Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts

Theories and Practices of Translation

Edited by

Dorji Wangchuk

INDIAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES 5

Hamburg • 2016

Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universität Hamburg

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Edited by Harunaga Isaacson and Dorji Wangchuk

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Foreword

Issues surrounding the theories and practices of translation of Buddhist texts have been an interest for modern scholars from early on, and accordingly have been the main topic of sundry academic gatherings. In February 1990, Tibet House, based in New Delhi, organized an international seminar with the title "Buddhist Translations: Problems and Perspectives," the proceedings of which were edited and published under the same title.[*] After a somewhat lengthy interval, in July 2012, the Khyentse Center for Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship (KC-TBTS), Universität Hamburg, organized a three-day international symposium on "Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts: Theories and Practices of Translation" (July 23–25, 2012, Hamburg). This symposium has been followed by a series of international events focusing on various aspects of translation of Buddhist texts: Shortly after the Hamburg symposium, in December 2012, the K. J. Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies in Mumbai organized an international conference on "Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts: Critical Edition, Transliteration, and Translation." A year and a half later, Prof. Dr. Klaus-Dieter Mathes and Mr. Gregory Forgues organized a one-day workshop on "Translating and Transferring Buddhist Literature: From Theory to Practice" (May 21, 2014, University of Vienna). The latter was followed by yet another related symposium, dealing with "Studies on Translation of Buddhist Sūtras: On 'Outstanding' Translation" (May 24, 2014), which took place within the framework of the 59th International Conference of Eastern Studies (ICES) and was organized by the Toho Gakkai and chaired by

[*] Doboom Tulku, (ed.) *Buddhist Translations: Problems and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1995.

Prof. Dr. Akira Saito (then at the University of Tokyo). Later that year, the Tsadra Foundation, in collaboration with several other foundations and institutions, organized a conference on "Translation and Transmission" (October 2–5, 2014, Keystone, Colorado), in which numerous academics, practitioners, translators, and interpreters dealing with Tibetan Buddhist texts or oral teachings (or both) participated in various capacities. Most recently, in March 2015, the Institute for Comparative Research in Human and Social Sciences and International Education and Research Laboratory Program (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences), University of Tsukuba, Japan, organized a symposium on "Philosophy across Cultures: Transmission, Translation, and Transformation of Thought" (March 5–6, 2015, Tsukuba).

I had the privilege to attend all these events and thus to experience first-hand the rapid developments in the field. It was indeed a humbling experience, which taught me not only (a) the complexity of themes relevant to theories and practices of translation, but also (b) the existence of a persistent interest on the part of various groups—be they academics from the field of Buddhist Studies or Translation Studies, translators, interpreters, or Buddhist masters and practitioners—in exploring and deepening our understanding of the challenges involved in translating and transmitting Buddhist texts and ideas.

The present volume mostly consists of scholarly contributions by participants (arranged in alphabetical order) of the above-mentioned symposium "Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts: Theories and Practices of Translation," which took place in Hamburg in 2012. Each of these contributions deals, in one way or another, with issues concerning the cross-cultural transmission of Buddhist texts in general or with theories and practices of translation of Buddhist texts in the past or present in particular. I would like to take this occasion to pay homage to the late Prof. Dr. Emeritus Michael Hahn (Philipps-Universität Marburg), who over the years contributed in various ways to the translation of both Sanskrit and Tibetan texts into modern western languages. Despite his illness, he worked tirelessly to revise and finalize his contribution to the present volume, which he submitted on March 30, 2014, only about three months before his passing away on July 12. Sadly, he did not live to see this volume in print. I am thankful for having had the opportunity to be in frequent email

correspondence with him over various issues regarding the finalization of his contribution. Michael Hahn was widely known for being particularly kind to younger colleagues, and I can confirm this with much retrospective gratitude.

It is hoped that this volume, with its rich and diverse contributions, will be of some relevance and usefulness to those interested not only in the cross-cultural transmission of Buddhist texts but also in the cross-cultural transmission of texts and ideas—or in specific theories and practices of translation—in other disciplines and fields of specialization.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to all the institutions and individuals who contributed in various ways to the success of the above-mentioned symposium "Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts." My thanks go to all the participants (including those who unfortunately were not able to contribute to the present volume), and also to the students and staff of the Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg, for their help and support in organizing the event. Special thanks are due to Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche and the Khyentse Foundation without whose vision and support the Khyentse Center would not exist and academic activities such as the symposium on the cross-cultural transmission of Buddhist texts could not take place. Last but not least, I thank the Fritz Thyssen Foundation (*Die Fritz Thyssen Stiftung für Wissenschaftsförderung*) for their generous financial support of the same event.

Dorji Wangchuk

9.9.2016, Hamburg

On the Fence Between Two Wor(l)ds: Theory and Practice in Translating Indian and Indo-Tibetan Texts[1]

Florinda DE SIMINI and Francesco SFERRA (Naples)

Modern words are round, ancient words are square,
and we may as well hope to solve the quadrature of the circle […]
(Max Müller)

1. Why It Matters

As is well-known, reflecting on the practice of translation has a history of more than 2000 years, possibly dating back to the considerations of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE) in his *De optimo genere oratorum*.[2] However, at least until the mid-20th century, there were only non-systematic reflections that still did not delineate a field of independent research. It is only since the early '50s, along with the development of generative linguistics and information technology, that we observe an increasing interest in translation as an autonomous field of investigation, which was soon diversified into various currents. Here, for a brief outline, we rely on the classification presented by Siri Nergaard, who identifies three major currents among the recent research trends.[3] These are:

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[1] We thank Kristen de Joseph for her help in revising the English text of this paper.

[2] Cf. Nergaard 1993. See also below note 26.

[3] Cf. Nergaard 2007²: 5–17.

1) *Translation science*, focusing on the translation of single words and syntagmata, while disregarding the texts in their complexity. This field of study is therefore chiefly interested in technical texts, with the aim of laying down rules for automatic translation, also by means of computing systems. Much in vogue in the 1950s and 1960s, it primarily involved linguists as well as mathematicians and engineers, being especially influenced by the generative grammar of Avram Noam Chomsky. As Nergaard notes, '[i]l compito principale della disciplina veniva individuato nella costruzione di una teoria in grado di stabilire dei criteri stabili e fissi su come fare una *traduzione equivalente* all'originale. La teoria prendeva perciò una direzione molto normativa'.[4]

2) *Translation theory*. This research trend started in the late '70s and was premised on opposition to the normativeness and source-orientedness that deeply characterised the previous approach. The aim of its scholars was to elaborate a 'global theory' of translation. Rather than finding rules for translating single words and stock phrases, their work focussed on the observation and description of the practice of translating literary texts, seen in their broad context.

3) *Translation studies*, developing from the 1980s, has a much wider perspective, as it deals not only with texts, but also with their cultural context and the way it influences their translation. In this approach all types of texts are taken into consideration, overcoming the dichotomy between literary and technical works. It is worth noting that translation studies, analogously with the translation theory, is not meant to be prescriptive but, rather, descriptive. The translated texts are analysed in order to detect the norms and conventions that, within a specific social, cultural and historical environment, have influenced the process of translating.

The general tendency of the scholarship has therefore moved from a rather reductionistic perspective, mostly limited to linguistic analysis, to a more holistic one, in which translation is seen as a form of communication between cultures. More importantly, in the light of the latest developments in this field of studies, the

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[4] Nergaard 2007[2]: 7. 'The main task of the discipline was identified in the construction of a theory capable of establishing stable and fixed criteria on how to make an *equivalent translation* of the original. The theory took a very normative direction' (emphasis added by us). Unless otherwise indicated, the translations in the notes are the authors'.

translated text acquires the status of an independent work, in some cases even getting the same intellectual recognition as its source text. Translating is not regarded, so to speak, as a lesser evil, but something that lies at the core of cultural exchanges and contaminations.

