Parallèles

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Introduction:

Women translators of religious texts

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At the present moment, concerns with women's rights and violations thereof, as well as with humanity's faulty track record with respect to equality (a term which is often vehiculated but insufficiently conceptualised) are frequently present in the public sphere, including in academia. Thus, our decision to invite contributions specifically on women translators of sacred and other religious writings appears to find a natural place in the chorus of voices currently speaking out against real or perceived injustices. It is true that one of the reasons which motivated us to embark on the project was the factual observation that little is known about contributions by women to the transmission, via translation, of holy and other religious texts. We therefore set out to study the phenomenon, with the help of scholars – mostly women, but also men – who could shed light on women's participation. However, while we do seek to give more visibility to women's endeavours and to contribute to the writing of a more complete history of religious translation in which men and women both have a role to play, our take is that the right to translate is, above all, a responsibility. Translating religious writings and, especially, holy texts, is no easy task. Greater numbers of women around the world are now in a position to undertake it, and more men as well. After all, although the hierarchies of institutionalised religions have traditionally been occupied by men, these men are a small minority and any generalisations suggesting that most or even all men have had rights, privilege and power, while women – construed as a homogeneous group, which clearly they are not – were all of them oppressed, are unhelpful as well as misleading.

A distinction is in order between 'religious' text and 'sacred' or 'holy' text. We use 'religious' in the sense of "relating to or pertaining to a given religion". The terms 'holy' or 'sacred', on the other hand, refer to the status of an entity (concept, object, process, phenomenon, and even human or, in some religions, non-human being) within the value hierarchy of the given religion. Where this entity happens to be a written text – and we do not mean 'happens' in the sense of random occurrence –, the text is extremely valuable in the eyes of those who adhere to the religion within which it emerged and which the text itself has contributed to shape, as is the case for instance with the Abrahamic religions, i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. What is more, it may be seen as inspired or even authored by the Divine. In light of this, translating such writings is not only challenging because of difficulties pertaining to linguistic and cultural transfer or to stylistic considerations, but it becomes perilous in view of the fact that the translators are deemed to be meddling with the word of God. Even if they are trustworthy and competent, can the endeavour be successful, and who decides whether it is or not?

The translation of religious texts has a long history and it undoubtedly contributed to the transmission and introduction of ideas, values and norms into new communities, societies, and entire nations; some of these then crystallised into traditions. It is therefore not surprising that religious text translation and, especially, the translation of holy writings have received the attention of scholarly books covering a variety of topics and research areas. For instance, in *Translating Buddhism: Historical and Contextual Perspectives* (2021), the contributors, who are all translators, explore the challenges faced by the translators of South Asian Buddhist texts in

different historical periods and examine how cultural and social norms impact the publication and reception of religious texts. Also looking at the historical context, *Translators through History* (Delisle & Woodsworth, [1995] 2012) gives an account of translators' experiences in different parts of the world and how they contributed to enriching language, literature, and human knowledge. While Delisle & Woodsworth's volume is not specifically on religious translation, one of the exceptional translators who are mentioned is Xuanzang, a Chinese monk who, in 629 CE, travelled to India in search for sacred texts and returned to China with a twenty-horse caravan bearing Buddhist treasures. He then spent twenty years translating the Sanskrit manuscripts into Chinese, with the help of other translators. Revisiting the past and attempting to recreate the historical context of how religious translations are produced is also the focus of Roland H. Worth's *Bible Translations: A History through Source Documents* (1992). Worth used documents created by the translators and studied numerous versions of Bible renderings into several European languages, including English. A similar historical approach has been applied to the translation of the Qur'an: in *The Koran in English: A Biography* (2020), Bruce Lawrence revisits various English translations of the holy text and discusses them within their historical and social contexts.

However, if academics have written extensively on religious text translation, its challenges, and methodology, its history, impact and development, they have generally overlooked women translators and the role they played. Indeed, most of the translators of religious texts we are informed about and who have gained a measure of visibility are men. This gap has not gone unnoticed by feminist translation scholars. In the last two decades, the names and works of women translators of religious texts have started to emerge, thanks to the efforts of a new generation of scholars. For instance, in *Gender in Translation. Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (1996), Sherry Simon brings attention to women translators of the Bible by retracing their stories and analysing their translations. Similarly, in her article "Women, Bibles, Ideologies", Luise von Flotow (2000) discusses women translators of the Bible and their feminist contribution, while Rim Hassen's work (e.g., 2011, 2012) has focused on women's contribution in the translation of the Qur'an and the strategies they use to translate the Muslim sacred text. Christopher Shackle (2005) revealed that the first translation by a woman of the sacred book of Sikhism, *Ādi Granth* ("Original Book", or "First Book"), was attempted in 1995: Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh's volume was published under the title *The Name of My Beloved. Verses of the Sikh Gurus*". In 2011, Lynne Long's contribution "Women Translators of Sacred Texts" appeared in Oriana Palusci's *Traduttrici. Female Voices across Languages*, where she gives an insight into women's involvement in translating sacred texts in various religious traditions. Through such efforts, it became gradually obvious that women have in fact translated religious and even sacred texts, and that it makes sense to want to find out more about them and their work.

While truth may not always be in numbers, historically there has been a gap between the number of books authored, published and translated by women and men. The phenomenon is complex and we do not wish to reduce it to considerations of power, even though power (not least of the kind exerted by women on other women) is part of the mix. But there has indeed also been a gap between men and women's access to education and production of knowledge; in certain parts of the world it persists to this day. Depending on where and when women lived, there have been social, cultural, economic, and religious reasons for this. One of the key issues that come to mind is women's literacy, which is in turn determined by cultural ideals, social norms, and even by legal and institutional constraints. Going back in time, it appears that in England, in 1500, as much as 99 percent of women may have been illiterate (by comparison with 70 percent of men), and girls of all social backgrounds were the object of purposeful effort to restrict their access to full literacy (Brayman Hackel & Kelly, 2008, p. 1). This improved

for both men and women as time went by but, even when many more women gained access to reading and writing, their male family members had more and better access. Women were also prevented from learning certain skills and acquiring knowledge in various subjects, which placed them at a marked disadvantage. Throughout history, various institutions – of which organised religion is an important example, alongside school – structured women's learning and competed to determine what they could read and what was appropriate for them to aim for. In particular, they could not aspire to occupy a role in the religious hierarchy, teach other people within a religious setting, or even speak out in public. It is therefore not entirely surprising that, as several of the contributors to this special issue point out (e.g., **Felicia Dumas**, **Anne O'Connor**, **Sema Üstün-Külünk**, **Jenny Wong**), it still seems inappropriate or even unacceptable that women should want to translate, especially if the project they embark on is a retranslation of the holy text.

Nevertheless, women in different parts of the world and historical periods have contributed to and participated in the translation of sacred texts. Sometimes they used their real names, or used a pseudonym (see **Üstün-Külünk**'s article), or published under a man's name. Like other women working in different areas and disciplines, women translators brought a range of experiences, skills, concerns, and perspectives to their reading and interpretations of religious texts. They are not a homogeneous group and, as **Richard Pleijel** reveals in his study of Swedish translator Viveka Heyman, some of them were most clearly not feminists. Furthermore, as **Anna Maslenova** contends, nor is invisibility always imposed on a (female) translator; in her opinion, a translator – in this case, Natalie Duddington – may voluntarily choose to relinquish her voice in the process of carrying out translation-based mediation, in the pursuit of higher purposes.

Do women translate differently from men? To what extent is gender a motivation or a constraint in their translations of holy and other religious texts? In other words, is gender the dominant factor shaping women's (re)translations of religious writings, by comparison with translations or retranslations by men? This also leads to a different set of questions relating to how readers (men and women) perceive women's translations. To what extent is the readers' understanding of the act of translation gendered, and how does that affect and influence their reception of religious translations by women? Expectations, norms, and stereotypes (including, but not restricted, to gender) in each society, culture, or historical period play an important role in shaping approaches to translation. In *Faithful Translators: Authorship, Gender, and Religion in Early Modern England* (2014), Goodrich gives the example of women translating religious texts in Early Modern England and points to the "critical dichotomy" that developed because, in his opinion, "men showed creative liberty by translating freely", while "women complied with patriarchal expectations by translating faithfully" (2014, p. 5). This state of affairs persisted even though women were mainly translating religious texts while men translated the classics, as Mary Ellen Lamb points out:

> The translations by Renaissance women are different from the translations of Renaissance men in being exceedingly literal. Absent are the magnificent and occasionally quirky expansions of Harington's Orlando Furioso and Chapman's Homer; instead, we find line-by-line transliteration. The explanation of the difference lies to some extent in the nature of the task itself... Many religious texts had by their very nature to be translated literally. (in Goodrich, 2014, p. 5)

The "dichotomy" may have gradually dissipated as more and more women became involved in translating religious texts. However, this is a useful reminder of the constraints, expectations and norms concerning faithfulness, accuracy, and transparency — all of which require the

(male or female) translator to remain invisible (or as invisible as possible), and posit that the translated text is, by definition, inferior to the original (a different conceptualisation could be, for instance, that the translation is the continuation, the progeny, the afterlife or renewed life of the original). This has at the same time made translation somehow compatible with women, while also giving women translators an additional challenge where they need to conform to social expectations of femininity (modesty, virtue, invisibility), to take into consideration rules set by religious institutions (in order to avoid censorship), and comply with market expectations. To face the challenges and cross these obstacles, women translators of religious texts and, especially, of holy writings, have adopted various translation strategies (some of which are outlined in this special issue) and, in recent years, used new platforms to market and publicise their work (Hassen and Şerban, in press).

To ensure that their renditions are accepted by the target readers, translators and publishers need to think strategically about each step they take in the publication process. Thus, they must decide how to package and present the translation, and what title to choose. Does the translation need approval, permission, and endorsement from religious institutions, scholars, or other authorities? In this special issue, paratexts and approbations make the object of **O'Connor**'s study of two of the most successful women translators of religious texts in the Anglophone world in the nineteenth century, Mary Anne Sadlier and Mary Austin Teresa Carroll.

Paratextual elements such as book covers, titles, prefaces, introductions, and marginal notes play a key role in the packaging, marketing, and publication process. In his book *Seuils* (1987), published in English under the title *Paratexts*: *Thresholds of Interpretation*, Gérard Genette studied the paratexts in print books and viewed them as liminal devices that mediate reception and perception. However, more recently, the term 'paratexts' has started being understood in a broader sense and now refers not only to books but also to digital media, e-books, and their translations. At the time of writing, paratextual elements also comprise online sources, audio and visual advertising materials, publishers' and translators' websites, and more. The challenge for women translators of religious and, especially, of holy texts, is how to present, package, and market their translations, in view of the fact that, in certain contexts, gender bias still impacts readers' choice (including that of other women). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the translation of religious texts is also a business venture; consequently, commissioners and publishers select translations that can sell well and turn a profit, which obviously only happens if they meet readers' and buyers' expectations. Such practical aspects form part of the complex and heterogeneous set of considerations that determine why women translators of religious texts have taken different approaches: while some chose to highlight their position as women translators, others opted for anonymity and resorted to pseudonyms or to male names. On the whole, their translations still need to attract a wider audience if they are to become profitable for publishers. Indeed, translations by women are mostly issued by small publishing houses or are self-sponsored, which limits their distribution.

How to best prepare for and respond to criticism, and avoid censorship and attacks (including, in extreme cases, threats to personal safety, or that of one's family)? Naturally, taking these decisions is a complex process which always involves selectivity and exclusion, where some aspects of the translation are highlighted and emphasised while others are downplayed or suppressed. The criteria for these selections or exclusions are often determined by personal, social, political, financial, and theological considerations, which in turn have an impact on the publication and reception of women's translations of religious texts. As **Julie Van Parys-Rotondi** reveals in this special issue, even a powerful woman such as Queen Katherine Parr, King Henry VIII's sixth and last wife who was a humanist and a devout first-generation

Evangelical as well as the first woman to publish a book under her own name in England, was not entirely free to do what she wanted, within the context of her time (women were particularly restricted in the expression of religious opinions) and facing her own husband's hostility towards Protestantism.

The fifteen contributions in this special issue cover aspects of translation by women in Western and Eastern Christianity, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Islam. We regret not having been able to attract studies of women's contribution within a broader range of religions including, for instance, Judaism and Buddhism, and hope to address this shortcoming in a future project. Some of the studies included here discuss retranslations of the holy texts of Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity, especially those by **Sema Üstün-Külünk**, **Yazid Haroun**, **Maria Puri**, **Maria Puri & Monika Browarczyk**, **Jenny Wong**, **Richard Pleijel**, **Felicia Dumas** – including, in the case of **Mary Phil Korsak** whose contribution concludes the volume, reflections on her own translation of the Gospel of Mark. Translations of religious texts such as prayer books, religious philosophy, commentaries, devotional writings (including poetry), or accounts of mystical visions, are studied in this special issue by **Agnieszka Gicala**, **Vasumathi Bandrinathan**, **Anne O'Connor**, **Anna Maslenova**, **Julie Van Parys-Rotondi**, and **Ewa Dębicka-Borek & Zofia Ziemann**. Where **Gicala** presents the case study of Julian of Norwich, a fourteenth-century English mystic and anchoress, and focuses on Julian's metaphor of God's maternity, **Bandrinathan** discusses translations into English and French of the *Tiruppavai* and the *Nachiyar Tirumoli*, which are books of devotional poetry written by Andal, the only woman among the twelve Alvars of Tamil Nadu. The question of the body and of female sexuality appears to be central in these texts, and translating the spiritual and cultural content while also adequately representing the mystic's poetic style is no easy task. India is present again in the volume through **Dębicka-Borek & Ziemann**'s study of Wanda Dynowska's life and activity, in particular her translation into Polish of a twentieth-century narrative of bhakti devotionalism.

The translators' religious, spiritual, and mystical experiences are rarely addressed explicitly in translations or the accompanying paratexts. But the phenomenon of mysticism, in its philosophical, psychological, and emotional dimensions, is present in various religions around the world, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In her article "Mystical and literary texts: Meeting the other, and each other, at the borders of language", Cristina Mazzoni (2007) highlights the challenges of translating mystical texts in their various forms (prayers, poetry, letters, biographies, and journals). How can translators convey mystical experiences and meanings is another thread running through the volume – see, for instance, **Gicala** and **Bandrinathan**. The relationship between mysticism, truth, and language is very complex and, in **Maria Puri**'s words, translating is a "spiritual journey in search of the self". In fact, as **Gicala** points out, translators may find themselves attempting to translate someone else's rendition of God's message, which she contends is precisely what happens when contemporary (women) translators tackle Julian of Norwich's *Shewings.*

Some of the women translators whose work is discussed within this volume are lay women, while others are consecrated, as is the case with the Orthodox Christian nun who translated the Psalms into French at the end of the twentieth century (see **Dumas**' contribution). At least one of them is extremely powerful in terms of her position in the world: Katherine Parr, the wife of a king. But it is perhaps plausible to suggest that, in her own way, each of the women is unconventional, as **Dębicka-Borek & Ziemann** demonstrate with respect to Wanda Dynowska (also known under the Indian name Umadevi). The stories of many remarkable women who translated sacred or other religious texts may not have been told yet, but we would like to mention here Fatma-Zaïda, a nineteenth-century Muslim slave maid or *djaria* who enjoyed the status of wife of a Turkish dignitary. She was the first woman to translate the Qur'an into

French. Her translation is not widely known, but the fact remains that Fatma-Zaïda used her translation to defend women's rights and to mediate between cultures (Hassen, 2018, p. 211).

