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ண்டகக் கோதை நனையத

ते चंदन की चिता सजी। स

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শহর করাচী, বিদেশী শব্দের ত

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## Editors' Note

This issue of *Sagar* focuses on the politics and practice of translation. It offers some respite to our concerns over the cultural geography of South Asia which indeed has a wider reach than has been conventionally represented. It is an endeavor of the present editorial collective to overcome a recurring trend in which South Asia is being limited geographically and linguistically to India and Hindi, respectively. By featuring translations of comparatively under-represented languages, this volume of *Sagar* recognizes the fluidity of the boundaries of space and language that defines the contour of South Asia.

The submissions in this issue address a variety of genres of oral and written texts in South Asian languages. Sandya Hewamanne translates a Sinhalese short story, and Laura Brueck translates Dalit prose and poetry, which they creatively use to explore regional experiences of a global economy, and subalternity. Michelle J. Sorenson, Christi A. Merrill, and Zjaleh Hajibashi specifically explore the politics of translation. Ed Yazijian, Sudipto Chatterjee, Martha A. Selby, Alladi Uma and M. Sridar, and Krishna B. Vaid translate short story, songs, and poetry, some of which had previously appeared in various regional contexts. We hope that the present volume will encourage its readers to ponder the multiple directions in which translation occurs, and the new public spaces that texts in regional languages come to occupy through translation.

With this issue, the present collective concludes its editorial association with *Sagar*. It has been our pleasure to work together on volumes 7 and 8. We extend our thanks to all contributors along with the members of the Editorial Advisory Board. Kathryn G. Hansen, Syed Akbar Hyder, Sankaran Radhakrishnan, Purnima Bose, Gail Minault and Barbara Harlow were generous with their guidance. Detailed comments and words of appreciation from Gail Minault and Barbara Harlow

encouraged us. Anne Alexander, and Sandra Paschall helped sort out the logistics of the journal. Randy Brown of Atex Printing was patient and cooperative with our experiments with the stylistics of the journal. Thank you all!

Nusrat Chowdhury
Ritu Khanduri
Shubhra Sharma
Eduardo Contreras (Online Editor)

*Sagar*

A South Asia Graduate Research Journal

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**Uneasy Alliances: Sri Lankan Factory Workers' Writings on Political Change**

Sandya Hewamanne

The University of Texas at Austin

Sri Lanka set up its first Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in Katunayake (near the capital city, Colombo) in 1978 as a part of the structural adjustment policies adopted in 1977. Establishing FTZs in Katunayake, and later in Biyagama and Koggala, fulfilled a campaign promise by the United National Party (UNP), which attained power in 1977 by pledging to initiate free market and open economic policies. In its attempt to attract foreign investment, Sri Lanka has offered numerous incentives, such as duty free imports of machinery and raw materials, duty free exports, preferential tax policies, double taxation relief, unrestricted repatriation of dividends, and up to 100 percent foreign ownership. One major attraction cited by the Board of Investment (BOI) in its advertising pamphlets is the "availability of a low cost, easily trainable work force." The notion that Sri Lanka has a "well disciplined and obedient women workers who can produce more in a short time" was also used as a bait to attract investors to the Sri Lankan FTZs.[1]

FTZs contain branches of multi-national industries that practice a distinctively late capitalist form of gendered working relations. Garment factories, which comprise the majority of these industries, recruit large numbers of young rural women from economically and socially marginalized groups to work as machine operators. The majority of these women are unmarried,

[1] *Dabindu* 1997, 17.

young, and well-educated.[2] There are very few facilities to house the women who flock to the FTZ each year, and people living in the area have rented hastily-built rows of rooms to them. Poor living conditions, coupled with physically and mentally arduous working conditions, make life difficult in the FTZ.[3] When Sri Lankan rural women started migrating to urban areas to work in transnational factories intense anxieties were aroused about female morality and cultural authenticity. A prevalent Sinhala Buddhist image of the ideal woman, one that constructs women as passive and subordinate beings who should be protected within the confines of their homes, has stigmatized women living away from their families. The subjectivities of young, rural women who migrated for FTZ employment has been significantly shaped by such discourses on the ideal Sinhala Buddhist woman and, as in many other FTZs the world over, women were recruited to Sri Lankan FTZs in the belief that they were "docile" and "nimble fingered."[4] However, the FTZ was a transformative space where cultural forms met and people negotiated new subjectivities. At the urban FTZs women came into contact with global capitalist patterns of production and consumption as well as global discourses on labor and human

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[2] Rosa, Kumudhini. 1990. "Women Workers' Strategies of Organizing and Resistance in the Sri Lankan Free Trade Zone (FTZ)." In *South Asia Bulletin,* 10 (1): 33-43 and Fine, Janice with Matthew Howard. 1995. "Women in the Free Trade Zones of Sri Lanka." In *Dollars and Sense*, November/December, 26-27& 39-40.

[3] Voice of Women. 1982. "Women in Free Trade Zone." In *Voice of Women,* 4(July):5-7; Dabindu Collective. 1989. *Prathiba*. Boralesgamuwa: CRC Press; and Hewamanne, Sandya and James Brow. 1999. ""If They Allow Us We Will Fight": Strains of Consciousness among Women Workers in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone." In *Anthropology of Work Review* xix (3):8-13.

[4] Nash, June and Maria Fernandez-Kelly, (eds). 1983. *Women, Men and the International Division of Labor* (Albany: SUNY Press). Ong, Aihwa. 1991. "The Gender and Labor Politics of Postmodernity," In *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 20:279-309.

rights, Marxism and feminism, all of which facilitated changes in their cognitive, social, emotional and moral dispositions.

It was on the factory floor, through assembly line work, that young migrant women encountered capitalist production relations and developed a work identity and rudimentary forms of proletariat consciousness. But this new understanding as industrial workers existed together with conventional perceptions such as age, class, caste and other Sinhala Buddhist sensibilities. It is through an intense socialization process that new workers learnt to become garment factory workers and configured their work identities within power-laden discourses. They created, learned and differently participated in a shop floor culture characterized by resistance to supervisors.

They also participated in shop floor activities that contributed towards building solidarity and alliances around specific situations or sequences of events. Globalization encouraged Sri Lankan women's migration from patriarchal villages and enabled their gradual transformation into dissenting, politically conscious workers. Most shop-floor activities were characterized by an awareness of class identity and opposition to others with different interests. As many studies on working class politics have shown, class-consciousness is always ambivalent and exists together with several other contradictory loyalties .[5] Sri Lankan factory workers' class consciousness also exists in conjunction with other interests and was produced and constructed as a result of specific economic, political as well as cultural practices.

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[5] Blackburn, Robin, and Michael Mann. 1975. "Ideology in the Non-Skilled Working Class." In *Working Class Images of Society*, ed. M.Blumer (London: Routledge.1983). Marshall, Gordon . "Some Remarks on the Study of Working Class Consciousness." In *Politics and Society*, 12 (3):263-301. Fantasia, Rick. 1988. *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemperory American Workers* (1988. Berkley: University of California Press).

Outside the factory women workers could participate in political activities initiated by several NGOs or leftist parties that worked among the FTZ workers. Many workers felt they had no free time to engage in these activities. However, the two monthly magazines published by the NGOs, Dabindu and Kalape Api, published workers' poems and short stories, which expressed anger towards their employers as well as frustration with the oppressive social and economic conditions.[6] Many of these writings evidenced the complex, inter discursive character of their responses. The short story appearing below was originally written in Sinhala by a female garment factory worker, S. Udayalatha Menike, and was first published in the Dabindu magazine. It expresses her class awareness, the desire to change the existing social system as well as the extreme frustration she feels about the conditions of possibility for transformational politics. Though there were many worker writings on the need to change the system, the critique of leftist parties and all politicians contained in this short story render it unique.

Even while expressing strong class consciousness, Menike calls upon god and reincarnated beings to intervene. This illustrates the multiple and contradictory consciousness that workers' grapple with daily and points towards the location specific and disjointed character of class consciousness. Menike's use of hunger and meals in conjunction with the red sun poignantly brings home the driving force of the oppression and the helplessness she feels in the given situation.

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[6] Dabindu (Sweat Drops) publishes a magazine titled *Dabindu*, while the magazine published by Kalape Api (Us in the Zone) was titled *Niveka* (The three Sinhala letters that depict FTZ).

## May Day*

A red sun was setting on the horizon: "How beautiful is the evening," Maya thought. However, not wanting to miss her dinner by wasting time enjoying nature's wonders, Maya hurried towards her boarding house.

"Tomorrow is May 1st, the labor day. But where is the free time for us to raise our voices for workers like ourselves," she mused. The moment she entered the boarding house uncle Some started talking about May Day. Maya listened to him intently while preparing dinner. "Tomorrow is our day, child. We don't have to go to work tomorrow. Come, march with us tomorrow." Maya laughed at Some's idea. "Uncle, you are a member of an extremist capitalist party," she said. Some replied, "what is capitalism, what is socialism, when it comes to hunger. I thought, why chop wood tomorrow. It is our day and I will shout until my throat hurts and get a free meal too. You know, lunch will be provided to the participants." Maya cringed at Some's answer.

Maya woke up early the next day and went to a May Day procession of a party that called itself socialist. She felt sad thinking about uncle Some who must by now be among those big, fat people whose heads overflowed with capitalist ideas.

Soon, discarding feelings of shyness, Maya too shouted, "Destruction to capitalists! Victory to socialism! Destruction to capitalism! Victory to socialism!" Her voice rose in waves until her throat tasted blood. As always the red sun slowly set on the horizon. Maya noticed the lustful eyes of the leader of their procession and shivered. "What is your name, little girl," he asked, coming closer to her. "Maya" she whispered. "Wow… your name is as beautiful as you are. You must be tired. Let's go

---

* By S. Udayalatha Menike. The story was first published in *Dabindu* (4/2000 : 6) and is translated by Sandya Hewamanne.

to a hotel. You can rest and go tomorrow." Her throat dried up and she mumbled, "No, no sir, I will go now," and started running. "Is this the equal society they are fighting for?" Maya screamed within her own mind.

"Maya." The rough voice was so close to her ear that she almost jumped. "Maya, daughter, stop." Recognizing uncle Some's voice, Maya stopped. "How was the march, daughter? We also did it in style. There were so many people. They forcibly stopped public buses running on the road. People who were at the roadside wondering about their daily meal also came. I shouted, 'workers, wake up! victory to workers!' I don't know what all that means. I don't even care. But I got a free lunch. That is the best thing," uncle Some happily chatted on as if he had won some competition.

Maya felt sad for this innocent man. "This man is thousand times more honest than those party bosses," Maya thought. "Alright daughter, I will leave now. Don't forget that we have a similar day next year too," uncle Some said smiling happily. "Yes, uncle. Not just next year, this day will come along every year. But workers' children will be workers despite their education. Big people's children will become big people. They will divide themselves as left or right and lead us. Whatever the side, whichever the party, all luxuries will be theirs. Do you understand uncle? I am a daughter of a worker. I understand very well. That is why I became a worker too. This social system will be permanent. I was strongly convinced of this today. There is no one good enough in this country to turn this unjust, degraded social system upside down. If people like Lenin, Marx, or Stalin were to be reborn in Sri Lanka or an honest and just leader with a strong back born like Cuba's Fidel Castro was to be born in Sri Lanka, a red sun will rise for us not just for one day but for everyday. I don't know whether uncle understands what I am saying. But we will have to accept the bitter truth that we live in an unjust country…."

"I don't know daughter…Please don't be angry with me. I don't know any capitalism or socialism…. I only know that I got a free meal to fill my shriveled stomach."

"No uncle. I am not angry. I will never get angry with a worker. I need to hurry home. Neither capitalists nor socialists contribute to our dinner." Maya thereafter hurried towards the boarding house.

"Party leaders look forward to May Day to shout, 'My dear voters. We should unite. Support us to create a new world.' Uncle Some, who chops wood all day and tries to obtain a free lunch on May Day, is much more honest than those party leaders," Maya thought.

She entered her small boarding room and cursed the cruel world around her. "I am not an antisocial. I am a radical. If I turn into an antisocial it is not my fault. It is the fault of the existing social system and the ruling class. O, God, turn this world out like a pillow case and create a new world….you are the only one who could do that." Maya opened the door and kept staring at the never ending empty sky.

**Eight Poems from *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu***

Translated by Martha Ann Selby

The University of Texas at Austin

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The following eight poems are from *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* ("Five Hundred Short Poems"), counted among the eight anthologies composed in classical Tamil in the early centuries of the past millennium. This particular anthology can be reliably dated at around the fourth century C.E. *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* is an anthology of *akam*, or "love" poetry. The text consists of five sections, each containing one hundred poems. The poems themselves range in length from three to six lines. Each section focuses on one of the five *tiṇais*, or "landscapes," of reciprocal love, a genre first described by the authors of the *Tolkāppiyam,* the earliest extant work on Tamil phonology, grammar, and poetics. *Aiṅkuṟunūṟu* was commissioned by a Cēra-dynasty king. The poems below are composed by one of Tamil literature's greatest virtuosos, Ammūvanār, who set his verses in the *neytal*, or "blue lily" landscape, that of the seashore. *Neytal* poems are ones of tortured separation and lament, and the verses here are spoken by a wife's girlfriend to a philandering husband. The girlfriend is shaming him; teasing him because he has been seen frolicking in the waves with a tiny little girl of inappropriate age. Even though this group of poems is called a *pattu,* "decad," the last two poems in the series have been lost. These poems are a part of Professor Selby's translation of the entire text, currently underway and to be published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi upon completion.

## *Ki<u>l</u>ava<u>r</u>kuraitta Pattu*

121. கண்டிகு மல்லமோ கொண்கநின் கேளே
முண்டகக் கோதை நனையத்
தெண்டிரைப் பௌவம் பாய்ந்துநின் றோளே.

122. கண்டிகு மல்லமோ கொண்கநின் கேளே
ஒள்ளிழை யுயர்மணல் வீழ்ந்தென
வெள்ளாங் குருகை வினவு வோளே.

123. கண்டிகு மல்லமோ கொண்கநின் கேளே
ஒண்ணுத லாய மார்ப்பத்
தண்ணென் பெருங்கடற் றிரைபாய் வோளே.

124. கண்டிகு மல்லமோ கொண்கநின் கேளே
வண்டற் பாவை வௌவலின்
நுண்பொடி யளைஇக் கடறூர்ப் போளே.

125. கண்டிகு மல்லமோ கொண்கநின் கேளே
தெண்டிரை பாவை வௌவ
உண்கண் சிவப்ப வழுதுநின் ளோளே.

126. கண்டிகு மல்லமோ கொண்கநின் கேளே
உண்கண் வண்டின மொய்ப்பத்
தெண்கடற் பெருந்திரை மூழ்கு வோளே.

127. கண்டிகு மல்லமோ கொண்கநின் கேளே
தும்பை மாலை யிளமுலை
நுண்பூ ணாகம் விலங்கு வோளே.

128. கண்டிகு மல்லமோ கொண்கநின் கேளே
உறாஅ வறுமுலை மடாஅ
உண்ணாப் பாவையை யூட்டு வோளே.

**Ten Poems Addressed to the Hero**

121. We saw your little friend,
didn't we, Lord?

Drenching her braid
plaited with screwpine,
she jumped into the sea's icy waves
and just stood there.

122. We saw your little friend,
didn't we, Lord?

She asked a white seabird
about her gleaming jewels
that she'd dropped
in the rising sands near the sea.

123. We saw your little friend,
didn't we, Lord?

As her bright-browed playmates
laughed at her,
she jumped into the waves
of the vast, icy sea.

124. We saw your little friend,
didn't we, Lord?

As it snatched away
her doll made of silt,
she gathered up fistfuls of sand
to dam up the sea.

125. We saw your little friend,
didn’t we, Lord?

When the crystalline waves
snatched away her doll,
she stood there weeping
till her kohl-rimmed eyes
turned crimson.

126. We saw your little friend,
didn’t we, Lord?

As bees swarmed around
her kohl-rimmed eyes,
she plunged into the great waves
of the crystalline sea.

127. We saw your little friend,
didn’t we, Lord?

She lay across your chest
adorned with cut gems,
her tiny breasts garlanded
with white nettle.

128. We saw your little friend,
didn’t we, Lord?

As she proffered
her dry, milkless breasts,
she nursed a doll
that would not suck.

# February 1969[*]

By Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir
Translated by Ed Yazijian

University of Chicago

In Dhaka now it's 5:00 PM, it's 4:00 in Karachi. In Dhaka the direct sunlight has moved on, here the sun is very hot. The curfew has started in Dhaka; here the streets are crowded with people. This comparison between the two cities shifts from the mind and takes up residence in his vision. The many sights of Elphi[1] float in Nasir's field of vision and Dhaka's roads become woven into this. His head feels heavy and the din and bustle in the restaurant swirls about him like a whirlwind of leaves. There are foreign sounds on all sides, he has to translate it all and he lives in the middle of constant translation. When he falls asleep the words of Bangla haunt his dreams. The burden of living in a foreign place weighs heavy on him and along with that the frightening awareness of his own language makes him lonely day and night. Nasir speaks Urdu well and is easily able to hold a conversation. He can even give a fifteen minute speech in Urdu with no problem. Even so, there is a feeling of agitation within him, one of unfulfilled promise. "Everything is the work of a powerful translator. I have translated my very life into Urdu."

Nasir paid his restaurant bill and stood up. He buttoned his coat and went out into the street. The wind was sharp and the cold bit into his face. There was a crowd on Elphi, the stores were full of people and there was no break in the buying and

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[*] From: *Muktijuddho: Nirbachito Golpo* [Selected stories of the War of Liberation]. Haroon Habib, ed. Dhaka: Nawrose Kitabstan, 1985.
[1] Elphinstone Street in Karachi's old city

selling there. There was a procession of taxis and well-dressed people. Everyone was busy thinking of their own self-interest. And now in Dhaka there is no one outside. The streets are empty except for the vehicles of patrolling troops. Looking out at the crowds and hearing all the noise Nasir suddenly felt that the streets of Dhaka were lying close to his chest.

Nasir reads the newspaper every day and thinks: "Unbelievable! Curfews, shootings, strikes, people injured—besides death there is no other news in Dhaka. Actually, in his life as a journalist there is nothing unique to him about this kind of news but the fact that this is going on in Dhaka daily weighs heavily on his heart like a rock stuck in the mud. His heart remains heavy and he can't get that rock to budge one bit. His associates stationed at the teleprinter look it over and glancing at him say: "Yar, look at what's going on in Dhaka!" They don't care about any of this; they have no connection to Dhaka at all. He blocks out the foreign words of those around him who are talking about the news coming off the teleprinter. His eyes burn and every street, every neighborhood of Dhaka feels like a different part of his body.

Nasir has been in Karachi for almost twelve years working for an English daily newspaper. It is only now however that he feels like he is in a foreign country. It's as if Dhaka is very far away, there's no end to the distance and it's very difficult to get any idea about what's happening there. No one knows what's going on. Shootings, injuries, deaths and strikes are not the whole story, but rather the external circumstances. One can't understand what's happening on the inside by looking at outward appearances. It's for this reason that Nasir becomes especially perturbed. He sits with his eyes fixed on the newspaper spread out in front of him just in case he can make out some important news hidden between the lines. His eyes hurt and vision becomes blurry. Dhaka materializes before him: "What is Father doing now at the house in Kamalapur? Is Ojipha studying? Did my younger brother come back from outside yet?

He didn't get stuck anywhere because of the curfew did he? Was Mother able to send someone to the market to do the shopping?"

There's a curfew in Kamalapur, in Dhaka there's a curfew now, and Nasir is at Elphi out on the street. All news of these goings-on is to be obtained through the shootings, injuries, murders, and strikes. How can one person, one family survive in the midst of all this? This is what the journalist Nasir would like to know, but that information can't be gotten from the teleprinter. He wrote a letter home a week ago but there's been no answer. Does the mail get delivered in a city where there's been an uninterrupted curfew for three days and where there's almost always a strike?

Nasir tries to compare Karachi where there are waves of foreign words in every direction with Dhaka, but he can't find a similarity between the two cities. Dhaka is *his* city, *his* words, while Karachi is his livelihood where he must translate foreign words. His brain is a ceaselessly operating translation mill. Can he understand Dhaka through that translation? That Dhaka where he wandered about, traveled on every street, spontaneously pronounced words, where spoken words created a climate, a season, a mood, an environment, a rebuke? "I can say '*Esho*'[2] or '*Lakhiti*'[3] and immediately my insides become warm." Nasir spoke as if he were telling someone: "This is Dhaka; this is what you call Dhaka!"

The comparison made between the two cities is like a needle stuck into his mind, and from there blood spews out with a gurgling sound. Nasir opens his eyes and stares. Can Monem Khan the Governor be making that much blood flow? Or, can his minions? Through that blood a sound, a certain sensibility is accumulating in his intellect. Can a bullet destroy that sound, that consciousness?

Conversations from behind come to the ear:

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[2] Come here
[3] Precious one

Friend, let's go to the drive-in.
What's the news at the Cotton Exchange?
I'm hungry; let's go to the Hong Kong.
Has your wife returned?
Have you seen the girls in Bori Bazaar? What a fine figure!

Nasir suddenly desires to shout: "Listen people of Karachi, listen! Have fun, make money. Dhaka is nothing to you. It's only a word. You're all happily going wherever you please, but in Dhaka there's a curfew. In Dhaka people are inside their homes. They're stuck in their rooms like mice in their holes!"

At the sound of a taxi's horn, Nasir came out of his reverie. If he had been a little closer the taxi would have crushed him. If so, would that be such a loss? Someone would lose a son, someone else a brother; some friends would lose their friend. In Dhaka that happens all the time, but does that mean that all of Dhaka died? The only weapon an unarmed person has is a hartal or shutdown, so that is what is done to resist. The protest of the curfew is hartal. Let everything come to a standstill!

Six months ago Nasir went to Dhaka. He remembers the conversation he had with his friends there: "You know you could come back to Dhaka. With your experience you could get a good job here." "No, Karachi is fine. One's country pulls at one from a distance; it's attractive from a distance. That kind of attraction to country from afar is greater." Nasir didn't carefully think before he said that; his answer just came out. Perhaps it felt good to say it then. Nasir didn't feel what is understood as love of country. To him neither the concrete form nor the concept of a nation was real to him, but today and for several days his brain is throbbing Dhaka Dhaka. Events in the newspapers are assaulting his eyes; they're jumping up and landing on his chest. They're ripping up his awareness,

perceptions, and his heart. A feeling of incomprehension has taken hold and he has entered into what is to him a hitherto unknown experience. Nasir is an inhabitant of that place between victory and servitude. Dhaka has angrily stood in opposition and the cry of protest reverberates in his ears.

In order to know what curfew is like, Nasir sat in his room for two days. He didn't even leave for food. Are the markets and shops open in Dhaka? If not then why eat? In the afternoon he watched the goings on outside from his window, at dusk he read a book of stories. For those two days he lived like a fly on the wall. He felt as if he was being pulled by a strong whirlwind but he tried hard not to be afraid. For those two days he observed the outside world: the sound of water dripping from a faucet, the babbling of a drunk, the boisterous ruckus made by the women from the flat next-door. For those two days he thought that any expectation of following a routine was unacceptable because anything could happen at any time. From that thought came the doubt that there are no rules, there is only chaos. Is there no security?

These thoughts come and go; Nasir's mind keeps troubling him, starting with the pain of alienation, then disgust. He sees a dream: he's walking on a street in Dhaka. The soldiers on patrol handcuff him and beat him from behind with a baton. Nasir is not surprised. He is alone in the city. Simultaneous feelings of guilt and pain, as well as humiliation and cruelty become enmeshed in his consciousness. At the same time he begins to think of himself as both guilty and innocent, for that reason there is no end to his self-punishment. Standing at a distance alone he pleads innocence, and for that reason living here for him is difficult. He sees himself in darkness and becomes afraid. Only he can free himself. So he pronounces a verdict that is beyond country, duty, and culture. What is happening? Is it happening within the boundaries of Karachi and Dhaka? Victor and vanquished? Human and animal? He had hoped to remain untouched but Dhaka took its revenge. Dhaka

devoured him. Foreign words were in all directions and their echoes were not able to protect him.

Nasir knew the contents of Heinrich Himmler's personal library. It was divided into three sections:

1. Freemasons and Jews
2. The history of torture
3. Raising ducks and chickens

Perhaps the minds of the torturers are divided like that. For them facts are real, they trust in the present, and they think the future is dependent on decisions. Monem Khan had certainly forgotten that you can't confine the living by a decision. Chaos will surely show itself and from that chaos, from the fallen drops of violence, knowledge is born. Oppression has its own kind of consequences. He remembered something he had read concerning past events. A warden of a concentration camp who had ordered the execution of many of the inmates was caught one day. At dawn he was taken in the direction of the gallows. There are former prisoners lined up on both sides and from their midst a short man suddenly comes forward, spits in his face and says: "I would like to ask you, do you recognize me?" His voice is soft, his tone almost intimate: "I was assigned to do work in your garden. Every month you would go to the city and stay there for a few days." He looked into his eyes and continued: "For those few days that you were gone I would sleep with your wife. She has a scar on her thigh doesn't she? She was fond of the daytime." Nasir went over these events in his mind repeatedly. By memorizing them he gradually gathered the internal strength for resistance. Again he recites to himself: "Oppression has its own kind of consequences" over and over again. Thoughts appear in his mind in a parallel fashion: "Fear arises when people have hopes and expectations. Hope is oppression's first targeted prey. When hope is lost there is nothing left to fear. People become desperate and stand up in anger. Dhaka, Dhaka will you stand up too?

