

BURGER, Maya, POZZA, Nicola (Eds.) *India in Translation through Hindi Literature. A Plurality of Voices*. Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang, 2010. 304 p. ISBN 978-3-0343-0564-8.

The book under review has been published as the second volume in the series *Worlds of South and Inner Asia* edited by Johannes Bronkhorst, Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz and Angelika Malinar. It is the outcome of an international symposium originally entitled “Translating India: the Construction of Cultural India through Translating Hindi Literature” held at the University of Lausanne in 2008.

The publication consists of the editors’ introduction and fourteen papers dealing with a wide range of themes connected with various mechanisms influencing the choice of Hindi texts for translation and transmission, which often resulted in shaping an image of India in Europe. The contributions by renowned scholars, translators, writers, educators and editors from India, Europe and the United States are divided into three parts according to their main focus: *Selection and Issues of Translation*, *Reception and Book History*, and *Practices of Translation and Writing Experiences*.

Part 1 (pp. 23 – 152) includes six scholarly papers. The first one, entitled *Encountering Translation: Translational Historiography in the Connected History of India and Europe*, is by Maya Burger. As the title of the paper indicates and the abstract explicitly says, the author understands translation as a process of encounter between India and Europe. She focuses on two kinds of encounter and two kinds of translations of vernacular languages in pre-modern period, i.e. translations produced by missionaries and translations produced by Indologists. She explains the various motives of these translators’ interest in Indian languages (in the first case this was mainly promoting the Bible and the second case was linguistic), the by-product of which were translations from Indian languages into Western languages which shaped the knowledge of India and relationships between India and Europe. She also devotes some space to the role “of translation in the history of (European) research on pre-modern Hindi texts of the so-called bhakti period” (p. 32).

Sudhir Chandra, a historian by training, in his paper *Translations and the Making of Colonial Indian Consciousness*, focuses on the making of a new kind of social consciousness during the 19th century owing to colonialism and the introduction of a new language, English. The author deals with three interrelated problems. Firstly, there was an increasing bilingual consciousness among educated Indians, who considered English to be a language of modern ideas, and as such they used it in their works. They maintained that “tradition, to be worth preserving, needed to be translated in Western terms” (p. 53). He exemplifies this with one of the pioneers of modern Gujarati literature, Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi, and a Bengali writer, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Secondly, the author discusses the benevolent attitude of the period and of Hindi authors to translations or adaptations of works by other authors (this is exemplified in the “plagiarism” by Bharatendu Harishchandra and Radhacharana Goswami of works by the Bengali authors Bankimchandra and Michael Madhusudhan Dutta). Thirdly, the author of the contribution shows “how the choice and modes of translations and translation-like creations were influenced by the emerging social

consciousness" (p. 57). He also demonstrates the influence of Bengali literature (illustrated by R. C. Dutta's works) on modern literature in several Indian languages and concludes his paper by sighing that "today, for all its /India's/ show of political-theoretical freedom, the postcolonial is barely postcolonial except in a chronological sense" (p. 62).

In the next contribution, named *Before the Translation*, Madan Soni metaphorically states the equivalence between translation and colonization. Postcolonial India is considered as "translated India". Due to the greatest translator, i.e. colonialism, not only have colonial constructions of ancient Indian texts been created, but Hindi authors themselves have started to interpret their own tradition "in the light of Western modernity and its categories" (p. 15). The author studies "to what extent the Indian intelligentsia had embraced colonial observations on India" (p. 68). Then he focuses on modern Hindi literature and on its new medium, prose, which clearly reflects the translation/transformation of Western modernity. He also points to the fact that modern Hindi criticism equally forgets its own tradition.