Translation is increasingly viewed as a cultural and social activity and not merely a form of linguistic transmission. It is a complex process of reading, understanding, writing, and conducting exchanges between commissioners, translators, editors, and reviewers. As mediators between two (or several) cultures and two (or more) languages and traditions, and beyond simplistic injunctions to deliver fidelity, accuracy, and faithfulness to the original, translators are writers and rewriters of a new text that carries the cultural, linguistic, and social elements of the source and target environments. The concept of 'translation as rewriting' was highlighted by André Lefevere in *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, where he stated that translation is "a rewriting of an original text" (2004, p. vii). In other words, translation is not a transparent, straightforward linguistic transfer, but a process that can introduce new ideas, concepts, and perspectives to the target language and culture. In her contribution to this special issue, **Arunima Dey** engages with translation as rewriting and takes as a case in point Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) which, she argues, is a feminist translation of the original Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. Female sexuality and the topic of the body are among the issues discussed here which tie in with themes in other articles included here, such as for instance with **Bandrinathan**'s paper on the poetess Andal.

We would like to finish with a few words on collaboration. Translation in general involves different types and levels of collaboration between translators, authors, reviewers, publishers, and commissioners. Christiane Nord, who teamed up with her husband to translate the Bible into German, highlights the collaborative aspects in the translation process, which may involve two or more participants (see Nord, 1997). Throughout history there are numerous examples of translators working together on holy texts. Sometimes they are family members – a situation which appears to have occurred repeatedly where Qur'an translation with the collaboration of women is concerned: *The Glorious Quran: Text and Translation* (1991) completed by husband and wife Ahmad Abdul Munim Zidan and Dina Al Zahraa Zidan, *The Koran, Complete Dictionary and Literal Translation* (1994) by father and daughter Muhamed Ahmed and Samira Ahmed, *The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text and English Translation* (1997) by husband and wife Abdul Mannan Omar and Amatul Rahman Omar, *The Noble Quran: A New Rendering of Its Meaning in English* (1999), by husband and wife team Hajj Abdalhaqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley. Contemporary translations of the Bible increasingly involve women. Thus, *The Contemporary English Bible* (1995) had 120 translators, twenty among them women; *The New International Version* (2011) had a committee of fifteen members, thirteen men and two women. *The New Revised Standard Version* (2021) translation committee included four women. Collaboration between women and men to translate the Muslim holy text is the key theme of **Haroun**'s contribution; it is also present in **Bandrinathan**'s study, and is mentioned by **Van Parys-Rotondi**. If we may conclude on a personal note, we would like to express our conviction that collaboration is the way to go.

We thank all the contributors for participating in this collective venture which they have shaped and enriched, and the members of our advisory committee for their insights and support. A special thank you to Bruce Lawrence for encouraging and helping us when we most needed it.

We dedicate this effort to Dr Lynne Long, who was our professor at the University of Warwick, UK, and to the memory of Laleh Bakhtiar (1938-2020), who was always ready to share her knowledge and experience of translating the Qur'an and was incredibly kind and supportive.

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Œuvres d'hier, traductions d'aujourd'hui :
Andal à travers le prisme contemporain

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Andal then and now: Contemporary translations of sacred poetry – Abstract

The only woman amongst the twelve Alvars of Tamil Nadu (saint-poet-philosophers who lived between the 6th and the 10th century CE), Andal wrote devotional poetry which is enshrined in the highest order of sacred texts of Hinduism. This article studies translations by three women (including the author of the present study) of the two works by Andal written in Tamil, the *Tiruppavai* and the *Nachiyar Tirumoli*. Two of these translations are in English, and one is in French. Translating Andal is challenging in more ways than one, and the translator therefore faces a double responsibility: communicating the cultural and spiritual content of the poetry while, at the same time, adequately representing Andal's poetic style. I contend that the "interlocutory space" (Parker & Sedwig, 1995) between the translators and the original text is far from watertight, which allows scope for subjective readings. Thus, it is possible to look beyond normative understandings of gender and sexuality and discover renewed perspectives from the standpoint of both the poetess and her translators.

Keywords

Andal, translation, women, *Tiruppavai*, *Nachiyar Tirumoli*

1. Introduction

Les deux recueils d'Andal, à savoir *Le Tiruppavai* et *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli,* ont tous deux pour but d'atteindre par la poésie le divin, en l'occurrence Vishnou, le Tout Puissant. La nature et la composition de ces œuvres sont pourtant très différentes. La première, *Le Tiruppavai*, révèle la voie vers le divin à travers une poésie simple et pastorale, alors que la deuxième, *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli*, présente une démarche charnelle et passionnée pour atteindre la même cible. Cette étude se donne pour objectif d'étudier des traductions contemporaines d'Andal réalisées par les femmes. Comment les traductrices d'aujourd'hui interprètent-elles le voyage intérieur d'Andal, le cheminement de la jeune fille amoureuse jusqu'à la jeune femme éprise par la passion du divin ? Qu'apporte donc l'identité de la femme traductrice à cette poésie ? Quels sont les rapprochements et les éventuels écarts entre les traductions de cette poésie ? Qu'en est-il de la présence de la traductrice dans la traduction ? Ce sont quelques-unes des interrogations que nous poursuivons dans cette étude. Toutes les traductions de l'anglais ou du tamoul vers le français ont été faites par nos soins.

2. Andal : qui fut-elle, qui est-elle ?

Lorsqu'on évoque Andal, on est obligé de prendre en compte un ensemble d'éléments, dont l'historicité de sa poésie. Andal est née au IXe siècle (Dehejia, 1990). Son rôle dans la vie socioculturelle de l'Inde du sud et sa place en tant que seule femme parmi les douze Alvars du Tamil Nadu, qui ont vécu entre le VIe et le Xe siècle, sont passionnants. Les Alvars (« ceux qui sont immergés dans le divin ») s'ancrent dans la tradition *bhakti*, la dévotion pieuse qui fait partie des grands courants traditionnels constituant le fondement de l'âme hindoue. Les Alvars ont créé une immense poésie versifiée de quatre mille vers en l'honneur de Vishnou, intitulée collectivement *Le Divya Prabhandham*, qui représente aujourd'hui un des piliers du Srivaishnavisme (la tradition de vénération de Vishnou au sein de l'hindouisme). Andal, qui a reçu à sa naissance le nom de Goda (mot polysémique signifiant « par qui les révélations arrivent », « celle qui apporte la lumière » et « qui fait des dons de vaches »), fut la fille adoptive de Periyalvar ou Vishnouchitta (lui-même un des Alvars), retrouvée sous le feuillage de la plante sacrée *tulasi*. Dès son plus jeune âge, Andal est portée par une dévotion intense pour Vishnou, qui prend de l'ampleur et se transforme en amour intense pour le Seigneur. Le dieu Vishnou, apparu en songe, ordonne à Periyalvar d'emmener sa fille au temple, vêtue en mariée. Ainsi se réalise l'union divine, Goda devient Andal, déesse et sainte. *Le Divya Prabhandham*, transmis oralement, est une poésie vivante, faisant toujours partie intégrante des rites du Srivaishnavisme à l'heure actuelle. *Le Tiruppavai*, quant à lui, est mis à l'honneur dans les récitations, dans la musique et les arts de scène, surtout lors du mois sacré hindou de *Margali*. Soulignons qu'il n'est pas rare de voir les mariées tamoules hindoues habillées en Andal, avec sa coiffure bien distincte, démontrant sa place vénérée et adorée non seulement dans les temples et les rituels, mais également dans l'imaginaire collectif des personnes de religion hindoue.

3. Choix du corpus

Cet article étudie des traductions contemporaines d'Andal réalisées par des femmes : notre propre traduction vers le français du *Tiruppavai* (*Le Tiruppavai ou le chant matinal de Margali*, 2019), la traduction vers l'anglais de Priya Sarukkai Chabria et de Ravi Shankar augmentée du *Tiruppavai* et du *Nachiyar Tirumoli* (*The Autobiography of a Goddess*, 2015), ainsi que la traduction d'Archana Venkatesan (*The Secret Garland: Andal's Tiruppavai and Nachiyar Tirumoli*, 2010). La traduction en anglais de Chabria et Shankar s'avère intéressante, car elle est le résultat de la collaboration entre une femme, Priya Sarukkai Chabria, et un homme,

Ravi Shankar. Parfois la traductrice traduit individuellement, et le traducteur aussi. Parfois ils traduisent ensemble, alternant entre prose et poésie. Il s'agit donc d'une Andal partagée, dans le sens où deux perspectives de la même œuvre coexistent au sein d'une seule traduction.

Le choix de travailler sur un corpus parallèle, en deux langues cibles différentes, est motivé notamment par la disponibilité des traductions contemporaines vers ces langues. Cela génère aussi un mouvement triangulaire qui nous permettra de comprendre Andal au travers de multiples perspectives et de mettre en relief les similarités et les différences entre les traductions. On s'interrogera également sur les intentions du traducteur ou de la traductrice, d'où l'importance des paratextes. En effet, les notes des traducteurs, les introductions, les avant-propos, les explications servent à contextualiser les traductions, et ainsi à mieux donner à voir la démarche des traducteurs.

Dans une visée de comparaison, nous nous appuierons également sur deux traductions d'Andal faites par des hommes : celle du *Tiruppavai* en français par Jean Filliozat (*Un texte tamoul de dévotion vishnouïte. Le Tiruppāvai d'Āṇṭāḷ*, 1972), et celle vers l'anglais du *Tiruppavai* et du *Nachiyar Tirumoli* par Srirama Bharati (*The Sacred Book of Four Thousand,* 2000). Nous confronterons les traductions au texte source en tamoul (Iyengar, 1988), auquel nous nous référerons tout au long de l'article. Des gloses accompagnent les extraits en tamoul pour faciliter l'accès du lecteur au sens du texte en langue d'origine, mais aussi pour mettre en évidence la structure de la langue tamoule.

Comme pour toute autre traduction de texte poétique et mystique, traduire Andal exige une relation proche et intime avec l'auteure. Une compréhension des significations culturelles de sa poésie est indispensable pour pouvoir entreprendre cette tâche. Toutes les traductrices et tous les traducteurs cités dans cet article se sont familiarisés avec Andal depuis de nombreuses années, à travers les milieux culturel, musical, religieux, familial et académique dans lesquels ils évoluent. La traduction de Bharati, par exemple, s'appuie sur les commentaires des érudits. Savant lui-même, Bharati fut aussi interprète du *Araiyar Sevai*, danse traditionnelle et sacrée basée sur l'œuvre des Alvars et présentée uniquement par des hommes dans certains temples vishnouïtes. Chabria et Shankar, quant à eux, sont poètes. Leur optique est visiblement différente par rapport aux autres traducteurs d'Andal, « ne cherchant ni une approche historiographique ni théologique mais une approche plutôt poétique » (2015, p. 22). Venkatesan (2010, p. 7) révèle sa « fascination » pour Andal et « l'attachement à sa poésie », facteurs qui ont catalysé son envie de la traduire, alors que Filliozat s'inscrit dans une démarche académique et savante. Pour notre part, nous avons dès notre plus jeune âge tissé une relation de curiosité et d'émerveillement pour Andal, de par notre milieu familial, musical et littéraire. Ainsi, les intérêts personnels de chacun se manifestent dans le choix des traductions proposées.

4. La problématique du féminin en contexte hindou

Le féminisme étant un concept occidental, nous nous rendons compte que, véritablement, « il est impossible d'éviter d'évoquer l'occident quand on parle de la soi-disant catégorie de femme » (von Flotow & Farahzad, 2016, p. 14). *Le Petit Robert 1* (1992) définissait le féminisme comme « une doctrine qui préconise l'extension des droits, du rôle de la femme dans la société » (p. 768). Ce concept s'avère problématique dans le contexte indien et, surtout, dans le cadre de l'hindouisme (Sugirtharajah, 2002). Si l'on étudie Andal et la traduction de ses textes, il est nécessaire de saisir le sujet du féminin dans la perspective hindoue. En Inde, les questions concernant la femme ont commencé à devenir visibles à partir des réformes sociales du IXe siècle (Chaudhuri, 2012) et ont progressivement gagné en ampleur. Toutefois, bien avant l'importation du concept de féminisme, la littérature en Inde a proposé des perspectives intéressantes par et pour les femmes. L'œuvre des saintes poétesses comme Andal, Akka

Mahadevi (XIIe siècle) ou Mirabai (XVIe siècle) du mouvement *bhakti,* révèlent des femmes résolument indépendantes à leur époque déjà.

Certains critiques ont tendance à penser que la tradition *bhakti*, immergée dans la dévotion divine, diminuait l'importance de la femme. Pour eux, la notion de la dévote-femme allant vers le dieu-homme est en elle-même hiérarchisante (Tharu, 1991). Autrement dit, l'idée de la femme, qui, dans sa dévotion, souhaite atteindre dieu, le personnage masculin, ne sert qu'à propager l'idéal patriarcal. De surcroît, cela peut ressembler à un double asservissement – d'abord la servitude à l'homme, ensuite la servitude à Dieu. Toutefois, on pourrait aussi voir les choses de manière différente : la femme a le privilège d'accéder plus facilement au divin masculin. Quoi qu'il en soit, les protagonistes du mouvement *bhakti* ont bien trouvé leur voie individuelle. Ainsi, au XIIe siècle, Akka Mahadevi a lancé un défi contre le patriarcat, renonçant à la vie conjugale au palais royal et s'abstenant même de porter des vêtements (Badrinathan, 2020). Couverte uniquement de ses cheveux, elle a marché vers son objectif divin. On peut voir ici un mouvement égalitaire, donnant voix à la femme, qui remet en question les institutions établies. Peut-être pourrions-nous dire que, dans leur quête du divin, ces femmes cherchaient non pas une réforme sociale mais une réforme intérieure, une épuration de l'âme. Un but qui donne le courage, la hardiesse et la persévérance d'accomplir des tâches prodigieuses et d'agir contre les conventions sociales. Leur corps et leur sexe ne sont qu'un instrument dans cette quête. Vu de cette perspective, on remarque un féminisme libéré des normes conventionnelles de genre et des hiérarchies sociales qui caractérisent souvent le mouvement *bhakti* (Chakravarti, 1989). C'est dans cette optique que nous pouvons situer le féminisme chez Andal.