A few lines from his friend's letter float up into his memory: "I want to let you know about something that happened that many people in Dhaka don't know about. It concerns a highly placed government official. One night he was returning home past the second Capital building in a car along with his wife. You remember where the lake is right? Well there were some guys standing around there and they signaled for the car to stop. They were all students at the University who stayed at Fazlul Haq Hall who came there to hang out but unfortunately couldn't find any transportation home. The official generously gave them a lift back to the dormitory. Now do we know who all of the notorious criminals whose names come up in the newspapers? I think not. Many respectable people like us have no idea who is a student in good standing and who is a hooligan. So, the gentleman dropped them off next to Fazlul Haq Hall. Now one of them, the leader, took a revolver out of his pocket and said in a low voice: 'Leave your wife with us. At 4:00 AM you can come and pick her up at the gate. It won't do any good to yell for help, and if anyone else comes here they'll be shot. And don't bother to call the police either because you won't gain anything from it.' The gentleman was left speechless. His wife was pulled out of the car in the blink of an eye and disappeared. Think about it, it's 11:00 PM and this happens in the middle of the city. The man went to the Police Chief first, then to the Home Secretary, then finally to the Chief Secretary. They all conveyed their sympathy and with that their inability to do anything about it. The reason for this is that the Governor controls the University through these so-called student leaders. That gentleman, I won't tell you his name, went back to the gate at 4:00 in the morning and picked up his wife. So this is what law, order, and the rule of the people in Dhaka is like now."

That happened in December and now it's February. What a swift change has come over the city in just a few months! Some days before, this event was just one among many instances of oppression, now people are protesting injustice.

Back then Nasir thought that he had done the right thing by not staying in Dhaka. When he heard about those exploits of the Bengali governor that only served to increase the parameters of bondage, he would lower his head in shame. That governor whose praises were sung by fawning government employees in the ten directions! Nasir thinks, perhaps this is how the country stays free, first the individual loses his freedom. Freedom always returns like rain and the leaves on the trees. The rains always come, the leaves always grow back. No one can stop them, certainly not by giving an order. Freedom also returns. Dhaka is in Nasir's heart. Dhaka's time for resistance has come. Dhaka is like a lighted torch in his chest and that burning torch can never be extinguished, ever. The city of Karachi surrounds him spread out under neon lights, and wave after wave of foreign words break against his ears making a huge noise. Dhaka, so far away, is gasping for breath under the weight of curfew. At their house in Kamalapur Father performs his prayers, Mother stands quietly by the window. Has Shahid returned? Maybe he didn't, maybe he's stuck somewhere, and maybe he's been shot dead. Nasir becomes alarmed by this thought. Later he thinks that this notion is not unreasonable, lately dying in this fashion is a natural occurrence in Dhaka. Perhaps because of this Father is begging for mercy during his *namaz*. Mother is looking outside, searching, the thought of Shahid awakened in her mind. She thinks, he's in a train car, no, not a train, a cage. It is full of the smell of blood and there is a genuine need to purify this bloody cage. And Dhaka, Dhaka is real; Nasir decides that he'll return. Sounds burst forth. In the midst of the cacophony of all these foreign sounds he says softly but clearly: "I *will* return to Dhaka."

**Note on author:**

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is also the pro vice chancellor at National University, Gazipur, Bangladesh. Jahangir was a participant in the Bangla language movement of 1952 in which many students were killed by police while protesting the government order to make Urdu the national language of East Pakistan. This movement planted the seed of the liberation war of 1971 that resulted in East Pakistan declaring its independence and becoming Bangladesh. Jahangir remains active in the political scene of Bangladesh and has authored books on academic subjects, as well as short stories and poetry.

**Translation and Vestige**

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The work of translation is not merely the translation of source material to target material. One is never just translating a language, one is always working within at least three modalities: that of the other who is being translated, that of the translator as reader, and that of the imagined audience for whom the reader becomes a writer. The translator must not only understand source material, but also appreciate that source material is never entirely discursively comprehensible; further, the translator must convey this play between understanding and non-comprehension to her prefigured audience. Translations are socially inscribed acts and contribute to cultural construction. The functions of the translator thus require an acceptance of responsibility for the consideration and deployment of a particular strategy or strategies in relation to these three modalities. The translator's functions are complicated by what I would term the "vestige," an elusive and complex aspect of texts and contexts. By "vestige," I mean to signify the semiotic and non-linguistic elements that inform text, yet which destabilize and/or elude projects of "literal" translation. The vestige exists in the dynamics of the three modalities I have named, sustaining a desire for the literal while simultaneously dislocating its fulfillment. The vestige is capable of constructing meaning as well as undermining meaning. It points to the instability of conceiving the work of translating in terms of the literal--to inherent variations in what is considered as "literal."

**Resisting Translation: Translating the Other**

Translation studies is preoccupied with naming the surplus which remains when a communication is moved from the sphere of the source or foreign language to that of the target or domestic language. In translation-studies discourses of alterity and subalternity, this preoccupation is exercised through the first of the modalities I defined above: the other who is being translated. A typical example is Anuradha Dingwaney's term "*transculturación*,"[1] signifying a domain in which the subaltern can counter, by rewriting or inflecting, hegemonic discourse.[2] Whether produced through reading or writing, such domains resist incorporation or identification. For the translator, they mark an important territory of the other *as* other: concepts such as transculturación function as reminders of the frontiers of empathy and acculturation, of the limits of knowing and representing the other. Similarly, Gayatri Spivak describes the work of translating as beginning from an act "of the responsibility to the trace of the other in the self"[3]: this imagined relation demands respect for the otherness of the other, that which eludes subsumption under concepts. In Spivak's terms, the "logic" of the other's discourse is readily accessible, but ethical engagement with a foreign text also involves an analytical engagement with its "rhetoric" and "silence." Although it might be argued that Spivak's terms are more suggestive than they are descriptive, her use of the term "rhetoric" can be read as that which informs the "logic," imbuing it with meaning, and thus

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[1] Here Dingwaney remarks on the influence of the work of Gustavo Perez-Firmat and Fernando Ortiz on her discussion of *transculturación*.

[2] Anuradha Dingwaney, "Introduction: Translating 'Third World' Cultures," *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts*, eds. Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 8-15.

[3] Gayatri Chakravory Spivak, "The Politics of Translation," *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2000), 397.

supporting possibilities for agency and for action; Spivak refers to rhetoric as a "condition of knowing" which works with and in a text's silences.[4] Work like Spivak's and Dingwaney's is crucial in cultivating acknowledgment of the subjectivity and agency of the other in another spatio-temporal context, and of one's own situatedness--including ideological situatedness--in order neither to "sacrifice" nor to "appropriate" differences. Discourses of alterity and subalternity often engage this concern by theorizing the problem of the resistant remainder in translation, identified through works that represent or are represented by the other. Unfortunately, accepting the reading of resistance and recognition as sufficient can foreclose on such projects. Accepting the other *as* other opens, rather than resolves, the problems of translation. What is needed is to generate a methodology of dialogic ethics in translation, and a technique to allow for representation, not just recognition, of resistance.

## Recycling the Remainder: The Translator as Reader

The subaltern space or resistant remainder produced by writers like Dingwaney and Spivak demands an ethics and politics of translation. Lawrence Venuti's work begins to mobilize resistance and representation in the work of translation, through engaging the second of my modalities: the translator as reader. For Venuti there is a remainder specific to the work of translation, namely the "domestic remainder," which occurs due to the fact that many of the effects of a text rewritten in domestic discourses are produced by significations within these discourses. The domestic remainder, in other words, reflects the domestic cultural aspects inscribed in a text by the translator and

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[4] Cf. Michael Riffaterre on double-decoding, "Transposing Presuppositions on the Semiotics of Literary Translation," *Theories of Translation*: *An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, eds. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 204-5.

thus mimics and/or forms domestic ideology and community.[5] Venuti advocates countering this tendency by means of the conscious and conscientious use of the remainder through attention to practices of domesticization and foreignization. He approaches this issue through the concept of "minoritization," a technique that recognizes the nonstandard and the marginal which constitute the other of hegemonic discourses: "[minoritizing] releases the remainder by cultivating a heterogeneous discourse, opening up the standard dialect and literary canons to what is foreign to themselves, to the substandard and the marginal."[6] Venuti's ethics and politics mobilize the remainder in order to reveal the social and historical situatedness of language and communication. Ideally, the foreignness of a foreign text can reveal the foreignness in the domestic, and the domestic in the foreign. These techniques characterize a praxis overtly concerned with challenging the hegemonic performances of English that sustain questionable operations of homogeneity and normativity.[7]

Venuti draws on the work of Jean-Jacques Lecercle[8] to formulate his theory of the remainder. In Venuti's conception, meanings "released" by the remainder are potentially available to the reader. Contingencies of politics and interpretation, however, thwart attempts to systematize or stabilize these meanings. Venuti writes that "[t]he remainder subverts the major form by revealing it to be socially and historically situated, by staging 'the return within language of the contradictions and struggles that make up the social' and by containing as well 'the

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[5] Lawrence Venuti, "Translation, Community, Utopia," *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2000), 477.
[6] Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*: *Towards an Ethics of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 11.
[7] Here one might also include reference to operations of globalism.
[8] In particular, Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *The Violence of Language (*New York: Routledge, 1990).

anticipation of future ones.'"[9] Venuti's work, however, does not adequately theorize incongruities among political and cultural discourses *within* a linguistic community; in other words, he does not entertain the idea of a remainder endemic to the foreign or the domestic. More importantly, while Venuti's concept of the remainder addresses incongruities among domestic and foreign discourses, it does not facilitate an analysis of the non-linguistic elements, such as the circumstances of transmission, circulation and reception of a particular text, that haunt the work of translation. What I want to emphasize by recycling this concept of the remainder to think about the vestige is the semiotic components manifest in any contact with text but not immediately accessible to linguistic analysis. When attempting to theorize an ethics of translation, it is important to be aware that the mobilization of power through cultural and political orders is *incorporated* in linguistic as well as extra-linguistic elements of intersubjectivity and community. A methodology of vestige provides not only for etic considerations of multivalence and difference, but also for emic interrogation of extra-linguistic elements that inform the act of inscribing texts.

**Anachronism and Desire: The Historical Vestige**

I also intend "vestige" to stand in for a multiple relation between foreign and domestic. Theorists of translation tend to represent this relation as two-dimensional, with the translator negotiating between her own culture and the culture that contextualizes her source text. When dealing with texts which are also temporally removed from the translator's own moment, the translator must balance attention to (at least) two types of foreignness: broadly, cultural and historical. The translator functions within a triangulation of practice: the domestic text stands between trajectories linking it to foreign culture and

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[9] Venuti, *Scandals,* 10.

foreign temporality, which themselves sustain a differential relationship and generate a "foreign" remainder. This triangulation burdens the translator with the responsibility of negotiating these two foreignnesses in the construction of a domestic text. From another perspective, this relationship can be viewed as a triangulation among text, translator as reader, and translator as writer, forcing the translator to balance these modalities. The third modality I am proposing, that of the translator as writer, involves the construction of an imagined audience; this audience, I would argue, takes shape within the reflections and refractions between these triangular relationships.

Apart from exploring the ur-problem of biblical translations or the transportation of the early Greek and Roman canons, writers in translation studies pay scant attention to the problems of engaging a text that is complicated by its temporal distance from the translator. These temporal problems can be conceptualized through another aspect of the vestige: the historical. "History," in fact, appears to operate in ways parallel to that of the vestige. When we invoke history, we imagine at least two trajectories: chronological, in which events regularly succeed each other in time; and genealogical, in which temporality is relative to connections serving the particular interests of the historical thinker.[10] Furthermore, by "history" we also mean the local and specific lived reality that by its very nature can never be fully articulated and circumscribed, and which is always-already vestigial. The historical vestige operates by insinuating the contradictions inherent in the play of the forces and variables of the particular instance of textual contact. The contextualizing factors of the historical vestige intrude on the contact with the text by perpetually producing, without being able completely to satisfy, the desire to participate in the lived environs of the text. Genealogical pursuits lead the translator into the historical foreign, a territory where she desires

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[10] Here, of course, another triangular relationship is manifested.

the anachronous conjunction of present and past, mapped by the words of source and target texts. The translator not only attempts to reconstitute social forces and environmental variables, but she desires to inhabit an identity with a reality which is conceived as a core of transhistorical truth. This desire, not typically recognized in translation theory, is perpetually deferred by the actual temporal distance between the translator's world and the world of the text.[11] Yet this desire of the translator--to be present to and to occupy the temporal and cultural "reality" of the author and of the text she is describing and inscribing--is to some degree and at some level requisite. In fact, the work of translation would be impossible without it.

The deferral of participatory desire is also dictated by the logic of transmission, in which textual communication is always deferred from writer to reader. It might be claimed, in fact, that translation is always-already anachronous,[12] an argument implicitly made through the character of Pierre Menard in Jorge Luis Borges' story, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*." This tale premises that it is less challenging and less interesting for Pierre Menard to become Miguel de Cervantes than to continue to be Pierre Menard and arrive at the Quixote "*through the experiences of Pierre Menard.*"[13] In other words, the activity of

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[11] It might be suggested that translation theory functions in part to mediate this desire.

[12] As George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), writes, "the existence of art and literature, the reality of felt history in a community, depends on a never-ending, though very often unconscious, act of internal translation. It is no overstatement to say that we possess civilization because we have learnt to translate out of time" (31).

[13] Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998), 91. In what might be considered apposite to my discussion here, the Buddhist textual scholar Luis Gomez, "Unspoken Paradigms: Meanderings Through the Metaphors of a Field," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 18.2 (1995), 183-230, presents a reading of "Pierre Menard" as

mediating between present and past has more intrinsic value than mere absorption in the past. As Menard's experience suggests, all translation involves crossing not only linguistic but temporal divides. When a source text is far enough removed from the translator's own moment, it provokes with an historical vestige, an irreducible aspect of the text which remains forever past. Menard negotiates this problem by incorporating its logic into his methodology of "deliberate anachronism,"[14] which mobilizes the temporal and historical vestige in the translation of the text. Using deliberate anachronism, the translator identifies with the past of the source, but with the reflexive recognition that this temporal movement is a quixotic project. In Borges' story, Pierre Menard becomes the author of the *Quixote* through the act of recognizing that it is impossible to do so: Menard registers temporal difference by eliding it, and conversely, the elision of temporal difference is simultaneously the registering--the remarking--of the difference. In the evaluation of both foreign and domestic texts, Borges' narrator reminds one to consider the historical situatedness of the work and the role of the reader: "The Cervantes text and the Menard text are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. (More *ambiguous*, his detractors will say--but ambiguity is richness)."[15] Here the technique of deliberate anachronism supports an argument for vestige as supersession of Venuti's remainder: the richness of Menard's text in contrast with Cervantes' is not recognized by the communicative act in and of itself, but through extra-linguistic elements which are vestigial.

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philologist: "Accuracy does not guarantee much, especially when it is a matter of accuracy as the recovery of the text verbatim. For the verbatim reproduction of text is only that, the reproduction of a text. This is the trap of the philologist, so well depicted in Borges's 'Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote' (Borges, 1944a). The true perfect exegesis, the true perfect edition, tells us nothing about the text--at best it is an echo of a text" (195).

[14] Borges, 95.

[15] Borges, 94.

I would suggest that a "technique of deliberate anachronism" operates through attention to both dynamics of the historical vestige: the temporal factors which contextualize a text as text in a particular cultural time; and the extra-linguistic forces and variables which, in juxtaposition to the chronological/temporal, become historical through the act of translation. The technique of deliberate anachronism is simultaneously illuminating and frustrating, demanding acknowledgement of one's participation in the cultural confusion of forces and variables that are not reducible to a theory of language as merely linguistic communication abstracted from social and cultural orders. Making the past present through the act of translation, while recognizing the paradox involved, and indeed engaging it, is an act which also generates the paradox of making the present past through registering participatory desire. A technique of deliberate anachronism promotes what Venuti describes as a "key factor" in an ethics of translation which attends to difference, namely "the translator's ambivalence toward domestic norms and the institutional practices in which they are implemented, a reluctance to identify completely with them coupled with a determination to address diverse cultural constituencies, elite and popular."[16] Deliberate anachronism employs conscientiousness toward the tensions of alterity elemental to constructing and maintaining a narrative that is intended to convey meaning to a heterogeneous audience in a particular cultural context.

## Translation and Heresy: The Transcendent Vestige

If the interests of a particular cultural constituency and/or social institution influence the conditions for the translation of a text, the domain of the historical vestige often generates acts of heresy. When communities have marked certain texts as sacred,

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[16] Venuti, *Scandals,* 87.

for example, predetermining the intrinsic worth of the contents to be transmitted, this manifests another figure of the vestige: the transcendent. The translator's audience, in such a case, becomes particularly difficult to imagine and/or satisfy. "Sacred" texts are embedded in and deployed by cultural traditions which impart ritual as well as philosophical value, value that is socially dynamic yet ostensibly transcendent. One might understand the "logic" (to use Spivak's term) of ritual value, yet the vestige of transcendent value will remain elusive. Reading and writing the immanence of the transcendent text can be seen as an act of heresy. Acts of heresy can be described in at least two ways. One is as the act of trying to speak the unspeakable, to name that which cannot, or should not be named.[17] Another is speaking that which is not usually spoken, and thus proffering an interpretation of that which should not be bound by an interpretation. By constructing an interpretation and putting it into the public sphere, one is demanding dialogue, and possibly dispute; one is also entering the realm of authorial and authoritative discourse with its related machinations of power. Gauri Viswanathan provides a useful distinction between heresy as "the site of competing interests and doctrines" and blasphemy as attacking "not a text or a creed but a community, along with the codes and rules it employs to sanction membership within it";[18] thus the former can be understood as generating opportunities for responsive and responsible dialogue, while the latter is driven by an ultimate desire for closure. In the domain of translation, heresy attempts to formulate new and potentially meaningful ways of approaching modes and contexts of actuality, to recognize the functions of the vestige outside of the normative confines of the "literal."

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[17] Or as Robert Kroetsch might describe it, "effing the ineffable"; viz. "Effing the Ineffable," *Open Letter* 5.4 (1983), 23- 4.

[18] Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 242.

Translation, as local and contingent, is unpredictable in its effects, and can be a revitalizing discourse or a discursive threat to hegemonic identities and institutions. Frequently when discourse is named "heretical," it is because issues are entering or reentering public discourse, engendering shifts in valences, emphases, and interpretations. Translation brings into play new audiences who will interact with the texts (the teachings) in ways conditioned by their own local and specific cultural positionalities. As heresy, translation is polyvalent in its interactions with the social: it both conforms to and challenges *doxa*. Translation is orthodox when it is working to literally represent the doctrine of the foreign in all its aspects. When it shadows the literal through engaging vestigial linguistic, historical, ideological and cultural elements, it becomes heterodox. Understanding the activity of translating "religious" texts requires an articulation of this heterodox/orthodox dialectic.

## Cutting Through Translation: *gcod*

My understanding of the problems and potentials of the vestige has been developed through the project of translating the work of the philosophical adept Ma-gcig Labs-sgron (ca. 1055-1153 CE). This female *bla-ma* (teacher-scholar) is considered significant in Tibetan history and in Tibetan Buddhist history for developing the Tantric philosophy and praxis of *gcod*.[19] *gcod* treatises combine discussions of the psychic grounds of suffering and the Buddhist thesis of actuality as voidness with instructions for the preparation and performances of practices meant to be efficacious in the understanding of Buddhist teachings and ultimately in liberation from suffering. One of the predominant concerns of *gcod* (which can be translated as "to sever," "to cut off" or "to cut through," the latter of which connotes a metaphor

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[19] Additional information on Ma-gcig Lab-sgron and *gcod* can be found in the following: Allione, Edou, Gyatso, Orofino and 'Gos Lo-tsa-ba Gzon-nu-dpal.

for analytical-experiential understanding) is to provide the means for the practitioner to cut through the mistaken concept of an independent, abiding ego. This is accomplished through a process of radical cognitive and physical practices exploring the lack of intrinsic identity of any aspect of one's reality, and thus to understand ultimate actuality as fundamentally interdependent and hence void of reifiable meaning.

The translator who is working with *gcod* texts must be particularly careful not to render the material unduly exotic through reductive readings and writings. Western interpretations of *gcod* tend to focus on the most exotic and esoteric techniques, such as the White Offerings and Red Banquets. Although these techniques involve complicated interpretations and teachings of arcane texts, they can be briefly and provisionally summarized. Recommended preliminary techniques include developing great skill at mindfulness meditation and researching suitable places for the praxis, such as mountain peaks and charnel grounds (where one will not be disturbing others and also where one will experience powerful or sublime feelings). At the time of the performance of the praxis of Offering, one will first visualize oneself as embodying the qualities one believes to be conducive to enlightenment, and then one will visualize summoning various guests (including one's teachers, lamas, deities, demons, karmic creditors, harmdoers, and one's mother and father) to the Banquet. Then one will cut up one's own body and serve it to these hungry and thirsty guests until they are satisfied and joyful.

Most readings of *gcod* highlight these practices as macabre and exotic rituals.[20] Here we see the limitations of "foreignization" at work: typical translations do not render these practices in analogous contemporary terms, but retain the

[20] At present there is a paucity of work that is done on *gcod* proper. Most works are merely concerned with a) using Ma-gcig as a token representative women in Tibetan Buddhism, and/or b) very cursory presentations of *gcod* as one of the more bizarre practices which can be identified with the "decadent" Tantric elements of Tibetan Buddhism.

"otherness" of such performances. On one level standard interpretations of *gcod* manifest a respect for the other who is being translated, but they also demonstrate the concomitant dangers of constructing an other as intractably alien: difference is negated by making it absolute. By deploying language that is usually representative of European practices, *gcod* practices can be easily dismissed as decadent, pagan, irrational activities. It is exactly this kind of translation situation that demands attentiveness to the vestige. The modality of translating the other must be complemented by the modality of translator as *reader*. Rather than being represented as macabre and bizarre aspects of the praxis, these offerings should be read as enacting the fundamental philosophy of *gcod*. The philosophy of *gcod* should be read as an investigation of epistemological and ontological descriptions of the "self" and of "subjectivity." Through the process of visualizing cutting up one's own body, one cuts through attachment to ego. One thereby undergoes a thorough analysis of the manifold of the "ego" to be cut, as well as "subject/object" and "existence/essence" relations. The practice requires one to distinguish analytically between mind and body to the end of causing the practitioner to realize that such distinction is impossible. By reading and translating with an attention to the vestige, one is compelled to investigate the contexts which would allow one to take seriously the ontological, epistemological and ethical implications of *gcod* philosophy and praxis.

Numerous elements of the vestige can be deployed in developing a more nuanced translation of the central tenets and practices of *gcod*. In particular, what I have termed the "historical vestige" can play a crucial role. A salient detail for understanding the context of *gcod* is that, as a very young child, Ma-gcig was renowned as a "reader" of the *Prajnaparamita* sutras, the "perfection of wisdom" or "transcendent wisdom" teachings, canonical texts within Mahayana Buddhist traditions. Indeed, so closely is Ma-gcig identified with the *Prajnaparamita*

literature that she comes to be identified as an embodiment of the goddess of wisdom, also named "Prajnaparamita." In references to *gcod,* this interconnection with the *Prajnaparamita* philosophical tradition, which might be considered to be one of the components of the vestige of *gcod*, is often overlooked or underemphasized. *Prajnaparamita* texts are foundational in the Buddhist philosophical canon, and contribute greatly to the central Mahayana Buddhist teaching of *stong-nyid*, or the voidness of any inherent nature in conditioned things, and the logical entailment of the equation of form with emptiness and emptiness with form. The Buddhist teaching of voidness emphasizes that modes by which we conventionally represent minds and bodies are not independently existing but are conditioned constructs--the conditioned nature of which can be perceived through conceptual analysis--and are thus not identical with the lived experience of human being.

Attention to the historical vestige foregrounds the metaphorical association of what is to be cut through in *gcod* performances, namely the *phung-po*, or the psycho-physical components which constitute one's being, and the concept which undergoes the cutting, the embodied being. Western authors often simply equate the vehicle and the tenor of this metaphorical connection, emphasizing that one is to cut through the tangible physical body. Such translations illustrate the problems of thinking of translation as linguistic correspondence. In reading the *gcod* texts of Ma-gcig, representative of her interpretations of the *Prajnaparamita* literature, the translator as reader is in dialogue with the translator as writer. She must imagine how her readers might cut through their own particular attachments to conditioned constructs of body and mind.

The work of reading and writing the vestige can be illustrated through the example of the *bdud*. In traditional Buddhist discussions in the *Prajnaparamita*, the *bdud* are external demons which are the sources of suffering, and, as such, are to be vanquished. In *Prajnaparamita* texts, these *bdud* are:

the *bdud* of the psycho-physical constituents (*phung-po'i-bdud*); the *bdud* of suffering (*nyon-mongs-pa'i-bdud*); the *bdud* of death (*'chi-bdag-gi-bcud*); and the *bdud* of desire (*lha'i-bu'i-bdud*). In her articulation of *gcod*, Ma-gcig reads and writes the *bdud* as internal psychological processes entrenching ego-clinging. In the *Phung-po gzan-skyur-gyi rnam-bshad gcod don-gsal byed bzhugs so,* the four *bdud* which Ma-gcig discusses are: the *bdud* of those with attachments (*togs-bcas-kyi-bdud*); the *bdud* of those without attachments (*togs-med-kyi-bdud*); the *bdud* of contentment (*dga'-spro-yi-bdud*); and the most difficult to sever, the *bdud* of self-attachment (*snyems-byed-kyi-bdud*). This reinterpretation and transvaluation is, among other things, a political act for Ma-gcig, who despaired of the scapegoating and denial of responsibility which she perceived in her social context; Ma-gcig was critical of blaming human situations on supra-natural forces. Her intention to liberate people from being caught up in fear of hypostasized "demons" and to recognize them as agents can only be represented through a translation that represents Ma-gcig's categorization of the *bdud and* indicates their inflection of the *Prajnaparamita* norms. Ma-gcig's heresy, in other words, must be reflected by a heresy of translation.