A deep inquiry into the applicability of modern theories of translation to Indic and Indo-Tibetan studies has not been conducted yet, since the few Indologists and Tibetologists who have reflected on the issue of translating have mostly focussed on the study of specific cases;[5] nor has the practice of translating Indic and Tibetan texts, and Asian classics more generally, been taken into account by translation theorists, who instead base their reflections primarily on Western literatures.[6] Although this topic could easily be analysed from many different perspectives — one could, for instance, chose to focus on the highly-debated issues of the many texts being translated from Sanskrit into the main Asian languages throughout early and late medieval times — our focus in this essay will primarily be on modernity and, more specifically, on modern and contemporary attempts at translating Indian texts into Western languages, and the hermeneutical implications of this activity. For one can rightly believe that these translations, along with the textual and philological research underlying them, are the spark from which the intellectual engagement of European and American scholarship with the Indic world was generated; at the same time, they have nurtured the interests of a vast array of literati and educated readers.

In the cultural milieu of the 18th and 19th century, when the target readership was on average fluent in more than one of the modern and ancient Western languages, but the knowledge and study of Asian languages was extremely marginal,[7] translating an Asian text into a European language had a different cultural and historical weight, greater than other translations of texts produced

[5] Cf., for instance, the contributions published in Garzilli 1996.

[6] There are however notable exceptions, for which see Lefevere 2001.

[7] Translations and travel reports were often the only vehicle for learning about different and sometimes even distant cultures and their intellectual (literary, religious, scientific and philosophical) production. Very important were also translations and studies conducted by Christian missionaries. For a survey of their activities in India see Halbfass 1988: 36–53.

from closer and better-known languages and cultural areas. This lack of linguistic knowledge and the greater cultural distance between Western, primarily European, and Asian cultures force us to think about the special function of translating an Asian work. To a certain extent, these premises may seem obvious, but the consequences deriving from them are certainly not.

The first consequence is that the early translators of Indian and Tibetan texts had to make a difficult cultural mediation without being able to rely on an established hermeneutical tradition. For the rendering of some concepts (especially in the translation of philosophical and religious texts), in certain cases they even felt compelled to coin new words[8] or use known terms with different meanings, at times creating potentially misleading overlaps.[9] Secondly, the lack of support from a long-lasting tradition of learning also implied less rigidity for the translators, who enjoyed a greater freedom, and in part still do. Moreover, facing a *terra incognita*, the translators had greater responsibility in creating a specific collective imagery of the culture on which they were operating, projecting onto it their own worldview and expectations even just by selecting certain works over others.

For these reasons, a survey of the experience of translating South Asian texts first of all suggests that, for a better assessment, we should shift the focus of our analysis from the work of translating, understood as a complex and elaborate factor in the process of cultural communication, to the intellectual role and responsibility of the translators themselves, who are the main actors of this process. As is perhaps common knowledge, the translator is ideally responsible for the reproduction in the target language of all the features and functions that the author attributes to the original text. In practice, however, translators can never fulfil this role perfectly, because, as we know from hermeneutics, they are always part of the process themselves; more than this, they

[8] On this topic, see, for instance, the remarks by Andrey Vsevolodovic Paribok in the introduction to his Russian translation of the *Milindapañha* (Paribok 1989: 16–18).

[9] In our opinion, this is the case, for example, of the term ‘gnosis’, which has been used by several Buddhologists to translate the Sanskrit *jñāna* and the Tibetan *ye śes*, while in the West (despite some exceptions), gnosis — as well as Gnosticism, with which it is closely associated — refers primarily to a dualistic worldview, which by contrast is absent in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

are the first and inalienable actors of the process, those who, consciously or not, interpret (and sometimes modify) the text according to their understanding, expectations and preconceptions, as well as according to the expectations of their audience.[10]

André Lefevere (1945–1996) observes that great intellectuals of the past had access to some of the most influential literary works of their generation only by means of translations and rewritings.[11] The latter play therefore an essential role as cultural vehicles. Every time a text is translated, not only is the recipient culture enriched by a 'newcomer', but the text, put into a new cultural context, also adopts a new semiotic horizon by which it is to some extent 'vivified'. Translating means to bring new life to a text, which in turn enriches the culture into which it is introduced. Again, however, we must observe that, in practice, this process never occurs in a neutral and abstract world, as the influence of the translator is always something very concrete with which we have to deal.

Lefevere points out that the images that the translators create of an author, a book, a literary genre, and the context in which it was produced tend to overlap and exceed the reality with which they compete.[12] This dynamic has been little studied to date in relation to translations of Indian and Tibetan texts,[13] and a thorough examination would certainly be a desideratum, particularly if we consider the role that these 'superimpositions' have had in portraying and understanding Indian and Tibetan

[10] As Bassnett and Lefevere masterfully put it: 'Translation is [...] a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way' (*General editors' preface* in Lefevere 1992: vii); 'Whether they produce translations, literary histories or their more compact spin-offs, reference works, anthologies, criticism, or editions, rewriters adapt, manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time. Again, this may be most obvious in totalitarian societies, but "different communities" that exist in more open societies will influence the production of rewritings in similar ways' (Lefevere 1992: 8).

[11] Cf. Lefevere 1992: 5.

[12] Cf. Lefevere 1992: 5.

[13] General remarks on this topic are in Hallisey 1995.

cultures. Let us consider, for example, the image of the Buddha as a Victorian gentleman, conveyed by translations of the Pāli canon by Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843–1922) and his wife, Caroline Augusta Foley (1858–1942); or even the depiction of the Buddha as a prototype of 'spiritual virility' in the writings of Julius Evola (1898–1974),[14] suggested, at least in part, by the translations of Giuseppe De Lorenzo (1871–1957) and Karl Eugen Neumann (1865–1915). This dynamic also involves the concealment of texts and doctrines that turn out 'inconvenient' for the interpreter. An example of this is the almost complete silence of modern and contemporary westernized Theravāda environments concerning the stories of the miracles of the Buddha, which are however expressly referred to in the Pāli canon.[15] The strategy, in this case, was and still is simply not to translate those parts of the canon, because they are seen as conflicting with the image of Buddhism as a 'rational spirituality', which constitutes much of its allure in the modern world.

The creation and 'demolition' of stereotyped images may also stem from the decision to act against an established tradition in the translation of some terms and expressions. For instance, in a recent Italian translation of the *Manusmṛti*, the word *dharma* is always translated with 'norma' (norm) or related expressions ('atti normati', cf. 4.238–239); this also happens when *dharma* is opposed to *adharma,* and where the context suggests that, from the semantic point of view, the term implies the co-occurrence of multiple meanings, including, for example, that of 'virtue'. Translating *dharma* with 'norm' in all its occurrences is a strong choice, as acknowledged by the same translators,[16] one that can also be justified as a reaction to other traditional translations in which the term has often been left untranslated, even though a translation was possible and desirable. One of the consequences of leaving the two terms (*dharma* and *adharma*) untranslated is that, in all its

[14] Cf. Evola 1957.

[15] For some references see Talim 2002–2003.