5. Le *bhakti* et le mysticisme nuptial

Dans le cadre du mouvement *bhakti*, le mysticisme nuptial est primordial et fait partie intégrante de la poésie mystique hindoue. La notion du *nayaka-nayaki bhava*, c'est-à-dire la présentation de la relation amoureuse, est fondamentale dans la poésie des Alvars. La relation homme-femme est souvent considérée comme une voie pour atteindre le divin (Govindacharya, 1982). Parmi les Alvars, Tirumangai Alwar et Nammalvar constituent des figures de proue en ce qui concerne la représentation de la passion amoureuse, car, dans leur poésie, ils se sont mis dans la peau d'une femme. Tirumangai portait le nom féminin de Parankusa Nayaki et Nammalvar celui de Satakopa Nayaki. Le divin représente le marié éternel et, par le biais du mysticisme nuptial, un contact direct avec la divinité était assuré au dévot (Srinivasa Chari, 1997). Andal, quant à elle, n'a aucun besoin de se transformer en femme ; l'étant déjà, elle est inondée de sa propre féminité. C'est donc une perspective hindoue de l'amour, dans le cadre dévotionnel, qui est présente dans ses écrits et qui doit être prise en compte dans l'analyse des traductions, permettant de placer ces dernières dans le contexte socioculturel et religieux des textes originels.

Regardons une autre perspective du féminin telle qu'elle est présentée dans *Le Tiruppavai*. Les *gopis*, les laitières, amies d'Andal, font le long et évolutif trajet qui les mène chez le dieu Krishna. Elles s'adressent directement au gardien du manoir du père de Krishna pour les laisser entrer, puis elles vont dans la chambre de Nappinnai, la conjointe de Krishna, et retrouvent le couple divin dans toute leur splendeur. Leur dévotion leur donne le courage d'oser entrer dans le manoir, dans la chambre, sans trop se soucier des normes sociales. Le traducteur ou la traductrice, tout comme le lecteur, se voit doucement mené·e dans ce monde féminin. Andal, s'effaçant dans le « nous » collectif du poème, conduit progressivement les filles du village vers l'éternel. Dans le trentième et dernier poème, elle surgit de manière édifiante en revendiquant son statut de poétesse du *Tiruppavai* : « Ainsi chante Goda, dans ce recueil de poèmes en

tamoul Sangam / Fille de Pattarpiran de Villiputtur à la guirlande fraîche de lotus » (notre traduction ; Badrinathan, 2019, p. 69).

Il est intéressant de noter que, sur certains plans, la poésie des Alvars et, évidemment, celle d'Andal, rejoint certaines des idées du féminisme occidental arrivées en Inde des siècles plus tard. Ainsi, dans *Le Rire de la Méduse*, Hélène Cixous (1975, p. 47) propose une écriture féminine et déclare : « On va leur montrer nos sextes. » Ce néologisme qui combine « sexe » et « texte » exprime l'idée d'une écriture féminine qui renforce à la fois le rôle de la femme et celui de son corps. Nous pouvons attribuer des « sextes » à Nammalvar et à Tirumangai Alvar. À travers leur poésie, ils ont transmis leurs expériences mystiques en prenant l'identité d'une femme, valorisant ainsi la dimension féminine pour atteindre le divin. Wuilmart (2009, p. 30) fait une remarque intéressante : « le sexe de l'écriture peut ne pas correspondre au sexe biologique de l'auteur ; et la féminité de l'écriture n'a rien à voir avec une quelconque intention féministe ». Les Alvars étaient-ils des « féministes » sans étiquette ? Par le rôle féminin que s'attribuaient certains d'entre eux, soutenaient-ils non seulement la place de la femme, mais également sa supériorité dans la quête du divin ?

Andal ne préconise pas le rejet du mariage ou la rupture avec les relations patriarcales et sociales (père, famille, mariage, normes). Elle résiste en revanche à se marier avec un homme, acceptant par ailleurs, de tout cœur, son mariage avec la divinité. Elle ne s'évade pas pour rejoindre son bien-aimé. Son père l'accompagne lui-même à l'autel de Vishnou pour la grande union. Selon Narayanan (2006, p. 38), Andal représente « un modèle théologique », une femme qui « cherchait le salut, non en vénérant son mari comme Dieu mais en allant directement vers Dieu et désirant une union avec lui ». Elle propose un mode de vie alternatif, celui de la quête de dieu comme époux, par la voie *bhakti.* Quand Andal se fond dans l'autel de Vishnou et devient la Sainte Andal, son père se lamente de la perte de sa fille unique. On ne trouve aucune trace de patriarcat ici ; dans la poésie étudiée dans cet article, la femme reste précieuse.

Il existe différentes versions et de multiples traductions des textes anciens comme les épopées indiennes *Le Ramayana* et *Le Mahabharata*, avec des tentatives de privilégier le point de vue de la femme (Sita et Kaikeyi du *Ramayana* et Draupadi du *Mahabharata* par exemple ; voir Dey dans ce numéro spécial). En ce qui concerne Andal, elle reste l'héroïne incontestée de son œuvre. Tel est le cadre proposé aux traducteurs, une poésie de nature gynocentrique.

6. Voix d'Andal, voix de femme(s)

Sans prendre la position anachronique qui a souvent tendance à instrumentaliser la poésie au service de l'histoire et de la société, nous pouvons affirmer que l'œuvre d'Andal, par la nature de son contenu, reste actuelle et riche. Andal attire par sa poésie et par sa personnalité, créant chez le traducteur l'envie de la connaître ou de la redécouvrir. Pour présenter à un lectorat plus large cette femme conquérante, magnétique, séduisante, la traduction devient nécessaire, voire impérative. La traductrice ou le traducteur se doit de présenter Andal au travers de ses poèmes, ses quêtes, ses désirs et son identité de femme. Dans ce contexte, quel est le rôle du sexe du traducteur ou de la traductrice ? Influe-t-il sur la traduction ? Et encore, ces questions sont-elles pertinentes dans le cadre de la traduction d'Andal ?

Les deux œuvres d'Andal, *Le Tiruppavai* et *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli*, présentent un certain nombre de différences. La première, bien plus importante dans les rites et les cérémonies hindoues, est composée de trente vers qui évoquent la beauté pastorale et la préparation des jeunes filles pour la cérémonie du *nombu*. Cette cérémonie se réalisera lorsque Vishnou, le Tout Puissant, leur accordera sa grâce. *Le Tiruppavai* raconte le trajet d'un groupe de filles, passant de porte à porte, rassemblant leurs amies pour la cérémonie religieuse et spirituelle. La parole est plurielle et, surtout, collective. Pour sa part, *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli*, composé de 143

strophes, est un poème d'amour intense et brûlant, avec une progression allant de l'obsession à la maladie d'amour et, finalement, au délire.

Dans *Le Tiruppavai*, le « nous » représente un groupe de jeunes femmes résolues à atteindre leur but. Andal se distancie volontairement du « je », car elle se soumet à la dévotion universelle. Le « nous » est soigneusement préservé dans la traduction par toutes les traductrices (Badrinathan, 2019 ; Chabria & Shankar, 2015 ; Venkatesan, 2010) et les traducteurs que nous citons dans ce texte.

Dans ce qui suit, nous présentons deux extraits du poème 25 du *Tiruppavai*, intitulé *Oroutti maganai pirandu* [Né d'une certaine mère] accompagnés de gloses en français.

Exemple 1 : extrait du poème 25 du *Tiruppavai*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 85)

> […] நெருப்பென்னநின்ற நெடுமாலே ! உன்னை
> Tel le feu debout Ô Nedumal à toi

> அருத்தித்துவந்தோம் பறைதருதியாகில்
> Comprendre sommes venues le tambour pour obtenir

> திருத்தக்கசெல்வமும் சேவகமும்யாம்பாடி […]
> Digne de Sri la renommée les richesses chanter

Voici notre traduction de ces vers : « O Nedumal ! Nous T'adressons nos prières ! / Offre-nous le *parai* et laisse-nous entonner les louanges / À Ta richesse et à Ton courage dignes de Lakshmi » (Badrinathan, 2019, p. 59).

Venkatesan (2010, p. 75*)* propose la traduction suivante, en anglais : « We have come to beg you : / If you give us the parai-drum / We will sing of your wealth matched only by Sri » [Nous sommes venues vous supplier / Si vous nous accordez le tambour parai / Nous chanterons vos richesses, égalées uniquement par Sri].

Chabria (2015, p. 15) choisit « you are the source of measureless wealth » [source de richesses sans mesure]. Venkatesan et nous même optons pour une interprétation qui allie les forces de Vishnou à celles de Lakshmi.

L'exemple qui suit est un extrait du poème 19 du *Tiruppavai*, à savoir *Kuttuvilakkeriya.* Dans notre traduction, il est inondé de sensualité et de grâce féminine. Le lieu est la chambre du couple divin, illuminée par l'éclat d'une lampe à l'huile sur piédestal. Le lit du couple est opulent et douillet. L'envie de capter cette sensualité dans la traduction est profonde.

Exemple 2 : extrait du poème 19 du *Tiruppavai*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 84)

> குத்துவிளக்கெரிய கோட்டுக் கால்கட்டில்மேல்
> Kuttuvilakku brûle d'ivoire pieds sur le lit

> மெத்தென்ற பஞ்சசயனத்தின்மேல் ஏறிக்
> Douillet cinq qualités lit monté

> கொத்தலர் பூங்குழல் நப்பின்னைகொங்கைமேல்
> Grappes les fleurs écloses cheveux Nappinnai les seins sur

> வைத்துக் கிடந்த மலர்மார்பா ! வாய்திறவாய் […]
> Allongé fleur épanouie ouvre la bouche

Voici notre traduction (Badrinathan, 2019, p. 47) :

> À la lueur du kuttuvilakku, allongé sur un lit moelleux aux pieds d'ivoire,
> Tu te reposes, Ta large poitrine étendue
> Comme une fleur épanouie sur les seins de Nappinnai
> Aux cheveux embellis de grappes de fleurs écloses

Chabria (2015, p. 13) réussit également à capter la sensualité de ces vers :

« Speak, Lord! asleep in a glimmering room / head resting / on Nappinnai's breasts, her flower braids / curtain you » [Parlez, Seigneur ! Endormi dans une chambre scintillante, tête / Reposant sur les seins de Nappinnai, ses tresses aux fleurs, un rideau.]

La traductrice transforme le substantif « rideau » en verbe pour enrichir la sensualité et transmettre l'image du visible et de l'invisible. Elle évoque de cette manière l'intimité du couple divin.

La traduction de Bharati (2000, p. 99) se situe entre la prose et la poésie : « Speak, O Lord sleeping in a room with a lamp of oil burning softly, on a soft cotton mattress over an ornate bad, resting the flower-coiffured Nappinnai's breasts on your flower chest ! » [La lampe à l'huile brûlant doucement […] Reposant les seins de Nappinnai à la coiffure de fleurs sur Votre poitrine de fleur].

Le traducteur inverse le sujet et l'acte. Ce n'est pas seulement Vishnou, mais aussi Nappinnai qui est allongée sur la poitrine du Seigneur. Les fleurs, ici, répondent aux métaphores canoniques de la beauté en Inde (pieds de lotus, mains de fleurs…). Filliozat (1972, p. 20) traduit ainsi ces vers, restant fidèle à l'original : « Le sein de NappiNNai à la chevelure aux fleurs épanouies en bouquets / Posé sur ta poitrine largement étendue, ô toi, ouvre la bouche ! ».

Le topos du *Nachiyar Tirumoli* est bien différent du *Tiruppavai*. Le « nous » omniprésent qu'emploie Andal dans *Le Tiruppavai,* pour représenter la quête collective, est remplacé par le « je » dans *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli*, car la poétesse dévoile ses sentiments personnels. Vishnou, le héros d'Andal, n'a pas la parole, mais se révèle à travers l'utilisation de la troisième personne « Il ». Le bien-aimé, invisible, ne se manifeste que dans les rêves d'Andal. C'est la voix d'Andal qui remplit l'espace en tant que seule voix du recueil. Ainsi, *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli* représente la vie d'Andal (Hudson, 1993), rendant le texte autobiographique (cf. titre du livre traduit par Chabria & Shankar, 2015). Andal se retrouve seule dans sa souffrance, sans ressources, sans recours, avec le seul soutien de son amour féroce et aveuglant. Voix suprême, voix de femme.

7. Écrire le corps. L'investissement corporel chez Andal

L'œuvre d'Andal nous mène dans deux mondes dévotionnels différents, en suivant, d'une part, la dévotion priante et, de l'autre, l'amour charnel. Alors que *Le Tiruppavai* est joyeux et élogieux, *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli* est une poésie toute en feu de passion. Andal bouleverse clairement les normes corpo-discursives classiques. Elle ne craint pas son corps qui, pour elle, est un véhicule l'emmenant vers sa destination finale.

7.1. Le corps en souffrance

Dans *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli*, troublée, désespérée et épuisée, Andal fait appel à ses « compagnons » – les oiseaux, les montagnes, les fleurs, les mères – qui ne sont pas nombreux, car un tel cheminement intérieur se fait dans la solitude. L'amour et la souffrance vont de pair. Andal souffre de tout – les souvenirs, les sentiments, la nature. La représentation de cette souffrance abonde dans *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli*. Andal interpelle les nuages riches en pluies de mousson. « Je suis effondrée comme les feuilles fanées » dit-elle chez Bharati (2000, p. 117). Venkatesan (2010, p. 169) choisit une tournure plus sensuelle : « Tell him, like the lovely leaves

that fall in the season of rains / I waste away through the long endless years » [Dis-lui que je dépéris au long des années sans fin / Comme les belles feuilles qui tombent dans la pluie].

Andal, actrice de sa vie, responsable de ses décisions, est soigneusement représentée dans ces traductions par le « je » magistral. La souffrance vue à travers le prisme de la femme est-elle plus intense ? L'extrait ci-dessous permettra d'éclairer ce point.

Exemple 3 : extrait de la strophe 13.1 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 104)

> வண்ணவாடைகொண்டு என்னை வாட்டம்தணியவீசீரே
> Jaune le vêtement apportez à moi le tourment pour apaiser éventez

Bharati (2000, p. 124) préfère rester dans la pudeur, mais peut souvent nous surprendre, comme dans cet exemple. Son utilisation de l'impératif brille d'une certaine urgence propre à Andal : « Unrobe him of his yellow vestment and fan me out of my swoon with it » [Déshabillez-le de ses vêtements jaunes et éventez-moi de mon évanouissement]. Venkatesan (2010, p. 183), en revanche, se contente d'une traduction plus sobre : « Bring the golden silk / wrapped around the waist of my great lord » [Apportez-moi la soie dorée qui couvre la taille de mon grand seigneur].

Dans ce qui suit, nous observons l'utilisation du verbe par les traducteurs dans la strophe 11.2 de la même œuvre d'Andal.