"Demons" are also foregrounded by the vast majority of interpreters of *gcod*, who emphasize them as recipients of the Offerings discussed above. However, as I previously noted, the Tibetan-language instructions for these banquets catalogue a variety of guests, which I would argue suggests that we are to read this performance as an allegory of the social construction and dismantlement of the self. When one is analyzing the *phung-po*, or cutting up the psycho-physical constituents which will then be offered to the guests that one has invited to the celebration of the process of cultivating enlightenment, such a feeding can be interpreted as a returning of social constructions to the self and of the self to social constructions. If socially constructed aspects are offered back to the social environment, one can better integrate them into a complex comprehension of

mind/body modality. Such praxis of offerings is paralleled in the praxis of translation: translation informed by the historical vestige supplements the literal with a dialogical expanse that provides for the integration of that which cannot be contained by the literal. *gcod* praxis can be seen as providing an analytical-awareness vehicle through which to transgress the limits of a socially constructed self in its historical moment. Translation must thus consider the rootedness of the practice in specific social worlds, environs that change as the practice is transmitted and repeated. The representation of the historical vestige is here symbiotically connected with the representation of *gcod* praxis: the extra-linguistic elements of social construction help to construct a nuanced and receptive translation.

The translator, of course, must mediate between the social construction of the *gcod* practitioner's self and her own social construction. As I discussed previously, one aspect of the historical vestige is the desire to occupy the living reality that conditions the significance of the text. George Steiner expresses this desire when he asserts that "[a] text is embedded in specific historical time; it has what linguists call a diachronic structure. To read fully is to restore all that one can of the immediacies of value and intent in which speech actually occurs."[21] In the contemporary field of Buddhist studies in the West, this desire is typically transformed into an epistemological paradigm: the desire for the past is translated into the conditions for knowledge. Tom Tillemans' contention is representative: "if we admit that, inspite [sic] of some quite considerable difficulties, we often can understand the mind of one of our contemporaries . . . or even the mind of someone who lived in another culture in the same century, then is there anything *in principle* all that different in the case of understanding the mind of a historical figure like

[21] Steiner, 24.

Dharmakirti?"[22] Of course, the translator does, to a certain extent, try to imagine the mind of Dharmakirti. Like Pierre Menard, however, the translator should maintain an awareness of the quixotic character of this imaginative act, which can be cultivated through a technique of deliberate anachronism that demands attention to and engagement with the forces and variables that become historical through their relation with the local and specific of the present.

My self-reflexive construction of this historical desire is particularized by both rational and extra-rational qualities of the Tibetan Buddhist Tantra tradition. To begin with, scholars of Buddhist studies recognize that Tantra traditions provide more scope for women's participation in comparison with the more traditional patriarchal forms of Buddhism. The field of Buddhist studies itself is influenced by a doubling of patriarchal effects, with its inheritance from models of European Orientalist scholarship in combination with the indigenous patriarchal modes which inform Buddhist lineages of knowledge and power. As an iconoclastic woman thinker, Ma-gcig provides me with a model for challenging orthodoxies of Western Buddhist scholarly interpretation; my desire to articulate the parameters of the vestige is intimately bound with my desire to imagine and identify with Ma-gcig's subject position. As Ma-gcig demystified the mental habituations which contribute to the hypostasization of existential, intersubjective and social barriers, I seek to "cut

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[22] Tom J. F. Tillemans, "Remarks on Philology," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 18.2 (1995), 271. Tillemans also takes part in the mystification of translation studies, as articulated by Douglas Robinson, *Translation and Taboo* (De Kalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996): "The 'commonsensical' notions . . . that translation is about equivalence; that equivalence is about rendering the meaning of whole sentences, not individual words; that sense-for-sense equivalence is attainable and its attainment is measurable--these notions are just *there*, given, 'obvious' and therefore almost certainly universal truths or truisms about translation, something to take for granted and build on" (48).

through" traditional readings of *gcod*. At the same time, I seek to recognize and represent the deliberate anachronism of this identification.

**Between Literal and Vestigial: Skillful Means**

The emphasis on the element of praxis in *gcod* teachings mandates the selection of a methodology that recognizes the non-linguistic elements informing the text. Such a method must reject the illusion of literal translation. In *gcod* there is a perpetual negotiation of the dialogic relations between non-discursive experience and the mediation of experience through cognitive apparatuses. In other words, this is a strategy of continual engagement with the limits produced by hypostasizing human modalities, with the existential and social closures considered to obscure enlightenment. Extra-rational elements that contribute to the vestige of *gcod* are highlighted by the emphasis on complementing the theoretical teachings of the *Prajnaparamita* with lived practice. In *gcod*, the existential condition of embodiment provides the means to understand the human modality, but the habitual illusion of a unified self is often located in one's identification with a stable body. The heuristic construction of the visualization of the body which one then divides to facilitate analytical-experiential awareness involves the "cutting away" and "offering" of the mind as much as the body to facilitate the destruction of ego-grasping. Further, liberation from the limitations of habitual grasping of the unified, embodied self does not mean a rejection of the body, but requires a sustained attention to dwelling in the body to provide for the efficacy of praxis in the process of becoming human. It is exactly this paradox that generates the power of *gcod* practice, and it is attention to such paradoxes that engage the extra-rational which can be discussed in terms of vestige. The vestige supports readings of elements which contribute to the

construction of meaning and understanding, but which are not contained by the literal.

The vestige also supports an ethics of translation that recognizes the machinations of power in the extra-rational and the rational, the extra-discursive and the discursive elements of intersubjectivity and environment. *gcod* teachings insist on the particular--on the local and specific. This insistence grounds a social ethic and mobilizes the interdependence of the rational and non-rational, each within the techniques of wisdom and compassion. The perfection of wisdom in Buddhism is an understanding of both the conventional reality of the intellect and ultimate reality that is non-intellectual. Ethical valuation of activity in Buddhism depends on considering if the activity results in the generation of appropriate or inappropriate consciousness and an understanding of the non-duality of conventional reality and ultimate actuality. *thabs*, as indicated in its conventional translation as "skillful means," is practical, pragmatic and efficacious, and thus requires consideration of particulars as well as universals. One might even argue that skillful means is the embodied performance of one who has sublated the paradox of particulars as well as universals, thus allowing for proficient deployment of the appearances of such paradoxes for the benefit of others.[23] The skillful means within Buddhist practice, I would argue, should be mirrored in the skillful means of translation, which sublates the opposition between the literal and the vestige. An ethical praxis of translation demands consideration of both universals and particulars. In *gcod* texts, this balance is struck by the Mahayana

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[23] In the writing of Matibhadra Kirti (Tsong Khapa) on *gcod* we read of the variations on embodiment and the significance of the non-rational which contributes to meaning: "One grasps the vital energy of the sublime place through the instruction of the restless minnow, such as they are also without any place to go. A tiger's heroic motions, a yogi's confident movements, a dakini's dancing movements, a black snake's coiling movements--one should proceed by whatever means appropriate" (8, translation mine).

ideology of non-dualism (*gnyis-med*). The translator of *gcod*, then, must work toward an understanding of non-duality by rendering non-duality both literally and vestigially.

**Revealing Texts: Imagining Audience**

Tibetan Tantric texts from the eleventh and twelfth centuries generate particular problems for the translator. These texts, in their very classificatory genre of "esoteric" or "secret," resisted "reading" in the first-order level of encounter, even while they were being "written." The genre of Tantra is contextualized through a theory of praxis which acknowledges at least two levels of what might be described as translation: first, through the student's initiation into the reading of the text with an expert who might also have been the "author" and/or commentator; second, through the student's understanding of the contents of the text through an experimental lived engagement with its multivalent possibilities. Moreover, in terms of encounter and praxis within Buddhism in general, it is orthodox to consider the management of reading and the acquisition of knowledge to proceed through a three-stage epistemic process of "hearing," "memorizing" and "meditating (to generate understanding)." *gcod* itself is a product which was and is manufactured through the interpretation of the *Prajnaparamita* as constructed by Ma-gcig, and, in its performative nature, through a continuous process of reinterpretation. Indeed, since *gcod* is generally considered to be an esoteric practice which can only be learned after years of familiarization with more exoteric teachings, including more orthodox *Prajnaparamita* teachings, the practitioner of *gcod* would most likely already be well-versed in conventional interpretations of the *Prajnaparamita*. Though difficult, the translator must find a way to represent the conditions for interpretation that are inscribed in the texts themselves; she must translate the translation of transmission.

These complex processes of transmission and interpretation are also contained within the Tantric vestige. *gcod* texts, which were often circulated orally before they were physically inscribed, are also *gter-ma*, "revealed" texts which are traditionally understood to authentic teachings of the historical Buddha or other key figures, but, due to their complicated nature, were "hidden" until the right time for them to be revealed. Again the vestige of *gcod* shadows the work of the translator: the translator is also working to reveal the hidden, including the processes of hiding and revealing which constitute the text.

Selecting, highlighting, and figuring aspects of the elusive but ubiquitous vestige involve the third of my modalities: the translator's imagined audience. Depending on how this audience is prefigured, different figures of the vestige will come to the translator's, and the audience's, attention. The vestige, as with all residue of culture, is ultimately inassimilable, and although it must always inform acts of translation, whether within or between languages, it is ultimately untranslatable. However, that which is ultimately untranslatable need not be abandoned but can be suggestively represented: aspects or elements of the vestige can be expressed to an audience, which is in turn enabled to contribute to manifesting the vestige. Moreover, just as Venuti emphasizes that the remainder can and should foreignize the domestic, so the vestige can and should historicize the present. The language used for translation should accent the historical particularity of a "present" in and through its relationship to a "past." The composition of the present includes the weight of being defined as an historical space of competing discourses with competing ideological vestiges. In the work of translation, an interrelation of different languages or discourses not only allows the foreignness of the source text to be disclosed, but also foregrounds the foreignness within the domestic: such encounters of discourses reveal dynamic parities and disparities, as well as extra-linguistic residue that clings to particular discourses. It is in such appreciations where translation in

relation to heresy can be conceptualized: translation as heresy reveals doxa as content of a source text, but simultaneously reveals it as doxa. Thinking about the vestige reveals the heterodoxa that defines every doxa, and also reveals the doxa that defines the translator's moment and the translator's community. Indeed, the translator's sense of community is constructed within the penumbra of the vestige. Thus we are reminded that the vestige inflects, both linguistically and non-linguistically, the translator's coming to self-understanding as translator translating at least three modalities: that of the other who is being translated, that of the translator as reader, and that of the imagined audience for whom the reader becomes a writer.

**Jagadamba Junction**

Gorusu Jagadeeshwara Reddy

Translated by Uma Alladi and M. Sridhar

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About ten in the morning.

Having moved beyond the horizon over the Bay of Bengal, staying at an angle of forty-five degrees from Visakhapatnam, the sun was shooting his hot arrows.

Jagadamba junction was bustling with people and vehicles moving about in a mad rush. Though it was two weeks into the month of June, there was no let up from heat. As city bus number twenty-five which plied from Madhuravada to the old post office stopped at that centre, Guramma, who had got off the bus, took the basket of yams handed over to her by someone from within the bus, placed it on her head with another's help, came to the place opposite Jagadamba cinema, to the left of the bus stop, where she sat every day.

People who wanted to take buses towards Asheelumetta, Maddilapalem and the zoo were hanging around waiting for them.

"Give me a hand, *baba*," Guramma asked someone standing near her, indicating with her eyes that he should bring the basket down. There was absolutely no sign of either softness or a plea for help in her words. He looked at her from head to foot, held the basket along the rim grudgingly and brought it down.

"Careful, careful…for nothing at all, the roots will break into pieces." She was annoyed. "Leave alone saying a word of thanks, this annoyance!" He scowled at Guramma and stood a little distance from her.

She took out the folded plastic sheet that was on top of the basket and the old bed sheet that was a bit torn and shook them out.

First, she spread the plastic sheet. Then, she folded the bed sheet into four and made sure that the folds were towards her, so she could hide her money.

She took out the knife from the basket and kept it by her side. She divided the yams into small and big ones according to their size. She kept each of them separately, arranged some of them in small heaps and decided at what price she should sell them.

Making sure that everything was handy before she started selling, she took a deep breath.

She looked around at the people waiting endlessly for their buses and heaved a sigh. As not only was her body scorched in the hot sun but was also completely drenched in sweat, she remembered the palm umbrella she left behind every evening on her way back home at the bamboo tea stall.

She wanted to go and get the umbrella, but thinking that dogs and pigs might have a field day if she leaves the yams behind, she looked up in the direction of the tea stall. Just then, for some reason, the owner of the stall, Appalnayudu too looked in her direction.

"*Orey*, Appalnayudu! Ask your Sannasi to get me my umbrella…." Hearing her yell, one or two customers eating at the tea stall looked at her.

"Old bitch! From the moment she arrives…she takes my life out." Abusing her in his mind, he called out to Sannasi who was clearing the plates.

"*Orey,* Sannasi! Go, give Guramma's umbrella and come back fast." He entrusted the job to him and was absorbed in his own work.

She fixed the umbrella Sannasi had brought in the hole there. Asking the fellow who was returning to the tea stall to wait, she undid the knot in her saree and took out the change.

"Here, take this quarter of a rupee, rush to the store and get me a cigar, please!" Sannasi, who had eagerly expected that she might give him some money as she was untying the knot in her saree, turned back swiftly, as he felt she only wanted him to get her a cigar.

"Appalnayudugaru'll get angry. He'll be annoyed I had gone away without clearing the plates. I won't go." Sannasi ran towards the tea stall.

"Bastard!" She abused him.

She shook the edge of the saree she had tucked at her waist with both her hands, wiped her face and neck with it, and snuggled under the umbrella.

"I had smoked a cigar, I don't know when, early in the morning. My tongue can't take it any longer." She told herself, but suppressed her desire for now.

City buses were halting there and going past every now and again. This atmosphere was not new to Guramma. She had been doing this business since her marriage. She had been selling yams for almost forty years at this same centre.

She recollected how in course of time "Yellamma thota" had transformed into "Jagadamba junction". She thought that just as new water washes away the old, hotels, cinema halls and new colonies had sprung up suddenly and had wiped out the age-old names of the places.

Guramma also had a sort of contempt towards human relationships. As she had come to the conclusion a long time ago that the world revolved around money and that it had grown beyond love and affection, she had been leading her life accordingly.

When she came to live with her husband in Visakhapatnam from Vijayanagaram, Guramma was sixteen. As

she had a husband who was too good and truthful for his times, her mother-in-law taught all the intricacies of this yam business to Guramma. She taught her how to go to places like Yendada, Tallavalasa, Anandapuram, buy raw yams, boil them and sell them for a profit.

Some time after Guramma had a son and a daughter, when she lost her mother-in-law and husband due to unforeseen illnesses within six months of each other, she took on the entire responsibility of the house.

She got her son and daughter married with the money she got from selling yams. She got her son married to her niece and her daughter to a man from Tagarapuvalasa. She had only one worry now!

Her son was a drunkard. He spent whatever he earned in drinks. Let alone the son, the grandson too had taken after his father's bad ways. Hardly sixteen, he would roam around cinema halls and gambling houses with other riff-raff. Her daughter-in-law would go around buses which halt at Madhuravada bus stand selling bananas.

Even as she and her daughter-in-law earned money toiling hard like this, they had no other go but to put up with vagabonds of a son and a grandson who were sponging off them.

Guramma thought of her dead husband as God. Though she wondered how such a good person could have such thoroughly useless fellows as heirs, she consoled herself that, as they belonged to the same family line, her husband's blood flowed in their veins.

In spite of being close to sixty, with her skin forming wrinkles just then, dark complexion and body as thin as a twig, she would walk without bending her back. Applying a little castor oil to wherever she had greyed, she tied her hair into a knot to the right. The only gold jewels she had were her ear studs and nose ring. They had been on her even before her marriage. She never had the habit of wearing a blouse. Used to

wearing her *pallu* on the right, she never wore anything other than a coarse saree.

At Jagadamba junction, as the day progressed, vehicular noise increased. Selling the yams, Guramma was observing everything around. It was time for the morning show at the cinemas. As city buses stopped, she felt jealous at the sight of women jumping out and rushing off to Chitralaya cinema.

"As their husbands go to work here and there, these bitches are quick to get all decked up and go off to films on the sly. They're having a good time as they have husbands who let them eat and laze around." With vengeance, she abused them in her mind.

Buses and autos were going about in a mad rush from Apsara down towards Purna Market and up towards K. G. Hospital like crazy bulls. In the auto stand a little away form her, instead of looking for passengers, some auto drivers were busily engaged in discussions and conversation either about the film they had watched the previous night or about the college girl standing at the bus stand or about country's politics. If passengers came to them to find out if they would take them to a particular place and charge them as per metre reading, some drivers heckled them saying, "What? You want us to charge you as per metre, do you? We hope you've not run away from the mental hospital in Chinna Waltair!"

On the Dandu bazaar road opposite Jagadamba cinema, some well-fed pigs were having a field day and were giving a tough time to the drivers driving the vehicles.

On either side of the road leading down to Leelamahal, the footpaths were filled with people selling odd things. The whole place was like a fair, what with the big cloth shops, bakeries, restaurants, shoe shops and new shops booming with video and audio musical sounds.

Looking at the crowds travelling hanging out of the buses, Guramma said to herself, "Horrible crowd's rising like increasing sins."

Some who saw her everyday were coming to her quite freely and speaking to her, choosing their own terms of address like “bamma” or “bappa” or “appa” and buying yams from her.

The amount of yams you could buy depended on the money you could give. She would hold the larger ones tight in her hand and with her knife cut them into thick, round slices.

If she felt that anyone was making fun of her saying, “Why are you selling it as though it were gold!” she would hurl even a cut piece of yam back into the basket in anger retorting, “You aren’t the kind who could buy it!”

She would recall all the hardships she put up with to sell each yam. She would not like to give anyone a chance to criticise her. She would always want to have her own say. In addition to this, since she had a sharp tongue, it was but natural that all those who knew Guramma would comment behind her back, “This old hag’s headstrong.”

She knew no other way except to live without being afraid of anyone and without trusting anyone.

“Guramma…when did you come, my dear?” Nookalamma said as she came.

Nookalamma had a vegetable shop in Poorna Market. She was a friend of Guramma. She would make her daughter-in-law sit in the shop and go to Jagadamba junction to chat for sometime with Guramma.

Guramma was angry with a student who had said something to and was making fun of a woman from the village who had got off a bus and was standing at the bus stop.

She felt like pressing her leg against his neck and skinning him. “Did you observe those rascals’ arrogance, Nookalamma? Do you know what happened last Saturday? …. Our daughter’s uncle from Tagaravalasa, that is, my daughter’s father-in-law, Appanna…not having been well, he came to consult in K. G. and came by this way. You know, we’d both exchanged pleasantries and were chatting about this and that when a rascal of a student came from a bus like this bus now and

addressing my daughter's father-in-law by some strange name said, `Your relative, Soorugodu's calling you.' This fellow had a blank look and asked, `Which Soorugodu, babu?' No Soorigodu. No nothing. Arrogance! Parents are sending these boys well fed to colleges, aren't they? Not just these. Even girls are no better. Leaving behind their sense of shame, heckling and laughing…look, what the world's coming to, my dear!"

"Why bother about such people, my dear…they'll ruin their own lives. Why should I worry about them? Can you give me a cigar piece, if you've one?" Guramma made a face at Nookalamma's words.

"No, I don't have any. I haven't had one since I came. My tongue's itching. Why don't you go to the stores and get two cigars?" Nookalamma made a face for having been entrusted with the job for having asked for a cigar, got up lazily and brought the cigars.

Striking a match, both lighted their cigars. Nookalamma chatted for a while and went back. Taking out the half-smoked cigar from her mouth, Guramma turned her neck to a side, spat out and put out the fire.

The sun was on top.

As Guramma went into a contemplative mood looking at the pigmy-sized shadows of people, she heard the beating of wooden cymbals, stuck out her neck from beneath the palm leaf umbrella, held her fore arm to prevent the sun hitting her face, squinted her eyes and observed.

Close to where the city bus had halted, while an eight-year old boy sounded the wooden cymbals, a eleven-year old girl was singing, dancing and waving her hands.

"Wretched fellows! World's become crowded with beggars." Expressing her annoyance, she cast an examining look at the two children. They were both walking towards her.

With disheveled hair, with an old, red, torn skirt and a dirty blouse over it, that girl was dark but beautiful.

Stout and fair, the boy looked like the son of some rich man who had put on the role of a beggar for a fancy dress competition. With his apple-like cheeks, curly hair and large eyes, he looked very cute despite his torn shirt and knickers.

As soon as he saw Guramma, he started sounding the wooden cymbals. The girl started singing and dancing:

The golden hen has come

Hey papa…hey papa…hey papa.

Guramma looked at them impatiently and showed them the stick she kept with her to drive away dogs and pigs.

"Will you stop that horrible song or do you want to be beaten up?' She was very sharp.

The children stopped as if they had become tongue-tied, scared of her words. They thought it better to be a little distance away from her and began to beg.

The boy was casting stealthy glances now and then at the yams and was beating the cymbals to the rhythm of the girl's song.

Half the yams in Guramma's basket had been sold. She kept the money carefully between the folds of the bed sheet.

For some reason, the children were quarrelling. As he was sulking, she was cajoling him.

"Look there, see the many colored bottles there! Buy me one." He was pointing out to the cool drink shop nearby.

"Don't you know amma is sick? What did amma say? Didn't she say that there wasn't enough money for medicines? Didn't the doctor say that we should take her to the hospital? Do you want amma or the colored bottle?" She was pleading to convince him.

"I want amma but first buy me the colored bottle."

"You think the bottle is only a quarter of a rupee that we can buy it? If you like, I'll buy you a soda." She said emphatically. Guramma, who was listening to their conversation, was curious to find out about them.

"You girl, come here. Why are you both fighting with each other?" The children came, even as they were a bit scared of her words.

"What's he to you?"

"He's my brother, bamma. Very quarrelsome. Wants me to buy a coloured bottle with money we've begged." Guramma was surprised at her words.

"How can he be your brother? Don't kid! You're like a burnt kebab stick and he's like a ripe mango…"

"No, bamma, God promise, he's my brother. His name is Raju. I'm Sitti."

"What does your mother do?"

"Doesn't do anything. She stays at home, doing nothing."

"Will the money you take home be enough? Doesn't your father do anything?"

"We don't have a father. Rajarao, Nookaraju, Simmachalam…all of them used to come and give money, all these days. They stopped coming from the time my mother fell sick."

"Where's your house?" She looked suspiciously at Sitti.

"Near Savulu Madum street—a thatched hut." She nodded her head as if to indicate she had understood everything from the girl's words.

"Oh, you bitch, so your mother's a prostitute! Never know with whom she had slept to have had the two of you! Now, she has contacted all kinds of diseases, hasn't she? She must have driven you here to beg for some money." She could not but think like this.

It was about two in the afternoon. Guramma realised that the morning show was over when she saw a sea of people. When the afternoon show started, there was less of commotion at the junction.

As the traffic lights, which had not been functioning till then, had suddenly started working, the policeman came to the shade of the Jagadamba hall to take some rest.

As soon as she saw the policeman, Guramma spread a cloth over the yams.

"Bastard, he knows only to take the yam and shove it into his mouth, but won't take out even a *dammidee* from his pocket." She recalled an instance that happened long ago.

She felt as if her whole body had been scorched in the heat. She also felt hungry. She had the previous day's food early in the morning. Would have food again only at night. She would not have any tiffin in the afternoon. She had the habit of ordering for some tea.

She waved her hand and beckoned to Raju who was begging. He came running with the hope she might give him some yam.

"*Orey*, go to the tea stall, tell them that yam-seller Guramma sent you and get me some tea, my dear!" She drank the tea he brought and asked him to go and return the empty glass.

Raju, who came back, hung around there hoping she might give him some yam. As if she did not know about it, Guramma was engrossed in her own business, now and then counting her money.

Realising that there was no use waiting, Raju went back to his sister staring angrily at Guramma. Annoyed at the heat that was scorching her body, Guramma, who was trying to scratch her back as far as she could reach, noticed Sitti and called out to her.

"*Oley*, Sitti! Come and scratch my back, my dear?" No sooner had she called out, Sitti sat on her knees and started scratching Guramma's back from neck to waist with her sharp nails. She pulled out the dried, prickly heat affected skin.

Guramma felt elated at having got Sitti to scratch her back. She asked her to untie her hair bun and look out for lice.

As Sitti's fingers ran over her scalp, she felt as if sleep would overpower her.

"Look…my dear, why those horrible songs?" Guramma wanted to engage her in conversation so that she could get some more pleasure.

"Don't you know the song, bamma? It's Siranjeevi's song. Didn't you see that film?"

"How does it matter to me which wretched fellow's it is? Don't you know any devotional songs?"

"Amma told me that if we sing those songs, nobody will give us any money."

"Bitch, you've learnt a lot, haven't you?" Guramma laughed.

"Do you know how to sing, bamma?" Sitti asked eagerly.

"If you listen to my song, you'll laugh your lungs out." Sitti insisted on Guramma singing. Thinking that the little bitch would go back to beg, she began to sing the song she remembered:

Tamarind fruit, whatever fruit, scorched mango
Brinjal by the pond, lemon on the branches
Hogging olugulu in the jeelugu garden
When only one drops, when the rice flower drops
Building a fortress of greens with a bodkin
The garden abuzz with honey bees
Getting on to the banks to find opium horses
Each house with an iron rimmed cart
Lone chain for such a huge garden
Oh, my little Rama, sleep on
Sleep on my Rama swinging on

As she sang, she smiled to herself and yawned.

Sitti, who listened to the song, did not understand a word of it.

The only thing she knew was that if she sang songs like this, no one would give her even a paisa.

They gossiped for another half hour. While all this was happening, Raju bought some peas with the change he had and was begging as he was eating them.

"*Oley*, Sitti, I'll go for a leak and be back. Stay here for a moment. Bastards haven't built a toilet anywhere here. I'll go up to Dandu bazaar and be back. Be careful! Those bloody dogs will come from nowhere and take away the yams. Here, take this stick and sit down."

"Okay, bamma. Go and come back quickly…I'll stay here with the yams." Guramma placed faith in Sitti.

She tied her untied knot, asked Sitti once again to be careful and told her not to sell the yams to anyone.

As soon as Guramma left, Raju joined his sister.

"Sitti akka, give me a small piece of yam."

"If the old hag sees, she'll peel off your nerves."

"Is she here now? The wretched old woman hasn't even given me a small yam for bringing her tea."