[16] Cf. Squarcini and Cuneo 2010: lviii–lix, where the translators explain the reasons of their choice and refer to recent secondary literature on the subject.

occurrences in the text, the word *dharma* always seems to acquire religious or ethical dimensions.[17]

Words have long histories and multiple meanings, depending on their contexts, or on the interpretations given by the commentarial tradition, which especially in India and Tibet has an important cultural weight. Sometimes, one has to choose between meanings that can be equally valid historically and supported by the commentarial tradition. Consider, for example, the case of the compound *ekāyana*, which occurs in connection with the teaching on the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s in the Pāli canon (*ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo […] yad idaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*)[18] as well as in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* (*ekāyano 'yaṃ bhikṣavo mārgo yad uta smṛtyupasthānāni*, ed. p. 529). The available translations are based on two opposite interpretations: the interpretation of those, on the one hand, who wanted to read into this term a heavy emphasis on the uniqueness, exclusiveness and superiority of the teaching at issue (and indirectly on the superiority of Buddhism with respect to other soteriological paths); and of those, on the other hand, who preferred to understand the word as a simple reference to the directness of the *satipaṭṭhāna* teaching in obtaining *nibbāna*, the ultimate goal. The first interpretation of *ekāyano maggo* is represented in translations such as 'the one and only way' (Conze), 'this one way' (Horner), '[i]l n'y a qu'une voie' (Lamotte), 'the sole way' (Ñāṇaponika), 'the one and only path' (C.A.F. and T.W. Rhys Davids), 'la seule voie / la voie unique' (Seyfort Ruegg), 'the only way' (Soma); the second, in translations like 'the direct path' (Anālayo, Bodhi), 'il veicolo diretto' (Cicuzza), 'la diritta via' (De Lorenzo), 'der direkte Weg' (Ñāṇatiloka). This second set of translations has the advantage of finding a parallel in *Majjhima Nikāya* 12.37–42, in a context where the rendering of *ekāyana* with

[17] In the translation by Johann Georg Bühler (1886), for instance, the word *dharma* is rendered in several ways; just to quote a few instances: 'sacred law', 1.2, 2.13; 'merit', 1.26, 2.112; 'Dharma', 1.81–82. In a recent German translation of the text, Axel Michaels (2010) has opted for leaving *dharma* and *adharma* untranslated in most of their occurrences, whereas he has translated the terms and inserted the correspondent Sanskrit words in brackets in the cases in which they assume a more specific meaning: see, for instance, *Manusmṛti* 1.26, where Michaels translates *dharma* and *adharma* as 'Ordnung (*dharma*)' and 'Unordnung (*adharma*)'.

[18] Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya* 22.1, *Majjhima Nikāya* 10, *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 47.1, 18, 43.

'direct way' definitely seems more appropriate, and also has the advantage — as Anālayo points out — 'of avoiding the slightly dogmatic nuance conveyed by the translation "the only path"'.[19] However, as emerges from the very useful analysis made by Rupert M. L. Gethin,[20] to which we refer for references, the term is difficult to translate, and the commentarial tradition, although being centuries later than the composition of the Nikāyas, contemplates both interpretations as well as adding other explanations that, despite being secondary, were certainly considered valid and plausible by Theravāda practitioners since at least the 5th century. Therefore, *ekāyana* could also be translated as the path that must be travelled alone; the path of the One, namely of the Buddha; the path that goes to one place only, that is, *nibbāna*. Historically speaking, we cannot reject any of these interpretations, despite the translation 'direct path' being more faithful to the original and compatible with our modern sensibility.

In translating, just like in textual criticism, the 'Protestant' preoccupation with a return to the original text,[21] combined with the implicit blame of historical developments, which are deemed as a corruption of pristine purity, may cause one to disregard the various interpretations that have sedimented over time and that, historically speaking, played a role in the interpretation of the readers and users of the text. In some cases, the translator must deal with a problem that is very similar to the one faced by the philologist, who establishes a critical text and chooses one variant instead of another, despite the latter possibly having been accepted in certain environments at some points in history. Just like the philologist who gives an account of the variants he rejects, setting up an apparatus that reflects and describes the diachronic development of the work, so too should the translator at least keep in mind the history of the reception and interpretation of the text and, if possible, give an account of it in critical notes.

The possibility of comparing the work of the philologist with that of the translator is not just a hypothetical claim, but a concrete reality once we turn our attention to the issue of translating from

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[19] Anālayo 2003: 27, n. 36.

[20] Gethin 2001: 59–66.

[21] For more general remarks on the 'Protestant presuppositions' in the study of Indian Buddhism, see Schopen 1991.

the 'classical' languages, both of Europe and of Asia. As a matter of fact, in these cases we lack the figure of the professional translator, so that the publishers who are interested in Indian and Tibetan literary works,[22] or the General Editors of specialized series — such as the *Clay Sanskrit Library* of the New York University Press, or the newly launched *Murty Classical Library of India* of the Harvard University Press — have to knock on the doors of universities and academies. In translating from classical languages in general, and from Indian classical languages in particular, the figure of the scholar ends up overlapping with that of the translator. This is a crucial point for understanding some of the trends of contemporary translations from Indian languages, since the interests and energies of scholars who deal with texts, their genesis, influence and authorship, as well as the historical and cultural context in which they were produced, are mainly absorbed by other tasks, namely the interpretation of these texts, the study of their manuscript transmission and, at times, the production of critical and reliable editions; hence, the work of translation may often be regarded secondary and instrumental. The unwanted consequence of this is that translations, especially of technical literature, which include not only philosophical, but also religious and scientific texts and commentaries, may tend to be very literal. Conceiving the task of translating as an accessory enterprise can above all make one oblivious to the historicity of — and, thus, the responsibility attached to — this activity, which has been and still is a culturally-driven and, at times, politically-influenced act of interpreting and bridging cultures that, just as all products of history, reflects its times and will, at a certain point, necessarily be surpassed. Neither mere mechanical transpositions of words nor highly literary pieces can fulfil the cultural responsibility that rests on the translator's shoulders, if these translations are not really the products of a conscious effort to balance the cultural word of the source with the cultural word of the target, while also contemplating the history of the reception and interpretation of the text. An overview of the practice of translating from Indian and

[22] For instance, Gallimard, Les Belles Lettres and Éditions de Boccard in France; Oxford University Press in England; Reclam and Verlag der Weltreligionen in Germany; Adelphi, Einaudi, Marsilio and Mondadori in Italy; J.E. Brill in the Netherlands.

Tibetan texts in the past shows us that finding this balance has sometimes proven difficult, if not impossible.

2. Two Kinds of Translation

In recent years, scholars of translation studies have analysed translations according to two main categories that are already traceable in Friedrich Schleiermacher's essay *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens*.[23] These categories are 1) *source-oriented translation* ('foreignizing' in Lawrence Venuti's terminology), in which the translator tries to remain as faithful as possible to the original, aiming at formal equivalence (lexical, syntactic, morphological, stylistic, etc.); and 2) *target-oriented translation* ('domesticating' in Venuti's terminology), in which one tries to mediate with the language and culture of the recipient.[24] The original text is, therefore, adapted to the culture and taste of the users. A target-oriented translation is based on what is sometimes defined as 'dynamic communication' or 'dynamic equivalence';[25] it consists in 'rewriting' the text according to the principle that a faithful translation does not correspond to the literal rendering of each sentence, but takes into consideration the whole work in its context. This kind of translation involves a complexity of factors, both semiotic and cultural, that go beyond the strict adherence to words and language.[26]

Starting at the end of the 18th century, and especially during the next two centuries, the number of translations from Indian and Tibetan texts increased exponentially in all major European languages, with the exception of Spanish and Portuguese and with

[23] Schleiermacher 1813: 152.

[24] Cf. Venuti 1995: 20.

[25] Cf. Nida 1964: 159 and ff.

[26] The forerunner of this view can be considered Cicero ([…] *non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne verborum vimque servavi. Non enim ea me adnumerare lectori putavi oportere, sed tamquam appendere* [*De optimo genere oratorum* § V.14]), followed by Horace (65–8 BCE) (cf. *Ars Poetica*, vv. 128 ff.) and by Saint Jerome (*ca.* 347–419), who, paraphrasing Cicero, prefers not to translate word for word, but meaning for meaning (*non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu* [*Epistola lvii ad Pammachium* § V]).

the growing prevalence of English.[27] The target-oriented translations were particularly popular in the 19th century. They are characterized by a refined prose, by the choice of rare, polished expressions, and sometimes by the rendering of the versified original into metrical compositions, a choice that could also result in the distortion of the original text, although efforts were made to contrast this. The translations made by Ralph Thomas Hotchkin Griffith (1826–1906) represent some of the most significant examples of this style. Besides the English versions of Vedic scriptures, he translated in rhyme the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* and the first seven chapters of the *Kumārasambhava*. A couple of quotations will suffice to give an idea of his work. The first citation is taken from the very beginning of the *Rāmāyaṇa*:[28]

> To sainted Nárad, prince of those
> Whose lore in words of wisdom flows.
> Whose constant care and chief delight
> Were Scripture and ascetic rite,
> The good Válmíki, first and best
> Of hermit saints, these words addressed:
> 'In all this world, I pray thee, who
> Is virtuous, heroic, true?
> Firm in his vows, of grateful mind...