Exemple 4 : extrait de la strophe 11.2 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 102)

> கழல்வளையைத் தாழும்கழல்வளையேயாக்கினரே
> Bracelets de main il bracelets a rendu ses

L'angoisse de la poétesse est véhiculée par son corps. Elle maigrit à tel point que ses bracelets lui tombent des mains, elle s'évanouit dans un chagrin d'amour. Bharati (2000, p. 121) utilise le verbe à la voix active : « Alas, he wears my Kalalvalai, loosened bangles, as his Kalalvalai » [Hélas, il porte mon Kalalvalai, mes bracelets larges]. Venkatesan (2010, p. 177) attribue le rôle passif à Andal, ce qui met en relief la force de son bien-aimé, Vishnou, devant sa propre impuissance : « He loosened my already loose bangles » [Il a desserré mes bracelets déjà trop larges]. Ce choix verbal rend l'amour plus intense, soulignant la vitalité du héros et la soumission voulue d'Andal.

7.2. Le corps : symbole de féminité et de sexualité

L'indifférence de Vishnou pousse Andal non seulement à découvrir sa féminité, sa sexualité et sa passion brutale dans *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli*, mais également à dévoiler ces attributs afin de se rapprocher de son but. Dans les premiers vers de la strophe 9.1, elle évoque les coccinelles rouges dont la couleur vivante abonde dans le paysage et les collines de Malirumsolai.

Exemple 5 : extrait de la strophe 9.1 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 99)

> சிந்துரச்செம்பொடிப்போல் திருமாலிருஞ்சோலையெங்கும்
> Poudre rouge comme Tirumalirumsolai à partout

> இந்திரகோபங்களே எழுந்தும்பரந்திட்டனவால் […]
> Les abeilles rouges se lèvent s'envolent

Bharati (2000, p. 117) suit le texte original. « Alas, like *Sindoor* powder spilled all over Malirumsolai, red cochineal insects swarm and fly everywhere » [Hélas, comme le rouge du *sindoor* éparpillé partout sur Malirumsolai, les essaims de coccinelles rouges volent partout]. Venkatesan (2010, p. 171) fait de même : « Crimson ladybirds flutter everywhere / in the groves of Tirumariluncolai / scattering like a fine vermilion powder » [Les coccinelles écarlates papillonnent partout / Dans les bosquets de Tirumariluncolai / Répandant une poudre fine de vermillon].

Chabria (2015, p. 38) décide d'aller plus loin en traduisant ce vers : « Blood drops of ladybugs fluttering through moist sparkle (…) » [Gouttelettes de sang de coccinelles qui frémissent dans l'humidité scintillante].

La présence des insectes évoque la mousson et le retour de l'homme à la maison après les guerres. C'est le temps pour l'amant de rejoindre la femme « in fecund wet surroundings » [des environs féconds et humides] et Andal « waits impatiently, demanding her hymen be torn, and she bleeds like rain falling over the earth, as her lover, the Supreme God, takes her » [elle attend avec impatience que l'hymen soit déchiré et qu'elle saigne comme la pluie sur la terre tandis que son amant le Seigneur suprême la prend], nous expliquent les traducteurs dans l'introduction de leur livre (p. 38).

Chabria (p. 105) évoque pleinement le plaisir avec son choix de lexique multisensoriel : « Tell my deceiful lord he's relished my / body's tangy fruit and the seed of my being [Dis à mon seigneur tricheur qu'il a goûté le fruit piquant de mon corps et le germe de mon être]. Ou encore (p. 103) : « (…) I seek / fondling / (…) as spilling nectar / my body's blood flower bursts [Je cherche des câlins / La fleur de sang de mon corps va éclater]. On dirait que c'est une prise de position audacieuse, notamment en poésie sacrée et dévotionnelle. Mais Andal n'a-t-elle pas ébranlé les paradigmes de la femme de son temps ? Tout comme Andal, Chabria ose aussi. Elle pénètre dans la poésie et y interprète le non-dit, comme le montre l'exemple ci-dessous.

Exemple 6 : extrait de la strophe 1.4 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 88) :

> […] ஆதரித்தெழுந்தளன்தடமுலைகள்
> Par respect mes seins généreux

> துவரைப்பிரானுக்கேசங்கற்பித்துத்
> Dwaraka le Seigneur à lui en offrant

> தொழுதுவைத்தேன்ஒல்லைவிதிக்கிற்றியே.
> J'ai prié rapidement les livrer

Même si Chabria (2015, p. 45) dit : « virginal i present / myself to You [virginale, je me présente à Vous], elle n'oublie pas le caractère sacré du texte et la nature de cette relation, que la traduction suivante affirme (p. 43) : « And Trivikrama too touches me with his / sacredness / Touches my breasts, my waist so slender. / I live solely for this pleasure. [Trivikrama me touche avec sa sacralité / Il me touche les seins, ma taille si svelte / Je vis uniquement pour ce plaisir]. Venkatesan (2010, p. 149) reste plus proche du texte source : « Coax Trivikrama […] / to caress this delicate waist and these broad breasts » [Convainquez Trivikrama […] / à caresser cette taille délicate et ces seins généreux].

Ce n'est pas uniquement Chabria qui se positionne de manière radicale et sensuelle. Certains vers traduits sont chargés d'allusions charnelles, à l'instar des vers de la strophe 8.7. La traduction de Venkatesan (2010, p. 169) est évocatrice et directe : « Beseech him to enter

me for a single day / and wipe away the vermilion smeared upon my breasts. / Only then can I survive » [Implorez-le d'entrer en moi un seul jour / Et d'essuyer la poudre de vermillon qui tâche mes seins / Ce n'est qu'alors que je survivrai].

Chabria et Shankar (2015, p. 93) se rapprochent de Venkatesan : « Beseech / him to live inside me for just one single day » [Suppliez-le de vivre en moi un seul jour]. Bharati (2000, p. 116) reste plus pudique en évoquant « the bliss of union » [le bonheur suprême de l'union]. Dans la strophe 1.5, Bharati (p. 104) parle des « swollen breasts » [seins gonflés] alors que Venkatesan préfère les « voluptuous breasts » [seins voluptueux] (p. 148). Chabria et Shankar (p. 5) évoquent simplement « my breasts » [mes seins]. La « faim » du Seigneur dans la strophe 12.6 ouvre la voie aux interprétations intéressantes présentées ci-dessous.

Exemple 7 : extrait de la strophe 12.6 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 103)

> […] இருடீகேசன்பக்கல்போகேயென்று
> Hrishikesha vers lui aller pour
>
> வேர்த்துப்பசித்துவயிறசைந்து வேண்டடிசிலுண்ணும்போது ஈதென்று […]
> Transpirant affamé estomac fatigue riz sacrificiel l'heure maintenant
>
> பார்த்திருந்துநெடுநோக்குக்கொள்ளும் […]
> Attendant regardant

Chez Chabria (2015, p. 31), Andal est à la fois le sujet du discours et l'objet de l'assouvissement de la faim de Vishnou : « I'm his food, he's mine to devour » [Je suis sa nourriture, il est à moi à dévorer]. Venkatesan (2010, p. 181) traduit différemment ce tourment :

> Go to him! Go to him!
> to that Hrsikesa
> who sweating, hungry and fatigued
> asked for his share of sacrificial rice
>
> [Allez vers lui, allez vers lui !
> À ce Hrsikesa, qui,
> Transpirant, affamé, fatigué
> Réclame sa part du riz sacrificiel]

À travers ces exemples, il est évident que les traductrices et les traducteurs s'attachent, chacun à leur manière, à interpréter et à communiquer la sensualité que transmet Andal dans sa poésie.

7.3. Le corps : lieu d'échanges et de conflit

Une telle passion ne peut être qu'une activité personnelle et solitaire caractérisée par des émotions fortes. Andal est prise de jalousie pour les fleurs qui portent la couleur de Tirumal (Vishnou), les jasmins lui rappelant ses dents blanches. Cette omniprésence de Vishnou l'obsède et la possède. Cette relation n'exclut pas la violence et la brutalité. Deux traductions de la phrase tamoule « Il m'arrache les bracelets » (vers 9.3 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*) nous interpellent.

Exemple 8 : extrait de la strophe 9.3 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 99)

> வரிவளையில்புகுந்து வந்திபற்றும்வழக்குளதே
> Les bracelets maison entré prendre de force est-ce juste

Bharati (2000, p. 116) traduit « snatched my bracelets » et Venkatesan (2010, p. 171) choisit « wrested my bracelets ». Nous ressentons dans ce choix de verbes en anglais, non sans nuance, un sens d'autorité dans le premier (*to snatch*) [prendre de force] et une passion brutale dans le deuxième (*to wrest*) [arracher]. Ce dernier verbe semble mieux adapté à l'état d'âme d'Andal, qui est amoureuse, folle, délirante. Le premier verbe transmet un acte de suprématie (il prend ce qu'il veut avoir) ; le deuxième verbe transmet davantage de violence (il arrache ce qu'il veut posséder).

Chez Andal, le corps vit et soupire. C'est la scène de théâtre où le lecteur ou le dévot vit les ravages de l'amour. Comme dans ces vers intenses du *Nachiyar Tirumoli* (strophe 7.1) où Andal s'adresse à la conque de Vishnou, qui reste toujours près de sa bouche.

Exemple 9 : extrait de la strophe 7.1 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 96)

> கருப்பூரம் நாறுமோ ? கமலப்பூ நாறுமோ ?
> Le camphre sent-elle ? Le lotus sent-elle?

> திருப்பவளச் செவ்வாய்தான் தித்தித்திருக்குமோ ? […]
> Le corail rouge la bouche douce a -t-elle le goût ?

La traduction de Priya Sarukkai Chabria (2015, p. 86) garde la dimension poétique de l'original :

> Camphor aflame? Or budding lotuses?
> What is / the scent of his sacred breath ? White Conch / whirled /
> from the ocean of time, like you I long to sip / from Madhavan's coral lip.

> [Camphre en feu ? Ou lotus en bourgeon ? Quel est le parfum de son haleine sacrée ? /
> Conque blanche tourbillonnant de l'océan du temps, comme toi, je meurs d'envie de siroter /
> des lèvres de corail de Madhavan.]

Voici la traduction de Venkatesan (2010, p. 166), fidèle au texte source :

> Are they fragrant as camphor? Are they fragrant as the lotus?
> Or do those coral red lips taste sweet?

> [Sont-elles parfumées comme le camphre ? Parfumées comme le lotus ? / Ces lèvres de corail, sont-elles douces au goût ?]

Andal est bien consciente de sa beauté corporelle et de sa jeunesse radieuse. Dans *Le Nachiyar Tirumoli,* elle évoque ses « cheveux aromatisés où bourdonnent les abeilles » (strophe 9.10), ses « cheveux doux » (strophe 13.2), ses « seins parfaits » (strophe 13.7). Les seins, vecteur important de son amour et de sa sexualité, sont présents comme un leitmotiv tout au long du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*. Dans les premiers vers (strophe 1.4), elle évoque ses « seins remplis qui montent et grandissent précocement. Dépêchez-vous et rendez-les au Seigneur de Dwaraka ». Vers la fin (strophe 13.8), délirante et épuisée, dans cette quête interminable, elle veut « arracher » ses seins et les jeter sur Vishnou. Ce désespoir extrême, qui culmine dans cette image violente, peut-il être traduit de plusieurs façons ?

Exemple 10 : extrait de la strophe 13.8 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 105)

> […] கொங்கைதன்னைக்கிழங்கோடும்
> Les seins à moi avec les racines

> அள்ளிப்பறித்திட்டுஅவன்மார்வில் எறிந்தென்னழலைத்தீர்வேனே […]
> J'arracherai sur sa poitrine je jetterai ma souffrance pour apaiser

Chabria (2015, p. 41) traduit ainsi : « […] I shall pluck / Out my useless breasts by the roots and / fling / Them at his chest » [J'arracherai mes seins sans valeur de leurs racines et les jetterai contre sa poitrine]. Venkatesan (2010, p. 185) propose presque la même traduction : « I shall pluck these useless breasts of mine / from their roots / I will fling them at his chest » [J'arracherai ces seins à moi sans valeur / Je les jetterai contre sa poitrine]. Le traducteur Bharati (2000, p. 126) reste fidèle aux mêmes idées : « I shall tear these worthless breasts of mine by their roots, and fling them on his beautiful chest » [Je déchirerai ces seins sans valeur et les jetterai contre sa belle poitrine]. Confrontés à une violence aussi immodérée, les traductrices et les traducteurs restent proches du texte original.

L'appropriation de son propre corps par Andal est remarquable. Le corps devient « le lieu privilégié de la construction et de la projection identitaires, culturelles et sociales » (Paveau & Zoberman, 2009, p. 16). Andal s'en empare, à sa façon, pour exprimer son amour ; outil de dévotion, le corps aide la poétesse à atteindre son bien-aimé.

8. Quand les traductrices et les traducteurs collaborent avec Andal

Les traductrices et les traducteurs ont réussi à transmettre la sensibilité féminine d'Andal, ses émotions enflammées et sa valeur dévotionnelle. Les paratextes révèlent pleinement ces préoccupations et l'implication de chaque traductrice ou traducteur avec Andal. Venkatesan (2010, p. 40) essaie de communiquer soigneusement les métaphores et les images, soucieuse de « rendre visuel l'art d'Andal en tant que poétesse ». Elle cherche également à communiquer les éléments littéraires et mystiques de l'œuvre (p. 42). À l'instar de Venkatesan, nous retenons les mots du texte source lorsque nous les jugeons intraduisibles ou indispensables à la traduction, essayant de trouver une entente avec Andal, tout en évitant d'imiter la syntaxe du tamoul ce qui, par ailleurs, reste une tâche difficile, voire impossible. Si Venkatesan se garde de reproduire l'organisation rythmique de l'original, nous nous y aventurons lorsque la possibilité se présente comme dans le poème 4 du *Tiruppavai*.

Exemple 11 : extrait du poème 4 du *Tiruppavai*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 81)

> ஆழிமழைக்கண்ணா! ஒன்றுநீகைகரவேல்
> Grand Seigneur de la pluie vous n'abandonnez pas

> ஆழியுள்புக்கு முகந்துகொடு ஆர்த்தேறி
> Dans la mer entrez soulever l'eau en rugissant monter le ciel

> ஊழிமுதல்வ னுருவம்போல்மெய்கறுத்து
>
> Le déluge qui fut là avant comme sa forme votre corps sombre

> பாழியந்தோளுடைப் பற்பமநாபன்கையில் […]
> Aux majestueuses épaules dans Padmanabha les mains

Face à l'impossibilité de traduire les anaphores et les assonances (*ayi mazhai, ayiyul, ooyi, payiyan*), nous avons recours à l'impératif français (Badrinathan, 2019, p. 17) :

> Plongez dans les profondeurs des océans,
> Puisez pleinement, résonnez ensuite dans les cieux en tonnerre,
> Vêtissez-vous de noir, telle la cause première,
> Resplendissez en nuées d'éclairs […]

Cette stratégie sert à transmettre le rythme, la puissance et l'énergie que le poème incarne.

