single unified entity. Although this understanding has rightly long been criticized, it is still employed as a recurrent theoretical tool.¹⁰

According to this conceptual model, the binary system would, *a priori*, perfectly fit the situation of a text written in any of the Indian *bhāṣā* and translated into one of the languages originating in Europe. The underlying idea would then be that the culture is embodied within the text and needs also to be “translated” for another (completely) different culture. With this conceptual model in mind, the translator may supplement the text itself with a peritext, such as a short introduction, some cultural notes and a glossary in order to help the reader, supposedly unfamiliar with the Indian background of the source text.

Although nobody can deny that every text and every creation is rooted in a specific context, this dualist view is “true” only as long as we stick to a simplified and essentialist concept of the world and its cultures. In reality, cultural identities and boundaries are never so clearly cut nor so stable. The limits and inadequacies of such a binary division with its implicit link between text, language and culture – or even nation – become evident in the case of India, where multilingualism and the rich

9 Somehow the old legacy of a nationalist or an Orientalist representation of the world.

10 See for instance BRISSET, 2004:337, who says: “Translation is a unidirectional operation between two given languages. The target language is thus, every bit as much as the source language, a *sine qua non* of the translative operation”.

variety of sources of inspiration are constituent to its literatures. Moreover, what about the situation where a writer is at the same time his own translator, as in the case of Ajñeya? The section dedicated below to the analysis of Ajñeya's *Nadī ke dvīp* (p. 140–145) will return to the question.

Postcolonialism and the “hybrid” system

Rejecting this binary model of translation, seen as too static and essentialist, scholars working on “postcolonial”¹¹ authors and literatures prefer to speak in terms of “relation,” “change,” “inclusion,” and “difference”.¹² They have also come up with the important notion of “Third Space”.¹³ Linked to this last notion, “hybridity” also plays a key role in postcolonial studies.¹⁴ In short, critics prefer to highlight the hybridity existing

- 11 “‘Post-colonial’ as we define it does not mean ‘post-independence’, or ‘after colonialism’, for this would be to falsely ascribe an end to the colonial process. Post-colonialism, rather, begins from the very first moment of colonial contact. It is the discourse of *oppositonality* which colonialism brings into being” (ASHCROFT, GRIFFITHS and TIFFIN, 1995:117; emphasis added).
- 12 “Rather than limit the possibilities of interpretation to those that are binary and exclusionary, I suggest that as postcolonial critics interested in cultural translation we begin to use evaluative tools that are relational, inclusive and differential to work that common ground of imperfect linguistic equivalence” (MERRILL, 2007:122).
- 13 “The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious. [...] It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (BHABHA, 1994:53–54).
- 14 “Hybridity” commonly refers to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (ASHCROFT, GRIFFITHS and TIFFIN, 2005:118). More specifically, it is thus explained: “Now the notion of hybridity comes from the two prior descriptions I’ve given of the genealogy of difference and the idea of translation, because if, as I was saying, the act of cultural translation (both as representation and as reproduction) denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in

within a work and its context(s) of creation, or to emphasize situations where the concept of “translation” refers to the re-appropriation and internalization of the colonial language by a postcolonial author, either in his native context or in the diaspora.¹⁵ Salman Rushdie’s (1947–) or V.S. Naipaul’s (1932–) novels and essays produce famous instances of the latter, while Anita Desai (1937–) and R.K. Narayan (1906–2001) represent well-known examples of the former (Indian native context). Raja Rao’s (1908–2006) novel *Kanthapura* (1938) written in English can be cited as an intermediary case.¹⁶ The writer explicitly states how languages and cultures are intertwined in the “spirit” of authors like him – giving thus an eloquent instance of the hybridity constitutive of his linguistic and cultural identities:

One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. [...] We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us.¹⁷

These are very common examples of writers using the medium of English without going through a textual translation. In fact, translation is inherent to their process of creation. But we may also ask whether the situation is very different when an author uses a “regional” language for

a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (Homi Bhabha’s comment in RUTHERFORD, 1990:211).

- 15 For a discussion on the analogy between literary translation and postcolonial writing using the former colonial language, see TYMOCZKO, 1999.
- 16 RAO, 1977 is an interesting case, as its author moved from India to France, then back to India before settling in the United States. Most interestingly, Rao wrote *Kanthapura* in France and published it first in London (<<http://www.litencyc.com>> (02.02.10)). For a study of the novel according to this approach, see PRASAD, 1999. Underlying the importance of “translation” for such writers, the latter comments: “Thus it is not only in the case of Indo-British writers but in that of all Indian English writers that the texts they create are ‘translated’, the very act of their writing being one of translation” (PRASAD, 1999: 41). CASANOVA, 2002:14 cites Rushdie as another example of translation in writing, or even in being.
- 17 RAO, 1977:vii. In a similar vein, and even on a higher degree, see Shree’s paper in this volume on the question of the “internalized” translation and on the almost insuperable difficulties she met in translating into English her Hindi novel *Khālī jagah*, which is itself already heavily hybrid.

the original version of a text, and only subsequently translates it (or has it translated) into English. Does it make a difference as far as the target readership, the lexical selection, and the cultural descriptions are concerned?