It is an elaborate versification, inspired by the English poets of the time, that also tries to reflect the metre of the original text, in this

[27] Among the various bibliographies and reference books, for Buddhist studies (essays and translations) see Hanayama 1961, Pfandt 1986 and Sueki 1998 (upgraded since 1999 and available also online: http://www.cbs.ugent.be/file/19). For Indian studies, see Indian Council for Cultural Relations 1964 and Potter 1970 (upgraded and available also online: http://faculty.washington.edu/kpotter/).

[28] Griffith 1870–1874: 1–2. The Sanskrit text reads as follows: *tapaḥsvādhyāyaniratam̩ tapasvī vāgvidām̩ varam | nāradam̩ paripapraccha vālmīkir munipum̩gavam || ko nv asmin sāmpratam̩ loke guṇavān kaś ca vīryavān | dharmajñaś ca kṛtajñaś ca satyavākyo dṛḍhavrataḥ ||* (*Rāmāyaṇa*, Bālakāṇḍa 1.1–2).

Compare the recent translation by Robert P. Goldman: 'Valmíki, the ascetic, questioned the eloquent Nárada, bull among sages, always devoted to asceticism and study of the sacred texts. "Is there a man in the world today who is truly virtuous? Who is there who is mighty and yet knows both what is right and how to act upon it? Who always speaks the truth and holds firmly to his vows?..."' (Goldman 2005: 29). The rendering of *kṛtajñaḥ*, which here likely means 'grateful', in Goldman's translation does not seem convincing to us.

case *anuṣṭubh*, which consists of four feet of eight syllables each. The second example is drawn from the celebrated beginning of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, in *upajāti* metre (four feet of eleven syllables each). Here too Griffith adopts a different metre in his English rendition:[29]

> Far in the north, HIMÁLAYA lifting high
> His towery summits till they cleave the sky,
> Spans the wide land from east to western sea,
> Lord of the Hills, indistinct with Deity.

Griffith's work is not an isolated case. Another voluminous work of rhymed translation is due to Michele Kerbaker (1835–1914), who translated more than 14,000 stanzas of the *Mahābhārata* into Italian *ottava rima*,[30] as well as many hymns of the *Ṛgveda*.[31]

Among the target-oriented translations, we can also include the Latin versions of August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767–1845),[32]

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[29] Griffith 1853: 1. A survey of Griffith's metrical choices in relation to the changes of the metre in the Sanskrit *Kumārasambhava* would deserve an elaboration of its own. The Sanskrit text runs as follows: *asty uttarasyāṃ diśi devatātmā himālayo nāma nagādhirājaḥ | pūrvāparau toyanidhī vigāhya sthitaḥ pṛthivyā iva mānadaṇḍaḥ* || (1.1).

Compare the recent translation by David Smith: 'There is in the north / the king of mountains, / divine in nature, Himálaya by name, / the abode of snow. / Reaching down / to both the eastern / and the western oceans, / he stands / like a rod to measure the earth' (Smith 2005: 25).

[30] Most of his translations from the *Mahābhārata* were published posthumously by his students Carlo Formichi and Vittore Pisani (cf. Kerbaker 1933–1939). As noted by Stefano Piano (forthcoming), Kerbaker's translations include 7424 octaves, most of which render two *anuṣṭubh*s.

[31] For an idea of his work, see for instance Kerbaker's rendering of *Ṛgveda* 10.125.1 (Kerbaker 1880: 459): 'M'odi. Coi Rudra alto passeggio e regno, / Mi son gli Adítja ed i Vasú compagni; / Mitra e Váruna in me trovan sostegno / E i due gemelli Açvini ed Indra ed Agni.' The original text is as follows: *ahaṃ rudrebhir vasubhiś carāmy aham ādityair uta viśvadevaiḥ | ahaṃ mitrāvaruṇobhā bibharmy aham indrāgnī aham aśvinobhā* ||.

[32] Christian Lassen and A.W. von Schlegel: *Hitopadesas, id est Institutio Salutaris. Textum codd. MSS. collatis recensuerunt interpretationem latinam et annotationes criticas adjecerunt*, Bonn 1829–1831; *Bhagavad-Gita, id est Thespesion melos, sive Almi Crishnae et Arjunae colloquium de rebus divinis, Textum recensuit, adnotationes criticas et interpretationem latinam adiecit Aug. Giul. Schlegel. Editio altera auctior and emendatior cura Christiani Lasseni*, Bonn 1846, Academia Borussica Rhenana (*editio princeps* 1823).

Franz Bopp (1791–1867),[33] Christian Lassen (1800–1876)[34] and Adolf Friedrich Stenzler (1807–1887),[35] as well as the famous translation of the *Dhammapada* by Michael Viggo Fausbøll (1821–1908).[36] Their use of Latin was not only meant to address their translations to an audience of educated Westerners at the beginning of the 19th century, but to also achieve something more sophisticated: by the use of Latin, the works of Kālidāsa and Jayadeva, as well as other Indian traditional works, were raised to the same level and status as the classics of Latin and Greek literature. Although there are no explicit statements in this regard, this can be read as an attempt to insert these works into the Western literary canon *tout court*, classical Latin culture being the common background of European cultural identity.[37]

The translations of Georg Martin Dursch (1800–1881) and Peter von Bohlen (1796–1840) may represent an important transition point. Bohlen's edition of the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* (1840)[38] is accompanied by both a Latin translation and a German rendition

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[33] *Nalus, Carmen sanscriticum e Mahàbhàrato, edidit, latine vertit, et adnotationibus illustravit, Franciscus Bopp*, Londini, Parisiis et Argentorati 1819.

[34] Christian Lassen: *Gymnosophista, sive Indicæ Philosophiæ documenta. Collegit, edidit, enarravit Christian Lassen*. Voluminis I. Fasciculus I. *Isvaracrishnae Sankhya-Caricam tenens*, Bonn 1832; *Gita Govinda, Jayadevae poetae Indici drama lyricum, textum ad fidem librorum manuscriptorum recognovit, scholia selecta, annotationem criticam, interpretationem latinam adjecit Christianus Lassen*, Bonn 1836.

[35] Cf. *Brahma-vaivarta-puráni specimen; textum e codice manuscripto Bibliothecae regiae Berolinensis edidit, interpretationem latinam adiecit et commentationem mythologicam et criticam praemisit Adolphus Fridericus Stenzler,* Berlin 1829; *Raghuvansa, Kâlidâsae carmen Sanskritae et Latine edidit Adolphus Fridericus Stenzler*, London 1832; *Kumâra Sambhava, Kâlidâsae carmen Sanskritae et Latine edidit Adolphus Fridericus Stenzler,* Berlin-London 1838.

[36] *The Dhammapada: Being a collection of moral verses in Pali,* Copenhagen 1855.

[37] In the preface to his translation of the *Nalopākhyāna*, Franz Bopp justifies the use of Latin on the basis of purely linguistic motivations: *Ante alias linguas ad Sanscritum auctorem vertendum, eodem conservato verborum ordine, Latina praecipue apta est* ('The Latin language is more suitable than other languages for translating a Sanskrit author, since the same word order is kept') (Bopp 1819: iv).