"Has she given me? I too had scratched her back, haven't I? I looked out for lice. Why don't you wait a while? She'll give the yam when she comes back." She convinced her brother.

Engaging her in conversation, he hid one yam without her knowledge. As if he had not done anything, he walked slowly towards the auto stand.

Walking up from Dandu bazaar towards Jagadamba, Guramma's hawk eyes detected Raju, hiding behind an auto, eating a yam.

Guramma rushed in angrily. As soon as she came, she lifted her hand high up in the air and gave Sitti such a resounding slap that all her five fingers were imprinted.

Sitti was about to collapse at this unexpected blow but held herself up.

For a moment, not knowing why Guramma had slapped, she stood transfixed.

She controlled her swelling sorrow. Her eyes were filled with tears.

"You whore, how many yams did you give your brother?" Guramma held Sitti by her shoulders, pushed and shouted at her.

"I didn't give any." She said trembling a bit.

"If you didn't, then did the yams on their own jump into your brother's hands?" It was only then that Sitti noticed where her brother was. As soon as he saw Sitti being beaten up, he ran away and was watching what was happening stealthily.

"You wretched liar, I can skin your back. Did you think this belonged to the dandy who visits your mother?" The crowd at the bus stop gathered on hearing Guramma's ranting.

With a pale and woebegone face, Sitti remained immobile.

"Where's that rascal?" Guramma was looking around.

Knowing how painful the slap was, Sitti was scared about the amount of beating her brother would receive.

"He hid the yam without my knowledge. He's like your grandson. Forgive him, bamma." Sitti said as if she were pleading.

"If you say one more time that he's my grandson, I'll kick you, you bitch. How can he be my grandson? Who knows who his father is? Was he born to my son, you whore? Who knows which son of a bitch's blood runs in both your veins?" An enraged Guramma almost beat up Sitti.

Realising it was all futile, Sitti slunk away from there quietly.

As it was getting to be evening, the city was cooling down. Cool breeze from the sea was blowing. The commotion at the junction had begun to increase. Two more traffic

policemen arrived. Soft pakodis, chekodis, jilebis—pushcarts that made and sold them hot then and there came one by one.

The afternoon shows were over. Crowds like ants crawling helter-skelter from disturbed anthills…crowds going back from work...crowds come to shop…crowds going to films…crowds all over.

Cycles, scooters, two-wheelers like Hondas and three-wheelers like autos …uninterrupted flow of city buses…the horns of all vehicles bursting every artery…the entire Jagadamba junction was full of commotion and noise.

Guramma, who had sold yams all through the day, was weak. Two yams were left behind. She wanted to go home once someone came and bought them.

She called out to Sannasi in the tea stall and asked him to put back her umbrella.

It was getting dark. At the Jagadamba junction, mercury lights started flashing on one by one.

Noticing her grandson coming towards her from a distance, Guramma made a face. She could spot his rascal-like figure from any distance.

Before anyone could notice, he came close, placing one of his hands regally on his waist and pushing back the hair that had fallen on his face with the other.

"Nanamma, I must go to a film. It's a Siranjeevi film at Alankar cinema. You seem to have sold all the yams. Give me money quickly for the film."

"Your bloody airs! I don't have money for the film." She looked at him angrily.

"Why are you looking at me like that, you old hag? Haven't you as yet heard what I said? Don't try to act smart and give me money." He shouted more angrily than Guramma.

"You bastard! You and your father want to eat away my money. I won't give you a *dammidee*. We're feeding you to your hearts content, aren't we? Isn't that enough? Should we

give you the money we get selling yams for films and eat grass …you good-for-nothing fellow?” As Guramma screamed, the crowd looked on amused for a while.

Some thought it was just a play between bamma and her grandson.

“I don’t care whether you eat grass or donkey’s eggs! If you don’t give me money now, you’ll eat my blows!” As he realised that it was getting late for the film, his impatience increased. The fight between them continued for another quarter of an hour.

He started abusing her in the worst possible language.

“You lout…I’ll hit you with my slippers. You irresponsible bastard! Get away from here.” Guramma, who was sitting till then, was about to get up. Taking advantage of this…

“Die, you bitch!” Saying this, he kicked her hard on her stomach with his right foot.

“You, bastard…I’m dead.” Screaming loud, she fell on her back.

In the blink of an eye, he took out as much money as he could get hold of from the folds of the bed sheet, sped towards Alankar cinema and became one with the crowd.

The crowd, which had imagined till then that she was having a mock fight with her grandson, was stunned at this development.

“Oh, God! He has kicked her and is running away. Catch him! Catch him!” Someone shouted.

Sitti, who was begging close by near the buses, was jolted by Guramma’s screams and looked up.

“*Orey*, Raju! The yam-selling bamma has fallen down.” Shouting, Sitti ran towards Guramma, worried .

Raju, who had not fully understood why Guramma had fallen down, followed Sitti with his half-empty soda bottle.

As the vehicular noise was sounding the trumpet amidst the brightness of the multi-coloured electric circuit shining like a decorated bride was Jagadamba junction.

Gorusu Jagadeeshwara Reddy (b.1960) is a young short story writer who has more than twenty five stories to his credit. He was Convener for *Telugu Katha*, an annual series of short stories brought out by Telugu University, Hyderabad. “Jagadamba Junction” appeared in *Suprabhatam*, 20-01-1997, 42-46.

Alladi Uma and M. Sridhar teach English at the University of Hyderabad. They have been translating together for almost a decade and have among their publications two collections of translated short stories. The translation of Gorusu Jagadeeshwara Reddy's story, "Jagadamba Junction" is an attempt to take Telugu literature, especially contemporary literature, to outside audience and to show its variety both in terms of theme and technique.

Jagadeeshwara Reddy wrote this story based on the experiences of his grandmother and her reactions to the impact of urbanisation on what was known as "Yellamma Thota" (Yellamma Grove) to "Jagadamba Junction" (Jagadamba is the name of the movie theatre.). Even the song the old woman in the story sings is his grandmother's. The translators have attempted to render the song with its repetition of sounds and local flavour as close to the original as we could. Here, as well as at other places in the story, the writer has used very region specific and culture specific words which the translators have had the opportunity to translate with the help of the writer. Where the context could convey the meaning, words in the Telugu original have been retained.

The autobiographical piece with its specific locale and the realistic portrayal of the lives of the lower classes on whom the materialistic world has had an adverse impact impelled the translation of this piece. The juxtaposition of such people with those like the old woman who is both a participant and an observer makes the piece both thematically and stylistically interesting. Though there is a clear empathy on the part of the writer with the old woman, there is no romanticisation of her character. She is there not just with all her faults but even for her faults.

**Songs of Suman Chatterjee**

Sudipto Chatterjee[*]

Translated by Sudipto Chatterjee

By the 1980s the Bengali modern song's existence was seriously threatened by the rising hegemony of Hindi film music that prevailed over the young music listeners of Bengal. There was a void and older listeners watched their progeny moving away from what was once the infallible modern Bengali song. The much-needed panacea was nowhere in sight, until the sudden arrival of a new voice — not quite *new* really, as it would unfold soon after — Suman Chatterjee (Bengali Caṭṭopādhyāy[i]). In 1989, when Suman Chatterjee returned to Calcutta from almost a decade and half in exile to resume his career as a Bengali music-maker, he did not think he was destined for super-stardom. He had ended his second contract as a broadcast journalist with the German International Radio and returned to Calcutta to make a final, somewhat desperate, attempt to present the Bengali songs he had been composing in exile before the Calcutta listeners. Having realized the personal nature of his songs and equipped now with the newly mastered acoustic/classical guitar, he decided on going solo. *Tomāke Cāi* (Want You), his first solo album, was released by H.M.V. (His Masters' Voice) in 1992. It was an instant hit. Suman's number of stage concerts grew exponentially. Journalists were suddenly running after him. *Business Standard*, an English daily from Calcutta, cried in an elated headline as early as 1991: "The City Finds Its Chansonnier." Loud speakers in neighborhood social gatherings played his songs in loops. T-shirts, carrying lines from his songs, were up for sale. Songs excerpts were cited like

[*] All translations by Sudipto Chatterjee.

proverbs. Suman's second and third albums did not belie the expectations of the first and he continued to top popularity charts. Very soon, Suman had bagged a Golden Disc for record sales figures. His concert "bootlegs" circulated among his young followers, many of whom he had weaned away from both Hindi music as well as the traditional Bengali modern song.

Suman has wrought distinctive changes on the physiognomy of modern Bengali music. The freshness of his lyrics, their poetic beauty, economy of expression and, in cases, biting satire — coupled with the syncretic quality of his music, assembling traits from music all over the world — have made for a new kind of song. Much in the mold of the Latin American *nueva cancion*, it offers a platform for the lay person to express her/his innermost thoughts and feelings. Suman's songs encapsulate and are nurtured by the cultural nuances of life in Calcutta, its pedestrian tragedies and catastrophic trivialities. In an urban musical tradition that has emphasized melody over lyrics, where the normative expectation of traditional aesthetics keeps the so-called "prettiness" of song lyrics immunized from the dissonance of daily life, Suman's arrival was a major rupture in the status quo.

Suman's songs from the very beginning were bitingly satirical, critically trenchant, romantic or, simply comic. Despite their obvious Marxist orientation, they differ considerably from the *gana-sangīt*[1] tradition in many ways, but mostly in their self-reflexive quality. Suman's songs are not the utterances of a vanguard of the proletariat, nor do they ventriloquistically project the imagined voice of the oppressed subaltern in musical rhapsody. This is music for/by/of the urban middle class that stands its ground by simultaneously celebrating and critiquing its contradictions, ambiguities and paradoxes. Suman's songs are

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[1] Mass-music—sung en masse, chorally, mainly in order to mobilize the masses.

not mouthmere messages of social equality. Rather they map a social text that attempts to create a complex, ambivalent discursive space that would have to be engaged by his listeners.[2] (Excerpted from Sudipto Chatterjee, "The Case of the Irritating Song: Suman Chatterjee & Modern Bengali music."

This is probably one of Kabir Suman's most popular songs. Published in his very first solo album, *Tomake Chai*, it was an instant hit. The song calls for positivity despite the depressive squalor of lower middle class life in Kolkata (or anywhere else, for that matter) and calls on everyone to up their chins and look forward to better dreams and better days.

**DON'T LOSE HEART, MY FRIEND**

You've given up a lot old habits more or less
Candies and cakes after bouts of sickness
You've given up a lot customs worn out by age
Worn out or salvaged homes burnt out garbage
Don't lose heart.

Don't lose heart, my friend, instead—
Loosen your voice, loud and strong,
We will meet, you and I,
At the dawn of another song!

You've given up a lot— that old laughter, for instance;

Announcing even and morn: My love for you is constant!
You've forsaken your dreams, it's been quite some time now,

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[2] Excerpted from "The Case of the Irritating Song: Suman Chatterjee & Modern Bengali music," authored by Sudipto Chatterjee (n.d.).

But I love to dream on even today (somehow).
Don't lose heart.

Don't lose heart, my friend, instead—
Loosen your voice, loud and strong,
We will meet, you and I,
At the dawn of another song!

Age is catching up with me— that midnight coughing...
But once the cough's gone I am in love with living!!

Keep alive, my friend, your dream of loving.
Wrap tight your arms around the dream of living.
Do not lose your dream of changing the times.
My dream of Change still never declines.
Don't lose heart.

Don't lose heart, my friend, instead—
Loosen your voice, loud and strong,
We will meet, you and I,
At the dawn of another song!

This song, too, was featured in *Tomake Chai* and received instant approbation from the listeners. The song satirizes compromises of various kinds, but complicates the issue when it includes the song-maker himself in the list of those who give up their ideological positions to get co-opted by the system -- the trade winds of commerce or political gains. At the end, the song looks at art, not the artist: maybe art someday will create the pure artist, not the other way around.

**IF YOU THINK YOU'RE BUYING ME UP...**

If you think you're buying me up... you are mistaken!

My voice can be bought, in piece meals
(To make a living I have to make deals).
You can as well buy the fingers on my two hands,

I have no problems with making deals (no demands)!
But, then, what've you bought — me or my pact?
Who's acquired the motherland, in the final act?

If you think you're buying me up... you are mistaken!

It's money that fills up everybody's belly;
It's buying and selling that runs a family.
Chitty chitty, Rabindranath,* bang bang wow...
Enter our entrails as market chow!

Protesting voices are a money-matter;
Protest itself, too, needs food and shelter.
Whether you are a worker or a Mr. Something,
You've got to eat, or it's nothing!

If you think you're eating me up... you're mistaken!

My voice can be eaten up, in a piece meal
(Indigestion, though, could the worst reveal).
You can as well eat the fingers of my two hands,
I have no problems with making deals (no demands)!
But, then, what've you eaten — me or my pact?
Who's acquired the motherland, in the final act?

If you think you're buying me up... you are mistaken!

Some put their labor on sale... their muscles.
Some sell their hairy decor... their tassels.
Some, to a periodical, sell their writing at leisure;
I sell my voice to you for your listening pleasure.

I sell my verse through musical expressions,
By means of disgust, disdain, even adoration.
That hope, too, now is up for sale... if sold,
It may bring some money home, I'm told.

So, I sell lyrics that will change the day.
Maybe some day other songs will show a way
To dump the rules of tum-ti-ti-tum and find
A way to usher better days for the humankind.

If you think you're buying me up... you are mistaken!

* Rabindranath Tagore (1860-1941) is the national poet of India and Bangladesh and the greatest literary figure in the Indian sub-continent. In 1912, he became the first person of color to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Love songs occupy a major place in Suman's oeuvre. But by the time they end, the songs seldom remain mere love songs. Suman's romantic songs come with a stamp of difference which the following number amply demonstrates. It leaps out of the immediate context of expressed love to a general concern for humanity. Watch for the use of personification in this song.

**WITH YOU ALONE**

Where Morning, at the cross roads,
Via Afternoon, into Evening corrodes—
That's where on my own
I'll meet with you alone.

Where City, across a by-lane at the border,
Will assume an evening suburban order—
That's where on my own
I'll meet with you alone.

Where Evening, in search of Nocturne
At Chronos' prod, decides to sojourn—
That's where on my own
I'll meet with you alone.

Where the Stars, at the sky's borderline,
Turn into a silent harmony unconfined—
That's where on my own
I'll meet with you alone.

Where Sky, in an envelope of watery Cloud,
Sends you a letter under Rain's shroud—
That's where on my own
I'll meet with you alone.

In the flood of your tears, where Rain
Tells stories of someone else's pain—
That's where on my own
I'll meet with you alone.

This song took Suman, by his own admission, almost a year to compose. The brisk pacing of the melody, the suspenseful strumming of the guitar and the hushed utterance of the lyrics create a deep sense of premonition that pervades the song. Mark the skillful use of personification in this song, as well.

**AT MIDNIGHT, THE SICKLE OF THE MOON**

At midnight, the Sickle of the Moon
Sharpens itself, but not too soon!

In a discordant age, the darkling Night
Grips an unseen hand, holds it tight,
Quietly watching the Sickle of the Moon
Sharpening itself, but not too soon....

Traveling down light years afar,
Bringing signals from a primitive star,
Light takes note of the Sickle of the Moon
Sharpening itself, but not too soon....

The adversary of Darkness who is the Sky,
(With sinister intentions, on the sly)
Hushes and watches the Sickle of the Moon
Sharpening itself, but not too soon....

The ill-boding Owl crouches uneasy.
The Night replies: "Shhhh, take it easy!

Look up there—the Sickle of the Moon's
Sharpening itself, but not too soon!"

The nocturnal Dog's eyes they glisten
With ideas that the Night has given.
He looks up to see the Sickle of the Moon
Sharpening itself, but not too soon....

All the Fireflies have put out their light
In bushes and shrubs in fear of some plight!
Peeping out, they see the Sickle of the Moon
Sharpening itself, but not too soon....

Where will now the Sickle's edge fall?
The Cacti are worried, most of all.
Quite unworried is the Sickle of the Moon
As it sharpens itself, but not too soon....

Suman wrote this song in the mid-eighties for his group, *Anya Kathaa Anya Gaan* (Other Words, Other Songs). Once again, it is framed within the limiting confines of a love-song, but by the end it grows out of its generic mold to endorse a greater humanistic value.

**YOU WILL SEE**

You will see, you will see—
When you extend your two hands
A hand or two will take your hands
When you stand on your own land.

The land will know
It's upon trust you stand
Thus, in its milk of life,
The world is sacrosanct.

I trust one day, a great
Tempest will rumble,
Will make all edifices

Of this world tremble.

I dream one day, flowers
Of equality will shower
On blood shed by humans,
On their breasts' bower.

"I'll put the flowers' nectar
On her lips, a little bit!"
"I'll draw the dreamy tales
Upon his breast, some of it!"

"I'll place in her hands
A bunch of bright blossoms!"
"I'll unravel for him, this
Courtyard of my bosom!"

I'll hold my friend's hand and
Dance away to a light cadence.
I'll fill my friend's heart
With tomorrow's fragrance.

I dream one day, I will
Sing the poetry of life
In other words, other songs
I'll think only of life.

Those who've left live on
In remembrance's chest
The songs left behind live
In this other song's breast.

Let'em live, let'em live on
My world is of humans alone.
I am just as full as humans
And just like humans forlorn.

This song was written in 1990 to commemorate Kolkata's tricentennial. But even in its celebratory tone and its declaration of love for the city, the song manages to bring out the pedestrian tragedies and catastrophic

trivialities of this city of contradictions, once the crown jewel of the British Empire.

**CITY OF 300 YEARS**

City of 300 years
300 year-old maze
On village Sutanuti's banks
Fell the white man's gaze.

The white man took his dues
In exacting measurement
White lords and ladies came
For rides of merriment.

When the white lords left
The brown lords came in
The 300 year-old city went
Moaning and screaming.

City of 300 years
Upon the third century
Wonders what'll go best
With its 300th anniversary.

A beggar or a poet?
Or just a shop-owner?
Politician or actor?
Policeman or debtor?

Washer, barber, cobbler?
A degreed literati hack?
Those that have left homes
Building roadside shacks?

City of 300 years
Upon the third century
Wonders what'll go best
With its 300th anniversary.

*Saari* under the navel
Under the brick—grass
Under what is ‘culture’ lies
A new bride’s carcass.

Who are those ‘carcassses’
That sleep on pavements?
Who’re those that daily bathe
In sewerage excrement?

City of embankments
Dipping into all waters
Gasps, pants, puffs to rant
Tales of all orders.

City of 300 years
Upon the third century
Wonders what’ll go best
With its 300th anniversary.

Mr. Modern walks along
Miss Modern to attend
Suddenly a disgusting odor
Makes the curtain descend.

A social worker, is it?
Or professional clown?
A bull that can suddenly
Shut all the traffic down?

City of embankments
Dipping into all waters
Gasps, pants, puffs to rant
Tales of all orders.

City of 300 years
Great gigantic maze
I find myself here
Married to the place.

City of 300 years

Mega-gigantic maze
I find myself here
Tethered to the place.

Although Suman has never claimed to be anything but a product of an urban bourgeois culture, his songs always side and cry with the oppressed. In this song, he paints a vivid picture of the life of the homeless street-dwellers of Kolkata.

**OVEN'S LIT UNDER THE TREE**

The oven's lit under the tree
A spinach curry's being cooked
Upon the branches of the tree
Even a swing has been hooked.

There are tin cans beneath the tree
Packing boxes, two or three
Over this "home" beside the road
The tree's become a canopy.

Morning shines under the tree
There's noon, evening and dusk
A stray dog arrives routinely
Sniffing the rice-vapor's musk.

There's people living under the tree
On its branches the crows nest
"Let them all live with me"
The tree wishes right earnest.

The wide-eyed baby boy on the lap
Of the girl squatting under the tree
Clutches the soiled saari's end
And the tree is all that he sees.

Everything goes under the tree

From wild love to family fights
Nightly passion, morning blush
In the noon a show of might.

The man under the tree worries
Leaning against his tree —
“Where will I go when it rains?
Where will the shelter be?”

What though it’s under the tree
There’s even a radio to boot
Playing songs on its own
Whatever it thinks that’ll suit.

And who knows, who can tell
When this song too is aired
The girl with the boy on her lap
Will hear it under her tree-lair.

That’s as far as I can go
Making tunes, composing lines
My abode is a well-built house
My business—fooling the mind.

The title of the next song, The Cloud Messenger is, needless to say, a reference to Kalidasa's narrative poem in Sanskrit, dating back to the tenth century. In it the Cloud is romantically imagined as a messenger between estranged lovers. Suman uses this romanticized classical "cloud" icon as a purposeful misnomer, with the effect of the Brectian "Alienation" device. For instrumentation in the recorded version of the song, Suman uses the classical duo of the sarod and santoor along side the folksy accoustic guitar to further emphasize the intended irony of the "Cloud-Messenger" figure.

**THE CLOUD MESSENGER**[3]
At times, the Cloud will don anklets to dance.
At times, it’ll dance out of measure... perchance.

At times, the Cloud pledges to welcome greenery.
At times, it will summon deluges... unnecessary.

At times, the Cloud means listening to *raga*s of old.
At times, it means out-of-tune sorrows untold.

At times, it beckons you to leave hearth and roam.
At times, the Cloud is a pain on your way home.

At times, the Cloud is an umbrella-ridden mega-city.
At times, it will flood roads, sink homes in animosity.

For those who have built homes on the roadside,
The Cloud means nothing but a slushy mud slide.

One such person, drenched in that slimy muck,
Has named the Cloud-Messenger—Mr. Schmuck!

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[3] *The Cloud-Messenger* is the name of a famous Sanskrit narrative poem by Kalidasa, dating back to the tenth century, where the Cloud is romantically personified as a messenger between estranged lovers.

# Dalit Writing: The Works of Kusum Meghval

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It is a complex project to identify the continually growing and changing expanse of the social and artistic movement in India known as Dalit literature. Through a brief introduction to the history (both socio-political and literary) of the Dalit movement in the last century, I will delineate a plausible frame of representation for this emerging pan-Indian forum of social rebellion. More specifically, through an exploration into the life and work of a single Dalit author and activist, Hindi writer Dr. Kusum Meghval, I will map the ways in which one woman narrativizes rebellion. I will read a poem and story both as a piece of the discourse particular to the Dalit cultural idiom, and particular to the writer from whose pen it is produced. I will also address the literature on a theoretical level to uncover the richness of its message and its aesthetic.

## Who are Dalits?

The first question which needs to be addressed is: Who are Dalits? The answer to this seemingly simple question itself is in fact the site of a broad contestation between various groups over authoritative symbolic meaning. I use this term throughout to refer to the community of people in India who are oppressed by the social mechanism of caste and class and who are consciously resistant to such a practice of inequality. But there is a wide variety of meanings and connotations that resonate within this single term.

[*] All translations by Laura Brueck

James Massey points out in his tract on the development of untouchability throughout history, *Roots*, "dalit" is both a noun and an adjective derived from the Sanskrit verbal root "dal."[1] "Dal" means variously to burst, split, crack, or crush. And yet the word is used most frequently to refer to communities of people. Even before delving into the complexities of the meaning of the term, the word carries an unspoken, but widely recognized, social significance.

Massey goes on to trace the present usage of the term back to the nineteenth-century Marathi social reformer, Mahatma Jotirao Phule. Phule reportedly first used the term to describe outcastes and untouchables as the broken-down, crushed members of Indian society. But Massey contends that it is the Dalit Panthers, a short-lived militant arm of the Dalit movement who flourished in the early 1970s, who "gave currency to the term 'dalit' as a constant reminder of their age-old oppression, denoting both their state of deprivation and the people who are oppressed."[2]

In fact the Dalit Panthers widened the term's scope of meaning to include all people who are oppressed in Indian society, though not necessarily because of caste. It reads in 1973's *Dalit Panther Manifesto*: "Who is a dalit? Members of scheduled castes and tribes, Neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically, and in the name of religion."[3]

Kusum Meghval takes a less inclusive stance in her book, *Dalit Society in Hindi Novels*: "The use of "dalit" society has been accepted for those traditionally thought of as Shudras in

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[1] James Massey, Roots: *A Concise History of Dalits* ( Bangalore: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1991), 9.
[2] Massey, 9.
[3] "The Dalit Panther Manifesto" (Bombay, 1973) reproduced it Lata Murugkar, *Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra* ( Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1991), 237.

India. In dalit society there are those castes who exist on a base level and who have been persecuted for centuries."[4]

There is no question that the modern significance of the word "dalit" refers to some one individual or some community of people who are oppressed socially, and sometimes emotionally and physically as well. The debate which surrounds that nature of that oppression and the source from which it comes provides the term with semantic subtleties which resonate differently throughout many works.

## What is Dalit Literature?

A second important question – what is Dalit literature? – is as wide-ranging as the multiple definitions of Dalit identity. An introduction to the history and the scholarly debate which surrounds the characterization of Dalit literature is proper here. Dalit literature is a literary-cultural-political-social movement. It is a body of largely autobiographical essays, short stories, and poetry (novels are only beginning to be published) which flowered in the 1970s under the patronage of the militant political group, the Dalit Panthers. Dalit literature is dominated by themes of untouchability, poverty, social repression, and revolution. It is indeed revolutionary in two ways; first by the nature of its very existence. Dalit literature employs the traditionally-denied medium of literacy to disseminate its message. It is also revolutionary with respect to much of its content; it exposes the living conditions of Untouchables to a pan-Indian and, through recent efforts in translation, an increasingly international audience. It will be important to consider the lived experience of Dalits which is being transcribed into a powerful written form. But it is the nature of

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[4] Kusum Meghval, *Hindi Upanyāson mein Dalit Varg* (Jaipur: Sanghi Prakāshan, 1989), 1.

this form, especially in the case of Kusum Meghval's body of literature, which is of particular interest to me.

Following the example set by twentieth-century social reformer Dr. Bhimrao Babasaheb Ambedkar's life of political activism for Untouchables and his own personal rejection of the Hindu caste order, Dalit literature continues to provide a space for the creation of a new identity for India's most socially oppressed. In the literature, through a conscious rewriting of history, religion, and cultural iconography, Dalits provide each other and themselves with a sense of identity which is organic to their own community rather than being imposed from above, one that inspires unity and pride.