This question will be dealt with at the end of this contribution. For the time being, a tentative answer can be given by having a look at one instance of such practice in Ajñeya's works. His Hindi short story "Jaydol," originally published in 1951,¹⁸ was translated into English by the author in 1967,¹⁹ for an anthology of Indian short stories. At the linguistic level, Ajñeya retained in his English version some Hindi terms and expressions, such as "I'll make some *bandobast*" or "*Theek'ai, Sa'ab!*" While these expressions can be understood by any Indian, they will surely give trouble to non-Indian readers. It is true that the plot may help them guess the meaning. This notwithstanding, nothing is done to help the reader in this matter: no introduction, no footnote, no glossary, and no following equivalent term in English. The aim of Ajñeya's translation, with the presence of Hindi terms, was certainly not to puzzle his readers. It should rather be interpreted as the desire of the translator to lend some "native" touch to the English version, in order to incite non-Indian readers to move out of their culture and "get into" the context of the story.²⁰ Without presuming to know what "Jay-dol" might have been had it originally been written in English, we can suppose from this short example that what matters is the translator's desire to have the reader move towards the background of the text, and not the fact that a text is first written in English or only later through translation.

This very short instance of translation brings us back to postcolonial studies. If their critics have brought some food for thought with the concept of hybridity, as was seen before, the fact remains that most of them mainly deal with Indian writers belonging to the diaspora and writing in English. Only a few, more "daring" among them, have thought it useful to include in their study writers residing in India. Nevertheless, there re-

18 AJÑEYA, 2000.

19 AJÑEYA, 1998b.

20 Mention should also be made of the fact that there is no "authorized" or standardized Indian English. Raja Rao's example is appropriate here; he "does not claim to be writing in Indian English. He is not writing in British English either. He is creating a language as well as creating in it" (PRASAD, 1999:42).

mains a strong impression that only Indian writers making use of English are taken into account, as if they constituted the only category experiencing interculturality or hybridity. And yet, anyone with some knowledge of the literatures of the various Indian *bhāṣā* is aware that hybridity had been present in them long before postcolonial studies invented the term, in the same way it was in European literatures.²¹

That lack of interest in texts written in *bhāṣā* raises the following question. If Indian literature written in English is predominant or if works translated into English are the only accessible texts to scholars – and to a more general non-Indian readership – how are “regional” languages, literatures and cultures represented in such circumstances? What could be the nature of cultural transfers in this case? Should we look at Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai or R.K. Narayan as the only authors able to show that India is not just “tradition” and “religion”? Or should we view this focus on these writers outside India as the result of the expectation of Western readers and editors, who still want to see in India the figure of an exotic and exuberant Other, although they also and at the same time want this Other to speak their own language and somehow share the cultural imagery of their own experience?²² Should we therefore recognize that the particular representation their writings give of India fits editorial demands and corresponds to a relevant selection of Indian literature(s)? If we might acknowledge the reality of such editorial expectations, we can but disagree with the last part of the question, as “India” can only be represented as a very limited and peculiar culture if it is based solely on literature in English. This is why the non-English literatures of India and their translation are so important for the topic of this volume.

21 For a clear evidence of this practice, see MONTAUT, 1992 on Ajñeya’s *Apne apne ajnabī*.

22 Take for example the recent widespread success of Vikas Swarup’s *Q&A*, and of course the even more “amazing” success of its film adaptation *Slumdog Millionaire* by Danny Boyle.

The status of Hindi and the translation of its literature

Hindi seen as a “minority language”

However, merely willing it to be so is not enough to change our representation of India through its literatures. Rather we should probably ask whether there is any genuine interest in translating texts from *bhāṣā* outside India. Thus, although Hindi, due to the political events of India’s modern history, has been promoted the official language of the republic – with English as the “associate official language” – and has acquired a dominant position vis-à-vis other Indian regional languages, on a global scale its literature continues to be seen as a “minority” or “dominated” literature.²³

The dominant position accorded to English has at least two connected consequences. The first consequence is that Hindi literature – and, of course, literatures of other *bhāṣā* as well – are often considered as “minority languages”. See for instance Michael Cronin, who first rightly points to “the tendency of post-colonial critics to reduce Europe to two languages, English and French,” but who, however, in the next paragraph, implicitly reduces Hindi, and other associated languages, to a “minority language” when he asserts: “If translation has traditionally suffered from lack of visibility then there is a sense in which translators working in minority languages are doubly invisible at a theoretical level”.²⁴

23 This “blackout” may also be seen as a consequence of the “enchanted circle” described by Ashis Nandy and developed here in Annie Montaut’s paper.