In the following paper by Thomas de Bruijn, entitled *Lost Voices: The Criterion of Images of India through Translation*, the author deals with translation and essays in English by Indian authors, which, according to his view, "address, to a large extent, an audience within India or the Indian community in diaspora, and are only indirectly directed at a Western audience" (p. 83). He starts with an analysis of Rabindranath Tagore's translation of Kabir into English. He points to the enormous influence of Tagore's translation on creating an image of Indian culture in the West, but at the same time he considers it a clear demonstration of the tension "between the image of India projected in translations or essay writing and primary literary texts" (p. 82). De Bruijn points to some differences between Tagore's translation and the original, and contrasts the monologic views of Indian culture which arise in translating and mediating a text and the dialogism and polyphony of the original text. This is followed by an analysis of a work by the Hindi writer Nirmal Verma which demonstrates that the agency of authors as translators and mediators to the English readership is also present in modern literature in Hindi. However, the contemporary Hindi author and translator Sara Rai is an example of the aspiration of a new generation of Hindi writers to change the perspective on creating and mediating Indian literature. "Instead of regarding translation as a forced externalization of the source text, she focuses on the English translation as an equally external and separate cultural object that is not in competition or in a hierarchical position in relation to the Hindi original" (p. 94).

In the next contribution by Annie Montaut, named *Translating a Literary Text as Voicing Its Poetics without Metalanguage: With Reference to Nirmal Verma and Krishna Baldev Vaid*, the author ponders over the fact that Indians have found themselves in a "enchanted circle" created by English that has "largely contributed to the alienation of Indians from their own traditional cognitive categories" (p. 104). On the basis of an analysis of the work by Nirmal Verma and Krishna Baldev Vaid she aims to show that the Hindi novel "may also voice the subdued yet not extinct voice of the traditional indigenous culture. These subdued voices stand in contradiction, or beyond, or beneath, their apparent, structural or stylistic, modernity: in contention with it" (p. 105). At length she analyzes the particularities of Verma's and Vaid's styles and considers it

important to maintain them during translation. She concludes: “Yet in order to properly translate, one must enjoy the text for what it is really ... and not for self-identification purposes or dubious ideological or sociological agenda” (p. 123).

In his lengthy contribution *Translating from India and the Moving Space of Translation (Illustrated by the Works of Ajñeya)*, Nicola Pozza critically comments on a binary approach to translation in the Indian context, the supposed target of which is a foreign readership and which presupposes proceeding from a source language and culture to a target language and culture. In India native vernaculars are often translated into English, and these translations are largely aimed at an Indian readership, living either in India or the diaspora. On the basis of the analysis of S. H. Vatsyayan Ajñeya’s novel *Nadī ke dvīp* and its translation entitled *Islands in the Stream*, he shows the important role of hybridity (intertextuality and interculturality) in Hindi literature as well as the need to understand translation as “inserted into a circulating process” (p. 149), in which the emphasis is switched from the expected readership to the place of the translation and the perspective of the translator.

Part 2 includes four papers. The first one, named *Translation, Book History, and the Afterlife of a Text*, is by Ulrike Stark. It is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to the question of transmission and translation of Hindi texts from a book historian’s perspective. The author describes the situation in the 19th century, when negative attitudes towards modern Hindi literature dismissed by Orientalists and colonial administrators prevailed. She shows how and which Indian texts reached a European readership in the original or in translation. Stark finds some answers in the book catalogues of Oriental publishers, mainly Nicholas Trübner and Luzac & Company, as well as in the book review columns of literary periodicals. In the second section, she deals with *Rāmcāritmānas* by Tulsidas in Frederic Growse’s English translation aimed at a general English-speaking public. She comments on the reception of the translation at the European market and shows how the translation could be read not simply “as a poetical or religious work, but also generated comment of a political nature” (p. 174).

The next paper is Purushottam Agrawal’s “*Something Will Ring ...*” *Translating Kabir and His “Life”*. The author is a scholar, a professor, who systematically studies the question of “bhakti sensibility and its various interpretations” (p. 293). In his paper he pays attention mainly to the translation of Kabir. He shows that the authors of some translations and works on Kabir, especially those created by Christian missionaries (an author of the first European translation to English, Marco Della Tomba, and the first European author of the book about Kabir, G. H. Westcott), were interested in Kabir more as the founder of a sect with a large following than as a poet. He also presents an understanding of Kabir’s personality by other authors and translators, for instance Vaudeville, Vinay Dharwadkera and R. Tagore. He focuses in particular on a translation by Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh and calls these translators “the artists on oath”. P. Agrawal appreciates their “feel for the language” coupled with a feel for the integrity of the poet’s personality. He shows that in contrast to many others L. Hess is more interested “in Kabir the poet and goes to the Panth from his poetry instead of the other way round” (p. 190).