Dalit literature's origins lie unquestionably in the political history of the western Indian state of Maharashtra and its language of Marathi. Maharashtra was the birthplace and center of activity for the two founding reformers of the Untouchable resistance movement, Jotirao Phule and Bhimrao Ambedkar. Dalit literature as it is known today appeared in embryo in the form of songs and folk performances during the height of Ambedkar's political and social agitation.[5] Various locales in Maharashtra were the sites of the first major conversions of Untouchables to Buddhism in the wake of Ambedkar's conversion in 1956. Members among the first Dalits to graduate from college in the late 1950s formed a literary collective called the "Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangh" (Dalit Literature Society of Maharashtra) and hosted the first conference on Dalit literature in 1958. Maharashtra was the birthplace of the "Little Magazine Movement," a surge of independent activist journals and literary periodicals which led to the founding of the Dalit literature quarterly, *Asmitadarsha* in Aurangabad in the late 1960s. The Dalit Panthers were founded

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[5] See Arjun Dangle, "Dalit Literature: Past, Present, and Future" in *Poisoned Bread: translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*, ed. Arjun Dangle (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Limited, 1992), 234-266.

in the 1970s by three Marathi poets: Namdeo Dhasal, Arjun Dangle, and J.V. Pawar. It has only been in the last thirty years, since the end of the 1970s that Dalit Literature has seen an increase in other languages and other regions of India.[6]

Several of Dalit literature's founding authors have written reflectively about what Dalit literature is and who it serves. Dangle writes,

> Dalit literature is one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India, its appalling nature and its system of exploitation. In other words, Dalit is not a caste but a realization and is related to the experiences, joys and sorrows, and struggles of those in the lowest stratum of society. It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity, rebellion, and loyalty to science, thus finally ending as revolutionary.[7]

For Dangle, Dalit literature is inherently tied to a movement which is at once for social equality and for psychological freedom, or "realization."

There has been relatively little work done in the field of Dalit aesthetics.[8] Many Dalit authors consider their literature as a vehicle for expressing the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of a large portion of society who have never had the forum to do so until very recently. Consequently, their literature is different

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[6] Dangle, 244.
[7] Dangle, 264-265.
[8] Two important works trace the formal elements of Dalit women's speech and story-telling. See in particular chapter 5in Fernando Franco, Jyotsna Macwan, and Suguna Ramanathan, eds., *The Silken Swing: The Cultural Universe of Dalit Women* ( Calcutta: Stree, 2000) and Persis Ginwalla and Suguna Ramanathan, "Dalit Women as Receivers and Modifiers of Discourse," in Walter Freeman, ed., *The Emerging Dalit Indentity* ( New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1996). For an introduction to Dalit aesthetics in the visual arts, see P. Mohan Larbeer and V. Alexander, ed., *The Colours of Liberation* ( Madurai: Dalit Resource Center, 2000).

from the literature which has been written and continues to be written by elites throughout India's history. There is a desperate need therefore to understand the ways in which it is different, to map some of the formal elements which are endemic to Dalit literature. As Dalit writer R.G. Jadhav explains, "Just as it is important to remember that Dalit literature has achieved its distinction as a separate entity mainly on the basis of its social content, it is equally important to bear in mind that this content takes a distinct form with the individual writer and with each of his separate works."[9] What is represented in this paper is the individuality of Kusum Meghval's voice, and the relative space which her voice occupies in the larger tradition of Dalit literature.

I want to determine the social significance of Dalit literature, but also want to reserve its literariness and examine its aesthetic. I want to ask the question not only of what makes it revolutionary, but what makes it good? I want to analyze it, enjoy it, and above all allow it to speak for itself. This last part might be the hardest. Here I will attempt to offer a summary of the complications.

Rosalind O'Hanlon, in her essay "Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia,"[10] applauds the Subaltern Studies Collective's self-described project of reconstructing the figure of the colonial subaltern by rejecting elitist historiography, the dominant narrative, and instead focusing on minority discourses and public records of peasant insurgency. She questions, however, the nature of this reconstruction and the transformative effect which the political biases and commitment to Marxist teleology, shared by most members of the collective, may have on the emergent "subaltern." O'Hanlon maintains that there is

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[9] R.G. Jadhav, "Dalit Feelings and Aesthetic Detachment" in Dangle, 299.
[10] In Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* ( London: Verso and the New Left Review, 2000).

an impasse between the collective's simultaneous critique of Western historicism and their reconstruction of the subaltern as "the classic figure of Western humanism – the self-originating, self-determining individual, who is at once a subject in his possession of a sovereign consciousness whose defining quality is reason, and an agent in his power of freedom…."[11]

O'Hanlon's essay suggests that a crucial question the collective, and indeed all Western scholars who seek to represent an historical or modern figure in a non-Western context, ought to be asking themselves is "How are we to configure (the subalterns') presence if it is not in terms of liberal humanist notions of subjectivity and creativity?"[12] How can we elucidate the experience of the subaltern in our own contexts as Western academics while still maintaining the sovereignty of "otherness" of this experience? How do we resist the supremacy of our own analytical categories?

The work of many historians and critics of Dalit literature, like the Subaltern Studies Collective, is governed by a desire first and foremost to uncover and describe a resistant subaltern presence to oppression. While this is a necessary and laudable project, it is nonetheless short-sighted. Dalit literature, once the groundbreaking work of a few educated and activist Marathi Dalits who were products of a century-long organized resistance movement in Maharashtra, is now being written in every Indian state, in every Indian language. This is a relatively new development and there has been little academic attention to the growing production of Dalit literature outside of Maharashtra. Much of the scholarship on Marathi Dalit literature, however, homogenizes the varied and distinct voices who contribute to the emergent genre, and foregoes any attempt at a direct engagement with the literature itself in terms of structure, aesthetic, and general literariness. Many critics and

[11] O'Hanlon, 74
[12] Ibid., 74

historians inside and out of the Dalit literary tradition are content to comment upon the tone of bitterness and rebellion, the agenda of resistance to subordination and suffering.

But my line of questioning is less expository. Dalit literature, by means of various literary journals devoted to the reproduction and dissemination of new writing, through national institutes such as the Dalit Sahitya Akademi in Delhi, and through initiatives at publishing houses like Macmillan and Oxford University Press to provide published English translations of notable work from Dalit authors throughout the subcontinent, is fast becoming a respected creative institution in the vast landscape of Indian literature. What Dalit literature needs now is more than another forum for exposition, but a systematic and theoretical *reading*. If we are to understand Dalit literature as a literature of resistance, then we should seek to understand the nature of that resistance, and how resistance plays out on the page. And we should look more closely at the subject-positions between which resistance operates, namely the oppressor and the oppressed. If there is an absolute dichotomy here then it will be evident, but if the relationship between these two subject-positions is more muddy, then such an analysis may help to clarify some of the complexities of the universal human struggle for equality.

Eleanor Zelliot, arguably the foremost Western scholar of Dalit literature, sidesteps any direct analytical engagement with the symbols, themes, or structure of the poetry she translates. She claims instead that what characterizes Dalit literature is a formless and homogenizing “attitude” of anger directed at generations of subjugation. She writes, “True, there is no Freud, or T.S. Eliot fallout in Dalit poetry. But only the subjects, a certain straightforward quality, the attitudes, some special words, and the references to history and myths from a Dalit point of

view, mark Dalit poetry as Dalit – not its inherent structure."[13] Dalit literature, indeed any literature, is about more than a point of view however, it is the product of the transformation of experience into discourse. For this experience to be understood discursively, for people outside of the immediate social and spatial frame of reference in which this experience (and the literature which describes it) happens, various modes of expression need to exist. The qualities which circumscribe this poetry within a specific group of people, and the symbols and methods employed to describe their lives, is much more complicated and subtle than a singular point of view.

Further, I think that an integral part of understanding Dalit literature is understanding who Dalit authors are, setting them apart from one another as individual writers instead of simply an indistinguishable chorale. Here I present the life and work of Dr. Kusum Meghval, a Dalit writer and activist living in the city of Udaipur, Rajasthan. Through her poem and story, as well as an interview on the topics of her life and her personal views about writing, I hope to provide an intimate illustration of the work of one woman writer actively resisting oppression.

**The Uplift of an Untouchable Settlement**

At the neglected edge of a village
like a ripe boil about to burst
there is
the untouchable settlement

[13] Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), 280.

One day
the settlement's fortune looked up
a minister had come there

The duty
of the social welfare minister
is the supervision of untouchable settlements

When the expedition
got underway
everyone tied pieces of cloth over their noses
because
on the lower branches
of the acacia trees near the huts
hung newly-flayed skins

The poor minister
what could he do
if he had tied cloth over his eyes
then he would have stumbled

From the crowd
in the commotion
the minister saved himself
but his eminent secretary
fell
in that tank
which held the dye
for the raw skins

Now on the skins
no dye was taking
but
on the eminent secretary
a definite color was fixed

Who would stop
in this sickening mess
every man
for himself

Covering
nose and mouth
not breathing
for a single moment
the assemblage left

Those who supervise
untouchables
on their advice
those who govern
cannot manage to stay
even one moment
in this fun
in this environment

Where
untouchables
taking roti
in their hands
are helpless to eat it

Where
stark naked
future generations
of India's children
childhood, youth,
old age
pass their lives

And
measurements are taken

Where he arrives
the eminent minister
the settlement is uplifted

And
his statistics
are noted
in the register
of uplifted untouchable settlements

## Mangali

It was already 5:20. The contractor still wasn't allowing his workers to leave. Mangali had passed the day with difficulty. Her husband Thavra was very sick. For the last fifteen days a fever had been hounding him. He had typhoid.

This morning Mangali had put him in a shared rickshaw and taken him for an examination at the public hospital. The doctor had written a prescription for a couple of injections and some medicine, but Mangali didn't have a cent. She would have to use the daily wages she was due that evening to buy the medicine and the injections. But the contractor was still not calling the end of the day. Getting paid therefore was a very difficult matter.

It was now 6 o'clock in the evening. The contractor signalled the end of the work-day. Now it was time to receive her pay, so Mangali got in line. In front of her there was a queue of thirty men and women. She spent another hour getting through the line.

It had gotten dark. It was as though wheels were attached to Mangali's feet. She went directly to the chemist's shop. She pulled out a slip of paper from a knot in her sari and gave it to the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper demanded a total of eighty rupees for everything. Where would Mangali find eighty rupees? "I'll give you the rest in two days. My husband has a terrible fever. Please, give me all the medicine."

"Get out of here! Why should I trust you people? Here today, there tomorrow, who knows how far we'll have to go in order to track you down. I want all the money," the shopkeeper said, raising his eyebrows.

Nowadays who cares for whom? Things like human sympathy and morality have become out of date, Mangali thought. The shopkeeper snapped – "So then just take thirty rupees worth of medicine. Come get the injection tomorrow."

What could Mangali do? She said OK. She took thirty rupees worth of medicine and returned home. By then it was eight o'clock. It was already pretty late.

She opened the door softly. Thavra was lying there unmoving. Mangali shook him. Thavra came to and moaned a little. He no longer even had the strength to speak. His body was blazing like a hot oven. Nearby a pot of water was tipped on its side. During the day Thavra must have drunk some water and was unable to set the pot down straight.

Mangali got up to make hot water to mix with the medicine according to the doctor's prescription. But there was no fire in the stove. For two days there had been no means to light it.

She went to her neighbor's hut and asked for a burning coal. Putting the coal in a small pile of grass, she blew on it. The grass started to burn. She placed narrow pieces of wood on this and made a fire to heat the water, then poured the water in a small bowl. She propped Thavra up and put the pill in his mouth. After this she offered him water, but Thavra was unable

to drink. She lay him back down and started to spoon water into his mouth.

Mangali saw that the pill was not going down. The water which she was spooning into his mouth was dribbling out one side. Thavra was muttering quietly. Mangali could not understand him. She put the water aside and took Thavra's head in her lap.

Sitting there, Mangali's eyes started to close from the exhaustion and sickness of the whole day. For two days she had neither eaten nor been able to sleep. Her condition was also becoming very bad.

After a couple of minutes Thavra's head fell to one side. From the jerk of his head Mangali suddenly started. She stroked his chest, but Thavra's breathing had already ceased. She let out a wail and started to weep.

Hearing the sound of Mangali's cries, people around the neighborhood assembled. They began to make arrangements for Thavra's last rites. They asked Mangali for money for wood for the cremation. But Mangali had no money. She had spent her day's wages on Thavra's medicine. She made it clear that she was unable to pay.

Her neighbor's started to whisper among themselves – "Now how can we perform his last rites?"

"What is the need for cremation? We'll dig a ditch and bury him," someone said.

Another spoke – "No, we have to perform his cremation. We are at least such men. Let's gather a little money. What is the problem? He is also a member of our community. So what if he is a *Bhil*? He is still human Lakshmi always comes and goes. Sometime this could be our state as well."

Everybody understood this. They all groped around in their pockets. In a short time they managed to amass two hundred rupees.

Thavra's cremation was performed. Now Mangali was left utterly alone. Today again the stove was not lit. A neighbor

brought over two *rotis* and cooked spinach greens. In spite of her husbands death, Mangali managed somehow or other to choke down the food because she had been starved for two days. The next day she didn't go to work.

In wealthy households women mourn their husbands for six months to a year. They do not even venture outside. But Mangali could not do this. If she stayed in her house then what would she eat? She had no one else to fill the hollow of her stomach.

On the third day, Mangali set off for work, a long veil pulled down over her face. The contractor exploded – Where the hell were you yesterday? Today you have flounced in here all decked out like a new young bride with a veil pulled across your face.

Mangali offered no reply. She thrust her bangle-less wrists in front of the contractor and started to cry. The contractor realized that her sick husband must have died. Checking himself he said – "Now, nothing will be accomplished by worrying. Those who go do not come back, even if you cry yourself to death.

Offering further consolation the contractor said – "If there is any problem staying alone there in your hut, you can stay in my empty servant's quarter. You'll be safe. In the mornings and evenings do a little housework. I will give you a little extra money on the side. You will get along comfortably. Staying with me, no one will dare to even cast a glance at you. Think it over and give me an answer tomorrow. I won't even charge you rent.

One who is innocent by nature sees only what is immediately in front of her. Mangali put her trust in the protection offered by the contractor and ten days later she moved into his servant quarters.

The contractor had two daughters. Both were married. They each had settled at the homes of their respective in-laws. They came once every year or two to visit their parental home.

Their mother was gone. She had died before their weddings. Father remained busy with his contracting. So they didn't come very often to their father's house. A servant lived with him and made him food.

Just a few days later the contractor started to lay a snare for Mangali. Everyday he bought her some little thing or another and he went to Mangali's quarters to give it to her. Along with this he would encourage her not to worry about anything. If there should be any problem then she should tell him.

The innocent Mangali didn't notice the contractor's scheme hidden behind his sympathy. As though fattening up a goat for sacrifice, he would feed her *pān* and sweets etc. He ornamented her. The contractor was simply mollifying Mangali, but uncomprehending Mangali would continue to present herself opposite him delicately with her veil drawn.

One day a full month after Thavra's death, the contractor said to Mangali – "Now give up mourning, Mangali. Be happy. Am I the cause of some problem for you? I am trying to respond to your every sadness. Don't you ever think of me? Five years has passed since my wife also died. Since then have managed to recover. If I were to sit grieving like you then I would not be able to do any work at all.

Mangali, her veil drawn, continued to listen quietly. She didn't acknowledge anything. The contractor moved a little closer and touched Mangali's hand. Mangali suddenly hissed – "I'm warning you, don't try to touch me. I am a married woman."

"What do you mean 'married.'? Thavra is dead. What, do you think he will return and make you once again a young bride? Now you need to get another man. Am I such a bad catch? Here the news will not reach anyone's ears. You will continue to live in your quarters and I in my bungalow. We will continue to meet at night. You'll get what you want and so will I. The contractor said all of these things in one breath. The stink of alcohol emanated from his mouth.

The revelation of the contractor's lurid designs caused an explosion. Mangali was made of stronger stuff than he had initially thought. Trembling in anger she replied, "Contractor Sahib I had no idea that this monster was hidden inside you and that on the pretext of helping me through my difficulties you have actually brought me here to take advantage of me. But I am telling you firmly that I am a daughter of a *Bhil* woman who, if she gives birth to a child even while cutting wood in the jungle, cuts the umbilical cord herself, lifts the child in her arms and goes home. So don't try to come any closer or I will cut you like a goat."

The contractor exploded in rage – "Even while living in my refuge you dare threaten me? Good-for-nothing untouchable bitch! You think you'll remain a chaste woman your whole life? We'll see just how you save yourself or who saves you here." Saying this he swooped toward Mangali and tried to pull her tight in his arms.

Mangali swiftly pushed aside her veil and in a flash lifted a thick piece of firewood lying by the stove and hit the contractor in the head. The contractor had no clue that there was such a powerful woman hidden inside Mangali. He lost consciousness and fell right there on the spot.

Panting, running in rage, like an angry goddess she arrived at the police station and filed a report against the contractor. As it happened the police took her side. Instead of preying upon Mangali, they offered her protection.

The chief sent two constables with her and gave her a seat in the jeep. They quickly arrived at Mangali's quarters and arrested the unconscious contractor.

Dr. Kusum Meghval was born in the city of Udaipur in the Western Indian state of Rajasthan on April 29, 1948. The youngest of three children and the only girl in the family, Dr.

Meghval showed a precociousness and penchant for learning from a young age. Her parents had spent their lives in a small village named Mujarwardar about forty kilometers from Udaipur, working as shoe-makers and leather-workers. As Dr. Meghval explains, after they married that moved together to Udaipur to set up shop in the city and escape the regular atrocities waged against Untouchables in their village, to raise their children in a city whose atmosphere was less rife with caste conflict.

Able to save a little money from their shoe shop, Dr. Meghval's parents enrolled her at five years of age to study at an English missionary school in Udaipur. She studied there through the eleventh class at which point she was married and moved to her in laws' house in Chittorgarh, an hour's train travel from Udaipur. Her husband's family did not see the need for women's education and her dreams of a university education faded into the distance as she bore two sons and took on the full responsibilities of an Indian housewife. Domestic duties consumed her life for the next decade.

After the death of her husband's parents, Dr. Meghval and her husband and sons moved back to Udaipur where her self-described "hunger" for further education once again found opportunity for fulfillment. While working as a librarian at Rajasthan University, Dr. Meghval undertook private study and worked toward her B.A. in Hindi Literature over the next three years. She subsequently received her M.A. in 1979 and her Ph.D in 1985 at Sukhadia University. Her doctoral dissertation on the representation of Dalits in Hindi literature was published and received the Dr. Ambedkar State Prize for Research from Delhi's Dalit Literature Academy in 1988.

Dr. Meghval also worked for several years in the 1980s at the Udaipur-based company Hindustan Zinc Limited, where she organized a union of Dalit workers at the company which eventually encompassed several thousand workers across several states. She has also helped found women's volunteer groups around Rajasthan including *Mahila Seva Sangh* (Association of

Women's Service) and *Rashtriya Dalit Mahila Sanghatan* (State Dalit Women's Association), providing books and clothes to poor students. Now a full-time social activist, author, and poet, she lives in Udaipur and has founded in her home the Rajasthan Dalit Literature Academy. She publishes a bi-weekly pamphlet of political and social commentary surrounding the issue of caste and gender inequality, *Parivarten Prabhakar*, or "The Light of Change." She has published several collections of stories and poetry in Hindi and Marwari, the dominant dialect of southern Rajasthan, as well as non-fiction works on Dalit women in Hindi literature and the life and teachings of Dalit social and political leaders Mahatma Jotirao Phule, his wife Savitribai Phule (widely believed to be India's first female schoolteacher), and Dr. Babasaheb Bimrao Ambedkar.

I had the fortune to meet Dr. Meghval while on an intensive summer language program in Hindi at the American Institute for Indian Studies in Udaipur. I was making my way through several collections of Dalit women's writings in Hindi with some of the instructors in the program when I happened to come across Dr. Meghval's story *Mangali*.

In the story, Mangali is a day-laborer at a contstruction site. Her husband is extremely ill with typhoid. Mangali has a difficult time gathering enough money for her husband's medication, and he dies shortly into the story. Unable to stay home for the proper mourning period because she is out of food and money, Mangali returns to the construction site, her bangles gone from her wrists, a clear indication of her new status as a widow.

The contractor for whom she works, himself a widower, has been until now an unpleasant character. He suddenly takes an interest in Mangali, however, and offers under the pretext of sympathy that she may stay at the servant quarters in his house in exchange for a little domestic labor. Having nowhere else to turn she agrees. It soon becomes clear that the contractors intentions

are more than merely empathetic, however, and it is not long before he gets drunk and attempts to molest her.

To this point in the story Mangali has been consistently characterized as "innocent" or "naïve." It is here at the moment of realization I pick up the narrative in order to highlight the moment of re-inscription of power into the real Mangali's fictional character:

> The revelation of the contractor's lurid designs caused an explosion. Mangali was made of stronger stuff than he had initially thought. Trembling in anger she replied, "Contractor Sahib I had no idea that this monster was hidden inside you and that on the pretext of helping me through my difficulties you have actually brought me here to take advantage of me. But I am telling you firmly that I am a daughter of a *Bhil* woman who, if she gives birth to a child even while cutting wood in the jungle, cuts the umbilical cord herself, lifts the child in her arms and goes home. So don't try to come any closer or I will cut you like a goat."
>
> The contractor exploded in rage – "Even while living in my refuge you dare threaten me? Good-for-nothing untouchable bitch! You think you'll remain a chaste woman your whole life? We'll see just how you save yourself or who else is going to save you." Saying this he swooped toward Mangali and tried to pull her tight in his arms.
>
> Mangali swiftly pushed aside her veil and in a flash lifted a thick piece of firewood lying by the stove and hit the contractor in the head. The contractor had no clue that there was such a powerful woman hidden inside Mangali. He lost consciousness and fell right there on the spot.
>
> Panting, running in rage, like an angry goddess she arrived at the police station and filed a report against the contractor.

In this passage Mangali is transformed from a weak and helpless victim of the contractor, whose character represents the locus of gender, caste, and class superiority, into an "angry goddess." By illustrating and drawing upon the power inherent in the women of her heritage, the *Bhils*, who bear their babies themselves while working in the jungle, Mangali finds for a moment this same awesome strength within herself. There is something significant as well in the fact that she enunciates her heritage of female power, hearkens a shared female physical prowess through oral expression, as much to instill that same

prowess in her own body as to intimidate the lecherous contractor. Finally it is an unexpected act of physical prowess over the contractor which renders her victorious over the multiple layers of oppressive social forces inherent in the figure of the contractor. In Dr. Meghval's rendering of Mangali's story, she quite literally fights back against her oppressor, and it is this physical act of rebellion which fells her attacker.

I was struck by the simplicity of the narrative and the abrupt turn-about of the protagonists character at the end of the story. A narrative twist which might be considered not fore-grounded enough in the story to be plausible, I suspected that this 'surprise' ending was the locus of the political message which the author might have desired to impart, a place where mere written representation of the vicimization of Dalits turns into a site for the re-writing of their responses to it. When I found out that Dr. Meghval lives in Udaipur, I quickly pursued the opportunity to speak with her.

Dr. Meghval lives with her husband in a comfortable house on the outskirts of Udaipur, in a neighborhood called Kamla Nagar. When I approached her gate for the first time, she was sitting in her office, the site of the Rajasthan Dalit Literary Academy, situated at the end of her driveway facing the street. The office is an open room, the fourth wall constituted by a sliding metal door like the doors of shops all over India. The other three walls are covered in books, piles of her own yet-to-be-published writing, and portraits of Jotirao Phule, Savitri Bai Phule, and Dr. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. She was seated at her desk, working at her typewriter, and flanked by two german shepherds, rendered languid by the heat.

I waved from the other side of the gate, and calming her dogs who had perked up at my presence, came to greet me. She was reticent at first, not opening the gate until I explained who I was and why I was interested in speaking with her. I came to find out later that she has been the recipient of death threats from various radical local groups as a result of her public persona and

outspoken support of social equalit for Dalits. When she did finally invite me in, she continued to grill me vociferously. We spoke on that initial occasion for more than two hours, and at the end of the visit scheduled another visit during which I would record a formal interview. As the summer progressed, I met with Dr. Meghval on several occasions. We shared meals together and spoke of our families, our academic aspirations, and the experience of women in the United States. At one point I invited her to come and speak to the rest of the students on the summer language program on the topic of Dalit literature.

The following excerpts from our discussions, translated from the original Hindi, are taken from an interview with Dr. Kusum Meghval at her home in Udaipur on July 21, 2001.

**LB**: Where does the inspiration for your writing, particularly the stories and poetry depicting the lives of Dalits, come from?
**KM**: Among the books I have given you, you have already read the story "Mangali." That story is about an incident which happened in a village near here.
**LB**: So it is a true story?
**KM**: It is an incident which, in writing, I have expressed in the form of a story. Those girls, I mean the ones against whom atrocities are committed, they cannot say anything. They are not able to speak. With my pen, I have given them breath. With my pen I tell these girls who cannot speak, "Get up and resist. Until you resist these atrocities will keep happening to you." Behind all these stories which I write there is this aim, this message, that revolutionary change brings society forward. And until women themselves take courage and resist these atrocities will continue to happen to them. This is the breath which my pen breathes into them.
**LB**: You have told me a little about your education. You said that after eleventh class you left school to marry and there

ensued a ten-year break when you raised your children. What made you go back to school after these ten years?
**KM**: (laughs) Because inside me there was a hunger and a willpower to study. For other people what it is to do a B.A. or an M.A.? But in our society, I mean Dalit society, it is quite a big thing. For a Dalit woman to do an advanced degree is quite a brave thing. Fifty-two years ago my father believed that girls should be able to study. But fifty-two years ago the rest of society was against the idea that Dalit girls should go to school. At that time my mother and father really resisted what was socially accepted when they said, "OK, our sons go to school, so will our daughter. What problem do we have with that?" This was how it started. Later, I had the desire itself. The first year back after ten years was very difficult. But when I passed, I knew I could do it and I took courage. It was a challenge, one which I welcomed.
**LB**: When you were in school did you experience any opposition because you were a Dalit?
**KM**: No. Because the English-medium school I went to was an *ashrama* (missionary) school. Now the school's name is St. Theresa, before it was called Kusumi Ashram. Amongst the sister and brothers who taught there, untouchability did not mean anything. For them all the children were equal. So there at school nothing particular ever happened to me because I was a Dalit.