24 CRONIN, 2003:140. Among scholars in the field of World Literature, another pair of terms is used for this distinction between “minority” and “dominant” languages: the notions of “periphery” and “core,” borrowed by Moretti (MORETTI, 2000) from the world-system school of economic history – although these terms are nowadays highly questionable. Writing on the concept of “world literature” – as a means to “go against the grain of national historiography” (61) – Moretti deals at some length with the formal influence of the Western novel on the literatures of the “periphery”. His paper is however symptomatic of Western silence – or is it ignorance? – concerning Indian literatures. There is not a single word on any *bhāṣā* when Moretti mentions the languages he would need to know in order to carry out such a study: “French, English, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Portuguese” (66). The

The second consequence regarding the dominant position accorded to English is that Hindi seems almost nonexistent in translation studies, and paradoxically also in postcolonial and world literature studies. Hindi is very poorly represented in these fields, despite its plethoric literary production and the fact that in terms of numbers of speakers it is the fifth largest language in the world.²⁵

Even a major journal such as *World Literature Today* (WLT) looks at India essentially as a country producing almost nothing but literature in English. Except for an issue dedicated to the Indian Literatures “In the Fifth Decade of Independence” (WLT 68/2, 1994), Indian writers appearing in the Reviews section are almost exclusively writers in English. The above-mentioned issue lists only authors such as Shashi Deshpande, Amitav Ghosh, Sarojini Naidu, Vikram Seth and Shashi Tharoor, with the noteworthy exception of David Rubin’s translation of Susham Bedi’s *The Fire Sacrifice*. But still more revealing of this omnipresence of English in postcolonial studies is the book edited by Harish Trivedi and Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context* (1996), in which *all* the authors are Professors or Lecturers of English, all but one of whom work on literatures in English!

It is obvious that outside India, any competence in Indian languages is almost completely (and unfortunately) lacking. But is not this neglect towards their literatures a proof of the persistence of some colonialist or hegemonic behavior and thinking – which can be called “neocolonialism” – despite what is claimed by postcolonial critics?²⁶

Translations of Hindi literature

These examples highlight the fact that not only does a binary model of translation and cultures prevail, but it is usually underpinned by a notion of hierarchy between “dominant” languages on the one hand, and “mi-

only reference to the Indian context and literature is a reference to Meenakshi Mukherjee’s *Realism and Reality*.

25 For details, see the web site “Ethnologue: Languages of the world” at <http://www.ethnologue.com/ethno_docs/distribution.asp?by=size> (02.02.10).

26 In this regard, see CHOUDHURI, 2007:29: “This has created a crisis of preservation of multilinguality in a system of neocolonialism in this post-colonial era because colonialism still survives in a new *avatar*, in an altered form”.

nority” or “dominated” languages on the other hand.²⁷ A consequence of this bias is that it disregards all translations (into English and other Indian languages) originating in *India*, which are mainly published by Indian publishers and made by Indian translators and/or writers. If it is true that in comparison to the major European languages (and to some extent also to Japanese and Chinese) relatively few Hindi literary texts have been translated, a quick survey of anthologies and statistics about available translations from Hindi nevertheless shows that these are far from being inexistent.²⁸

Actually, there is an important discrepancy in the percentage of works being translated in a text’s country of origin between texts written in the West and those produced in India. If none of the literatures originating in Europe and North America is firstly translated in its country of production – except for the former USSR (for evident geopolitical reasons) – Hindi literature, as well as other literatures in *bhāṣā*, is primarily translated in India itself. Actually, two third of its translations are made in India, the last third being shared among all other countries, starting with Russia (and ex-USSR), Germany, France, etc.²⁹ This is corroborated by the figures resulting from the *Bibliography* of Joshi, which

27 This conception can be illustrated by the (otherwise instructive) article of CASANOVA, 2002.

28 This information is based on the statistics of the UNESCO “Index Translationum,” <<http://databases.unesco.org/xtrans/stat/xTransStat.html>> (05.02.10). They are corroborated by the more specific *Bibliography of Hindi Literature in English Translation* by Joshi (JOSHI, 1997). From the “Index Translationum,” only the works categorized as belonging to “Literature” (representing about 50% of the entire catalogue) have been taken into account for this study. Because of the inexhaustive nature of these documents, the comments set out in the text above are based on percentages and comparison between different figures, and not on absolute numbers.