[38] *Ritusanhàra id est Tempestatum cyclus, Carmen sanskritum, Kâlidâso adscriptum, edidit, latina interpretatione, germanica versione metrica atque annotationibus criticis instruxit P. a Bohlen*, Lipsiae 1840.

called *Interpretatio Germanica*.[39] Only a few years earlier (1833), his edition of Bhartṛhari's *Śatakatraya* and Bilhaṇa's *Caurapañcāśikā* contained only the Latin version.[40] His German translation is also metrical and precedes the metrical translations of Griffith and Kerbaker by a few years. Dursch behaves in a similar way. His edition of the *Ghaṭakarparakāvya*, which was published in Berlin in 1828, is accompanied by a translation into German, French and Latin,[41] whereas his edition of the *Hitopadeśa*, which appeared in 1854 in Tübingen,[42] exclusively preserves the German version. The decision to adopt only the German translation is not without significance. As a matter of fact, unlike other European countries, during the first decades of the 19th century, Germany was the scene of a rather important debate on the topic of translation, which involved public figures such as the above-mentioned Schleiermacher, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, August von Schlegel, Alexander von Humboldt and Georg Wilhelm Hegel.[43] This was

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[39] See for instance Bohlen 1840, pp. 49 (latin text) and 74 (German translation): *Coxarum globulis pulchro amiculo cinctis, papillis margaritarum serto ornatis santaloque adspersis, et capillis suffitus fragrantia suave olentibus, mulieres calorem tranquillant amantium*; Den Seidengurt um runde Hüst' geschlungen, / Mit Perlenschnüren ihrer Brust geschmückt, / Und in den Locken Wohlgerüche, haben / Die Schönen ihres Freundes Herz entzückt. The text of the Sanskrit original reads as follows: *nitambabimbaiḥ sudukūlamekhalaiḥ stanaiḥ sahārābharaṇaiḥ sacandanaiḥ* | *śiroruhaiḥ snānakaṣāyavāsitaiḥ striyo nidāghaṃ śamayanti kāminām* || 4.

[40] *Bhartriharis Sententiae Et Carmen Quod Chauri Nomine Circumfertur Eroticum, Ad codicum mstt. fidem edidit latine vertit et commentariis instruxit Petrus a Bohlen*, Berolini 1833.

[41] *Ghatakarparam oder das zerbrochene Gefäss: Ein sanskritisches Gedicht*, Berlin: Dümmler. The French translation is a reprint of the rendition made by Antoine-Léonard Chézy (1773–1832) in *Journal Asiatique* 1823.

[42] *Die älteste praktische Pädagogik des heidnischen Alterthums. Hitopadesas, oder heilsame Unterweisung, angeblich von Wischnusarman zur Belehrung königlicher Prinzen verfaßt. Aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt*.

[43] In a perspicuous essay, to which we refer the reader for further study, Saverio Marchignoli (2002: 88–89), points out that '[L]a cultura tedesca assumeva su di sé il ruolo di "ponte" tra l'Europa moderna ed ogni alterità culturale. L'antichità e l'"Oriente", la Grecia e l'India, dovevano passare attraverso la mediazione tedesca prima di divenire accessibili al resto dell'Europa. [...] Non è esagerato dire che nel corso della *Goethezeit* la vocazione all'appropriazione attraverso le traduzioni divenne una componente essenziale dell'autorappresentazione della cultura tedesca' ('German culture took upon itself the role of "bridge" between modern Europe and every cultural otherness. The antiquity and the "East",

not motivated entirely by a dispassionate interest in other cultures, but intersected with the issue of the role of the German language, which some authors (Goethe *in primis*) considered to be the most appropriate tool in conducting cultural mediation. It is also perhaps no coincidence that a scholar like Stenzler, who adopted Latin at first, since 1848 only used German for his translations.[44]

In the choice of the target-oriented translation, which was so successful in the 19th century, as the aforementioned examples show, the translators are not called to give up to their 'authorship', as they themselves become actors in the foreground of a process of cross-cultural communication.[45] However, such communication is achieved only partially, since what prevails in this phase is the idea and wish of assimilating the translated texts into the cultural milieu of the translators.[46] This is also true for the reverse operation, that of translating or adapting into Sanskrit the classics of European culture, such as the works of Shakespeare[47] or even the *New Testament*, rendered from Greek into Sanskrit by William Carey (1761–1834)[48] with the assistance of Bengali pandits in 1808 —

Greece and India, had to go through German mediation before becoming accessible to the rest of Europe. [...] It is no exaggeration to say that during the *Goethezeit* the vocation to appropriation through translations became an essential component of the self-representation of German culture').

[44] Cf. *Yâjnavalkya's Gesetzbuch, Sanskrit und Deutsch herausgegeben von Dr. Adolf Friedrich Stenzler,* Berlin-London 1849; Indische Hausregeln. *Gṛhyasūtrāṇi*. Sanskrit und Deutsch, Leipzig 1864–1878.

[45] Cf. Nergaard 2007²: 15–16.

[46] In this case we cannot speak of 'the translator's invisibility' (Venuti 1995); what tends to be invisible are the differences between the source-culture and the target-culture, which are basically eliminated and flattened.

[47] Cf., in chronological order: 1. *Vāsantikasvapnam* (= *Midsummer-Night's Dream*), adaptation by R. Krishnamachari, Kumbhakonam 1892; 2. *Veṇīśa Sārthavāhaḥ* (= *Merchant of Venice*), by Ananta Tripathi Śarma, 1969; 3. *Dīnārkarājakumārahemalekham* (= *Hamlet*), by Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay 1971; 4. *Ūthikā* (= *Romeo & Juliet*), by Revaprasad Dvivedi, 1978; 5. *Candrasenaḥ Durgadeśasya Yuvarājaḥ. Sanskrit adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet, the prince of Denmark*, translated by S. D. Joshi, Vighnahari Deo and R. G. Takwale, 1980. For a study on Shakespeare's Reception in India, see Mohanty 2005.

[48] *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; in Sanscrit*, Translated from the Greek by the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries, with Native Assistants, Calcutta 1808 (1886³): Baptist Mission Press.

although in the latter case, as well as in the translation of the *Holy Bible* published in four volumes in Calcutta between 1848 and 1872,[49] there is also a patent evangelizing intention. In spite of the intentions of their authors, these translations are not really contributing to a cultural exchange: the source culture is not valued in its peculiarity, nor enriched, but overwhelmed by the semiotic values of the target culture.

In the course of time, the tendency to produce target-oriented translations has waned, but has not disappeared. However, there have been more intermediate situations, namely cases in which, although the categories and concepts typical of the target culture are clearly discernible and sometimes even predominant in the work of the translator, the operation of mediation can be said to have been historically successful. An example from the field of Indian philosophy is the work of Theodor Ippolitovich Stcherbatsky (1866–1942). His rightly celebrated work *Buddhist Logic* (2 vols., 1930–32), for instance, which contains also a translation of the *Nyāyabindu* by Dharmakīrti with the *Ṭīkā* by Dharmottara, is deeply influenced by Kantianism. This 'domestication' of the so-called Buddhist *pramāṇa* tradition probably did not contribute to a true understanding of all specific aspects of Buddhist philosophical terminology, which have been partially 'hidden' by the Kantian frame of reference,[50] but there is no doubt that it has given a significant positive boost to the study of Buddhist logic in the West.

There can be little doubt that the early translations did impact the literary and cultural world of their times. Suffice it to recall here that the upsurge of European and American interest in Buddhism, especially starting from the second half of the 19th century, owes much to the work of the first translators of Buddhist

[49] *The Holy Bible in the Sanskrit Language, Translated out of the Original Tongues by the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries with Native Assistants*, *Vol. I. containing the five books of Moses and the book of Joshua*, Calcutta 1848; *Vol. II. containing the historical books from Judges to Esther*, Calcutta 1852; *Vol. III. containing the poetical and devotional books from Job to Canticles*, Calcutta 1858; *Vol. IV. containing the prophetical books*, Calcutta 1872: Baptist Mission Press. The missionaries involved in this project, who belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, were J. H. Gill (dnr), John Wenger (1811–1880) and William Yates (1792–1845). See also Halbfass 1988: 49–50.