Even now in Rajasthani villages, however, there are difficulties for Dalits who study in village schools. For fear of touching them, no one gives Dalit students or Dalit teachers any water to drink or wash their hands. All the facilities are separate for Dalits and higher castes. … There is a lot of opposition to Dalits in rural schools. I did not face that because I was in Udaipur. Udaipur is a city. In ashrama schools in cities these kinds of things don't happen.

But at home it was different. I had friends and we would go to each others houses. Sometimes it would happen that some

friend would realize that we were Dalits and their parents would practice untouchability. They would demand that we would eat and drink separately, and so on. It was important to their parents, but for the girls who would come and play at our house it was no big deal. I recently met a close friend with whom I had lost touch after eighth class when she was married. When we met again we remembered that she would come to my house and eat my mother's cooking secretly, and then go home and tell her father that she had not. (laughs)

**LB**: So when did you really come to understand that your family was Dalit, and what being a Dalit in society really meant?

**KM**: I think I really started to understand when I was five or six years old. Before that I didn't really know anything because I stayed at home. But when I was five I started going with my mother to fill water. We would go to the public well. That's where everyone went to get their water. But the people running the well and filling people's water-pots did not want to give us water. This was because we were Dalit. We had to start going to another well which was very far from the house to get water. I asked my mother and father why we had to go so far. They explained to me that this was because we were Dalit and ot often goes this way for us.

My understanding grew from things like this. We also used to go to Lake Pichola to wash our clothes. There, there were also people who practiced untouchability. We would wash our clothes in the lake water just like they would and they would tell us, "Don't let the water from your washing come near us." And when we would bathe they would say the same thing.

When we are all human and all equal, then why should they act like this? From that point this thing inside me started to grow. But then I never wrote any of this down, these incidents that I write about now. Like when I was married and moved out of Udaipur I had to go get water at a well outside the village where we lived. Whenever I would go there, everyone else would make sure to get in line before me and I would always

have to be the last in line to get water. When I would go to the lake to bathe and wash clothes, everyone else would move very far from me. Day after day after day, this feeling of resistance inside me continued to grow.

And it is this very feeling which I write about. An author lives life too. In my stories I write about the pain which I too have experienced. The pain which so many of us experience because of the way society works needs to stop. That is our struggle which we can fight through the medium of literature.

**LB**: So what is it you want your writing to accomplish?

**KM**: Through the medium of Dalit literature we want there to be equality in this society. There should not be this kind of atmosphere which we have now, where there is high and low, touched and untouched, widowhood. There should be equality instead. In Dalit literature we want to say to the people who practice inequality that these things are wrong, they should not exist. We also want to give Dalit society this message that you need to sit with them and explain about equality. There should not be caste and there should not be class. This is what Dr. Ambedkar taught in his writings. And this is what Dalit authors also want to express.

**LB**: So do you think that there has been positive social change with regard to the condition of Dalits since the time of Dr. Ambedkar? Since the time when you started writing thirty years ago?

**KM**: There has been improvement since Dr. Ambedkar revealed the state of Dalits to the whole nation. Since that time, people have started to read and write and find work. And they have also started to live life according to the opinions of Dr. Ambedkar, and spread his message. You will find in the cities – Bombay, Nagpur, Delhi – that their condition continues to improve. Because there you have educated people. They can read and understand and enact change. But in the villages the situation now is just what it was before. There is untouchability and class strife and widowhood just as before. We hope that we can bring

some change to the villages by publishing and bringing to them little books about Dr. Ambedkar and his teachings, and about the equality of human beings. Because so few people would be able to read big books, we try to write this message in little ones which they can understand. Today in India the Dr. Ambedkar movement continues to grow and move forward. The situation is better in Maharashtra because Dr. Ambedkar himself did a lot of work there. Atrocities against Dalits are fewer in Maharashtra. There are many more in Rajasthan. Today Rajasthan is where Maharashtra was fifty years ago. Dalits here have to endure a lot more, and they do not have as much confidence to speak out against what happens to them. But still change has begun.

**LB**: Who reads your stories? Who do you understand your audience to be?

**KM**: My stories are for society as a whole, not just Dalits. Everyone has different reactions, because until now these things have not been written. Many people say, what are you writing? And I tell them I am writing the truth. The daily lives of Dalit women and their difficulties, these things I write 'as it is.' Just like if there is some Dalit woman living in a village, tilling a field, caring for her children, and there is some atrocity committed against her, as an author I am concerned about what actually happened. Inside her there may be no room for anger, for resistance. That is where Dalit literature differs from 'as it is'; it offers the power of resistance to her character. That is how Dalit literature differs from other realist literature. It represents the truth of what happens, and it fights for equality.

## “The Lover” & “My Mother’s Sermon”

by Champa Vaid

Translated by Krishna Baldev Vaid

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**उस रात कोई चला आया था**

उस रात कोई चला आया था
घर के अन्दर मेरा पीछा करता
सोने वाले कमरे में भी रहा साथ
नींद नहीं आयी उस रात
वह पेड़ अचानक बड़ा हो गया था
जिसका बीज निगल लिया था
मैंने बचपन में
उस पेड़ से लटक रही थीं यादें
उस रात मुझे डर था
अंधेरे में मुझसे वह
सब कुछ बुलवा लेगा।

### The Lover

He followed me home that night
Into my bedroom

Into my bed
I couldn't sleep all night
The seed I'd swallowed as a child
Shot up like a tree
That night
Laden with memories
I was afraid
He'd force me into
Blurting out everything
That night

**माँ की सीख**

माँ कहती थी

लड़की हो

नंगी मत नहाओ

लड़कों के संग मत खेलो

उनकी आंखों में देखोगी तो

गर्भ ठहर जाएगा

अकेली मत जाओ कहीं

मित्र के भाई से मत बोलो

स्कूल से लौट

होमवर्क करो

सुबह सवेरे पाठ रटो

स्कूल की किताबों के सिवाय

कुछ मत पढ़ो

उपन्यास और कविता तो बिल्कुल नहीं

भाई सेमत लड़ो उससे प्यार करो

पिता से फालतू बातें मत करो

सम्बन्धियों से तो बिल्कुल नहीं
लड़की हो खाना बनाना और सब कुछ सहना सीखो
जो कहा जाए बिना मुंह बनाये करती जाओ
मां की 'मत' की सूची लम्बी थी
जो अब भी लटकी है
मन में जुटिया-सी

**My Mother's Sermon**

You are a girl
You shouldn't bathe in the nude
Even in the bathroom
You shouldn't play with boys
You'll conceive
If you look them in the eye
Don't go out alone
Don't talk to your brother's friends
Do your homework
When you get back from school
Learn everything by rote
Do not read anything
Except your text books
Never touch fiction and poetry
Do not stand up to your brother
Be sweet to him
Do not talk in vain
With your father
With relatives never
You are a girl
Do whatever you are told to do
Learn to cook
And endure

The list of mother's don'ts was long
It hangs in my mind
Even now
Like a black pigtail

## Are We the “Folk” in this *Lok*?: Usefulness of the Plura Translating a *Lok-Katha*[*]

Christi Ann Merrill

University of Michigan

### The Riddle

I begin this paper by asking a riddle, but in order for to appreciate its implications you need to understand that I s both as a theorist of translation and also as a practitioner. Th riddle revolves around a story I myself have translated into English from a Hindi short story Vijay Dan Detha wrote wh itself was inspired by a Rajasthani folktale. I call my versior “Professional Honor,” and Detha called his Hindi version “F ki Maryada” while the Rajasthani version(s) have neither tit nor name—at least, as far as I know. The riddle, then, is this have written this story in English from a story written in Hir that in turn was written from a story told (several times, and several ways) in Rajasthani, then who can be said to have authored the English version?

Convention dictates that as the translator I name Vija Dan Detha author of “Professional Honor,” but in doing so I become caught in the same snarl of contradictions Detha hir gets caught in, conforming to modern (European) notions of single authorship when the creative process itself is decided plural. In this paper I am going to suggest that a more produ approach to Detha’s dilemma and mine would be to create a category called “storywriter,” which can apply equally to au and translator, and be used as the literary equivalent of a

[*] This paper was first presented at the Katha International Conference December 16-22, 2000.

"storyteller." In short, I suggest that the truest answer to the riddle "who authored the English version?" turns out to be: "the folk."

**Detha's Short Stories as Folktales, or Folktales as Short Stories**

"Rijak ki Maryada" was published in *Kathadesh* four years ago, but that was not my first encounter with it.[1] I had already translated a yellowed manuscript version of the same tale a decade earlier while working with Vijay Dan Detha and his Hindi translator, Kailash Kabir, in Jodhpur in 1990, and had included it in my MFA thesis in 1993. If you want to be crassly legalistic, you could argue that since my English translation of "Professional Honor" was the first copyrighted version of that tale, then the story can be said to belong to me. Or if you're more conventional you could argue that since my English version was directly derived from Detha's Hindi version, then the tale should belong to him. Or you could insist that the story should be claimed by the person who originally told it. But I would argue that we need to ask the question a different way. I would argue that the story belongs to Detha and to me, and to anyone else who has told, will tell it, has heard it, or will hear it. I would even venture to say that the question of ownership when you're discussing translations—especially translations of self-professed folk tales—is not just misleading but downright dangerous. Dangerous not just for myself, and for Detha as the "author," but for the storytelling tradition more generally.

It must be said that Detha sits somewhat uncomfortably between the designations "folklorist" and "author." At the beginning of his writing career he unabashedly thought of himself as a folklorist, and made it his life mission to put into print the exceedingly varied and vibrant oral tales he grew up

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[1] *Kathadesh,* March 1997.

hearing in his native rural Rajasthan. When I met him in 1988, he had already published fourteen fat volumes of tales written in Rajasthani as part of a series called *Baton ri Phulwari* (*A Garden of Tales)*, and from those fourteen volumes Kailash Kabir had culled two collections worth of stories he then translated from Rajasthani into Hindi.[2] Of course we know that writing in a regional—and, it must be admitted, less prestigious—tongue such as Rajasthani does not command the same cultural capital as writing in a national language such as Hindi. While we could talk about the implications of this inequality from many different angles, here I will focus on the vexing question of authorship, since Detha's national—and you could even assert international—reputation as an author has been based primarily on the Hindi versions written by Kailash Kabir.

The contradiction at the heart of my riddle is this: Detha may be considered the author of these stories so many people have read and lauded in Hindi, but he is not their writer. At least, not exclusively. I can testify as one of those many readers that part of what moved me in reading these texts was the way Detha recreated the oral quality of the tales in his written (Rajasthani) versions, and part of what moved me was the way Kabir was able to convey a certain Rajasthani inflection in the Hindi prose. In short, it wasn't simply the tale itself I was responding to, but the way the tale was performed. The problem is that we expect to hold only one person accountable for this artistic success.

It would be easier if we could assume the problem arises from the fact that stories such as "Dohari Zindagi" or "Anekhon Hitler" are translations, and that we just have to work out more carefully what part is the translator's input and what part the author's. But when we look again we can see that analogous issues arise from reading stories Detha wrote himself—whether

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[2] Detha, Vijay Dan. *Baton ri Phulwari.* 14 vols. Borunda: Rupayan Samsthan, 1964-88.

in Rajasthani or in Hindi (as is the case with "Rijak ki Maryada"). By trying to identify a single person responsible for the creation of a stories, we spend much of our time gathering evidence to ascertain whether Detha is a folklorist or an author. The assumption is that if Detha is labeled a folklorist, then he should become a completely transparent conduit for the stories and should name the true creators of the stories as the original authors; or else that if he is an author, then he shouldn't claim any true kinship to the oral culture he evokes in his tales so that we can designate the origin of the stories as his (godly) imagination. What I would like to assert here is that the distinction between the two is somewhat false, and that if our main goal is to keep storytelling (or storywriting) alive and well, it would behoove us to create a new set of criteria whose goal isn't so much to assess ownership as liveliness, eloquence, even emotional, political, or moral relevance. We need to adjust our expectations so that we think of the written text as yet one more performance of a story in a tradition necessarily various and multiple.

**What is an Author?**

Part of what I'm calling into question is the definition—you may even say the institution—of the "author." Here I rely on the observations Michel Foucault makes about the (mostly European) history of authorship in his famously provocative 1969 essay, "What is an Author?" He points out that an author's name begins to be linked to a literary text as copyrightable property when the discourse contained in it is thought to be transgressive—that is, when the work is considered to represent a significant departure from the tradition—and so the individual's name is supplied in order to vouch for the material set forth as a way of holding one person responsible for

said transgressions.[3] Of course, we know that the effect of this maneuver has been to romanticize the singular transgressiveness of literary creation to such an extent that we now do not consider a work sufficiently literary unless it is deemed to be a complete departure from previous norms. A writer is not considered a true "author" unless s/he can prove that her/his work is in no way derivative—a significant problem for a storywriter such as Detha whose stories are based on folk tales.

Such expectations have not always obtained, however. "Even within our civilization," asserts Foucault via Bouchard and Simon's English,

> the same types of texts have not always required authors; there was a time when those texts which we now call "literary" (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author. Their anonymity was ignored because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity. (125)

In this quasi Golden Age of identity-less literature, according to Foucault, only scientific texts had to prove their authenticity by stating the author's name. Then in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries scientific texts began to be "accepted on their own merits and positioned within an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification" while suddenly literary texts were required to carry the author's name, date, place and circumstance of writing to guarantee its authenticity. My point here is not to open up a historical debate on literary versus scientific discourse in Renaissance Europe, but rather to challenge these received notions of authorship as they shape our reading of literary texts today—most specifically our reading of folk tales. If, as Foucault

[3] Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" in D. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice,* trans. D. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 124-127.

concludes, “these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author...are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts...” then how do these projections onto a single individual shape our reading of a story such as “Rijak ki Maryada”? The danger is that reducing an ongoing creative process to the text of a single performance does not fully account for the story’s multiple origins—oral, or otherwise.

Albert Lord suggests in *The Singer of Tales* that part of the problem lies in our discomfort with multiplicity.[4] In oral tradition, he claims, “the words ‘author’ and ‘original’ have either no meaning at all...or a meaning quite different from the one usually assigned to them.” A folklorist may hear numerous versions of a song, but if he is called upon to single out an author, then he will name the performer before him. After all, explains Lord: “A performance is unique; it is a creation, not a reproduction, and it can therefore only have one author.” How is this possible, that a story can be one and many at the same time? Lord replies:

> Actually, only the man with writing seems to worry about this, just as only he looks for the nonexistent, illogical, and irrelevant “original.” Singers deny that they are the creators of the song. They learned it from other singers. We know now that *both* are right, each according to his meaning of “song.” To attempt to find the first singer of a song is as futile as to try to discover the first singing. And yet, just as the first singing could not be called the “original,” so the first man to sing a song cannot be considered its “author,” because of the peculiar relationship...between his singing and all subsequent singings. From that point of view a song has no “author” but a multiplicity of authors, each singing being a creation, each singing having its own single “author.” (102)

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[4] Lord, Albert. *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), 101-102.

What Lord fails to take account of in such a scenario, however, is the role played by the invisible, nameless scribe setting these songs to paper. If Lord can insist that each performance of a song is a creation unique in its own right and not a mere reproduction, then he should consider a written version as yet another performance.

I say this not to disparage Lord's documentary skills, but rather to point out that he himself gets caught in the same impossible demands made on someone trying to recreate the experience of these songs or tales through writing. What do you do if you are a Vijay Dan Detha or one of the brothers Grimm, inspired by the tales you hear as part of your everyday, because in them you sense something special, something worth preserving, a certain spiritedness you wish to have captured for posterity? You may very well do as the Grimm brothers did—at least according to Jack Zipes—and modify the stories for greater effect. Theirs is an instructive example to look at because we know the outcome: the Grimm brothers succeeded in their goal of popularizing a corpus of stories that otherwise may have dropped out of circulation.

The way Zipes tells it the Grimm brothers would invite family friends and other "educated young women of the middle class or aristocracy" into their drawing room and have these women repeat stories they had heard growing up from their "nursemaids, governesses, and servants, or tales they may have read."[5] Zipes takes care to note that the Grimms' informants would often draw on both "the oral and literary tradition of tale-telling and combined motifs from both sources in their renditions." The Brothers did not seem to distinguish authenticity based on oral versus written sources, but rather would write down as many versions as they heard, and then begin the arduous process of refining them in order "to *create* an

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[5] Zipes, Jack. *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 10-12.

ideal type for the *literary* fairy tale, one that sought to be as close to the oral tradition as possible, while incorporating stylistic, formal, and substantial thematic changes to appeal to a growing bourgeois audience." In other words, they reworked the various versions they elicited to conform to the ideals they shared, namely:

> ...the endeavor to make the tales stylistically smoother; the concern for clear sequential structures; the desire to make the stories more lively and pictorial by adding adjectives, old proverbs, and direct dialogue; the reinforcement of motives for action in the plot; the infusion of psychological motifs; and the elimination of elements that might detract from a rustic tone. The model for a good many of their tales was the work of the gifted romantic artist Philipp Otto Runge, who stories in dialect, *The Fisherman and His Wife* and *The Juniper Tree,* represented in tone, structure, and content the ideal narrative that the Grimms wanted to create.(12)

If you did not know the names of these writers who endeavored to make their stories livelier, stylistically smoother, with clearer sequential structures, but asked you to categorize them as "author" or "folklorist", I don't imagine you would have chosen "author." Such aesthetically-minded mediations do not fall under the domain we like to think of as folklorist. I say this not to disparage the validity of the Grimms' work, but quite the contrary: to point out that they were able to preserve these stories because they paid such careful attention to the ways they wrote. Categories of "author" versus "folklorist" become incidental in the face of their larger success.

What matters to us is that their work as storywriters has become valued. I would therefore like to suggest that instead of investigating <u>if</u> writers like the Grimms or Vijay Dan Detha craft the stories they present, we should look instead at <u>how</u>. In order to do this successfully, our job as critical readers should be to develop a more complex language for appraising the writers' work that takes into account the inherent multiplicity of their stories.

**Detha's Professional Honor**

If we don't, then what's the danger? In Detha's case, we can see that the pressure to fit him into the slot of either folklorist or author has opened him up to criticism, either for improvising too much (and therefore tampering with the "original") or not enough (to call his version an "original.") This demand for a single, singular original forces us to disregard any elements in a story that belie a dynamic relationship with folk tradition, even if they are the most distinctive and compelling aspects of the story. In short, this demand for a single, singular original forces us to misread, whether the work is attributed to an author, the folk, or both at once, as is the case with Detha's stories.

Detha's particular writing gift lies precisely in the ways in which he plays with and against the storytelling tradition. He retains enough elements of it to create a fuller context for the rhetorical and political transgressions he makes, so that the departures represent a critique of the tradition from within. Such artistry is difficult to appreciate if we cannot tolerate multiplicity. Stories like Detha's are not created in a vacuum, and are not meant to be read in a vacuum. They represent a particularly fruitful relationship with the various lok brought together in the stories—and here I mean *lok* in the sense of people or folk, but also in the sense of worlds. If we are serious in calling these stories *lok katha*, it behooves us to ask: Who are these lok, what, and where?

Alan Dundes asks a similar question in the essay, "Who Are the Folk?" The essay sets out to challenge the stereotype of "folk" as a monolithic, homogeneous mass of illiterate, uncivilized peasants.[6] Instead of a blurry mass of romanticized peasants, he suggests,

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[6] Dundes, Alan. "Who are the Folk?" In *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1980), 2.

> The term 'folk' can refer to *any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is—it could be a common occupation, language or religion—but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own.....A member of the group may not know all other members, but he will probably know the common core of traditions belonging to the group, traditions which help the group have a sense of group identity. (7)

He explains that people may identify as being in a group because they are part of the same family, ethnicity, race, nation, because they are all baseball players, computer programmers, coal miners, cowboys, fishermen, surfers,...the possible varieties are infinite. He ends the essay by answering the question, "Who are the folk?" by proclaiming cheerfully, "Among others, *we* are!"[7]

The implicit moral to Dundes's story is that folklore functions in part to create a sense of belonging: the answer to his question can be "we are" because lore binds us together, makes us feel part of that particular *lok* (as people, and as world.) And yet, the feeling of inclusiveness a performance creates gives rise to a certain attendant anxiety: suddenly we feel we must know exactly who this is performing our identity for us. To know our identity we must know the identity of the singer of this song, the teller of this tale, this single entity who speaks of and for the *lok*. The singing, telling, speaking, performing re-defines what and who the *lok* is, and the more acutely we sense the definition of the *lok* shift, the more we insist on holding an individual performer responsible for the collective movement. We crave this shift in the plural, but blame the performer in the singular. It is this gesture towards artistic scapegoating that Detha highlights in his version of the *lok katha* he calls "Rijak ki Maryada."

In brief, the story revolves around the plight of a *bhand* or shapeshifter who is said to be so good at his trade that he fools one person after another with his excellent disguises. (A lovely

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[7] Ibid., 19.

analogy for a storywriter!) By the rules of the game, no one can hold the bhand responsible for what he does when he's impersonating another character; he explains that his professional honor ("Rijak ki Maryada" of the title) requires him to enter fully into whichever persona he adopts for the designated period of time. When he's a mahatma he refuses to let his ascetic vows be compromised by all the riches dangled before him, and when he's a *dayan* he drinks the blood of the queen's own brother when he crosses her path. Of course, the queen has trouble accepting the rules of the game once it has been played to the death and sets out to seek revenge for her brother's horrific murder. But the king and his courtiers realize they can't put the bhand to death for a crime he committed while he was in disguise, especially after he had so specifically and publicly warned them. Finally when there seems to be no way to avenge the murder of the queen's brother, a lowly barber thinks up a way to outwit the bhand in his own terms: have the bhand assume the guise of a *sati* who must immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

In the version Detha heard—or so I heard from his friend, Komal Kothari—a barber told the tale in such a way that celebrated the cleverness of the fictional barber by showing how he outsmarted not only the bhand but the mighty king and all his stumped courtiers as well. In the nameless barber's version, the issue of the sati's sacrifice served as only an instrument to a different kind of justice, but in Detha's version he uses the traditional story form to highlight the atrociousness of such a practice by sympathizing deliberately with the bhand, and adopting a sorrowful tone rather than the whimsical delivery common to many folk tales:

> tatpashcat us vichitra bhand ne jaisa kaha, vaisa ki kiya,
> hazaron manushya sati ka svang dekhne ke liye oomand
> pare dekhte-dekhte ki chitaa saji—mata sahaj bhav se chita
> pur baithi, uske sat ka karishma ki apne-aap chita men aag

> ki lapte dhoo-dhoo kar ke jal oothi. sati ka svang bhi
> sampann hua (1997:15)

Detha's version treats the bhand's decision to go through with the sacrifice as a tragedy, figuring the bhand not so much as a mischievous trickster who must be taught a lesson, but rather as an unparalleled artist with a laudable commitment to his art. The story ends with what at first appears to be a somewhat heavy-handed judgment about the bhand's honor compared to the king's:

> par raja ki maryada ke jhoote ahamkar aur bhand ki maryada ke sahaj gaurav jaane-anjaane kahi koi samanta nahin thi (1997:15)

It's only when we read this line in the context of other folk tales in the Rajasthani oral tradition that we hear a parodic edge to the narrator's voice. These are the moments when Detha uses traditional storytelling conventions not only to comment on the events within the story, but to comment on the traditions themselves.

After all, Detha himself is an artist who has been so effective at mimicking other people's voices that the line between who he is in play—i.e. a storyteller—and who he is in reality—a writer—becomes irrevocably crossed, and as the performer of that play he runs a greater risk of being singled out as scapegoat for the resulting transgression. We could read the story as a version of "The Death of the Author", Rajasthani folk tale style. For just as French theorists such as Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes critique a system which mythologizes the author of the text so that it may sacrifice him, so does "Rijak ki Maryada" critique a system which demands a performance to the death.

The remedy, suggests Susan Stewart in her *Nonsense* book which combines folklore and literary studies, is to protect

the welfare of the players by protecting the welfare of the play.[8] The main difference between play and reality? According to Stewart, play is repeatable, reversible, intangible, temporary. This is the difference between seeing Detha's version of the story as one performance in a line of many, and regarding it as a definitive and original piece of literature.

By locating a storywriter in the plural—as part of the lok—you are allowing there to be play in the re-creation (and here it is important to think of "play" both in the sense of dynamic movement as well in the sense of fun.) Play for Detha, as well as for the storywriters and storytellers who preceded him and for those who will follow. Thus while logocentricity encourages us to believe the power of the story can he reduced to specific words in a fixed text, lok-ocentricity forces us to embrace the ambiguity and temporality inherent in plural play. This isn't a distinction based on oral versus written media, but on the expectations surrounding the performance of a story. If you want to keep not just the individual storyteller or author alive, but the whole tradition, you would then want more people to feel part of a lok that has play, has movement. You would want for that lok to keep re-creating itself through an endless line of performances. You would want the play to continue on through a revolving series of players.

Now, you may ask, what does this have to do with translation?

## What is a Translator?

Some of you may have noticed that I didn't offer my English versions of the passages I just quoted from Detha's story

[8] Stewart, Susan. *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 57-66, and 118-123.

in Hindi. But now I will do my own bit of "Professional Honor" and offer my translation:

> Subsequently the incomparable bhand did just what he said he would. Thousands gathered to see a man assume the guise of a sati. Soon a cremation pyre was laid of sandalwood. She mounted the funeral pyre with the natural bearing of a true sati. Such was the power of her conviction that flames leapt up from the pyre of their own accord.