29 In the “Index Translationum,” the country of translation is designated according to the place of publication. Thus, according to the “Index,” between 1960 and 2008 64% of translated Hindi literary works have been published in India, whereas only 8% of translations have been published in Russia and the former USSR, 5% in Germany and 4% in France. The situation is the same with Bengali, Sanskrit and Oriya literatures; the Indian percentage becoming even greater with Tamil, Malayalam and Marathi literatures. On the other hand, translations of literatures in European and East Asian languages published “at home” do not exceed each 2.5%, except for Spanish (8%) and Russian (31%).

shows that out of three hundreds or so translations listed, only 12% have been published by foreign publishers (based for the great majority in the U.S.A.).³⁰ If we look at the names of the translators, it appears that the great majority are of Indian origin, while there are a little less than twenty translations made in collaboration between Indian authors and foreign translators.³¹

These statistics give the impression that an international audience is not the first target of the translations. Of course, against this interpretation, one may object that comparison should be made between India and Europe taken as a unit instead of comparing the former with every single European country. If we can easily agree with this remark as far as the cultural and the linguistic grounds are concerned, there is another phenomenon which makes Hindi literature particular in the field of translation. It concerns the fact that – according to the statistics of the “Index” – contrary to all other translated literatures, whether belonging to European languages or not, Hindi is translated into one predominant

30 JOSHI, 1997.

31 Regarding translations made *in collaboration*, Ajñeya represents a good illustration of the practice. Together with Manas Mukul Das, he translated *Preparing the Ground* (AJÑEYA, 1984) and *Truculent Clay* (AJÑEYA, 1982b), two collections of his jottings in the form of dateless diaries. With Leonard Nathan, he translated four collections of his poems, and with Gordon Roadarmel, *Apne apne ajnabī* – a translation he revised alone for the second edition (AJÑEYA, 1982a). The fact that Ajñeya was always taking part in the English translations of his works is variously explained by writers and critics who knew him. According to Ashok Vajpeyi, too few translators and a small English readership at that time may explain the lack of interest for English translations and the need for a writer to translate his works himself (an explanation given during an interview. See Bibliography for details, as for the subsequent comments). For Manas Mukul Das, it is more the fact that Ajñeya enjoyed working in collaboration. When working together with his translators, he would first do a literal translation of his poems, then explain their meaning and finally let his translators translate the poems for publication. If the result was felt appropriate, Ajñeya would speak of a “transcreation”; otherwise he would look at it as a new poem made by the translator (for the concept of transcreation, quite usual in India, see SALVADOR, 2005:195f). Nandkishore Acharya goes a step further and argues that translation was for Ajñeya the occasion to give a new expression to the text: “Translating something into another language is a way to introduce something new”. It was not only a question of “transcreation,” but the result of a creative process, and collaboration was a way to explore this creative process.

language, i.e. English. Thus, we find that 25% of the translations are made into English – while the second target language for Hindi translations is Oriya with only 10% of the whole, ahead of German and Bengali (7% each).³² One last figure shows both the importance of English and Indian publishers in this matter: out of the 218 translations into English listed by the “Index,” 79% have been published in India.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this. First, the preponderant place of Indian publishers and translators reflects the traditionally central role played by translation in the formation of Indian literatures in general, and modern Hindi literature in particular. Second, the great majority of translations from Hindi literature, which are made into English, are essentially the result of Indian authors and translators, and are apparently meant for an Indian readership, living either in India or in the diaspora. The large quantity of books translated into English after the colonial period also shows that the previous colonial language is now considered a useful, if not essential, medium to promote Hindi literature in India outside the Hindi-speaking States.³³

Hybridity in Ajñeya’s works and the moving space of translation

Statistically, the predominance of India and the Indian publishers in regard to the translations of Hindi literary works into English shows that

32 Besides Hindi, the only literatures in India which are primarily translated into English all belong to the Dravidian family, i.e. Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. However, except for literature in Tamil, English is not a predominant language for translation.

33 If we pay attention to the dates of publication given in JOSHI, 1997, we can see that very few translations were made before 1947: out of the only six translations listed, five refer to premodern poets, the first and single translation of a modern author being one collection of short stories by Premchand in 1946. After Independence, not more than a dozen English translations were published between 1948 and 1960, and a few more during the sixties. Translations of Hindi works really start during the seventies – an evolution corroborated by the “Index”.

these translations are mainly meant for an Indian readership. Such a conclusion, however, would be reliable only if we could have further details from the authors, editors and publishers with respect to their expected readership, i.e. Indian or foreigners. As this information is lacking, and in order to bring more concrete elements to these general observations, it is now necessary to look practically at one instance and at its author's use of references. Ajñeya's second novel *Nadī ke dvīp*,³⁴ and its translated version *Islands in the Stream*,³⁵ will thus be used in this part as an illustration: 1) of the presence of hybridity in Hindi literature and 2) of the moving space of translation, which switches the emphasis from the question of the expected readership to the place of the translation and the perspective of the translator.