Florence Pache Guignard is the author of the paper *Go West, Mira! Translating Medieval Bhakti Poetry*. She studies Mirabai's *Padāvalī*, which has been translated into several European languages (English, German, Hungarian, French and Italian) as the table at the end of the contribution demonstrates. The author points to some problems which are inevitably met by translators presenting medieval bhakti poetry to a readership not acquainted with Indian tradition, and which are reflected in mythological and ritual references, allusions to daily life and objects and erotic metaphors of bhakti. In the second part of her contribution, F. P. Guignard deals with "the construction of Mira East and West through translation". She focuses on the influence of gender studies, the inclusion of Mirabai's poetry in a number of series or collections, the titles of translations, the importance of locations of publishers and the readership, and the location of scholars and translators.

Galina Rousseva-Sokolova is the author of the paper *Behind and Beyond the Iron Curtain: Reception of Hindi Literature in Eastern and Central Europe*. She briefly deals with the developments of translations from Hindi in Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, which have been to a large degree influenced by political circumstances and ideology in the so-called "former communist bloc" before the fall of the Iron Curtain. In her view some local differences resulted from "the degree of political goodwill applied by governments in conforming to Moscow's agenda" and from "the existence of local scholarly tradition in Indology" (p. 245). Later also economic arguments were important. Besides the analysis of various mechanisms influencing the choice of translated works in Eastern and Central Europe, the author presents useful information on the existence and developments of Indology in the abovementioned countries.

Part 3 begins with a paper by Susham Bedi named *Looking in from the Outside: Writing and Teaching in the Diasporic Setting*. The author is a writer and teacher of Hindi at Columbia University. She makes use of her own experience and 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). She examines the decisive criteria for elaborating the theme in Indian writing and in writing in the United States (the degree of influence of religion, the society in which a person lives, the tension between tradition and change and so on) and demonstrates how her own basic value system, which was developed in India, has been fully developed only in the US. Her conclusions are illustrated by examples from her own works.

Geetanjali Shree's *Writing Is Translating Is Writing Is Translating Is* follows. The author aims at examining the selection, translation and transmission in the field of Hindi literature as it operates internally. She starts from her Hindi-English bilingualism and realizes how difficult it is to translate from one language to another one. On her own experience, she proves the well-known truth that it does not suffice to translate only words but it is necessary also translate the atmosphere of a text. She tries to give the list of some journeys that translations need to make.

Girdhar Rathi, the author of the next paper entitled *Compunctions in the Act of Translation*, is a poet, an author of essays and a prolific translator from several Indian and European languages in collaboration with other poets or translators. He brings his

perspective on translated Hindi literature and circumstances conditioning the choice of a particular book for translation (patronage, religious dogma, political ideology, commercial ideology, socio-political concerns and so on).

The book concludes with a short paper by Rainer Kimmig named “...*The Savage Silence of Different Languages*” or *Translating from South Asian Literatures*. The author (a teacher, editor and a translator of Hindi and Urdu) avoids theorizing about translation present in academic papers and considers it important “to do justice to a text” (p. 285). According to him, “l/iterary translation is about the unique voice of an individual writer, not about cultural or literary history. And obviously not about a national language” (p. 287). In his paper he focuses on some practical problems any translator must solve (e.g. the non-existence of an exact correspondence of meanings of single words in the source and the target languages or difficulties at mediating the sound quality of the original when translating poetry).

The book concludes with some brief information on the contributors and an index.

The editors of this book have brought together the contributors of various main focuses of activity (scholars, educators, writers, editors and, naturally, translators) who provided a variegated insight to the study, translation and transmission of Hindi literature in India and in Europe from various (external and internal) perspectives. The book can be considered a remarkable achievement in this field. It would appeal to anyone interested in Hindi (and Indian) literature as well as to those who are interested in the role of the English language and Western ideas in India, and particularly in Indian literatures and Indian thought.

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