The sati disguise turned out to be another great success.I refrained quite intentionally from offering my version, not wanting to follow Detha into the allegorical flames already raging. After all, in a world that would sacrifice an author, the translator would be next to go. I'm not ready for a fire test like that.

Sherry Simon has a similar worry. She points out in *Gender in Translation* that the identity of the translator is bound up with the identity of the author as "exclusive proprietor of the text." [9] Her metaphors underscore the tangible and therefore permanent nature of our expectations. Her theory is an easy one to test. When you read the last line of the story,

> There's no comparing a monarch's false pride with the natural dignity of a bhand.

What moral do you draw, and with whom do you imagine sharing it? My hope is that you are able to imagine me, and Detha, and the nameless barber, and a long line of other storytellers and writers who have passed on this tale, each of us offering a version that is repeatable, reversible, intangible, temporary, playful. My hope is that in the moment when you came to the end of the story, you were able to feel part of this lok somehow.

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[9] Simon, Sherry. *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 46.

For a lok-ocentric vision of a story would see translation as less of a tangible carrying across, in the English sense of the word, and more of an intangible telling in turn, as is suggested by the Hindi word for translation, *anuvad.* Such an approach would allow us to embrace the inherent multiplicity of storywriting, in such a way that individual performers wouldn't be placed in the unenviable dilemma of having to demand entire credit for the work or none at all. Just as the relationship between Detha and the nameless barber can be cast as a one-on-one winner-take-all contest for possession of the (tangible) text, or can be seen as two of many instances in on ongoing line of (an intangible) story performance, so I suggest we recast the author-translator relationship in such a way to emphasize the creative enterprise we both participate in. I have confined my discussion to the literary re-creation of folktales, but for me these examples simply offer a heightened version of the situation any translators—nay, any storywriters—are in. That all of us are potential translators, redefining the lok in the way we pass along stories.

I will then end with a beginning, of a story I wrote in English after a story Vijay Dan Detha wrote in Hindi after a story he heard told in Rajasthani. It belongs to us and them and him and you. After all:

> What difference does a story make if all you do is hear it? Or just read it and repeat it word for word? Now, if you let something affect you, that is—really let it change you, that's another story...a story that goes something like this...(1997).

# Cut Flowers: A Comparative Look at Colonial and Contemporary Translation Anthologies of Persian Literature

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But what do prefaces actually do. . . . Oughtn't we some day to reconstitute their history and their typology? Do they form a genre? Derrida

It comes into vacant place where people are looking. Alger

Awareness of the social circumstances precipitated by the 1979 Islamic Revolution, especially the new degree of censorship and state control, is essential for understanding contemporary Iranian authors' writing. However, silences, omissions, and slants characterize not only the production and presentation of post-revolution writing in Iran, but the representation of this writing in English as well. Like censors, translators have the power to cut and control.

Women's lives in post-revolution Iran are the subject of a wide range of "fictions" amenable to critical reading—fictions produced by men, as well as women, that take a variety of generic forms. Yet, at the present time, English language anthologies of Persian literature showcase "Iranian women's fiction," although that category has yet to take on a similarly distinct identity in Iranian literary criticism. There are, as yet, no translation collections of post-revolution writing. Only two general anthologies of Persian short stories have been published in English since 1979, and the number of complete translations of post-revolution works, including works by both male and female authors, can be counted on two hands. While all of the editors of available collections note that anthologies are intended to serve as tools for sociological as well as literary study, the majority of these compilations consist of decontextualized

"pieces" that have been spliced together with minimal explanation of their interrelationships or historical relevance.

By drawing on post-structuralist translation theory to analyze anthology formats, I have identified compilation patterns that suggest eighteenth and nineteenth-century Persian-English translations continue to orient contemporary anthologies such that they perpetuate the objectifying gaze of the past.

## Post-Colonial Translation Theory

In her analysis of translation as a node for thinking through the positive possibilities of a more reflexive/integral relationship between post-structuralist and post-colonial theories, Tejaswini Niranjana puts forth a central point few would disagree with—translation "theory" has been overly preoccupied with questions of interlingual equivalence and other strictly syntactic concerns for too long. In the past decade, there has clearly been an impetus in translation studies toward elaborating theories that take the specificities of cultural context into fuller consideration.[1]

Niranjana takes the position, and it is one that I share, that there is no use in trying to judge or correct colonial misrepresentations of non-western subjects (since there can be no "true" representation); rather, the primary task of the literary/cultural critic is to elaborate the "how's" and "why's" of translation's collusion in the historical processes of cultural domination. Along the same lines, Lawrence Venuti describes translation as "an active reconstitution of the foreign text

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[1] Niranjana's central concern that translation theory should study textual force instead of fidelity to any supposedly fixed "original" is consistent with ideas expressed in *The Manipulation of Literature* (1985); *Translation, History and Culture* (1990); *Translating Literature* (1992); and *Rethinking Translation* (1992). All of these works open the field of Translation Studies to exploration of the political and ideological complexities that socio-historical scrutiny entails.

mediated by the irreducible linguistic, discursive, and ideological differences of the target-language culture." He then particularizes a method of reading translations that would be grounded in what he specifically names "post-structuralist translation theory." His method of close analysis calls for "detailed studies that situate the translated text it its social and historical circumstances and consider its cultural political role."[2]

Prefaces and introductions yield a wealth of contextual information for this type of "detailed study." Sherry Simon makes a strong case for in-depth analysis of paratextual material. She writes: "In addition to revealing the historically shifting relationship between author and translator and foregrounding the foundations of literary values, prefaces are useful precisely because they trace the contours of literary ideology and expose for us the socio-political context which commands literary exchanges."[3] I have found paratextual material most useful for tracking differences in editorial attention to contextualizing Persian translations during three historical periods that illustrate the degree to which the anthology format has functioned as an appropriative as well as a communicative vehicle for Persian literature: the period of British colonial presence in India,[4] the period of major U.S. involvement in Iranian internal affairs (late 1940s through the 1970s), and the years following the 1979 Islamic-Revolution.

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[2] Lawrence Venuti, ed., *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 10.
[3] Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 112.
[4] After the turn of the century, Persian language learning served the interests of the British in Iran as well as India. Although Iran never became a British colony, the Anglo-Russian accord signed in 1907 split the country into two occupied territories: the Northern Caspian Sea region fell under Russian control; the oil-rich South was controlled by the British.

The Profit in Persian

> Translation studies have been impelled by many of the concerns central to feminism: the distrust of traditional hierarchies and gendered roles, deep suspicion of rules defining fidelity, and questioning universal standards of meaning and value. . . . The most compelling questions for both fields remain: how are social, sexual and historical differences expressed in language and how can these differences be transferred across languages? What kinds of fidelities are expected of women and translators—in relation to the more powerful terms of their respective hierarchies.
>
> Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation*

Anthologies of English literature first appeared in the eighteenth century when they were used as a teaching aid to disseminate Standard English among the emergent middle class. The first English anthologies of Persian literature were designed to facilitate the acquisition of the Persian language for men pursuing a career in the administration of British colonial interests in India. Emphasis on language learning continued to determine the contents of many twentieth-century anthologies of Persian literature in English as well. Gradually, however, linguistic concerns became secondary to literary critical criteria in the selection process. Only in the most recent wave of English anthologies of Persian literature, (those published after the 1979 revolution), has the subject of Iranian culture, especially issues surrounding women's societal role, moved to the fore, almost entirely displacing the more linguistically oriented or literary critical Persian anthology. This change in focus may be attributable in part to the sweeping changes in anthology inclusiveness that resulted from the push to "open the canon" in the United States academy in the 1970s.[5] However, given the

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[5]The gender-segregated approach to literary production was proposed by feminists in the 1970s in response to the traditional under-representation of women authors in university textbooks

small amount of Persian literature available in translation, one cannot argue that new anthologies rectify an imbalance in male/female author representation. As the comparative discussion to follow will illustrate, despite shifting criteria for selection choices, the presentation style and prefatory posture of compilers has remained remarkably close to the colonial template.

Judging from the number of translation anthologies produced in the nineteenth-century, it would appear that classical Persian literature commanded considerably more respect at that time than it does today. However the profusion of translations produced during that period is not necessarily indicative of the prestige of Persian literature nor of the English public's unmitigated interest in it. The burst of translations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was in large part due to the very practical applications of Persian language proficiency for the British Empire. When the British took over India, they quickly realized that successful administration of the colony necessitated familiarity with Persian. After the passage of the India Act of 1784, Persian language study became crucial to the regulation of trade and the extension of empire because Persian was the language of the Indian upper class and the court language of the Mogul rulers. As John Yohannon notes: "For the English, the whole focus of interest in things Persian was not Persia but India, and their interest was inevitably affected by political and commercial considerations of the East India

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of American and British literature. But when *The Norton Anthology of Women's Literature*, intended as a corrective to previous exclusions was published in 1985, it generated considerable debate. See for example: Sandra M. Gilbert, "A New Anthology of Literature by Women: Does it define a canon or merely baptize a kangaroo?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* 12 (1989): 31.

Company."[6] This extra-literary interest in Persian texts was freely acknowledged at the time. In the first English anthology of Persian literature, published in 1801 as a companion to Sir William Jones' *Grammar of the Persian Language*, Samuel Rousseau observed that Persian was crucial in order to deal effectively with Indian royalty: it allowed for the fulfillment of "obligatory" social requirements. He avers that Persian had economic utility, and then advances the rather tenuous assertion that Persian is the only way to learn Hindi, in order to claim that the Persian language therefore has even a military applicability. Rousseau enumerates these benefits as follows:

> No negotiation of importance, whether for the purposes of friendship, alliance, or treaty, can be properly carried out by the servants belonging to the East India Company, without a moderate acquaintance with the rudiments of the Persian language. . . .
>
> Persian is considered as the polite language of the elite society of Hindoostan, therefore the acquisition of it is of much greater consequence for all those who would keep company with the higher circles, as every person going out under the auspices of the East India Company are, more or less, obliged to do. . . .
>
> If we take a view of the study of Persian tongue in a commercial light, much may be advanced in its favour. In the western provinces of Hindoostan, particularly those which border on the empire of Iran, Persian is used in all mercantile transactions. . . .
>
> The study of the Persian language, is likewise by no means unworthy [of] the attention of the Military, for this plain reason; because it is the best, and indeed the only road to a perfect acquaintance with the language of Hindoostan; without which, no officer, however great his

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[6] John Yohannon, *Persian Poetry in England and America* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977), 8.

> military abilities, can be esteemed properly qualified to command a battalion of native troops.[7]

Despite the manifold motivations for Persian language acquisition, titles of Persian anthologies published before the 1906 Iranian Constitutional Revolution are strikingly alike. *The Flowers of Persian Literature* was published in 1801, *Flowers from a Persian Garden* in 1808, *Flowers of the East* in 1833, *The Rose Garden of Persia* in 1845, *Flowers Culled from Persian Gardens* in 1870, *Flowers from a Persian Garden and other Papers* in 1890, *Flowers from Persian Poets* in 1901, and *Flowers from Persian Gardens* in 1902. Why was this floral analogy so dominant? Perhaps it was due only to a happy coalescence between the Greek etymology of the word "anthologize" (literally: to collect flowers) and the prevalence of garden imagery in Persian poetry. However, several of the collections listed above are not predominantly comprised of this type of Persian verse. Such peculiar uniformity in titles points to an unstated anthology operative of the time: substantive description of anthology content was secondary to the aesthetic naming imperative. In addition to exemplifying the Orientalist tendency to idealize and/or romanticize Eastern cultures, the flower analogy renders Persian literature ornamental and available for harvest. Only the one title, *Flowers Culled from Persian Gardens*, makes the anthologizer's action explicit, but the implication is there in the other titles as well: these flowers have been picked for display in the West.

These early anthologies fall into two categories: texts for the serious student of Persian literature and those intended for the more general reader. As previously mentioned, literal translations were valued during this period for their scholarly and more practical applications. Citing his desire to increase British

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[7] Samuel Rousseau, *The Flowers of Persian Literature* (London: The Arabic and Persian Press, 1801), 56-57.

gentlemen's chance of "preferment," Rousseau writes in his preface that he has made his selections "for the advancement of his pupils, and to render less rugged the paths of Oriental Science."[8] He specifies: "Part two contains a large selection of entertaining and useful pieces from different authors which are given in Persian and English, so literal, that any person who has acquired the rudiments of the language may, with very little trouble, turn them out of Persian into English" (vii). He also notes that this section includes a group of translations that will allow students to trace linguistic evolution—to chart the introduction of Arabic into Persian—a change that reflects the nineteenth-century preoccupation with philology and racial difference.

In *Rethinking Translation*, Venuti observes that traditionally, a translation has been judged most successful when it gives the appearance that it is original.[9] In the period of colonial presence in India characterized by Persian linguistic prominence, there was a definite appropriative character to such striving for "invisibility." Matthew Arnold, rewrote the story of "Rustam and Suhrab," patterning his poem much more on the Homeric epic than the national history and legends of Iran. His version became the most widely known representation of Persian epic poetry for the West, in spite of, or perhaps because of, its being a "free rendering."[10] Multiple facets of a politically and

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[8] Ibid., v.

[9] Venuti, *Rethinking Translation,* 6.

[10] *The Book of Rustem*, attributed to the translator only and conspicuously renamed, provides a two-tiered example of appropriation from the colonial period. On the first title page of *The Book of Rustem*, there is no mention of Ferdowsi—author of the national epic *The Shahnameh* from which this "Book" is taken, and a veritable literary legend in Iran. This translation is especially interesting for the degree of transformation it effects in attempting to be more "original." As the translator/author notes, "in some particulars I have followed the story as told by Arnold rather than the original version." E. M. Wilmot-Buxton, *The book of Rustem: retold from the Shah nameh of Firdausi* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1909).

historically specific ideology are quite visible in this rewriting. Nineteenth-century imperialist notions, the "sciences" of race, the subordination and marginalization of women which was concomitant with industrialization . . . all play a role in determining the aesthetic of "Sohrab and Rustum" (sic) for a Victorian audience. That is, the semantic frames Arnold employed facilitated a symbolic loading of his poetic statement so that it would please Victorian England, not because it transcended the cultural difference between Iranians and the British, but because it systematically effaced cultural differences. Through this type of cultural appropriation, the British took the place of contemporary Persians as heir to the great Persian Imperial past.

Given the immense popularity of Arnold's poem and Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, it is not at all surprising that several of the Persian literature anthologies from this period are not, strictly speaking, translation anthologies. In *The Poetry of the Orient* and *The Rose Garden of Persia*, for example, compilers present renderings, based not on the Persian sources, but on published literal translations.[11] Like the *Rubaiyat* and "Sohrab and Rustum," these collections targeted a mainstream audience. The issue of translation faithfulness was moot; cultural comparisons, and making money, were of prime importance. In his introduction to the 1856 edition of *Poetry of the Orient*, William Alger describes his aim as being "to import to the west and exhibit there some specimens of the Thought,

[11] This practice has proven particularly useful in the contemporary period for Coleman Barks who has turned scholarly translations of mystic poet Jalal al-Din Rumi's works into free verse volumes that are among the best selling poetry books in the United States today.

Sentiment, and Fancy of the East."[12] Though he is writing for an American audience, the overlap of motivation is considerable. Alger refers to already available Persian translations as "the vast contents of the imperial treasure-house" (3), and comments in the preface to the 1866 edition that "there seems to me also a striking propriety, and the promise of profit, in bringing to the acquaintance of Americans the most marked peculiarities of the East" (v).

In the introductory essay to Costello's collection, *The Rose Garden of Persia*, Joseph Jacobs asks, "How has it come about that of all the poetries of the east, that of Persia alone has to some extent made itself at home on English soil?" A tentatively phrased hypothesis follows, "Can we see here some subtle sympathy between the Persian Aryans and their European cousins?"[13] Jacobs supplies a definitive answer to his own question just a few pages later: "It is when Persia comes in contact with Islam, in other words, an Aryan race with a Semitic religion, that we see produced a tone of mind analogous and sympathetic to the European, which may also be described as Aryan tinged with Semitic religion" (xiii). E.S. Holden's justification for his collection *Flowers from Persian Gardens* strikes the same chord: "Orientals are human beings like unto ourselves. They have our own wants, hopes, fears, delights; and they seek their satisfactions in like fashion. . . . We are of Aryan blood as they are and thousands of years of different race experience has not shut the door between us."[14]

In the post WWII period, increased United States involvement in Iranian affairs was accompanied by an increase in state support for Persian language acquisition on the part of

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[12] William Alger, *The Poetry of the East* (Boston: Whittmore, Niles and Hall, 1856), 92.

[13] Louisa Costello, *The Rose Garden of Persia* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1945), ix-x.

[14] E.S. Holden, *Flowers from Persian Gardens* (New York: Russell, 1902), 1-2.

both the American and the Iranian governments.[15] The National Defense Education Act of 1958 made funds available for the establishment of Middle East Studies Centers and grants for foreign language acquisition. As a National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges [NASULGC] Task Force Publication documents, this financial support had strings attached. The following reminders with regard to criteria for receiving funding appear in this document: "1) The Congress only supports international studies to the extent it believes they are in the national interest; 2) The definition of the international dimension of international interest has repeatedly shifted and these shifts affect the amount and distribution of the funds. Thus any university that wishes to receive these funds must closely track the mood of Congress in these matters."

Because of American economic ventures in Iran, especially those of United States petroleum industries, Persian language acquisition became a practical necessity for a large population of American entrepreneurs and engineers in Iran. More significantly, because of American involvement in Iran's internal political and economic affairs, as mentioned above, conversancy with Persian culture became crucial for information gathering and for "National Defense." The growth in literary cultural interest and the increased production of Persian literature anthologies during this period thus depended to some extent on the close ties between Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the United States government and oil companies.

[15] As early as 1949, Mohammad Reza Shah traveled to the United States seeking economic aid. Iran had already come to depend on the United States for military weaponry and military advice. But it was only after the United States government derailed Prime Minister Mossadeq's very popular campaign to nationalize the oil industry in Iran in 1953 that the US became the dominant force shaping the Shah's social and economic policies. In order to strengthen his position and protect his power, the Shah received US aid in excess of $145 million dollars in the mid-1950s. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

In a development that appears to be related to the government interest and sponsorship of international studies cited above, anthologies devoted exclusively to Persian literature fall out of fashion during this period and are replaced by anthologies that take a more international approach. English translations of Persian texts appear chiefly in anthologies that include other national literatures. Although the broad national representation is quite consistent from one collection to the next, the contextualization afforded Persian texts in each volume varies considerably, as does the regional terminology. Here again, the titles of collections are evidence of a trend. *A Treasury of Asian Literature* was published in 1958, *Literatures of the East* in 1959, *Masterpieces of the Orient* in 1961, and *Translations of Eastern Poetry and Prose* in 1969. Each of these anthologies gives different weight to Persian literature vis-à-vis the rest of the collection, and compilers introduce the translations in ways that underscore their choice of geographical designation.

*A Treasury of Asian Literature* introduced and compiled by John Yohannan includes two different tables of the book's contents. The first arranges the works by genre and sub-genre, the second orders the texts chronologically and by geographical region. That is, texts from "Arabia, Iran (Persia), India, China, and Japan" do not appear in the volume clustered by national origin, but in ethnically mixed genre categories. The *Shahnamah* for example, Ferdowsi's epic about Iran's legendary kings previously discussed, comes immediately after the Indian epic the *Mahabharata*. Yohannan explains this unusual arrangement in his introduction:

> It (*A Treasury of Asian Literature*) offers some of the best samples of the peculiar literary genius of five national groups with a view to displaying the infinite variety of Asian literature, not its development within national bounds. The absence of prose works from the Persian does not mean that no such works exist, but only that they are not a distinctive achievement of Persian literature . . . arbitrary

> limits had to be placed upon the size of this book.[16]

This introduction also affords Yohannan the opportunity to describe both his motivation in compiling the collection as well as his larger goal. On the one hand, he is very cognizant of historical factors that are generating interest in these regions and the need for more attention to cultural concerns:

> In the West, two world wars have finally impressed upon us the geography of the remoter continents. And we are now conscious that Asia has a history that is not merely a part of the 'dark backward and abyss of time,' even though we are ignorant of it.
>
> In the remedies we are applying to our old myopia, there is a new danger. Our nascent interest in Asia may become limited to economics and geopolitics. Even the study of Oriental languages in our schools appears to subserve these purposes. (xvii)

On the other hand, by presenting "a general collection of the sacred and secular literature of all Asia" (xvii), Yohannan blurs national boundaries and negates the importance of each nation's history in shaping literary products. His statement as to why he has put this product on the market, with its appropriative tone recalls justifications offered for anthologization during the previous century: "The primary aim of this book is to make available to the lover of literature in the English language, a body of pleasurable readings which, up to now, he has not been able easily to come by" (xx).

*Masterpieces of the Orient*, published by Norton and Company, groups translations geographically and presents them chronologically within those geographical boundaries. However in this collection, Iran does not rate its own category and is subsumed in the category of "The Near East." This anthology makes some attempt to represent the modern period, which is

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[16] John Yohannan, *A Treasury of Asian Literatures* (1958), xvi.

something of a landmark, but because of the regional girth, this inclusiveness produces some very peculiar juxtapositions. Here Ferdowsi's *Shahnamah* (the only example of Persian literature in the volume) follows examples of classical Arabic poetry and comes just before a translation of Egyptian author Taha Hosayn's autobiographical *Stream of Days* published over a thousand years later.

As the connection between the Pahlavi regime and the United States government grew, the productivity of translators who sought to bring Iranian literature to a western audience increased proportionally. [17] In the 70s, the appearance of several important and groundbreaking anthologies of modern Persian literature was the result of increased traffic between the two countries and greater cultural contact. This decade saw a significant jump in single author collections. Eric Hoogland's introduction to Samad Behrangi's *The Little Black Fish* was published in 1976. Also of note, the Iranian Heritage Series,

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[17] In a parallel development, English-Persian translation was strongly encouraged by the Shah's program of modernization and secularization that sought to make Iran European. The "White" revolution, Reza Pahlavi's name for the process of development he implemented in 1963, created (through increased access to western education) and was served by, literary critics who could forge links between Iranian and European literatures. Thus the White Revolution resulted in an unprecedented flood of publications of works translated from English into Persian —classics, modernist works and literary criticism. It bears noting that women authors were less enthusiastically translated. While virtually all of Hemingway's works are available in Persian, there are no Persian translations of Gertrude Stein's works in print as of this writing. In any case, for Persian translations of English language texts, it also bears noting that the anthology was not a particularly popular format.

edited by Ehsan Yarshater, made substantial amounts of Jamalzadeh's, Hedayat's and Farrokhzad's works available in English thus ensuring that Persian literature was more accessible for university students and the general reading public. This decade also marked the return to a more exclusive treatment of Persian literature in the anthology format. Hillmann's *Major Voices in Contemporary Persian Literature* (1976) and Karimi-Hakkak's *An Anthology of Persian Poetry* (1978) set new standards for inclusiveness and translation quality.

The climate for Persian-English translation has radically altered in the post-revolution period. With the severing of diplomatic ties in 1979, United States government funding for Persian studies abroad almost disappeared, although federal support for Persian language learning in the United States was maintained. Without the enticements of travel to Iran or the promise of potential employment in the country, American interest in Persian studies has fallen off sharply. Iranian-American students, who are usually not specialists in language and literature, now account for the majority of enrollment in Persian language classes at major U.S. universities. Perhaps the turn to the almost exclusive attention to women's writing in the post-revolution period is partly attributable to the decline in the political expediency of Persian language instruction. Whether one accounts for new selection criteria by citing institutional connections between translation studies and feminism or these broader political shifts, certainly the change in selection criteria marks a significant transition. However, the chief point I shall emphasize in my consideration of the paratextual material that frames contemporary Persian anthologies is that despite the changes in selection criteria, many characteristic features of imperialist exhibition are nonetheless still operative at an organizational level. On this basis alone, perhaps the anthology format itself is in need of a thorough reworking.

## Post-Revolution Anthologies

Anthologies of English translations that introduce contemporary Persian writing by women published after the Islamic Revolution include: *Stories by Iranian Women Since the Revolution* (1991), *A Walnut Sapling on Masih's Grave* (1993), and *In a Voice of Their Own* (1996), *A Feast in the Mirror* (2000), collections devoted entirely to women's writing; *Daneshvar's Playhouse* (1989), and *Sutra* (1994), both single-author collections; and *Stories from Iran: A Chicago Anthology* (1991), the largest volume of Persian literature in English available, that contains writing by both women and men and offers a historical overview of the short-story genre in Iran. Examination of two central constructs—history and gender, with attention to the way each has been manipulated in the production of several of these anthologies, serves to illustrate *how* "Post-revolutionary women's writing" is becoming a dominant literary category of Persian literature in the West.

The editors of *A Walnut Sapling on Masih's Grave*, John Green and Farzin Yazdanfar, have not ordered their anthologized selections by publication date, nor by author birth date. Post-revolution publications are interspersed with older material in random fashion; there are no historically differentiable blocks. No attempt is made to identify a canon of writers or to delineate literary periods. The emphasis is on the stories as women's stories. As noted in the preceding section, some editors and translators in the colonial period viewed "Persians" as existing in an alien and oppressive environment. The rhetoric of the introductory material in *A Walnut Sapling on Masih's Grave* recalls this orientalist perspective. First, the editors portray the situation of Iranian authors as being very unusual due to their sex-segregated and male-dominated society. Second, Evelyn Accad's foreword paints a dismal picture of Iranian women as trapped in a backward, repressive society. Accad writes of "the often cruel and restrictive walls of their [women's] existence," of

"their search for a way out of their imprisonment," of the "distress and anguish of post-revolutionary Iranian society," and of "their search for identity in a culture that provides them with so few alternatives."[18]

Like *A Walnut Sapling on Masih's Grave, Stories by Women Since the Revolution* adopts a gender exclusive approach to the translation of contemporary Persian literature. Upon reading the paratextual commentary in each collection, however, it becomes apparent that, despite this shared selection criterion; the two works do not share a common polemic. Each volume characterizes Iranian women writers as a group in radically different fashion. In Sullivan's collection, women writers are introduced in such a way as to emphasize their political activity, in terms that imply an affinity with western feminism. For example, in her introduction to Sullivan's anthology, Farzaneh Milani writes: "Women's fiction in the last ten years is more politicized than ever. . . . These writers are creating a distinctive atmosphere in which women resist and rebel against repression of any sort." She continues, "A sense of sisterhood and identification between these writers and other women dominates this literature."[19]

Market concerns have also distorted the presentation of anthologized collections of Simin Daneshvar's writing. The translators who compiled *Daneshvar's Playhouse* and *Sutra*—Maryam Mafi, Hasan Javadi, and Amin Neshati have succeeded in providing access to a variety of this very important

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[18] In her analysis of the discursive construction of "third world women" in feminist theory, Chandra Mohanty offers a sharp critique of analytical frames that produce "a homogenous notion of the oppression of women as a group." She holds that this type of presentation produces the image of "an average third world woman who leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender and her being 'third world'" See Mohanty, Chandra, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 56.