[50] Cf. Chattopadhyaya 1969: xxiv.

texts, and that their activity even managed to imprint and nurture the Asian revival movements that would contribute to throw off the yoke of colonialism.[51] A telling example is that of Philippe-Édouard Foucaux (1811–1894), who, in 1850, published his Tibetan-to-French rendition of the *Lalitavistara,* which then became the source of inspiration for Edwin Arnold (1832–1904)'s *The Light of Asia* (London 1879). This fictional book had a great impact on the knowledge and dissemination of Buddhism in Europe and America among the educated middle classes and, paradoxically, at a certain point it was even used in Asia to teach Buddhism in schools.[52]

Another significant example are Neumann's translations of many parts of the Pāli canon into German. Although these translations were strongly criticised (for instance by Rudolf Otto Franke [1862–1928]),[53] they became very popular, and their contribution to the wider knowledge of Buddhism in Germany and Austria (and indirectly in Italy, through his translation, together with De Lorenzo, of the *Majjhima Nikāya* into Italian) is no doubt evident.[54] Among the intellectuals who were deeply influenced by

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[51] On the knowledge of Buddhism in Western Europe and the impact of the activity of 'textualization' of a religion, see especially Almond 1988; on the notion of Buddhist 'modernism' and its cultural and political implications, see McMahan 2008.

[52] The same function of popularising Buddhism in the West (and the East) played by Arnold's work was also carried out by *A Buddhist Catechism* (Madras 1881), by Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), and *The Gospel of Buddha* (LaSalle 1894), by Paul Carus (1852–1919), each strongly based on the available translations of Buddhist texts in Western languages.

[53] Cf., for instance, Franke 1893. On the reception of Neumann's translations in the German-speaking world, see Hecker 1986: 270.

[54] The Italian translation of the *Majjhima Nikāya* was published in three volumes in 1907, 1925 and 1927 (Bari: Laterza). A review of the first volume was published by the influential Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) in the fifth issue of *La Critica. Rivista di Letteratura, Storia e Filosofia*. Since Croce was rather critical of Buddhism, which he conceived in a nihilistic and quietist way, his review must have helped to curb the interest in Buddhism in Italy rather than promoting it. Buddhism is defined there as 'un'intuizione della vita che esclude la conoscenza e l'azione, e si rivolge tutta all'annullamento del dolore mediante l'annullamento del desiderio' ('an intuition of life that excludes knowledge and action, and focusses on the annulment of pain through the cancellation of desire') (Croce 1907: 158).

Neumann's translations were Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, Carl Gustav Jung and Hermann Hesse.[55]

There have been cases, then, in which this influence was restricted to the world of literature. In 1879, Kerbaker published a poem entitled *All'Aurora* (*To the Dawn*), a rhymed translation of passages drawn from several hymns of the *Ṛgveda*. The result is a miscellaneous hymn that can certainly be considered a form of target-oriented translation, with the aim of appropriating the text in order to make it consonant with the contemporary Western, particularly Italian, literary taste. The knowledge of Kerbaker's poem was not limited to a small circle of 'Orientalists', for it certainly inspired one of the greatest Italian poets of the 19th century, the Nobel laureate (1906) Giosue Carducci (1835–1907), who used Kerbaker's hymn for at least two of his poems. Carducci published the hymn *All'Aurora* (*To the Dawn*) in 1881, after a 15–year long revision, and subsequently introduced it in the second edition of the *Odi Barbare* (*Barbarian Odes*), which appeared in 1882.[56] The debt of Carducci towards Kerbaker's *All'Aurora* is evident from a comparison of the two texts. He not only uses identical expressions, but also seems to rely on the structure of Kerbaker's poem, as shown in the following example (note that text in bold is absent in the original texts):

[55] For more details and references see Miglio 2009: 82–89.

[56] The *Odi Barbare* was published numerous times between 1873, when the first core appeared, and 1893. In the first edition of 1877, the work numbered only 14 compositions. Other editions of the text appeared in 1886, 1889 and 1893. See Ferrari 1912: 23.

Kerbaker, *All'Aurora*, st. 2	Carducci, *Il comune rustico*, st. 34[57]
Le rosse giovenche dall'atre caverne Ai paschi ella scorge del prato divin, E il retto cammino da lunge discerne, Dei mondi dischiusi vegliando al confin	E **le rosse giovenche** di su 'l prato Vedean passare il piccolo senato,

Kerbaker, *All'Aurora*, st. 5	Carducci, *All'Aurora*, lines 19–22
Ha **infrante alla suora gelosa le stalle** E il furto che ascoso negli antri tenea,	Pastorella del cielo, tu, **frante a la suora gelosa** **le stalle**, rïadduci le rosse vacche in cielo.
Col candido armento le bionde cavalle Ai campi celesti radduce la Dea,	Guidi le rosse vacche, guidi tu **il candido armento** e **le bionde cavalle** care a i fratelli **Asvin**
Già gli agili **Aśvini** la rosea sorella Han posto sul carro dai vari color, E a gara coi Numi la Diva più bella Del celere agone riporta l'onor	

The two authors choose different metres, but in both cases their choices are rooted in the classical Greek and Latin tradition: Kerbaker composed quatrains of iambic senarii, which are the Italian version of the traditional metres of the dialogic portions of Latin tragedy and comedy, while Carducci preferred the elegiac couplet (made up of one hexameter and one pentameter).

In the case of the first 19th-century translations, the prevalent aim of the translators thus seems to have been that of 'domesticating' the texts that were considered relevant from the religious, philosophical and literary point of view, and putting them on the same level as the great works of various European national literatures. This tendency of subsuming the Indian world into one's own, which was certainly also driven by the lesser acquaintance that the European culture of the time had with Asia in general, was however gradually abandoned.[58]

[57] The poem *Il comune rustico* appeared in the *Rime nuove* in 1885. Cf. Ferrari 1912: 21–46. On the hymn *All'Aurora* of Kerbaker, see also Ardito 1879: 221 ff. and Trezza 1881: 233–238.

[58] Lionel David Barnett's translation of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, for example, which was published in New York in 1909, groups together the stanzas of the text in various blocks in prose without attempting to produce a stylistically refined version, not to say a poetical work.

In the second half of the 19th century, a significant impetus to the strenuous activity of translating Asian texts came from some editorial projects of great ambition and importance, among which it is definitely worth mentioning the series founded by Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), *The Sacred Books of the East* (50 volumes published between 1879 and 1910), and the series of translations of Buddhist texts promoted by the Pali Text Society. In order to grasp the spirit animating this enterprise, or at least its pioneering founder, one should read a few words from his introduction to the English translation of the *Ṛgveda*:[59]

> I mean by translation, not a mere rendering of the hymns of the Rig-veda into English, French, or German, but a full account of the reasons which justify the translator in assigning such a power to such a word, and such a meaning to such a sentence. I mean by translation a real deciphering, a work like that which Burnouf performed in his first attempts at a translation of the Avesta,—a *traduction raisonnée*, if such an expression may be used. Without such a process, without a running commentary, a mere translation of the ancient hymns of the Brahmans will never lead to any solid results.

The intention of Max Müller in writing these lines was to claim that his translation of the *Ṛgveda* could in fact be regarded as the first one; although this was technically not the case, it was the first in which philological acumen was accompanied by the study of a traditional commentary, namely that of the 14th-century author Sāyaṇa, the 'tradition of India' as Müller calls it (1869: xv). A higher awareness of the history and life of the translated texts thus marks the emergence of a new trend, more respectful of the sources and not only focused on the target. This tendency does not entirely replace the previous one, as the two continue to co-exist for some time. It suffices to compare Max Müller's statements with what a contemporary scholar, the above-mentioned Michele Kerbaker, would write ten years later concerning this same topic, namely the issue of translating the *Ṛgveda*:[60]

[59] Müller 1869: xv–xvi.

[60] 'A poetic translation of the *Ṛgveda* must therefore represent to readers all accessory ideas that the words of the text remind the philologist; in other words it must supply, with appropriate paraphrase, the analytical and scholarly commentary. Such kind of interpretation runs various risks and mainly this: the

> Una traduzione poetica del *Rigveda* deve pertanto rappresentare ai lettori tutte le idee accessorie, che le parole del testo richiamano alla mente del filologo, deve, cioè, supplire, con acconcia parafrasi, al commento analitico ed erudito. Siffatto genere d'interpretazione corre diversi rischi e principalmente questo: che l'interprete sia tratto talvolta ad ammodernare soverchiamente la poesia antica, per renderla intelligibile e ravvicinarla, come si dice, alla coscienza moderna. Ma l'assunto di dare un'immagine viva e colorita, quanto più sia possibile, della poesia Vedica, mi parve cosi utile da compensare, in parte, i difetti inevitabili di siffatto lavoro.