Nadī ke dvīp as an illustration of intertextuality and interculturality in Hindi literature

Ajñeya translated *Nadī ke dvīp* (hereafter ND) as *Islands in the Stream* (hereafter IS) in 1980, at the beginning of what was to be an important decade regarding his activity as a translator. The English version, published in New Delhi by Vikas Publishing House, belonged to a series called "Vikas Library of Modern Indian Writing," which included anthologies of short stories of varied Indian languages and some novels by Indian writers in English (the series ended around 1984). ND and IS both possessed a limited peritext: two epigraphs in both versions, Acknowledgments in the English publication, and a one-page preface (*bhūmikā*) to the National Publishing House's version of the Hindi text (which I am using here).³⁶

The two epigraphs of the original version – a poem by Shelley, quoted in English (but in Devanagari script) with the author's Hindi translation in a footnote, the other by himself, in Hindi – remain the

34 AJÑEYA, 1998a.

35 AJÑEYA, 1980.

36 In the preface the author briefly deals with the reception of his novel and the hope that his characters have now become a part of society – and, through them, the writer too. The first Hindi edition was published by Sarasvati Press (Delhi, Allahabad) in 1951.

same in the English version, except that the Hindi poem is translated into English. The difference lies in the fact that in ND the epigraphs are set at the very beginning of the book, before the preface and the table of contents, while in IS they are inserted between the table of contents and the first chapter. It is the “Acknowledgements” that come first in the latter. These are related to people who helped him translating the novel, including a non-exhaustive list of works quoted or alluded to by the characters in the book:

Apart from the books of the Bible and the Mahabharata, characters in this book frequently quote or allude to the work of Browning, Eliot, Heine, Lawrence (D.H. as well as T.E.), Jayshankar Prasad, Plomer, Rossetti (D.G. and Christina), Shelley, Swinburne, Tagore, Toller and others whom it is not possible to name. These references have helped the author to achieve an authenticity in the representation of the period in which the story is set [1941–43], and in the delineation of the characters whose story it is. He records his debt to all these sources.³⁷

This explicit intertextuality clearly informs the reader of the varied and multicultural sources of inspiration of this milestone novel. What is particular to the text is that these references are explicitly cited, whereas other writers in Hindi generally avoid mentioning them, even though all of them were well-versed in English and other European literatures and cultural references.³⁸ Now, the fact that the “Acknowledgements” are present only in the translated version implies that the author had in mind another readership than the one who reads his Hindi text (besides the obvious difference of language capability). Apparently, for Ajñeya it was important that his Anglophone readership knew who and what (some of) his sources of inspiration were. Maybe he also wanted to show clearly to non-Indian readers – or to some Indian critics and conservative Hindi

37 AJÑEYA, 1980:n.p.

38 A reality described by Ajñeya in an essay on Hindi literature, where he says that at the beginning of 20th century the “Hindi writer [and the elite] was by now familiar with the works of the great Victorians; in poetry he knew the Romantic lyric poets very well but was also familiar with the longer narrative poetry not only of the Romantics but of Pope and Dryden and Milton. He also knew the work of Hugo and Dumas, and to a lesser degree of Molière, Balzac, Flaubert, Maupassant and Zola. Tolstoi, Turgeniev, Tchekov were becoming familiar names” (VATSYAYAN, 1957:76).

writers too – that Hindi literature is actually rich in multicultural and multilingual elements.

To pursue this argument, it is necessary to look into the text, where intertextuality and interculturality play an important role. While the plot and the setting mainly refer to the Indian context of the nineteen-forties and to its issues (such as India and the Second World War, freedom in India vs. in Europe, marriage and divorce in India) and to some “autobiographical” elements, the manifold sources of references and the highly developed psychological delineation of the characters, to the detriment of more descriptive and concrete aspects, broaden the cultural frame of the novel and de-centre its interpretative space. Besides conceptual and geographical references to various cultures, quotations in and allusions to English, Bengali or other linguistic references are from time to time inserted as poems or locutions in the narrative and in the characters’ discourses and dialogue.