[19] Ibid., 8.

author's work. Maryam Mafi's detailed afterword does provide some historical information; but in *Sutra*, there's no reference to original titles or publication dates anywhere in the text. This obscures the fact that twenty years separate the Persian publications the selected stories have been taken from. Thus, the translators (or publishers) present anthologies of Daneshvar's writings that create the definite (and mistaken) impression that what has been translated retains the coherence of the original collections.

In the case of *Sutra*, the effort to naturalize the translation in English is especially marked. The fact that there is no introduction, scholarly or otherwise, no notes, and no glossary of terms distances the text from academia and creates the illusion that one is reading a collection of short stories authored in English. In addition to obscuring the fact that the integrity of Daneshvar's collections has been disrupted, inattention to dates in translation practice, for all but the most specialized reader, precludes historically accurate perception of the works. Without dates, it is difficult, if not impossible for the ordinary reader to identify the political climate the stories describe and which in some cases determined their date of publication.

It is clear from Daneshvar's own statements that she compiles short story collections in a systematic fashion. In her introduction to *Shahri chun bihisht* [A City Like Paradise] printed after the revolution, she writes, "*A City Like Paradise* was first published in January of 1962. The second printing was distributed in 1975. I have not changed that edition at all; it is presented exactly as it appeared originally. It [the collection] is a reminder of a black period of strangulation and exemplifies the society where I have lived and experienced life. Most of the characters of this collection's stories are real —[they are people] with whom I had personal contact."[20]

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[20] Simin Danishvar, *Shahri chun bihisht* [A City Like Paradise] (Tehran: Shirkat-i sihami-yi intisharat-i khvarzami, 1962 [1340]), 2.

Despite the fact that none of the pieces in *Beh ki salam konam* [To Whom Can I Say Hello] were written after the revolution, translators could have made a very useful distinction between Daneshvar's pre-revolution and post-revolution publications. The three selections published after the revolution that have been translated, "Kayd al-kha'inin" [Traitor's Intrigue], "Anis," and "Sutra," all include critical statements about the Shah or allusions to his political opposition. In the original collection, five of the six stories published for the first time in 1980 contain short passages that would have made their publication before the revolution problematic. The absence of attention to this important distinction suggests that some translation marketing may be governed by "new critical" consciousness that seeks to depoliticize by dehistoricizing, in order to garner a broader, more conservative, audience. Certainly, the titles of these English translations of Daneshvar's work belie their content. The word "playhouse" suggests that the collection has a quality of lightness and fun, but the only story set in the theatre in the collection is rather morose. As a title, *Sutra* appeals to that residual fascination with things Eastern and lends a mystic aura to the book which is not at all in keeping with the spirit of the short story that bears the same title.

"Kayd al-kha'inin," Simin Daneshvar's story about a retired Iranian colonel confronted with his powerlessness in old age also appears in *Stories by Iranian Women Since the Revolution*.[21] Where the story's publication date and any relation it might have to the revolution are fairly inconsequential in *Daneshvar's Playhouse*; in Soraya Sullivan's historically-bounded, chronologically organized collection, publication date

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[21]This duplication underscores another problem endemic to Persian-English translations. Because copyright laws do not govern the exchange—a single work can be translated countless times with no need for author or publisher approval. Because Iran is not a signatory to the International Copyright Laws, no permission is needed for the translation or publication of English language works in Iran; the same situation holds in reverse.

is of tantamount importance. A simple shift in organizational emphasis transforms "Traitor's Intrigue" (which Mafi holds up as an example of Daneshvar's masterful characterization) into "Traitor's Deceit," an example of "revolutionary literature." Sullivan makes Daneshvar's story part of a project broadly conceived "facilitating an understanding of the crucial events that led the authors to act as the expressive media of 'their times.'"[22] But, the use of chronological order in and of itself does not adequately locate stories in relation to sociopolitical developments.

*Stories from Iran* falls at the opposite extreme; Heshmat Moayyad, who edited the anthology and wrote the introduction, chose not to divide women's writing categorically in terms of the pre and post-revolutionary periods, except to observe that Ravanipur began her career after the revolution. In general, his introduction does not discuss the revolution as having been instrumental in changing the literary currents in Iran. This omission stands out because the introduction for the most part is very historically grounded. As he moves through his introduction, Moayyad makes pointed references to the Constitutional Movement, the allied occupation, the reign of the Pahlavis, and Mossadeq's ousted nationalism to explain particular literary developments. It is only in introducing Iranian authors' writing after the Islamic Revolution that the sociopolitical mode of analysis evaporates.

As Avery Gordon writes, fictive works are "not simply literature . . . [but] the ensemble of cultural imaginings, affective experiences, animated objects, marginal voices, narrative densities, and eccentric traces of power's presence."[23] Translation of Iranian literature certainly involves far more than

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[22] Soraya Sullivan, *Stories by Women Since the Revolution* (Austin: The Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1991), xii.
[23] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 25.

Rousseau's goal of turning texts out of Persian into English. For those working in a field where many words are per force left unwritten, translation demands careful consideration of one's audience while orchestrating the central linguistic performance. Post-revolution artists and their work betray at every turn the dominant cultural poetics and the struggle that continues to be waged in Iran for freedom of expression. Dirt that clings to uprooted flowers keeps them alive.

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*Imaginary Maps: Three Stories by Mahasweta Devi*. Mahasweta Devi. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Trans. New York: Routledge, 1995. 213 pp. $62.95 (hardcover).

*Imaginary Maps* is the first of three sets of Mahasweta Devi's stories translated by Gayatri Spivak from Bengali into English. In this collection, more than thirty pages of commentary supplement three of Devi's stories: "The Hunt," "Douloti the Bountiful," and "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha." Spivak's commentary, which provides a theoretical yet practical framework for Devi's stories, is the focus of this review.

Spivak's commentary comes in four installments: an interview with Devi entitled "The Author in Conversation," a preface, a note, and an afterword. "The Author in Conversation" introduces readers to Devi and her work as a creative writer, journalist, and activist as well as to the indigenous peoples of India (referred to by Devi as "tribals") whom she champions. Spivak's "Translator's Preface" presents Devi's stories "in combination with deconstructionist versions of Marxism and feminism" as a means of both understanding and combating the oppression of such indigenous peoples (to whom she refers as "subaltern" and "fourth world"). Additionally, the preface provides an opportunity for Spivak to respond (sometimes apologetically, sometimes defensively) to criticism of her previous work as a translator, interpreter, and purveyor of Devi's writing. Spivak's "Translator's Note" explains her italicization of words which were originally in English and touches on the colonial and class implications of the use of English in India. Finally, Spivak's "Afterword" revisits the themes of her "Preface," though it provides a more extensive analysis of Devi's

stories. Spivak grounds her commentary on Derrida's notion of différance: put simply, the idea that linguistic meaning is constructed referentially, and therefore whenever two terms are positioned as opposites, each must necessarily be construed as both different from and a deferral of the other. In studying any set of binary terms, then, Derrida explains that one should not focus on how similar or different they are but instead on what is at stake in the construction of their différance. Spivak asserts that Devi's stories can be used to deconstruct a number of binaries: the U.S./India, first world/third world, literature/activism, and men/women. For instance, Devi's work can lead readers to ask, "In what interest or interests does the necessity to keep up this game of difference, 'India is "India" and the US is the "US," and the two are as different as can be' emerge today?" Questions like this must be asked in particular, Spivak argues, by those readers whom she views as complicit (albeit unintentionally) in the oppression of indigenous Indians: "the multiculturalist US reader," "the expatriate critic" (like Spivak), and "the urban radical academic Indian reader."

According to Spivak, Devi's stories provide models for how to achieve the liberation of the subaltern. First, "cultural workers" (i.e., those interested in assisting indigenous peoples, including the three groups she accuses of being complicit in their oppression) and subalterns must try to establish "ethical singularity" with each other; to do this, they must "engage profoundly" in a kind of ethical, responsible "love" for each other despite the gap that seems to lie between them. Spivak believes that the character Puran in Devi's story "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha" demonstrates this sort of "love." Second, Spivak argues, "organic intellectuals" need to actively and effectively resist oppression: "When the subaltern 'speaks' in order to be heard and gets into the structure of responsible (responding and being responded to) resistance, he or she is, or is on the way to becoming, an organic intellectual." The character Mary Oraon of Devi's "The Hunt" exemplifies such an organic

intellectual. Finally, Spivak asserts that subaltern women need to recognize that "internalized [gender] constraints" inhibit their becoming organic intellectuals, and that ethical singularity with first and third world peoples can help them overcome this obstacle. Devi's character Douloti in her story of the same title illustrates how "sweetness, virtue, innocence, [and] simplicity" prevent her from becoming "a subject of resistance." Spivak's proposals for liberating the subaltern are intended to apply not just to indigenous Indians but to all the indigenous peoples of the world, who need to recognize their solidarity with one another.

These proposals provide stimulating food for thought; however, in order for readers to understand how to enact them, it would have been helpful if Spivak had elaborated more fully and clearly on her terms and on how to apply them to real-life situations. One reason she may not have done so is because of her desire to highlight Devi's voice rather than her own. Indeed, voice (and its relationship to agency) has long been an issue of concern for Spivak and for her critics. Her well-known 1985 essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" explored the reasons behind the silencing of third world women's voices. Spivak's critics, however, have accused her of contributing to the silencing of the subaltern, in particular by speaking for Mahasweta Devi as her translator and editor. As Spivak herself notes in her "Translator's Preface," Sujit Mukherjee has accused her of serving as Devi's "dwarpalika (female doorkeeper)," mediating the Bengali writer's reception by Western readers. Spivak admits that she does, at least to some degree, function as Devi's doorkeeper, but she embraces this role, arguing that it obliges her to clear up "misapprehensions" of Devi's work, which she proceeds to do in both her preface and afterword. Despite acknowledging her doorkeeper role, Spivak attempts to give Devi a larger, more authoritative voice in *Imaginary Maps*. For example, the volume opens with "The Author in Conversation." Spivak admits in her "Afterword" that her previous companion essays to Devi's works demonstrated "an insufficient preparation

in the specific political situation of the Indian tribal"; in order "to remedy this, indeed compensate for this [deficiency in her criticism]," Spivak has allowed Devi's more extensive knowledge of Indian tribals to "speak itself at the head of this volume."

Thus Devi, not Spivak, gets to speak first, though with each successive installment of commentary Spivak's voice becomes more prominent, and Spivak in fact gets the final word. In addition to placing Devi at the start of *Imaginary Maps*, on several occasions Spivak explicitly refers to the limitations of her intervention as translator and editor. In introducing "The Author in Conversation," for instance, Spivak explains, "The following is a lightly edited version of a conversation, originally in English, taped in Calcutta in December, 1991. The questions are mine, the answers are hers." By minimizing her editorial contributions as "light," emphasizing the language of the interview (English, not Bengali), and distinguishing her own words from Devi's, Spivak is downplaying her role as a representer of Devi's language. As a deconstructionist, however, Spivak likely views even interviews as representations. Nevertheless, she must feel that the need to be perceived as letting Devi speak for herself outweighs the need to deconstruct her readers' presumptions about authenticity. Spivak's editorial additions to her interview with Devi indeed appear to be minimal. She has added bracketed commentary sparingly, only to provide translations of Bengali words and relevant supplementary information (such as the title of one of Devi's novels and the circulation of several periodicals which are mentioned). Of course, the reader has no way of identifying undocumented additions, omissions, and/or changes to Devi's comments. Interestingly, alternations in speaker are indicated only by spacing, not by name (e.g., "Spivak" or "Devi") as is often conventional in interview notation. This serves to blur the boundary between interviewer and interviewee (a conflation which one might suppose Spivak would have wanted to avoid). Spivak makes a second disclaimer at the

opening of her "Translator's Preface": I thank Mahasweta Devi not only for the interview but also for her meticulous reading of the manuscript of the translation. She made many suggestions, noted omitted passages, corrected occasional mistranslations, and supplied names for government agencies. This is indeed an authorized translation. Any faults that remain are of course mine. By foregrounding Devi's role in the translation process, Spivak is again trying to avert allegations that she speaks for the subaltern. Fortunately for Spivak, Devi can speak and read English and is therefore capable of "authoriz[ing]" the translation of her work (an atypical situation for an author whose writing is being translated).

Spivak's final pleas to be judged as a fair translator come at the end of her preface. First, Spivak addresses Sujit Mukherjee's charge that she has rendered the English of her translation of Devi's works inaccessible to Indian audiences. While admitting that "the English of [her] translations belongs more to the rootless American-based academic prose than the more subcontinental idiom of [her] youth," Spivak counters that Mukherjee has not sufficiently explored a crucial question: into what sort of English should Indian texts be translated?

Though she does not herself attempt to answer this question, it is helpful that she asks it, for it raises other significant issues, such as the colonial legacies and political aims of translation. I would also add that Spivak's prose in *Imaginary Maps*, as elsewhere, is difficult to decipher, even for those well versed in "rootless American-based academic prose." Spivak might face less criticism from Indian and Western readers if she decreased the opacity of her writing, regardless of the type of English she chooses to employ.

Spivak makes her second plea by quoting extensively from South African writer J.M. Coetzee's *Doubling the Poin*t, in which he comments on the difficulties he faced in translating the work of Achterberg, a Dutch poet. Coetzee lucidly explains that translations can never be "perfect" since "[t]here is never enough

closeness of fit between languages for formal features of a work to be mapped across from one language to another without shift of value"; as a result, the translator must make decisions "based, literally, on preconceptions, pre-judgment, prejudice." Spivak's choice of quotation is logical since it mentions the impossibility of exact cross-linguistic mapping (presumably one of the reasons for the title *Imaginary Maps*); moreover, Coetzee's edifying comments resonate with the post-structuralist concept of an unbridgeable gap between signifier and signified upon which Derrida's notion of différance is based, and différance is at the heart of Spivak's commentary. Following her quotation of Coetzee, Spivak admits to her own bias as translator but simultaneously asks the reader to do the same: "Upon this acknowledgement of prejudice (not derived from the possibility of an unprejudiced translation, even in reading). . . I invite you to acknowledge your own and turn now to the text." Here Spivak's deconstructionist view of translation is made plain and enables her to share blame (for speaking for the subaltern) with all readers of Devi's work. In particular, however, Spivak is probably targeting her critics. Significantly, Spivak compares herself to Coetzee in that their relationships to their languages, "English and Dutch for Coetzee, English and Bengali for Spivak" are "askew," albeit in "different way[s]." Moreover, Spivak asserts, "the compromised position of 'white writing' in South Africa" is "a much greater compromise than translating Mahasweta into 'American'." Here, while giving a nod to differences in cultural contexts, Spivak is effectively "map[ping] across" two different cultural situations without sufficiently explaining their unique specificities.

In sum, Spivak's commentary in *Imaginary Maps* provides provocative insights into issues of translation, literary criticism, and activism. Her model for subaltern resistance is edifying though perhaps not at useful as it would have been had her prose been more lucid and her illustrations more fully developed. Nevertheless, Spivak makes a significant attempt to

allow subalterns to speak for themselves, and for this she deserves credit.

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*Translating Partition*. Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint, Editors. New Delhi: Katha, 2001. 238 pp. $9.99 (paperback).

Comprised of English translations of Hindi and Urdu stories about the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, critical commentary on the stories, and scholarly essays on a range of topics, *Translating Partition* is a uniquely comprehensive anthology of literature of the Partition. The editors of this volume, Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint, view Partition literature as "an alternative domain of collective memory," a domain that has shifted away from the historians' concern with causation and its resultant emphasis on the events occurring within the domain of high politics and towards an emphasis on the local and the lived, on subalterns as both victims and perpetrators of violence, and on the nature of individual experience [xxiii and xxvii]. Ravikant argues that in the process of attempting to answer the question of whether or not the Partition was inevitable, the last couple of generations of Indian historians have produced superficial, apologetic literature that lays the blame for the Partition on easy villains and that altogether fails to show the Partition as a great human tragedy. This, he claims, is due not only to the limitations inherent in the craft of history writing and its inability to represent pain and suffering, but is also due to the historians' view of Partition as an aberration, as the "other" of Independence rather than as part of the same processes that resulted in Independence. "The nation has grown up," he writes, "ritually counting and celebrating birthdays – its own and of the great

souls that won it the freedom – while systematically consigning the Partition to oblivion" [160]. The basic difference between literature and history, then, is that they represent different ways of seeing the Partition: whereas history writing on the Partition has largely been an exercise in collective amnesia, fiction literature on the Partition is an exercise in collective remembrance.

The first of the three sections of *Translating Partition,* "Stories," contains eight stories on Partition that have been translated into English from Urdu and Hindi. The thematic focus of the stories ranges from the large-scale killings and abductions to the retrieval of memory and the experience of exile to the emphasis on communalism as a problem that refuses to disappear. Sa'adat Hasan Manto's "Toba Tek Singh" is featured, a well-known and oft-translated piece about the exchange of Hindu and Sikh insane asylum inmates on the Pakistani side of the border with Muslims on the Indian side of the border that employs the trope of madness to question the sanity of Partition and the exchange of bodies across newly created borders. Another well-known story is "Pali," by Bhisham Sahni, about a young boy who is abandoned by his Hindu family during the chaos of Partition, adopted by a Muslim family, and later reclaimed by the Hindu family. This story depicts how certain religious symbols and rituals, such as circumcision and tonsure, are deployed in communal circumstances to fix identity on the body. Lesser-known stories such as "How Many Pakistans?" by Kamleshwar are also included, making *Translating Partition* a valuable collection for the academic and general reader alike. "How Many Pakistans?" was written in 1967 and subsequently lost, only to be unearthed in 1990 and printed in *Kohra*, a recent collection of the Kamleshwar's Hindi short stories. It is a haunting story about a young couple, a Muslim girl and a Hindu boy, separated as a result of the communal tension during Partition. In this story, each subsequent encounter that the narrator has with his former beloved, Banno, results in a greater

distance between the two – "another Pakistan" – and in the realization of his own incompleteness. Eventually the narrator finally cries out in desperation: "Where can I run to escape from Pakistan? Is there any place where there is no Pakistan? Where can I become whole again?" [28]. A powerful metaphor for the division of the subcontinent, the English translation of "How Many Pakistans?" is an important contribution to Partition literature. The other stories featured in this collection are "Dream Images" by Surendra Prakash, "Phoenix Fled" by Attia Hosain, "Thirst of Rivers" by Joginder Paul, and two other contributions by Sa'adat Hasan Manto: "The Dog of Tetwal" and "Pandit Manto's First Letter to Pandit Nehru." In addition to covering a range of themes and styles, this collection is also significant in that it includes selections from the first generation of writers on Partition, such as Manto, as well as the generation of writers that followed.

The second section of *Translating Partition*, "Critical Commentary," contains four essays which provide context, commentary, and analyses of the translations of four of the above stories. In the first essay the editors, Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint, discuss the process of translating Manto's "The Dog of Tetwal," noting that they were particularly dissatisfied with they way that previous translations have dealt with the verses from the Punjabi song "Heer" that are given in the story. What was challenging about these verses is that they share both romantic and mystical grounding, a multiplicity of meanings which is often impossible to convey in the target language [99-100]. In his essay "Against Forgetting: Memory as Metaphor in 'Dream Images'," M. Asaduddin similarly discusses the difficulties of the process of translation, arguing that "in its broadest sense, a translation is also an interpretation of historical and cultural codes and idioms, and translators are interpreters and critics who stretch and transgress the limits of linguistic boundaries and cultures" [126]. In particular, Asaduddin was concerned with retaining the cultural nuances of the original story as far as

possible. This meant that there were certain words, words rich with a connotative context, that he felt should be retained even in the English translation. He therefore chose to retain the words "Hindu *dharamshala*" and "Muslim *musafirkhana*" in his translation, believing that these terms are generally intelligible in the context of the story and that their translation as "guest house" would have taken away much of the resonance of that culture where people practiced exclusivity based on the notions of purity and pollution and yet could create an inter-community life of mutual enrichment [127]. While these four essays each provide valuable background on the short stories and raise interesting concerns about the process of translating those stories into English, the essays are too brief to do more than this; there is little actual theorizing about translation and interpretation in general or about the translation of Partition literature in particular.

The final section of the book, "Partition Overview," contains five essays which are meant to provide background on various aspects of Partition for the general reader. These contributions include a brief introductory essay by Naiyer Masud on Partition and the Urdu short story; an essay by Arjun Mahey discussing the similarities and differences in narrative strategies of historians and fiction writers in writing about Partition; an essay on the woman protagonist in Partition literature by Bodh Prakash; an article by Ravikant that returns to the subject of collective memory and collective amnesia that was first raised in the introductory chapter; and finally an article by Saumya Gupta on the depiction of the idea and then the reality of Pakistan in the Kanpur paper *Vartman* in the 1940s. This last article is a well-written study of print media and identity construction during the decade leading up to Partition which again raises the important question: How many Pakistans? Through her study of the paper *Vartman*, Saumya Gupta demonstrates that for the people of Kanpur, Pakistan was not located somewhere out there, in Punjab or Bengal; rather, the local idiom in which *Vartman*

outlined Pakistan, as well as the arguments and metaphors through which it countered Partition, made Pakistan a dangerous reality within the United Provinces – Punjab and Bengal were just pre-empting instances of the drama that was to unfold in the heart of the United Provinces, in Kanpur itself [189]. In addition to these essays, this final section of *Translating Partition* also contains a timeline that stretches from 1837 to 1948, an annotated bibliography of secondary readings, and a bibliography of select fiction – all of which will make this book even more valuable to the general reader or as a classroom textbook.

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*The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science Secrecy and the Postcolonial State*. Itty Abraham. London: Zed Books, 1998. 180 pp., ix. $19.95 (paperback).

*The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb* charts the development of India,s atomic energy program from the late 1940s through the 1974 and finally May 1998 tests. However, writing a history of a nuclear India is not Itty Abraham's intent. Rather, he wishes to explore why so many in India and elsewhere love "the bomb." Despite the international outcry that greeted the May 1998 Pokharan tests, Abraham notes that Indians from all over the ideological spectrum applauded them. This enthusiasm, he notes, correlates with the broad mainstream support for India's refusals to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. But, Abraham asks, is this an adequate frame for understanding India's love for nuclear power? Abraham sees the enthusiasm that has greeted the development of nuclear energy in

India as a sign of a "deep and disturbing" relationship between nuclear power and the Indian intelligentsia and urban public. Examining this relationship, he suggests, helps one understand not only India's nuclear program but also the project of modernity within postcolonial states. Abraham suggests that India's atomic energy program, from its inception, was characterized by two factors: atomic energy's potential as a peaceful force that could help ex-colonies achieve First World-esque greatness, and a maximization of its deadly potential to ensure the security – and thus legitimacy – of the Indian state. By the early 1960s, India's governmental leaders and atomic energy establishment had come to believe that developing an atomic bomb could demonstrate what a postcolonial state might achieve.

In this way, the bomb came to represent India's potential greatness as a "developing" ex-colony. One question framing the tale is this: why did India make developing an atomic weapon a priority in the 1960s but then fail to carry out the mission until 1974 when support to nuclear weapons programs had waned worldwide? In the early 1960s, Abraham argues that there was not only sufficient belief internationally that India could build an atomic device but also tacit support for such a move. A successful Indian bomb would have been regarded as a sign of a postcolonial state's move toward self-reliance as well as a means of neutralizing the growing international threat that China was perceived to present. Yet, while this confidence existed outside the country, it had encountered crisis within India itself. By the mid-1960s, the Indian government and atomic energy establishment lacked the confident certainty of success that had characterized the early years of state-building and had shaped the atomic energy program. Could India build a bomb? The rest of the world thought so, but India's power elite apparently did not.

Though the deaths of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Atomic Energy Commission founder Homi J. Bhabha, coupled with India's defeat in 1962 by China and a series of disastrous harvests, helped encourage this crisis in confidence,

much of what gave it a tangible shape was a sense of inferiority that Abraham argues characterizes the postcolonial condition. Such inferiority arises from an awareness that, as a postcolonial, one is always already late to the game of modernity and is trapped in the dilemma of trying "to catch up" by following a blueprint for progress established by others, namely one's former colonial masters from whose shackles the decolonizing state seeks to escape. Abraham,s portrait of postcoloniality as such is superb. In addition, he conveys a sensitive understanding of the bomb culture that seemed so prevalent in the decades immediately following World War II. Reading this book evoked memories of southwestern Missouri in the late 1980s, when I interviewed people who lived, literally, next door to Minuteman missiles in underground silos. Far from feeling alarmed, many felt happy. The missiles, to them, were a source of protection. What makes love for the bomb irrational, yet potent? One answer, it seems, is that it provides what is sought from any long-term relationship: safety, security and a desire for personal growth. The text tends to meander beyond its purported subject. This can leave the reader feeling confused as to whether Abraham wishes to discuss nuclear tests, the dangers and promises of atomic energy, postcolonial theory, statecraft, international relations, or all of the above. I would suggest it be read not as a book about nuclear weaponry in India but one about the bomb itself and its interaction with postcoloniality at a particular historical juncture. This interaction has produced a fetishization of a destructive yet creative force that can still seduce all of us.

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