Kerbaker shows awareness of the risk of the interpreter appropriating the original text according to his own categories, of modernizing it too much in order to make it intelligible to the modern mind, yet he prefers to take the risk in order to transmit, as he says, the vividness of the poetry. Thus, for the Italian scholar, poetic taste had to be preferred over interpretive tradition. As a matter of fact, however, Kerbaker does not entirely disregard the philological implications of the translators' work, as in the notes that usually accompany his translations of Vedic hymns he provides the reader with a philological commentary and, at times, a literal rendering. His translations from the *Mahābhārata* are all published posthumously and contain no philological notes.[61]

3. Modern Tendencies and Old Problems

The coexistence of these two main approaches to translating has persisted in the course of the 20th century and up to present time, although in the fields of Indology and Indo-Tibetology the habit of target-oriented translation has shrunk significantly, with a few remarkable exceptions.[62] Especially in the case of technical

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interpreter sometimes tries excessively to modernize the ancient poetry, to make it intelligible and bring it closer, so to say, to the modern sensitivity. But the assumption of giving as much as possible a vivid and colorful image of Vedic poetry seemed so useful to me to compensate, in part, the inevitable defects of such work' (Kerbaker 1879: 333).

[61] See above note 30.

[62] See, e.g., the translation of Dāmodaragupta's *Kuṭṭanīmata* by Goodall and Dezső (2012).

literature, the source-oriented translation may in fact even seem to be preferable, being justified on account of the fixed terminology and phraseology used by these texts, which scholars are now trying to make into an established jargon. It is assumed that these translations do not have literary intent, that they should be solely or primarily 'instrumental' for the sake of other interpretations of the text. The advantage of these translations, which are honest and thus valuable attempts at offering an accurate rendering of the texts by means of a technical terminology, lies primarily in their being an aid to other scholars and students. In this, they are certainly more useful than some very well-known paraphrases, like those authored by Ganganath Jha (1872–1941) on some of the classics of Indian thought.[63] At the same time, one cannot disagree with the arguments of Lawrence McCrea and Parimal Patil, who, while dealing with the translation of Buddhist epistemological texts in the introduction of their translation of Jñānaśrīmitra's *Apohaprakaraṇa*, note with regret that too-literal translations, i.e. renderings produced by what they define 'the long-standing European philological tradition', cannot really be understood outside the circle of specialists and paradoxically require the knowledge of the original language of the texts that they should make accessible to all.[64] As they explain in the introduction,[65] their

[63] Cf., e.g., his famous English translations of the *Ślokavārttika* by Kumārila (Calcutta 1908), of the *Nyāyasūtra* with the commentaries by Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara (repr. in 4 vols., originally published in *Indian Thought* 1912–1919), of the *Tantravārttika* by Kumārila (2 vols., Calcutta 1924), and of the *Tattvasaṅgraha* by Śāntarakṣita and its *Pañjikā* by Kamalaśīla (2 vols., Baroda 1937, 1939).

[64] 'Most translations of Buddhist epistemological texts have been products of the long-standing European philological tradition. This tradition emphasizes the editing of texts through meticulous and critical study of existing manuscript materials and the production of studiously literal translations that are maximally faithful to the words on the page. Scholars in this tradition try very hard to preserve the text's lexical and syntactic features, including ellipses, ambiguity of pronouns, and the like. Furthermore, they make a conscious effort not to allow their understanding of the text's overall argument and content to shape their translation of specific words and passages. This results in translations that are highly accurate but nearly impossible for those who do not have firsthand knowledge of the primary languages to really understand. Such work is necessary for developing a rich, detailed understanding of these materials. But if these materials are to be made accessible to a broader range of educated readers, we must produce translations and studies of Sanskrit philosophical texts

translation provides the reader with a smoother, more intelligible text by applying a method that we might call the 'principle of explicitness'. For instance, they decide to avoid the use of brackets to insert information that is missing in the text; to supply the unstated agent of an action or the name of the authors or the title of the quoted texts if these are supposed to be well-known to the original audience of the work; to explicitly state unspecified referents for some substantivized adjectives, as well as the unstated agents of participles and agentive adjectives, etc. These stylistic choices make this type of translation more useful to scholars and students of Western philosophy, provided that they do not want to check or verify the Sanskrit or Tibetan original. It is undeniable that, if they wanted to get closer to the original text, even without aspiring to become Sanskritists or Tibetologists, what McCrea and Patil define 'more philologically minded translations' at least have the advantage of being didactic, allowing the non-specialist armed with good will to follow the path of the translator more easily.

As regards the translation of literary works, the question may be different. The assumption that a word-for-word rendering is after all a lesser evil, and perhaps more respectful both to the author of the original text and to the reader, clashes even more strikingly with the evidence that the outcome of this 'conversion' is often a failure, the result being a text of little success, tough and substantially dry, unable to convey even a small portion of the aesthetic sense of the original. Nevertheless there have been attempts to justify the 'literal approach' also for the translation of literary texts. Its defence has been made, for instance, in the 1970s by Lee A. Siegel in his study on the *Gītagovinda*.[66] At a certain point he states:[67]

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that can be read and understood by those with no knowledge of Sanskrit and with little or no previous exposure to the philosophical traditions to which they belong. Without such work, Sanskrit philosophers will never find a place in contemporary academic discourse and public consciousness comparable to that of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, or Wittgenstein' (McCrea and Patil 2010: 34–35). Partly similar considerations on translating Indian philosophical texts can also be read in Taber 2013: 138–141, in particular p. 138.

[65] Cf. McCrea and Patil 2010: 35–40.

[66] Siegel 1978: 233–238.

[67] Siegel 1978: 235.

> Neither the literary nor the literal approach can convey the sensual impact of the poem, the sense-sound of the original; nor can they convey that intensity in *kāvya* which arises from the compactness and condensity achieved by compounding groups of words into monolithic units. *Kāvya* is untranslatable because it is not only *in* Sanskrit, it *is* Sanskrit.
>
> But the literal approach can, I believe, convey at least the intellectual impact of the poem, the sense-content of the original, particularly if it is supplemented with notes and discussion to make explicit information which could have been implicit to the original audience.

On the basis of this, either reacting against the earlier scholarly tradition or on account of a more advanced philological awareness, Siegel criticizes some of the previous English translations of the poem, not only those impressionistic and paraphrastic renditions of Duncan Greenless (Madras 1962), Bankey Behari (Jodhpur 1964) and Monika Varma (Calcutta 1968), but also those target-oriented versions of the first English translators: William Jones (Calcutta 1792), Edwin Arnold (London 1881) and George Keyt (Bombay 1940). Siegel's words are diametrically opposed to those written about a hundred years earlier by Kerbaker, which we have quoted above, and which can be considered illustrative of the predominant sensibility among late-19th-century translators.

There are also examples of translations that can rightly be called a compromise between the two positions described above: renderings that are faithful to the original, but which seek to offer a sophisticated text also in the target language. Some translators, especially of poetry, try to imitate the figures of speech of the original and, in the case of Sanskrit texts, to maintain some of the ambiguity allowed by nominal composition. An example can be seen in the Italian translation of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* by Giuliano Boccali. Stanza 6.4 (= 133) runs as follows:

> vihitaviśadaviśakiśalayavalayā |
> jīvati param iha tava ratikalayā |
> nātha hare |
> sīdati rādhā vāsagṛhe ||

In this verse, as throughout the entire work, Jayadeva makes a wise use of rhymes (*yamaka*) and alliterations (*anuprāsa*). Boccali has tried to reproduce both effects, but without enforcing any that would

have allowed the Italian text to stray too far from the Sanskrit. The result is a literal translation, attentive to the figures of speech of the original composition.