Dans les vers immortels du *Nachiyar Tirumoli* racontant le rêve des noces d'Andal, Priya Sarukkai Chabria (2015, p. 78) imagine mille éléphants caparaçonnés, avançant tel un mur

oscillant, « a swaying wall », amplifiant ici le texte source qui évoque simplement des éléphants qui progressent. Son collaborateur Ravi Shankar (p. 83) donne la parole à Andal : « In dream, I had awakened to the dream in progress » [Dans mon rêve, je me suis vue me réveillant d'un rêve en cours]. La tournure poétique et l'imagination du traducteur-poète laisse croire qu'il vit le rêve d'Andal à sa place, soulignant l'aspect de création et de recréation inné à l'acte de traduire. Ainsi peut-on voir une collaboration des traductrices et des traducteurs avec l'auteure.

Chabria et Shankar adoptent une approche novatrice de traduction en formant un tandem mixte homme-femme. On va trouver « deux Andals », comme annoncé dans l'avant-propos de cette traduction (Rao, 2015, p.13). Voyons quelques exemples de ces « deux Andals ». Chabria (p. 9), fait allusion aux seins d'Andal en les qualifiant de « full hills » [collines abondantes], alors que son collaborateur Shankar (p. 9) choisit l'image des « upturned blossoms » [fleurs retournées]. La première expression présente la maturité et l'empressement. La seconde fait ressortir la souplesse et la jeunesse. Les deux métaphores correspondent bien à Andal, qui ressent elle-même son corps sous toutes ces dimensions. Si la traduction de Chabria est énergique et explosive, Shankar, lui, se montre plutôt spirituel et lyrique. Lisons cette traduction du *Tiruppavai* (poème 6)*,* qui témoigne de l'originalité de Shankar.

Exemple 12 : extrait du poème 6 du *Tiruppavai*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 81)

> புள்ளும்சிலம்பினகாண் புள்ளரையன் கோயிலில்
> Les oiseaux chantent regardent le roi des oiseaux au temple

> வெள்ளைவிளிசங்கின் பேரரவம்கேட்டிலையோ? […]
> Blanche   belle conque   le son qui résonne n'entends-tu pas ?

> உள்ளத்துக்கொண்டு முனிவர்களும்யோகிகளும்
> Dans leurs cœurs les sages et les yogis

> மெள்ளஎழுந்து அரி என்றபேர்அரவம் […]
> Doucement se lève Hari le nom le chant

Ravi Shankar (2015, p. 21) joue avec le nom propre et le verbe :

> Do you not hear dear friends how the birds / chirrup /
> how resonant the conch sounds from the / temple /
> of Garuda's lord? It pervades the air with his name –
> Hari, Hari, Hari. Hurry!

> [N'entendez-vous pas comment gazouillent les oiseaux ?
> Comment la conque résonne bien du temple du Seigneur de Garuda ?
> Elle pénètre l'air de son nom
> Hari, Hari, Hari. Hurry.]

Le mot anglais *hurry* [dépêche-toi] rime avec Hari (Vishnou) et augmente sa valeur incantatoire. Chabria et Shankar (2015) explorent la passion d'Andal à différents niveaux : d'abord, une version littérale, suivie d'une interprétation du désir intense et intérieur d'Andal, et finalement une interprétation plus libre et plus poétique, suivant la poétique *sangam* (environ 200 avant notre ère à environ 200 de notre ère), qui utilise la distinction entre un monde extérieur et direct (le *ullari*) et un monde intérieur (le *eraichi*). Par exemple, Priya Sarukkai Chabria (pp. 42-43) propose trois traductions différentes pour une seule strophe (8.9) du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*.

Exemple 13 : strophe 8.9 du *Nachiyar Tirumoli*
(Iyengar, 1988, p. 99)

மதயானைபோலெழுந்த மாமுகில்காள்! வேங்கடத்தைப்
Comme des éléphants se lèvent les nuages noirs au-dessus de Vengadam

பதியாகவாழ்வீர்காள்! பாம்பணையான்வார்த்தையென்னே!
résident allongé sur le serpent les paroles à moi

கதியென்றும்தானாவான் கருதாதுஊர்பெண்கொடியை
Protecteur a promis fille comme une liane

வதைசெய்தான்என்னும்சொல் வையகத்தார்மதியாரே
Me tourmente me dit des mots le monde ne respectera pas

Voici les trois traductions que propose Chabria :

Traduction 1

> *Andal says:*
> Great thunderheads rearing like maddened
> War elephants over Vengadam's forested
> emerald
> Summit ask him who makes his bed on the
> colossal
> Coils of the sacred serpent what words he
> said to me
>
> [*Andal dit* :
> Les grands tonnerres se montrant comme des éléphants de guerre fous
> Au-dessus des sommets émeraudes des forêts de Vengadam
> Demandez-lui à celui qui fait son lit sur le serpent lové
> Quels mots il m'a dit]

Traduction 2

> *She also says*:
> Clouds clashing like rutting elephants
> trumpeting
> With trunks entwined over Vengadam's
> peak
> Ask him who sleeps on the snake's
> stupendous
> Loops to awaken to my distress, to be not
> twisted
> in his words.
>
> [*Elle dit aussi* :
> Les nuages s'effondrent comme des éléphants en chaleur qui barrissent / Leurs troncs
> enlaçant les sommets de Vengadam
> Dites-lui, celui qui s'allonge sur les magnifiques boucles / du serpent de s'éveiller à ma
> détresse / de ne pas déformer ses propos]

Traduction 3

> *Perhaps she says this too:*
> coiled twisted thunderheads
> coiled twisted words of succour
> ask me

tender coiling vine
what words of love
should be

[*Peut-être qu'elle propose ceci aussi :*
Coups de tonnerres enroulés, tordus / Paroles de soutien enroulées, tordues
Demandez-moi / Vigne tendre et enroulée / Quels mots d'amour je cherche]

Cette dernière traduction représente, aux yeux de la traductrice, l'interprétation la plus libre, car elle pénètre davantage le monde intérieur d'Andal. Cette interprétation lui est venue suite à une « inversion du sens littéral » (2015, p. 13). Chabria joue avec le texte source pour y trouver le sens intime, en procédant par niveaux, dévoilant ainsi à chaque étape un monde caché. Belle stratégie pour s'approprier Andal !

Le périple d'amour d'Andal est solitaire, mais l'acte de traduction ne l'est pas, comme nous le rappelle von Flotow (2012, p. 129). En effet, comme le montre le travail en équipe de Chabria et Shankar, la traduction est une expérience d'altérité, une rencontre de l'autre, dans le sens où la sensibilité du traducteur ou de la traductrice rencontre celle du texte original, en parallèle avec les changements sémantiques, syntaxiques et lexicaux nécessaires à l'acte de traduction. Le voyage d'Andal qui se révèle dans sa poésie, teintée d'angoisse spirituelle, n'est pas simple à traduire. Le mysticisme du Srivaishnavisme se prête souvent à deux interprétations, voire davantage, et une seule voix ne suffirait pas à recouvrir toute la profondeur de la mystique *bhakti.* Les traducteurs font le choix de vivre l'expérience avec Andal, et il est intéressant de noter qu'on n'a pas cherché à affaiblir la voix de celle-ci, comme cela peut parfois se produire en traduction (cf. Hassen, 2009, concernant la voix de l'auteure et l'identité de la femme musulmane rendues moins audibles dans la traduction). Au contraire, Andal est bien mise à l'honneur. Les interprétations du texte d'Andal, certaines similaires, d'autres différentes, classiques par moments, audacieuses par d'autres, ou encore fidèles ou originales, sont des lieux de création, d'imagination et de recréation. Les perspectives différentes des personnes qui ont traduit l'œuvre de la poétesse mystique permettent de voir Andal sous plusieurs prismes, et servent surtout à la faire connaître auprès d'un public plus large.

9. En guise de conclusion

« Les traductions sont des transpositions, et certains éléments du texte original peuvent entièrement résister à la transposition » explique Ramanujan (1993, p. 16). C'est le cas notamment quand on travaille avec des langues très différentes, comme le tamoul ancien et l'anglais ou le français moderne. Les traducteurs essaient de donner à entendre la voix d'Andal « comme elle aurait elle-même parlé […] à l'époque actuelle » (Dryden, cité par Ramanujan, p. 17). Ils s'adressent ainsi au lectorat d'aujourd'hui par une approche contemporaine de la traduction.

La traduction passe nécessairement par la trame des sensibilités individuelles des traducteurs ou des traductrices. Et cela sans forcément se poser ce type de questions : je suis une femme, je traduis une femme, comment devrais-je faire ? Ou, je suis un homme, je traduis une femme, à quels aspects du texte dois-je faire attention ? Dans les introductions détaillées et les notes proposées par les traductrices et les traducteurs contemporains d'Andal, il n'y a aucune intention manifeste d'aboutir à une traduction mettant en exergue la femme. On peut donc affirmer que, globalement, ils sont motivés par le seul souci de la qualité de la traduction. En effet, comme nous le rappelle Wuilmart (2009, p. 31) : « on ne traduit pas un homme ou une femme, on traduit un texte ». Par l'universalité de ce qu'elle représente, Andal dépasse le clivage social homme/femme et continue à attirer les

traducteurs et les traductrices plusieurs siècles après elle. À bien des égards, Andal est une femme d'aujourd'hui, revendiquant son identité féminine et son autonomie d'action. Ou encore, elle est probablement une voix intemporelle « d'un moment antique de l'histoire » (Chabria & Shankar, 2015, p. 32).

Peut-on parler d'une femme en avance sur son temps ou simplement d'une expression de dévotion de son temps ? Il est impossible de trancher, tant dans l'acte de lecture que dans l'acte de traduction. Mais une chose est certaine : pour saisir la poésie d'Andal dans toute sa splendeur, sa profondeur et sa complexité, nous avons besoin de multiples perspectives apportées par différentes traductions, ces nécessaires « médiations des médiations » (Gilbert, cité par von Flotow, 1998, p. 118)

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Joy, peace, bliss, or ecstasy?

Women and men translators of the Sikh prayer *Anand* in a classroom

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Abstract

Anand is one of the most popular prayers used in Sikh worship. This article compares twelve English translations, authored by men (1909 to 2005), of the opening stanza of *Anand*, with two renderings by women translators (1981 and 1995), and discusses their suitability as study materials in a teaching environment where neither the instructor nor the students are conversant with the language of the original text and its religious tradition. Drawing on Derrida's reflections on translation as necessity-cum-impossibility and Spivak's notion of 'politics of translation', we study the appropriateness of the translations for contemporary readers, here teachers and learners. By creating a study template and demonstrating that all examined translations are deeply embedded in their historical milieus and strongly influenced by translators' backgrounds and subjective choices, thus often archaic and dated, we argue for the use of modern translations in the classroom. We further assert that due to its gendered lens and thoughtful avoidance of Judeo-Christian vocabulary, hence also the conceptual framework of these religious systems, the fairly recent rendition (1995) by one of the woman translators (Kaur Singh) seems to be the most promising choice for a classroom reading.

Keywords

Guru Granth Sahib, *Anand*, women translators, feminist translation, pedagogical translations

1. Approaching sacred texts through translations – including by women

Derrida's essay "Des Tours de Babel" discusses translation as a necessity-cum-impossibility (1985, p. 170). The author's reflections revolve around the biblical account of the tower of Babel, its metaphorical imagery of 'confusion of languages' and God's admonition that translation is both necessary and doomed to failure. No similar tale explaining the origins and multiplicity of languages is known to religious traditions indigenous to South Asia. But the area's linguistic diversity, the continuing presence of the pan-Indian *linguae francas*, and the ever-changing dynamics of power resulted in intense mediations between languages. The British rule left an enduring linguistic heritage, with English as the *lingua franca* of the Indian state and a medium of communication among regional languages, and between India and the world.

In this study, we examine the interplay of impossibilities and necessities in translating the sacred texts of Sikhism into English and focus on the use, within a higher education setting, of translations by men and women translators. The choice of a translation suitable for students who are not native speakers of English is of paramount importance and, as Kaur Singh (2000, p. 75) pointed out, a modern, possibly feminist re-translation – or one which takes women's concerns into account – is a must.

In what follows, we present close readings of a series of English translations of a stanza from *Anand*, which is also the subject of Maria Puri's contribution in this special issue. *Anand,* a composition by Amar Das (1479-1574), the third Sikh guru, forms an integral part of Sikh liturgy. It is found in the Guru Granth Sahib (henceforth the GGS), known also as the Ādi Granth (henceforth the AG), a sacred book considered by Sikhs as their living guru and "the focal point of all Sikh rituals and ceremonies" (Kaur Singh, 2000, p. 70).

We compare two translations of *Anand* by women, Baljit Kaur Tulsi (1981) and Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh (1995), with several English translations by men, presented here in a chronological order. One of our objectives is to assess how gender-specific differences, if any, might be of use for teaching. The choice of translations for pedagogical purposes is often dictated by the availability of the text and its academic grounding (reliable authorship, presence of a critical apparatus, prestige of the publishing house). Its 'readability', too, plays a paramount role in a non-native English environment, while factors such as the poetic quality of the translation, its sensitivity to the source language or articulation of religious concepts (including through the lens of gender) are often considered secondary.

We argue that English translations informed by gender sensitive reading and the use of vocabulary not rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition might provide an additional dimension to a classroom discussion and, as Kaur Singh (2000) suggests, bring to the fore the originality and gender inclusiveness encoded in the Sikh religious message. Regrettably, university courses rarely provide sufficient time and space to compare different renditions of a given text or open avenues for critical discussions on "patriarchal intervention and the colonial experience" (Kaur Singh, 2000, p. 75), and other forms of epistemic violence.

2. Sikh texts in translation: historical considerations

An informed selection of a sacred text in translation for teaching purposes clearly requires some knowledge of the translation history of that particular scripture. Prior to the British annexation of the Punjab (1849), there were few attempts on the part of Westerners to learn about Sikhs or their beliefs. The first Western translation-like paraphrase of a Sikh sacred text, the *Japji*, can be found in Ward's "Account of the Shikhs" (2009 [1817], vol. 2, pp. 282-289). Its high degree of fidelity to the original makes it of interest to students of religion and of translation.

Closer engagement of the East India Company with the Punjab's Sikhs post-1849, further accelerated by the Mutiny-generated (1857) shift to direct rule under the British crown (1858), prompted official interest in Sikh religion and scriptures, with a view of facilitating governance over the possibly unruly native subjects. Accordingly, in 1869, "the task of translating the AG was […] given by the India Office, with what were to be unexpectedly significant consequences, to Dr Ernst ('Ernest') Trumpp" (Shackle, 2008, p. 258). What is only hinted at by Shackle is Trumpp's overbearing missionary persona, overwhelmingly Christian worldview and his arrogant authoritarianism, borne out in his Preface to *The Ādi Granth or the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs* (1877, [1989]). A product and prisoner of his habitus, Trumpp decided to offer the Occidental reader only the 'better' parts of the text. Even making allowances for a different era, Trumpp's stance smacked of "blatant orientalism" (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 34). Besides setting up a Judeo-Christian framework and terminology for future translations of the text into English (Kaur Singh, 2007, 2017), it inadvertently served as a catalyst for the Sikh reformist movement.