A few examples will be used here to illustrate the hybridity which pervades the novel and to question the potential readership of the translated version. For instance, near the middle of the book, the narrator plays with both Hindu and Christian cultures when he describes the sequence of the “love affair” between Bhuvan and Rekha in the Himalayas. He juxtaposes scenery of high mountains and moonlight in order to symbolize, in the purest Indian tradition, their love and union, and puts into Bhuvan’s mind verses of the *Song of Solomon* during their erotic games.³⁹ His mental recitation of the *Song of Solomon* appears twice, with a gap of some pages in between – the *Song* is later mentioned two more times, once without quotation and once when Bhuvan relates this episode to Gaura. The first time the *Song* is quoted, Bhuvan, accompanied by Rekha, is travelling to the mountains where he is going for a scientific experiment. Extracts from Rekha’s notebook come to his mind while he is sitting restlessly in the bus. Ajñeya the narrator has translated the verses into Hindi for the Hindi version,⁴⁰ while Ajñeya the translator has quoted the *King James Version* for the English version.⁴¹

39 On the symbolism of moonlight linked to eroticism, see DAMSTEEGT, 2001.

40 AJÑEYA, 1998a.

41 AJÑEYA, 1980.

दो-एक बार अशान्त भाव से वह अपनी सीट में इधर-उधर मड़ा। 'मेरी प्रिया बोली, उस ने कहा, उठो प्रिय और मेरे साथ आओ, क्योंकि शीत ऋतु बीत गयी है, वर्षा चुक गयी है, धरती में फूल जागते हैं, पक्षियों के गाने का समय आ गया है, और कुमरी का कूजन सुन पड़ने लगा है। अंजीर के वृक्ष में नया फल आता है, और अंगूरी के कचिया अंगूर मधुर गन्ध दे रहे हैं। उठो, प्रिय, और चले आओ।' सहसा स्पष्ट हो गया कि सालोमन के गीत के ये अंश उसे रेखा की कापी में से याद आ रहे हैं—क्यों ? वह सीधा हो कर बैठ गया। (पृ. १६८)

He moved restlessly in his seat as more phrases came flooding in ... "My beloved spake, and said unto me,| Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.| For, lo, the winter is past,| The rain is over and gone;| The flowers appear on the earth;| The time of the singing of birds is come,| And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;| The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,| And the vines with tender grape| Give a good smell.| Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.]" Suddenly he realised that these snatches from the Song of Solomon were recurring to him from Rekha's notebook. Why? He sat up very straight. (p. 151)

The second time (ND:178, IS:159), Ajñeya has, strangely, used the English, still from the *King James Version*, for both versions. In the English text however, he has removed one page of the Hindi version, which contained a second episode of love, filled with some other verses of the *Song*. This passage of the Hindi version also quotes the verses in English.

Let us continue with other sources which are cited in the book. These can be divided into three categories: i) the narrator names their authors or their origin in both versions; ii) no information is given; iii) the author is named in the Hindi version but not in the English one. Belonging to the first category (naming), besides the *Song* above, is a poem of R. Browning (1812–89) – the poet being named another time too, but without a quotation of his poetry. The two first stanzas of the poem "By the Fire-Side" are kept in English within the Hindi version (in Devanagari script however) as well as, of course, in the English translation (ND:255, IS:222). There are also some Bengali verses, extracted from songs linked to the river-life of fishermen, kept in Bengali in ND, but translated into English in IS. While, for one of them, the Hindi narrator names the genre of the song, i.e. *bhaṭiyālī*, this information has disappeared in the translated version (ND:148, IS:134). On the other hand, when a Punjabi refrain is hummed by Rekha, mention of its Punjabi origin is made in both versions. As for the previous example, the original is used in ND while its translation for the English text seemed necessary to the translator.

Then comes the second category, in which quotations are made without the naming of the author. Six lines of the poem “Ode to Psyche” by J. Keats (1795–1821) are quoted in the original in both versions, without naming either the author or the title of the poem (ND:259, IS:225). The same practice is used for a few poems by R. Tagore (1861–1941). But while the original Bengali (in Hindi transliteration) is kept in ND, the verses have been translated into English by Ajñeya for IS (ND:280, IS:241). The same is true for the famous verse 7.21 of the *Bhagavadgītā*. There is no mention of the source, and while the original Sanskrit is used in the Hindi version, a (personal?) translation in English is given in the English version.

जो डूबने-उतराने को मानता है, वह डूबता-उतराता है, जो स्वाधीनता के लिए साधना करता है, वह—यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्त : श्रद्धयार्चिंतुमिच्छति। तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥ (पृ. ७८)

Those, who believe in bobbing up and down, bob up and down; those who strive for freedom are free. “Whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, in that same form I make his faith secure”. (p. 75)

Finally, there is a third category, in which poets are named only in the Hindi version. This is the case when Bhuvan quotes some lines from T.S. Eliot’s (1888–1965) “The Hollow Men”. In ND, the poet’s name precedes the stanza, which is kept in English, while his name disappears in IS (ND:35, IS:36). The same is true with “Nonentity” by D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930) (ND:36, IS:37).

From these examples a few comments can now be made. Regarding intertextuality, we can admit that the Hindi version is already the result of a *cultural and linguistic translation* – in both meanings of the term – for the reader of Hindi. Not only does the variety of cultural references used in the novel allow us to come to this conclusion, but the fact that the quotations are kept in their original languages (English, Sanskrit, Bengali, Punjabi, etc.) is another “proof” of it. In this respect, we could even say that the Hindi version shows a higher degree of interculturality than the English translation, and that the reader of ND is expected to be more versed in languages than the reader of IS.