> Con bracciali intrecciati di boccioli e steli teneri,
> vive solo per le tue arti in amore:
> signore Hari,
> Rādhā languisce nell'asilo della sua dimora.[68]

Although, inevitably, the rhyme is not perfect in Italian (*-eri/-ari*, *-ore/-ora*), the reproduction of the alliteration in the first line is particularly successful. The Sanskrit text plays around a triple alliteration: the repetition of the syllable *vi/va*, the repetition of the syllable *śa* and the repetition of the syllables *laya*.

> **vi**hita**vi**śada**vi**śakiśalaya**va**layā
> vihitavi**śa**davi**śa**ki**śa**layavalayā
> vihitaviśadaviśakiśa**laya**va**layā**

The Italian translator has also tried to reproduce three alliterations: the repetition of the syllable *ccia/ccio*, the repetition of syllables *ali/oli/eli/eri* and the repetition of the syllables *ti/te*.

> Con bra**ccia**li intre**ccia**ti di bo**ccio**li e steli teneri
> Con bracci**ali** intrecciati di bocci**oli** e st**eli** ten**eri**
> Con bracciali intreccia**ti** di boccioli e s**te**li **te**neri

4. The 'Semiotics of Faithfulness'

In the same way that a one-sided criticism of literal translation does not take into account its advantages and function, in our opinion it is not only ungenerous, but also conceptually wrong to radically criticize the target-oriented approach, not only for its obvious advantages, which have been briefly described above, but also because a strict adherence to its opposite model presents at least two weaknesses. And it is the analysis of these two weak points that allow us to draw some conclusions.

First of all, a literal translation promises only an illusory faithfulness to the original because in fact each word in the original context often, if not always, presupposes a different semiotic horizon.[69] As we have seen, even an advocate of the 'literal

[68] Boccali 1982: 84.

[69] For some considerations on this topic see Jakobson 1959.

approach' like Siegel is aware that a word-for-word translation is not able to faithfully transmit the meaning of the original text, and in fact he expects a translation to be accompanied by notes and explanations. Thus a translator must not only apply himself/herself to the rendering of words, but also to the rendering of concepts, that is, the 'horizon of meaning' that lies behind words, but which is often not easily expressible and sometimes, perhaps, even inexpressible. Already in 1879, in the introduction to the first volume of the series *The Sacred Books of the East*, Max Müller expresses this concept in a masterly way, along with other rather interesting considerations on the role and limits of translations that are worth quoting in full.[70]

> Many poets have translated Heine into English or Tennyson into German, many painters have copied the Madonna di San Sisto or the so-called portrait of Beatrice Cenci. But the greater the excellence of these translators, the more frank has been their avowal, that the original is beyond their reach. And what is a translation of modern German into modern English compared with a translation of ancient Sanskrit or Zend or Chinese into any modern language? It is an undertaking which, from its very nature, admits of the most partial success only, and a more intimate knowledge of the ancient language, so far from facilitating the task of the translator, renders it only more hopeless. Modern words are round, ancient words are square, and we may as well hope to solve the quadrature of the circle, as to express adequately the ancient thoughts of the Veda in modern English.
>
> We must not expect therefore that a translation of the sacred books of the ancients can ever be more than an approximation of our language to theirs, of our thoughts to theirs. The translator, however, if he has once gained the conviction that it is impossible to translate old thought into modern speech, without doing some violence either to the one or to the other, will hardly hesitate in his choice between two evils. He will prefer to do some violence to the language rather than to misrepresent old thoughts by clothing them in words which do not fit them. [...] I only wish to warn the reader once more not to expect too much from a translation, and to bear in mind that, easy as it might

[70] Max Müller 1879: xxvii–xxviii.

> be to render word by word, it is difficult, aye, sometimes impossible, to render thought by thought.

A strict adherence to literal translation also involves a second problem, which is closely connected with the first one we have seen — we sacrifice the *possibility* of a semiotic enrichment of the translated text, especially in the translation of literary works, where there is more room for the translator's choice and where the translation, instead of being simply instrumental, *can* become an independent work of genius.

This possibility is based on the assumption that each literary work possesses a 'seminal' function, namely an ability to generate new or related meanings, even beyond the intention of the original author, which becomes evident once the text is placed in another semiotic horizon. Translating a text does not just mean keeping it alive as a museum piece, but giving it a second life that comes along with the new language.[71] A translated text interacts on diverse levels with the 'cultural actors' of the target culture (i.e. target-language, translators, readers), which are not simply passive with respect to the newcomer.

All this seems to push us into a specific direction, a direction that we glimpsed at the beginning of this essay: the focus should be put on the translators and their activity, rather than on the distinction between the two above-mentioned types of translations, the target- and the source-oriented, in favour of what Umberto Eco (1932–2016) defines 'semiotica della fedeltà' ('semiotics of faithfulness').[72]

According to this principle, which we have tried to formulate in our own way, translating has a twofold nature. On the one

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[71] This viewpoint stands in direct contrast to the theoretical assumptions of the Descriptive Translation Studies, as they have been expressed by Gideon Toury: 'DTS starts from the notion that any research into translation, whether it is confined to the product itself or intends to proceed to the reconstruction of the process which yielded it (and on from there), should start from the hypothesis that *translations are facts of one system only*: the target system. It is clear that, from the standpoint of the source text and source system, translations have hardly any significance at all' (Toury 1985: 19).

[72] '[T]radurre significa rendere il testo comprensibile a un lettore di lingua diversa, ed è in questa tensione che si articola il problema della "fedeltà", che è sempre fedeltà-per-qualcuno, ovvero *fedeltà di qualcuno rispetto a qualcosa d'altro al servizio di qualcun altro ancora*' (Eco 2007: 124). Cf. also Meschonnic 2007: 55.

hand, it is *one of the forms of hermeneutics*. Faithfulness, in this case, means reconstructing the intention of the author — as already pointed out by Schleiermacher — or at least the intention of the text to be translated, in accordance with the language and the context in which it was produced.[73] On the other hand, translating is *one of the forms of exegesis*. Faithfulness, in this case, means rewriting, adapting, reproducing the spirit of the original. 'If it is necessary to bring the reader to understand the semiotic universe of the original, it is also necessary to transform the original, adapting it to the semiotic universe of the reader'.[74] All this could be summarized by simply saying that translating means reading (= interpreting) and making others read (= explaining). The crucial point is that the mediation between the two natures of the translation process can never be the result of a mechanical process; it resides in the intention and in the genius of the translator, in his/her sensitivity, flexibility and ability to interpret and synthesize, which, as the exponents of the Manipulation School teach, is in its turn historically determined — each translation is produced in a specific socio-cultural context and for a particular group of readers with specific expectations.[75] In fact, since any process of translation is obviously tied to a specific place and time, each generation is entitled to its own translations, we could say as a motto, and it is in

[73] 'Il concetto di fedeltà ha a che fare con la persuasione che la traduzione sia una delle forme dell'interpretazione [...] e che l'interpretazione debba sempre mirare, sia pure partendo dalla sensibilità e dalla cultura del lettore, a ritrovare non dico l'intenzione dell'autore, ma l'intenzione del testo, quello che il testo dice o suggerisce in rapporto alla lingua in cui è espresso e al contesto culturale in cui è nato. In tal senso una traduzione non è mai soltanto un affare linguistico, e non lo sarebbe neppure se esistesse un criterio assoluto di sinonimia' (Eco 2007: 123).

[74] '[S]e occorre portare il lettore a capire l'universo semiotico dell'originale, occorre parimenti trasformare l'originale adattandolo all'universo semiotico del lettore' (Eco 2007: 125). This passage continues with the following words: 'Di fronte alla domanda se una traduzione debba essere *source* o *target oriented*, ritengo che non si possa elaborare una regola, ma usare i due criteri alternativamente, in modo molto flessibile, a seconda dei problemi posti dal testo a cui ci si trova di fronte' (Eco 2007: 125).

[75] Cf. Campanini 2000. See also above note 10.

the nature of the translating process itself that it must be periodically renewed.[76]

[76] And this is also true for the translations produced in the same language. From this point of view any claim to produce perennially valid translations is simply destined to clash with the reality of the facts.

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