Unsurprisingly, the next colonial translation of the GGS, undertaken by M. A. Macauliffe with the specific view of "making reparations to the Sikhs for the insults that [Trumpp] offered to their Gurus and their religion" (Macauliffe, 1909, p. vii, our addition), found favor with Sikh religious authorities and Sikh audience; even more so, as Macauliffe had consulted widely with Sikh scholars and community elders, revising his translation extensively over the years (pp. v-xxxiv). The book was published in London in 1909 as *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings, and Authors* and recorded, "for the first time […] the interpretation of the sacred texts, as orally communicated by *giani*s [Sikh religious scholars] from generation to generation." (Harbans Singh, 1970, p. 144, our addition). Looking at it from today's perspective, a contemporary translator and academic, Linda Hess, calls Macauliffe's rendition "an old and very inadequate translation" (see Notes in Hess & Singh, 2002, p. 171).

Although several English renderings by Sikh intellectuals of selected hymns from the GGS appeared in print from early on (cf. Puran Singh, 1921; Teja Singh, 1920, 1926, 1938 [1945]), including in the form of stand-alone Sikh missionary tracts showcasing different compositions among them *Anand* (cf. Sardul Singh Caveeshar, 1920, Sher Singh, 1937), there were no publications of the whole scripture until long after the Independence (1947). Of those, the earliest was authored by Gopal Singh (1960), soon followed by Manmohan Singh's translation (its different volumes appeared between 1962 and 1969). The last, backed by the authority of the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee (Supreme Gurudwara Management Committee), attained the status of definitive, official version. For the first time, the entire original text of the GGS was set next to its English translation (for autoethnographic reflections on the personal predicaments generated by the reading of *gurbāṇī* text in a non-sacred, academic setting, see Kaur Singh, 2019, pp. 38-39).

Gurbachan Singh Talib's translation (1987) again carried only the English text and targeted a broad English speaking readership. Of special interest is the translation by Pritham Singh Chahal (1993), largely adapted from Manmohan Singh's version. Available in a number of formats for public and private use, it provided the original *gurbāṇī*, its Roman transliteration and the English translation. The introduction of transliteration, common now in certain editions of Sikh prayer books, was an attempt to address the community's growing disengagement with the *gurmukhī* script – especially by the younger generation outside the Punjabi-language educational system, and the diaspora. However, even today "the status of the original Gurbani as a liturgical language is not challenged and other vernaculars are never used for the central liturgies, except in white Sikh (3HO) communities" (Nijhawan, 2007, p. 6)[1]. In this respect

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1   3HO Sikhs – Healthy Happy Holy Organization – are predominantly White American followers of Yogi Harbachan Singh.

the Sikh approach to translation of the holy text resembles the Jewish tradition, where "the translations [were] intended to supplement, not supplant; complement, not replace, the original" (Greenspoon, 2005, p. 61).

While all translations of the complete GGS mentioned above were undertaken almost exclusively by religious scholars, there is one rendering (2004), described by its author as a 'transcreation', that came from the pen of the writer and translator, Kartar Singh Duggal. More poetic than the scholarly translations, it resembles the lyrical renderings of the Sikh hymns by Puran Singh (1921), Sher Singh (1937) or Khushwant Singh (2003) and, like them, could be of interest not only to students of religion but of literature as well. Surprising as it may sound, women were totally absent from the field of the GGS translation, the first women authored English renderings – by Tulsi and Kaur Singh – of compositions from the sacred texts appearing only towards the end of the twentieth century. In their translations, both women strongly asserted their Sikh background and their right to give voice to their interpretations, but also their professional objectives and personal sense of the aesthetic: Tulsi's work was thus informed by her poetic oeuvre and possibly anachronistic idiolect; Kaur Singh's by her academic, feminist background and modern literary style.

3. Is there a place for colonial translations by men in a classroom setting?

Till the last quarter of the 20th century, translations of the GGS were exclusively the work of men, and it makes sense to envisage them in terms of the translators' background: on the one hand, scholars (e.g., Trumpp, Macauliffe, Gopal Singh, Manmohan Singh, Gurcharan Singh Talib), and on the other, poets and writers (Puran Singh, Khushwant Singh, Kartar Singh Duggal). However, a closer look at different renditions of *Anand*, both within the complete as well as the partial translations of the GGS, revealed a plethora of interesting details best addressed within a chronological template to keep track of influences and trends. For example, the translations by Tulsi (1981, 1990) and Kaur Singh (1995/2001/2019), which stood apart by virtue of being authored by women and because of their distinct literary style, were in conspicuous dialogue with previous translations by men. Similarly, all the male translations conversed among themselves, though, unsurprisingly, the scholars seemed to totally ignore the poetic renderings produced by the creative writers, which they tended to consider amateurish and incompetent while, in turn, the creative writers, clearly dissatisfied with the bland offerings of the scholars, penned their versions keeping firmly in mind the objective of steering clear of what looked to them as obvious translatorial failings of the scholars.

While the starting point for the scholars was to refute Trumpp's disparaging comments and to better the arguments advanced by Macauliffe, ultimately it was the fidelity to the original that was foremost in their minds, even at the expense of grammar or intelligibility. Search for beautiful-sounding language seemed to them secondary; they were, after all, mainly addressing readers like themselves (believers already familiar with the holy texts), who expected an accurate explanatory translation into English, unencumbered by poetic flourishes often found in the earlier Sikh missionary tracts or the later renderings of the creative writers, including Tulsi's. It was only with the advent of a new generation of scholars, mostly academics teaching in the West who felt that the translations should be in contemporary idiom and speak also to non-Sikhs, that a different type of translation approach emerged. This group of translations includes partial renderings of the GGS by McLeod (1984), Kaur Singh (1995/2001/2019), and Shackle and Mandair (2005). All these scholars include *Anand* (GGS 917-922) in their selections.

Below, we provide twelve chronologically arranged translations of the first stanza of *Anand* authored by men. Together with renderings by Tulsi and Kaur Singh, the two women whose translations are discussed extensively in this volume by Puri, the corpus under study adds up

to fourteen. It has been assembled in order to provide a comprehensive model to foreground in the classroom what Spivak (1993) calls 'the politics of translation' – which encompass such aspects of translatorial practice as difference in approach exhibited by native and non-native speakers; colonial and postcolonial divide; personal intimacy with the text vis-à-vis scholarly detachment; translator's habitus in Bourdieu's (2013, pp. 72-95) understanding of the term; etc. – and arrive at a text most suitable for a teaching environment. As we reveal in what follows, the translations differ not only in the choices of key words or salient features, but also in diction and literary style. In the original stanza (given below in transliteration) and the examples that follow, we have highlighted in bold certain crucial words which are important in understanding the challenges and ensuing choices of the individual translators, and which need to be emphasised in discussions on the texts in pedagogical settings so that the students come to see the translated text not as the perfect reflection of the original but only one of the many possible versions.

Original (GGS 917)

> **anandu** bhaiā merī māe / **satigurū** mai pāiā //
> **satguru** ta pāiā **sahaja** setī / mati vajīā vādhāīā //
> rāga ratana parvāra parīa / **sabadu** gāvaṇa āīā //
> sabdo ta gāvahu harī kerā / mani jinī vasāiā //
> kahai nānaka **anandu** hoā / **satigurū** mai pāiā // 1 //

Trumpp's (1877) selections from Sikh scripture did not include *Anand*. However, general clues of how Trumpp might have rendered the word *anand* in English had he decided to translate the composition can be found in the texts he did translate. Brief scrutiny shows that the two uses of the word *anand* in Nanak's *Japji*, which predates Amar Das's *Anand*, have been rendered respectively as 'joys' and 'joyful' (cf. Trumpp, 1877, p. 13 and p. 14; GGS 7, GGS 8); compositions by Amar Das included in Trumpp's volume yielded 'joy' (cf. Trumpp, 1877, p. 44, two instances; GGS 29), then again 'joy' and 'happy' (cf. Trumpp, 1877, p. 53; GGS 36). The renditions seemed to emphasize the quotidian over the mystical and the revelatory in human experience of the One, probably as more in tune with the Protestant ethics or sensibilities of the translator.

The trend was replicated by Macauliffe (1909), who authored the earliest English version of *Anand* and set out its key terms *anand*, *sati guru*, *sahaja*, *sabadu*, *harī* for the first time, establishing benchmarks to be followed, flouted, or elaborated upon. Interestingly, he left two words untranslated, *guru* and *rāg*, which he must have considered familiar enough to his English speaking audience.

Example 1: Macauliffe

> **Joy**, my mother, that I have found the **True Guru**!
> I have **easily** found the **True Guru**, and the music of gratulation is in my heart.
> The excellent Rags and the race of the female singers of heaven have come to sing
> **hymns**.
> They who have fixed **God** in their hearts sing His praises.
> Saith Nanak, I feel **joy** that I have obtained the **True Guru**. (1909, Vol. 2, p. 117)

Chronologically, the next translation is found in Puran Singh's volume of poetry *The sisters of the spinning wheel* (1921), which includes selections from the GGS.

Example 2: Puran Singh

> Peace!
> My Mother! I have found **Peace** in my **Lord**!

> He gives it to me;
> **Spontaneous** music of triumph of soul and joy of life swells up in me;
> In the temple of my heart is the concourse of celestials!
> O celestials! Raise in me **song**s of the Praise of **Him**,
> > Who having made in me His Dwelling, makes me a palace of music and joy.
> **Peace** I have found in my **Lord**! (1921, p. 124)

Puran Singh's book was introduced to the anglophone public by Ernest and Grace Rhys, and published, like Trumpp's and Macauliffe's *magnum opuses*, from the heart of the empire, London. The authors of the introduction purposefully juxtaposed it with Macauliffe's work, inviting the reader to compare Singh's poetic renderings with Macauliffe's "careful scholarly translations" (Rhys, 1921, p. vi), promising "the comparison most interesting" (p. v). They saw in Puran Singh a Sikh version of Rabindranath Tagore, of the Noble prize fame, with "something of the same gift" (p. vi); their views were shared by contemporary reviews and scholarship (cf. Anand, 1933, pp. 86-101; O'Loughlin, 1935, pp. 86-91). Although today Puran Singh is best remembered for his Punjabi writings, as "translator of the scriptures," he was, in Shackle's opinion, "one of the first Sikhs with the gifts necessary to transmit the spirit of the religion to a Western audience" (2017, p. 85). According to Shackle, "[f]ew of his successors have been touched with his poetic imagination, and few have matched his linguistic and literary gifts" (p. 85); his mystical writings in verse and prose, and his English renderings of the GGS impacted generations of writers, including Tulsi. It might be instructive to compare in a classroom Tulsi's translation (example 9), published much later, in the independent India, with the colonial renderings of Macauliffe, Puran Singh and Sher Singh (examples 1, 2, 3), with which it shows surprisingly strong affinities.

A closer study reveals that Tulsi, herself a poet writing in Punjabi, was not only familiar with Puran Singh's work but also greatly influenced by his poetic oeuvre (both Punjabi and English), finding him a kindred spirit. Her GGS renditions spring out of a similar sense of spiritual wonder, best voiced by way of poetry. Though in *Anand* she might have opted for 'bliss' where Puran Singh, as the only one of the fourteen translators quoted here, proposed 'peace,' both his and her translations strongly reflect their subjective spiritual journeys (for Tulsi's life and detailed analysis of her translation, see Puri in the present volume). Whereas Tulsi's 'bliss' points to the presence of strong emotion(s) (happiness, ecstasy), Puran Singh's 'peace' suggests a withdrawal from emotion/s and an evolved self, possibly even Buddhist influence at the level of verbalising mystic experience.

While Tulsi was more strictly anchored in the Sikh tradition, Puran Singh, though born and brought up as a Sikh, came under the influence of Buddhism during his stay in Japan. Thereafter, he became the follower of the Hindu mystic, Rama Tirtha (1873-1906), returning to Sikhism later in life. In view of Puran Singh's mysticism and spiritual trajectory, it is only natural that attaining *anand* would have been to him, a one-time tonsured Buddhist monk, equivalent to attaining 'peace'; more so when the term be read in conjunction with the expression *sahaja setī*, variously rendered, as attested by the quoted examples, as 'easily', 'with ease', 'without effort', '[by way of] spontaneous […] swell,' 'all-too-spontaneously', 'with poised mind'; but also, 'following the gentle path of *sahaj*', 'in the state of *Sahaj* [poise].' The translators were clearly grappling to convey the 'ease' with which *anand* might be attained by trying to bring out in English the undertext of spiritual quest and spontaneity of mystical communion. Besides, *sahaj* hints at a more nuanced, broader context with links to earlier metaphysical traditions, both Buddhist and Hindu (Kvaerene, 1975; Olivelle, 1997), where, as narrated by one modern practitioner, "the ecstasy (*ānanda* [Sanskrit]) that he feels in those moments in which he 'melts into' God-consciousness can be called 'peace' (*śānti*)" (DeNapoli, 2018, p. 10).

The now largely forgotten translation by Sher Singh, similar in style to Puran Singh's, appeared in 1937 as Tract No. 11 of The Bengal Sikh Missionary Association, Calcutta. Interestingly, as explained in the Preface, the original *gurbaṇī* verses are given, "for the convenience of the readers" (Man, 1937, p. 6), in Roman transliteration, clearly targeting readers unfamiliar with the *gurumukhī* script. Moreover, the actual translation is preceded by an Introduction (Sher Singh, 1937, pp. 7-39) where the author explains: "I have divided Introduction into two parts: the first which is easy, so easy that even school children may read it with pleasure, and the second which is difficult, divinely difficult, which is mastered only when the above Lamp is lit" (p. 3). Thus, the setting out of the meanings of *Anand* in such an elaborate, well thought-out format whereby the translation is preceded by a lengthy exposition brings to mind Tulsi's publications. In Tulsi's words, "[t]o make it more vivid, more vital and more intense, the dissertation [preceding translation] has been given in the form of dialogue" (Tulsi, 1981, p. 15). Sher Singh's English rendering and its paratexts are thus mirrored in Tulsi's (including her very un-Indian sounding turn of phrase, 'the nine muses'), making one wonder whether it would not be fruitful to examine her translation work in the light of the tract literature of her formative period. Interestingly, Sher Singh seems to be the first of our translators to introduce 'bliss' for *anand* though to establish whether this use is unique in this period would require further study.