Another remark proceeds from these elements. Except in the cases of Eliot and Lawrence, there is no difference between the Hindi and the

English versions with regard to the naming or not of the authors of the quotations. This means that either both readerships were supposed to have the same intertextual knowledge, or Ajñeya thought unimportant for the English reader to know that Tagore or the *Bhagavadgītā* were behind this or that quotation – they had been named in the “Acknowledgments,” which should be sufficient.

One should probably see Ajñeya’s English version of *Nadī ke dvīp* less as motivated by the intention to make his novel and Indian modernity known to a Western public, and more as his attempting to widen his Indian readership, to disseminate – within India – his views on individual freedom versus the constraints and limitations of society, and on aestheticism. He may also have wanted to draw his readers’ attention to the “influence” Western authors and ideas had had on him and on Hindi literature in general.⁴²

The moving space of translation

What needs importantly to be retained from the last argument is the idea that a “source” text like Ajñeya’s ND – which is not peculiar to Hindi literature – is already the result of the author’s appropriation of some aspects of other cultures – or, in other words, represents the literary testimony of perfectly internalized cultural and textual transfers. Thus, the text in the source language can already be seen as the *hybrid product of an intercultural space*, “borrowing” some of its elements from other languages, literatures and cultures, either regarding their contents or their forms.⁴³

42 “His [i.e. Ajñeya’s] literary affinities are, in fact, Browning and D.H. Lawrence; he is also perhaps more influenced by the Bible and Christian thought than any other Hindi writer” (VATSYAYAN, 1957:84).

43 “Borrowing” must be understood as a kind of inspiration from some other sources, and not as a mere copy of them. Ajñeya had a clear opinion on this question: “Of course, there could be direct borrowing from writer to writer; but in fact a good writer rarely borrows techniques directly from another in this way. What is more likely to happen, and would lead to more fruitful consequences, is that a writer views other writers’ achievements in the light of the total contemporary possibilities of the particular medium and then naturally uses this richer and more developed

Texts of this kind then ask the reader to move from his/her linguistic and/or local space to a new space, which is itself never static or fixed. In a way, what Ramanujan said about the use of introductions, notes, glossaries or other peritexts as a mean for the translator “to translate the reader from the second culture into the first one”⁴⁴ can also be applied to this part of the process of transfer, i.e. a move which the author asks his/her reader to undertake.

Following this, and considering that cultural and linguistic translations already lie within the “source” text, the stage of the textual translation can be viewed as just another bidirectional transfer: the translator brings the (Hindi) text to the new (English) reader, while asking the latter to leave his/her linguistic and cultural space for a new space. This new space and the distance the reader has to cover to reach it then depend both on the level of hybridity of the “source” text and on the cultural background of the reader. Here again, Ramanuja’s opinion quoted above may be put forward.

A translation should therefore be viewed as an *intermediate and moving space*, rich in intertextuality and interculturality and which exists within an ever moving and circulating process. Moreover, this process rarely ends with the translated text. More likely, the translation will in turn be followed by other textual translations or circulate through intertextuality. Instead of a unidirectional and linear process, we are then dealing with what can be called a “circulating process of translation,” integrating multidirectional transfers and hybrid identities. The process will thus be developed into several steps or layers, preceding the “source” text and following the “target” text, and resulting in various and progressive versions.⁴⁵

medium” (VATSAYAN, 1981:52). The following poem, by the Tamil writer K.N. Subramanyam (1912–89), is a revealing testimony of this practice of appropriation – or call it “inclusivism,” “hybridism,” “syncretism,” “plagiarism,” etc.: “Introduced to the Upanishads by T.S. Eliot; and to Tagore by the earlier Pound; and to the Indian tradition by Max Müller (late of the Bhavan); [...] eloquent in words not his own” (PARTHASARATHY, 1994:255–56).

44 DHARWADKER, 1999:121. But these informative elements are not exclusive to translators, they can also be used as “literary strategies” by postcolonial authors (TYMOCZKO, 1999:22).

45 “In actual practice, even in Europe, the translating consciousness treats the source language and the target language as parts of a larger and continuous spectrum of various intersecting systems of verbal signs” (DEVY, 1997:404).