Example 3: Sher Singh

> **Bliss**, bliss, O my mother, there is bliss;
>> I have found **the True One** —
> I found the Great one **spontaneously**
>> And lo! my heart singest songs of union!
> **The heavenly Muses** and their offspring
>> Come to chant the Excellent Music — the Word-divine,
> The strains of Symphony welled up in me,
>> And my heart is suffused with is suffused with love — incarnadine!
> There is, O Nanak, there is,
>> Ecstatic joy and holy rapture,
> I found **Him**, Him at last
>> Who is the truest Master! (1937, p. 40)

Each of the three examples presented above, is strongly marked by the translator's habitus (Simeoni, 1998) or his sociography (Guzman, 2013), a fact that may be used in teaching to foreground the translated text's links to the milieu in which it was produced. The differences within this corpus, and the subsequent as well, appear at first to be less the product of a gender divide and more of the personal backgrounds and worldviews of the translators in question. However, this statement appears flawed when the twelve translations by men are juxtaposed with the two translations by women, Tulsi's and Kaur's. While Tulsi's rendering, viewed alone, might overtly carry no marks of her gender, the very fact of her being probably the first published woman translator of the GGS, forces one to accord her work a second look. Book covers of Tulsi's publications boldly carry her name, that too appended by academic credentials, making a loud statement in a male dominated field of the GGS translation. As to Tulsi's linguistic choices and style, they bring to mind Ostriker's words describing women poets as "the thieves of language" (1985, pp. 315-316), a notion already discussed by Puri.

4. Do postcolonial translations by women suit better the contemporary teaching environment?

The post-Independence (1947) translations, especially of the complete GGS, were carried out in new locations marked by the Partition-enforced geographical shift to the East and tied to new academic centres of independent India. They deliberately attempted to move beyond the colonial, distancing themselves from the earlier translations of the Western scholars, but also from Sikh missionary tract literature in English. The Sikh scholars, who were no longer satisfied with fragmented renderings of key liturgical or theological writings, aimed now to bring out a monumental translation of the complete sacred text. In this way, by producing the most visible icon of identity for consumption in the pan-national public domain, they hoped to make the community, deeply scarred by the horrors of Partition and deprived of access to holy places now in Pakistan, whole once again.

Dissatisfaction with Macaufille's mundane 'joy' (and, probably, Puran Singh's overly subjective 'peace'), led Gopal Singh, the first Sikh translator of the whole GGS (1960), to replace it with 'ecstasy' in order to convey the state in which the human being 'melts into' One Being and thus mark the sensation attending the event as something beyond mere joyfulness.

Example 4: Gopal Singh

> I am in **Ecstasy**, O mother, for, I have Attained to my **Lord**.
> Attained have I to my **Lord**, **all-too-spontaneously**, and, within my Mind, Rings the Music of Bliss.
> (As if) through all the bejewelled *Rāgas* and their *families,* the fairies have come to Sing the **Lord**'s **Word**.
> Sing ye the **Lord**'s **Word**, all those who have Enshrined it in the Mind.
> Says Nanak: "I am in **Ecstasy**, for, I have Attained to my **Lord.**" (1960, Vol. 3, p. 875)

Besides Gopal Singh path-breaking translation, the same year saw the publication of the UNESCO's *Selections from the sacred writings of the Sikhs* (1960). Reminiscent of Trumpp's or Macauliffe's authoritarian undertakings by way of offering to the global audience a sanitized English version of the Sikh sacred text, it was overtly authored by Sikh scholars but refined by a native English speaker and significantly tempered by the editorial interventions of several leading authorities in the field of religious studies. The project was entrusted to Sahitya Akademi (Indian Academy of Letters) and a committee of scholars led by Dr S. Radhakrishnan, a well-known philosopher and the then Vice-president of India. Besides Radhakrishnan's Introduction, the volume included a foreword by Arnold Toynbee.

Example 5: Trilochan Singh et al.

> **Rejoice** with me, O mother,
> That I have found **the True Guru**,
> **The True Guru** have I found without penance,
> And songs of rejoicings are in my heart.
> The excellent Ragas and the race of the heavenly Muses
> Have come to sing **hymn**s to the Lord;
> Those in whose hearts the **Lord** indwelleth,
> Sing the **Song** of praise to Him.
> Saith Nanak: My heart is full of **joy**
> That I have found **the True Guru**. (2000, p. 126)

In this particular translation, extremely readable but low on our list of texts to be used in classroom, *anand* is rendered in the first line as a verb, greatly distorting the original and taking

all mystical experience out of it by shifting the focus from the attainment of a sublime state to quotidian rejoicing; *sabad* is rendered as 'hymn' or 'song', and *sahaj* as 'without penance', probably in view of global sensibilities coloured by Christian overtones; 'True Guru' is singled out as '**the** True Guru.' Speaking of *Japji,* another composition found in this volume, Kaur Singh calls the whole undertaking a "malestream translation" and writes: "When we read the version of the Sikh *mulmantra* [opening verses of *Japji*] produced by the intellectual elites from east and west, we receive an entirely different meaning and sensibility" (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 38, our addition). This is a statement which can also be applied to the *Anand* stanzas or other GGS compositions. Possibly unsatisfied with the outcome, Khushwant Singh subsequently produced a more poetic translation of the hymns under his own name (Singh, 2003).

Manmohan Singh's translation, which appeared in the 1965 volume, reverted to Macauliffe's 'joy,' retained Macauliffe's 'True Guru' but changed his 'God' to the probably less theistic 'Lord.'

Example 6: Manmohan Singh

> **Joy** has welled up, O my mother, for I have obtained my **True Guru**.
> The **True Guru** I have found **with ease** and within my mind resound the music of bliss.
> The gem like measures and their families, have come to hymn the Guru's **word**.
> They who enshrine the **Lord** in their mind, sing the **Gurbani** of the Lord.
> Says Nanak, **joy** has ensued and I have attained the **True Guru**. ([1965] 2006, Vol. 6,
> p. 2991)

McLeod's 1984 rendering, targeting primarily a Western audience, gets lavish praise from Shackle as "[having] the great advantage of being the work of a native English speaker capable of properly reproducing English rhyming patterns" (Shackle, 2005, p. 37), privileging once again linguistic skills of a non-Indian English language practitioner. The text reads well on its own but the use of words such as 'soul', 'glory', 'songs of gladness', by sacrificing the particular for the universal, makes it close to the generic Christian prayer.

Example 7: McLeod

> When the **Guru** comes, O mother, **joyous bliss** is mine; || Boundless blessing, mystic rupture, rise within my soul. || Surging music, strings of glory, fill my heart with joy; || Breaking forth in **song**s of gladness, praise to **God** within. || Comes the **Guru**, I have found him; **joyous bliss** is mine. (1984, p. 100)

Talib's translation, which comes next, is still widely used despite being overly literal and not easy to read due to convoluted syntax. Like McLeod's, it has 'bliss' (without a modifying adjective); it also chooses to substitute 'True Guru' by an uneasy sitting (in Indian context) 'holy Preceptor'. Moreover, following Gopal Singh and Manmohan Singh, probably to distance itself from Hindu idiom, it uses 'Lord' for *harī*.

Example 8: Talib

> Mother mine! **Bliss** have I obtained,
> By the **holy Preceptor**'s touch.
> With poised mind **holy Preceptor** have I found;
> The mind in jubilation revels:
> **Fairy songsters** of the jewel music have descended the holy **Word** to sing.
> Sing you all the **Lord**'s **Word** who in the self have lodged it:
> Saith Nanak: **Bliss** have I found by the holy **Preceptor**'s touch. ([1987] 2003, Vol. 3,
> p. 1878)

The two translations by women, i.e., Tulsi (1990) and Kaur Singh (1995), discussed by Puri in this volume, follow chronologically that of Talib but, as Puri reveals, Tulsi's renderings show most affinity with those of Puran Singh or Sher Singh, while Kaur Singh's showcase not only their author's scholarship but also her feminist worldview.

Example 9: Tulsi

> O mother! I have attained **Divine Bliss**. Enlightenment of the eternal **Lord**!
> With the revealment of Truth, the force of evil vanished. My Inner self echoed with
> blissful, devotional and sacred songs.
> **All the nine muses** felt inspired to sing the Divine word, in melodious strain, in
> harmonious course.
> Let all sing the Divine Word in chorus, who have attained the Lords.
> Nanak, **Divine Bliss**, Delightful spirit, Enlightenment of the Eternal Lord, has been
> attained. (1990, p. 25)

Kaur Singh's rendering, totally different in style to Tulsi's, appeared five years later, in 1995. It is characterised by beautiful simplicity of language and amazing fidelity to the original. Having this work in mind and reiterating some earlier translations, including the *Anand* stanza, McLeod writes: "The only translator who hitherto has used gender-free language is Kaur Singh. My earlier shortcomings in earlier works are acknowledged" (McLeod, 2010, p. 313). References and bibliographical details reveal Kaur Singh's deep familiarity with virtually all preceding translations, which she examines through a feminist lens (Kaur Singh 2007, 2017). She does mention that she did not use Macauliffe's version while working on her own for the simple unavailability of the cumbersome six-volume edition at her USA college in the pre-internet era (Kaur Singh, 2017, p. 35).

Example 10: Kaur Singh

> My mother, I am in **bliss**, for I have found my **True Guru**,
> The **True Guru** I found so **easily**,
> my mind rings with felicitations.
> **Jewel-like melodies with their families and fairies** from afar
> have come to sing the Word within me.
> Those with minds that house the **Divine**,
> they sing the sacred Word.
> Nanak says, I am in **bliss** for I have found my **True Guru**. (2019 [1995], pp. 133-134)

Contemporary poetic translations such as Khushwant Singh's (2003) and Kartar Singh Duggal's (2004) take more liberties with the original, unwittingly (or maybe not) emulating Puran Singh and Sher Singh. Moreover, their tone is deeply personal and intimate, like that of the original. While both Khushwant Singh and Kartar Singh Duggal prefer to retain *sahaj* untranslated, with Duggal glossing it as 'poise', in his usual iconoclastic mode Khushwant Singh imagines *parī/s* as 'fairy-like houris', introducing a slightly oriental/Islamicate element, *houri/s*, into the chaste Sikh discourse. Nor does he shy away from using the possibly sectarian 'Hari' where other translators, with the exception of Kaur Singh, have preferred the more nondenominational 'Lord' or 'God.' True to her feminist worldview, Kaur Singh opts for the genderless 'Divine.'

Example 11: Khushwant Singh

> Mother, my heart is full of **joy**
> For I have found my **true guru**;
> I found the **true guru** following the gentle path of *sahaj*
> My heart resounds with cries of felicitation
> Jewel-like ragas and their families of fairy-like houris

> Have come to sing **hymn**s of praise;
> They within whom **Hari** resides, divine **hymn**s sing
> Says Nanak, I have attained **bliss** because the **true guru** I did find. (2003, p. 158)

As mentioned earlier, Duggal's is the only translation of the complete GGS by a person not from within the academia, and one needs to keep in mind the fact that such a venture requires of the writer-turned-translator a much greater consistency in the matter of terms and expressions than were he merely translating a stand-alone *shabad* [hymn].

Example 12: Duggal

> Mother dear! I am in **bliss**,
> I've imbibed my **True Guru**.
> The **True Guru** I've imbibed in the state of *Sahaj,** [*poise]
> My mind is in jubilation true.
> The master musicians and the fairies of their families
> Have descended to present the ***Shabad*** as a crew.
> He who has blessed me with the **Word**, I adore my Beau.
> Says Nanak, I am in **bliss**
> I've imbibed my **True Guru**. (2004, Vol. 3, pp. 2071-2072, gloss by Duggal)

The collaborative translation by Shackle and Mandair employs, like Kaur Singh's version, simple language which is easily accessible to modern global readers, and clearly avoids most of the pitfalls of the earlier renderings. Shackle confesses to his preference for "working in a two-person team as the best way to stay alert to serious error of accuracy or judgement" (Shackle & Mandair, 2005, p. 37). While chastising other diasporic renderings "as stiffly close to the style of the Indian English translations" (p. 37), he praises Kaur Singh for breaking the "restrictive mould" and calls her work "the first translation by a woman and the first consciously to attempt to produce a gender-neutral version suitable for a diaspora" (2005, p. 37). Shackle was involved in reading Kaur Singh's draft (p. 37) as one of the five male reviewers of her work prior to publication (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 38), and admits to having "disagreed fundamentally about many issues, including the linguistic bending away from the masculine" (Shackle, 2005, p. 37). The difference is evident when one compares his own co-authored translation with Kaur Singh's, with which it clearly competes for Western or even global readership and classroom presence.

Example 13: Shackle and Mandair

> O mother, what **bliss** I can feel, I have found my **true guru**.
> **Without effort** I've found him, my mind rings with songs of rejoicing,
> With their consorts, rich ragas have come to sing **hymn**s.
> Sing a **hymn** to the **Lord** who is housed in your hearts.
> What **bliss** I can feel, Nanak says, I have found my **true guru.** (2005, p. 92)

The English translation available online at srigranth.org, probably first port of call for today's readers, including students and teachers, makes use of all earlier English iterations and follows a four-fold format: each line is first given in *gurmukhī*, then in *devanagarī* (a script used to write Sanskrit and Hindi), the Roman transliteration and, finally, the English rendering. The format, by linking words in the text with a dictionary and by providing further links to the same words found elsewhere in the text, allows for easy search of specific words and their meanings throughout the whole GGS. But, as Kaur Singh points out, like most of the other translations, which espouse "patriarchal gender paradigms" and "Jewish and Christian vocabulary and worldview", "[t]he website srigranth.org uses the terms 'God' 5,195 times, 'Lord' 7,500 times,

and 'Soul' 1,315 times! And so very often there is literally nothing in the original to correspond with them!" (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 37). In the stanza discussed in this study, this is evidenced by the occurrence of 'Word' and 'Lord', besides the incongruous sounding 'celestial harmonies', with all that this image might entail to a student of religion.

Example 14: srigranth·org

> I am in **ecstasy**, O my mother, for I have found my **True Guru**.
> I have found the **True Guru**, with **intuitive ease**, and my mind vibrates with the music of bliss.
> The jewelled melodies and their related celestial harmonies have come to sing the Word of the **Shabad**.
> The **Lord** dwells within the minds of those who sing the **Shabad**.
> Says Nanak, I am in **ecstasy**, for I have found my **True Guru**. (GGS 917)

All fourteen versions of the stanza presented above form a large enough corpus to provide us with a historical perspective of Sikh sacred texts and identify certain trends that would have played a crucial role in the manner those texts were selected and translated. The framework showcasing the *Anand* stanza could be used for employing other text/s as long as the historical frame is inclusive enough. Our study however brought home certain important factors, namely, the subjective nature of translation choices and the very personal nature of the end product – the translated and published text. In our view all these factors could be used creatively in classroom to draw students to engage with sacred texts in novel ways while highlighting the long absence of women translators in Sikh tradition and the amazing work by women, both in the field of translation as well as the exegesis, emerging of late.

5. Conclusions: the translators' struggle and pedagogical suitability of contemporary, women-authored translations

In the Preface to *The sisters of the spinning wheel*, Puran Singh describes his translatorial venture in these words: "In moments of this joy and under the cool shades of 'Guru Granth,' I have tried to write down […] a portion of the sweetness with which His Grace filled me at times" (Puran Singh, 1921, p. xxxix). Yet, unsatisfied with the results, he adds, "I only publish these fragments in the joy of my total failure at an attempted rendering of a few pieces from 'Guru Granth' into English" (p. xl). Tulsi simply states that "[t]he rendering, the exegesis and the commentary has been done to bring out the signification and the connotation cupped in the divine verses. Effort has been made to remain true to the original message" (Tulsi, 1981, p. 15). Undoubtedly, it is 'the message', hidden in the "conceptual density of the discourse" (Wendland, 2004, p. 169) that needs to be teased out and transported into another linguistic medium and literary garb, a dilemma felt most acutely by creative writers, deeply in need of sharing their visceral understanding of the Ineffable with their audience.