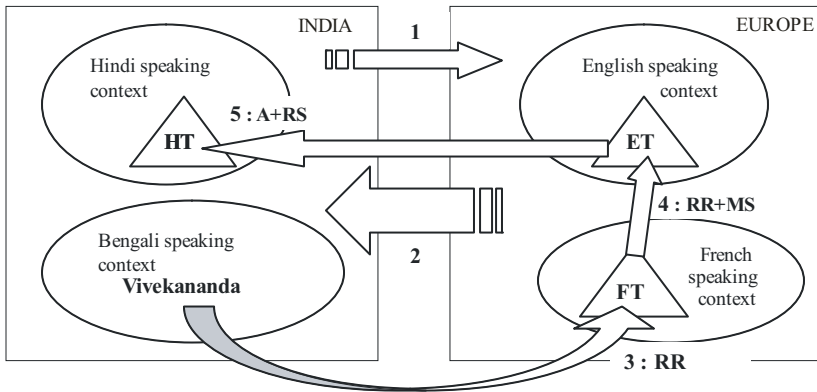
Some examples

As an instance of this process one can mention M.K. Gandhi who, prompted by the Theosophists during his stay in London, first read the *Bhagavadgītā* in an English translation, before reading the original version in Sanskrit. Examples are not limited to this cross-cultural Indo-European relationship. Venuti provides an interesting instance while dealing with two English translations of Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942).⁴⁶ His argument is that the more recent translation by Matthew Ward (1988) is closer to the French novel than the more elaborated translation by Stuart Gilbert (1946), as it keeps the "hard-boiled and tough-guy prose" that was originally borrowed by Camus from American writers of the beginning of the 20th century.

Another example, even more eloquent of this process, can be taken from Ajñeya's translation of Romain Rolland's book on Vivekananda. More precisely, at the "end" of the process in 1968, Ajñeya and the Hindi poet Raghuvir Sahay (step 5: A+RS, see diagram below) translated into Hindi (HT)⁴⁷ the English translation (ET) made by Romain Rolland and E.F. Malcolm-Smith (4: RR+MS) of Romain Rolland's original French text (FT) (3: RR) on Vivekananda's life, entitled *La vie de Vivekananda et l'Évangile universel* (1930). These three steps all represent textual creations and translations. However before these stages, and in order to understand the multiplicity of the linguistic and cultural layers that constitute them, one should first take account of upstream processes of cultural transfer, such as the influence of Orientalist and theosophical concepts of "Hinduism" on Vivekananda and Bengali society (2) and, constitutive of this influence, the interpretation of Sanskrit sources by the Theosophist and the European scholars of the 18th and 19th centuries (1).

46 VENUTI, 2005:488–491.

47 AJÑEYA and SAHAY, 1978.



With such an example (which remains incomplete of course), who would dare to say where lies the “source” text and culture, and where ends the process in the “target” language? Rather, we should by now have understood that the process of translation does not limit itself to the linguistic difficulties linked to the passage from a “source” language to a “target” one.⁴⁸

Concluding remarks

The examples and elements presented so far show that as long as we keep thinking of translation 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. Otherwise, we would have to think of texts as fixed objects belonging to closed languages and cultures, and translation would then be impossible.

On the contrary, in order to unpack and grasp the multiple layers of fictional works, it will certainly be more effective to think of translation

48 SEREBRIANY, 2004:153 summarizes this kind of process in a paper comparing the history of novels in Russia and in India seen as cultural transfers.

as a *moving space inserted into a circulating process*. Besides the textual translation of a text, other steps should be added to the process, before and after that translation: possible new translations, either in the same language or into a third one, reception of the translated text and its impact on the public, repercussion of this impact on the author and his/her culture (think of the Nobel Prize in Literature given to R. Tagore in 1913), etc. The question of how the reader “translates” the story and the context he/she has been reading into his/her own world also plays a role.

At first sight, one could think that the answer to the last question may depend on whether the translation is meant for an Indian readership (local or diasporic), or for some foreign reader. However, after our analysis of Ajñeya’s novel, it appears that instead of putting the emphasis on the expected readership – to whom is the translation addressed? – we should rather look at the other side of the translation and ask *from where, in which space*, and in which perspective is a text translated?

In the case of Hindi literature, translations are clearly produced in the context of multilingual and multicultural India. Therefore, the Hindi text is already implicitly or explicitly filled with other languages and cultures; it is not therefore settled in a monolithic space. This is even more the case for its translation, which is “an open-ended, multi-track process, in which translator, author, poem and reader move back and forth between two different sets of languages, cultures, historical situations and traditions”.⁴⁹ Therefore, both the reader of the Hindi version and the reader of the translation into English (or other languages) are asked to depart from their usual spaces for a new and intermediate space, set in a constant moving tension between various cultural and linguistic worlds.

To conclude, the situation of Hindi literature in translation has helped us leave the dominant context of the “target” text and culture for the other side of the translation process, while showing that every translation constitutes part of a moving and circulating process, filled with multidirectional cultural transfers, assimilations, and hybridity.

49 DHARWADKER, 1999:123.

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