This creative struggle is probably best articulated by Attar Singh, a literary scholar with an in-depth knowledge of the GGS. In his analysis of Puran Singh's translations, he observes that "these translations offer an interesting study of the problems besetting transference of the products of a particular cultural ethos into a very different and foreign tongue" (Attar Singh, 1969, p. 16) and sums up such a translation project in words evoking Derridean impossibility: "The total devotional atmosphere surrounding the word-patterns gets dissipated and they unexpectedly emerge earthen, sensuous and, one may even say, profane." He notices as well certain salient traits inherently present in poetic renderings of sacred texts, here, of Puran Singh's hymns by Guru Nanak, but his observations are also applicable to Tulsi's rendition of *Anand* or to other poetic translations produced under similar conditions: "[…] interesting

feature of these translations is that there is invariably an expansion of meaning. Guru Nanak's compositions are remarkable for their terse and pithy expression. The clusters of condensed meanings forming around different words and images cannot be satisfactorily rendered into another language except by expanding them" (p. 16).

In her discussions on the existing translations, Kaur Singh, possibly unfamiliar with Tulsi's English renderings of *gurbāṇī*, addresses herself mainly to the work of male translators, both Sikh and non-Sikh, and, following Spivak (1993, p. 183), highlights the need for an intimate relationship with the original (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 34). Of the translatorial ventures of the latter group of academics, she writes, "for whatever reasons then, be it their personal proclivities, religious ideologies, or academic methods, non-Sikh scholars have been unable to surrender themselves completely to 'the special call' of the Sikh text" (p. 35). Eschewing all translations coming "from the pens of male elites", she argues, possibly from her own experience as an invested reader and translator, but also an academic teaching Sikh texts, that "the touch of the translator must not be heavy-handed – that would wall in the meaning – but, rather, delicate and tender so that the original shines forth with its endless possibilities" (p. 47). Kaur Singh's open, gender neutral approach reflects both her personal worldview and the global trend among female translators to reclaim their authority by re-reading and re-translating source texts in a conscious and nuanced manner. As this approach was not yet available to Tulsi in her time, her decision to author and publish the first woman-authored translation of GGS was in itself a daring act of subversion.

Whereas early translations such as Trumpp's, Macauliffe's, or even Puran Singh's, sought to introduce the yet unknown religion and its scripture to the West, later translations by Sikh intellectuals such as Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Sher Singh and other writers of the Sikh missionary tracts often followed reformist agendas. The post-Independence period saw the re-grouping of the Sikh scholarship. Scholars like Gopal Singh, Manmohan Singh, Talib and others devoted themselves to producing complete English translations of the GGS meant for the Sikh community, be it in India or abroad, though they hoped their English renderings might be of interest to other readers as well. The translations by McLeod or Shackle and Mandair, but also Kaur Singh, targeted predominantly non-Sikh students of religion as well as the general reader. The poetic translations authored by Puran Singh, Sher Singh, Baljit Kaur Tulsi, Khushwant Singh or Kartar Singh Duggal form a category of their own, not least because of their highly literary, personal style. The ecstatic utterings in the poetic mode remain, however, the sole prerogative of the two most spiritual-minded of the discussed translators, Puran Singh and Baljit Kaur Tulsi. Neither of them shies from attributing their translatorial impulses to their mystical experience of the divine. There is also a very intimate and personal dimension to all the translations by Kaur Singh, further reinforced by the modern idiom and close adherence to the spirit of the original, although without the poetic stylistics of the sacred text. Kaur Singh's volume, which was recently re-published by Penguin Classics (2019; earlier editions 1995, 2001) and is also available as an e-book, is set to become the most-read and most easily accessible globally, making it the first choice for modern classroom, even more so when accompanied by her texts on translation in the contexts of Sikh scriptures (cf. Kaur Singh, 2007; Kaur Singh, 2017; Kaur Singh, 2019, pp. 38-46).

Our survey of fourteen different translations of *Anand*, none of them meant for liturgical use, revealed a variety of purposes and target audiences, while simultaneously betraying strong influence of the respective translators' habitus. All of them appear to have been guided by personal predilections and wider social context, with the two women translators, however, breaking the 'restrictive mould' and making their mark in more than one way. Kaur Singh, who eschews 'expansion of meaning' in favour of verbal simplicity, sees the translation of Sikh

scriptures, including her own contribution, to be an on-going process. She not only believes that "translations must continue on, and they must be carried out by both men and women", but also subscribes to the opinion that they "must be renewed every generation" (Kaur Singh, 2007, p. 47), an astute comment resonating strongly with current trends in the translation of sacred texts meant for modern readers (cf. Long, 2005; Şerban, 2005), including those in classroom.

The choice of texts for a religious studies classroom within a higher education setting is daunting if the instructor and the students are not conversant with the language of the originals and have to rely on translations. In our experience, such selection depends on several factors such as the personal preferences of the teacher, the availability of translations, and the goals of the course. For instance, when teaching the literary traditions of the Indian subcontinent the professor might be well advised to opt for poetic renditions which highlight the aesthetic value of religious texts. On the other hand, in courses on the religious traditions of South Asia one may opt for more academic or literal translations containing annotations and commentaries, explanatory footnotes, and prefaces, i.e., paratexts that provide further information. Obviously, a teacher would rather not choose archaic translations that make the text more difficult to read and, consequently, even more remote, adding an extra layer of difficulty to verses that are already challenging on account of their religious content. In fact, Kaur Singh's renditions can be instructively used in courses on feminism in South Asia as an illustration of the recontextualization of sacred texts' translations that 'write-back' to the colonial and the patriarchal by focalising gender, post-colonial and contemporary sensitivity.

In the present study of English renderings of the opening verses of *Anand* we have argued that the Derridean impossibility and necessity of translation may be circumvented, within a teaching environment, through a thoughtful choice of the versions to be read in the classroom. The chronological arrangement of the translated stanza showcased in section four allowed us to analyse the material both from the diachronic and synchronic perspective. Having foregrounded certain differences (and similarities) in the presented translations which we attributed to historical factors and subjective choices of the translators, we then focused our attention on the text(s) most suitable for classroom use, taking into account variables such as level at which the course is offered, time allotted to the particular text, pedagogical goal of the given engagement, personal interests of the students or instructors, thus coming up with a number of possible configurations in which texts might be read and discussed, with strong preference for lucid, modern renderings like Kaur Singh's.

Hypothetically, the ideal though for the most part utopian option would be to introduce students to several renderings of the text, giving them the opportunity to reflect on the reasons behind different translation choices. As argued by Kaur Singh (2000, p. 75), opting for translations that are archaic, veiled in Judeo-Christian imagery and its conceptual framework, and insensitive to the reforming and promoting gender equality spirit of the original Sikh faith, "managed to make the rich and inclusive literature of the Sikhs so foreign and alien" right at the onset; however, an attentive choice of an English rendering in the classroom and beyond has the potential to reverse that course.

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Religious space as a stage for love:
Translating Sikh scripture as a woman

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Abstract

The sacred book of Sikhism, *Ādi Granth*, which is known by the faithful as the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is a compilation of the utterances of the Sikh Gurus and other figures, both Sikh and non-Sikh, whose writings reflect a similar worldview. The first English translation of *Ādi Granth* was commissioned by the British administration and entrusted to a German scholar, Ernest Trumpp (1877). Since then, almost all translations have been produced by men, with the first English translation of the entire *Guru Granth Sahib* by Sikh scholar Gopal Singh appearing only in 1960. This article showcases the work and person(a) of Baljit Kaur Tulsi (1915-1997), one of the first women translators of the Sikh sacred texts. I begin by contextualizing Tulsi's life and work, then move on to her English rendering of *Anand*, a sacred composition in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. I compare the first stanza with that of the translation by Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh. I conclude that despite having different idiolects and worldviews, the two translators, both of whom are deeply religious, speak first and foremost as women and their woman-centered position is evident in their translations.

Keywords

Sikhism, *Ādi Granth, Anand*, *Jap*, Baljit Kaur Tulsi

Life bursts into fullness, absence into genuine presence, suffering into bliss, mortification into delight, Nothingness into ecstasy, and vice versa. Religious space is thus transformed into a stage for love, while the search for truth becomes a matter of body-to-body, spirit-to-spirit, body-to-spirit encounters.

Julia Kristeva, *Teresa, My Love: An Imagined Life of the Saint of Avila*
(2008, p. 36)

1. By way of introduction

In a very personal essay titled "Why Did I Not Light the Fire", Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh revisits her mother's funeral and uses it as a foil to assess women's role in the religious life of the Sikhs. Though in charge of daily worship in home *gurudwara*s (Sikh temples) and often more familiar than their menfolk with the ritual texts memorized in childhood, women are not allowed to carry out the same duties in public *gurudwara*s; they cannot act as *granthī*s (readers) and they cannot perform *kīrtan* (singing), though neither the scripture nor *rahit maryada* or 'code of conduct' explicitly forbid it. The *Guru Granth Sahib* (henceforth the GGS), "the focal point of all Sikh rituals and ceremonies" (Kaur Singh, 2000, p. 70) is "physically *enclosed* by men; its meaning is not properly *disclosed;* it is linguistically *closed off;* it is *closed up* in rites of passage; and it is *closed to* women by their social conditioning." (p. 64, italics in the original). To date, all major English translations of the GGS have been authored by men, be they European scholars (Trumpp 1877; Macauliffe 1909) or Sikh intellectuals (Gopal Singh 1960; Manmohan Singh 1962-1969; Gurbachan Singh Talib 1987; Pritham Singh Chahal 1993; Darshan Singh 2005; Kartar Singh Duggal 2004; Sant Singh Khalsa [not dated]). However, through a covert 'bargaining with patriarchy' (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274), a few women have managed to find a way to gain a foothold in this indubitably male space, setting forth their understanding of the sacred texts. The earliest, tiny examples of female translatorial ventures amount to timid exercises in scriptural exegesis. Dating from early twentieth century, they may be found embedded in articles scattered in school or college magazines, occasional pamphlets and handouts, all too easily kept from public view and buried in the archive. Further, similar manifestations, found in popular magazines of the time, come in the guise of lyrical poems, their diction and subject matter linking them to the medieval devotional (with the GGS providing templates), further tempered by the English Romantic, often by way of Rabindranath Tagore (Schomer, 1984, pp. 219-220) or — as might be the case with Tulsi — women writers like Sarojini Naidu (Hoene, 2021). Though neglected earlier, in view of "recent studies demonstrate[ing] poignantly […] that throughout most of her history, the woman writer has had to state her self-definitions in code form, disguising passion as piety, rebellion as obedience' (Ostriker, 1985, p. 315), the exegetic renderings presented as innocuous lyrics reignited scholarly attention.

One of the first women to have her translations launched as stand-alone publications was Baljit Kaur Tulsi (1915-1997), a poetess and an educator. Known predominantly for her poetry, much of it spiritual, she published several books on Sikhism in her later life, and specifically after her retirement in 1973. Four of those are English renderings of the compositions from the Sikh sacred texts, the GGS and the *Dasam Granth,* the first two from the former and the second two from the latter: 1. *Psalms of hope. Poetic exegesis of Bani of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur* (1978); 2. *Revelation of divine bliss. Poetic exegesis and commentary of Anand Sahib of Shri Guru Amar Dass Ji* (1981); 3. *The Ramayana of Guru Shri Gobind Singh Ji* (1967)[1]; 4. *Divine effulgence of the formless Lord. Part I. Jap Sahib by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Poetic exegesis and translation* (1985). Interestingly, three of these books have been furnished with a common sub-title, *Poetic Exegesis*, which, on the one hand, surreptitiously draws on the author's reputation as a poetess, and on the other, shields her from possible reprimand(s) on account of textual/translatorial discrepancy or overstepping the mark.

Anand (GGS 917-922), the subject of the second of the four books authored by Tulsi and mentioned above, is a forty-stanza composition by the third Sikh guru, Amar Das (1479–1574). It is recited early in the morning; its six stanzas (the first five and the last) are chanted at all Sikh rituals, irrespective of the nature of the event; also, the short, six-stanza arrangement forms a part of the evening prayer, *Rehras*. Baljit Kaur Tulsi's English rendering of *Anand*

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1   The second edition of this book was published in 2022 by Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi.

covers all forty stanzas and is preceded by an introductory 'Preamble' (1981, pp. 1-16), which provides interesting insights into its author's spiritual understanding of the text tempting one to view her devotionalism as an example of an authorial self-representation, or "even, to take the point further, as a form of autobiography, if only the autobiography of the imagination." (Lambert-Hurley, 2015, p. 247). In Lambert-Hurley's proposal, formulated first in the context of Indian Muslim women's life-writings, "[t]he adjective *autobiographical* is […] appropriated as an inclusive hold-all for a wide range of self-referential writing—even 'the marvelous and the miraculous'" (p. 247), with the devotion-inspired 'self-referential writing' and by extension, impassioned transcreations of sacred texts, providing women with a narrative strategy that "could be interpreted as a means of drawing a metaphorical veil over women's voices—not meant to be heard in the South Asian context—while, at the same time, endowing their individual experiences with a kind of validity not achievable otherwise." (p. 241). Keeping in mind the notion of 'translatorial habitus' (Simeoni, 1998) and the evident need for validation of personal experience and/or agency on part of women by creatively adapting available templates, this paper proposes to scrutinize Tulsi's project involving *Anand* (with special focus on the first of the six stanzas used in daily worship), and briefly compare her renderings of the oft-used verses to Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh's more recent translation of the same as found in her book of Sikh prayers, first published as *The Name of My Beloved. Verses of the Sikh Gurus* (1995), while locating both renderings within a larger corpus authored by men.

2. Baljit Kaur Tulsi: fashioning of the self

My first encounter with Baljit Kaur Tulsi came about in the course of a larger study of what can be broadly termed as 'Punjabi identity in the narratives of the self'. Looking for the early 20th century female voices in Punjabi writings, I repeatedly came across two names, Harnam Kaur[2] and Baljit Kaur Tulsi. Both were referred to as the first modern female Punjabi poets but beyond their names, dates marking their birth and death, and the titles of their first published collections (Awan, 2015), not much could be found. Through pure "good luck and the serendipity of history" (Burton, 2003, p. 4), I was able to establish links with people who knew and remembered them, filling the silence surrounding their lives with personal reminiscences.

Baljit Kaur Tulsi's life spans a period of modern Indian history marked by momentous historical changes. Born in 1915, in Jhelum, in what is now Pakistan, she was brought up and educated in Lahore, capital of the undivided Punjab and home to three religious communities: Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. Her father, Bua Ditta Bal, was a Punjabi Hindu; her mother, Mehar Kaur, came from a Sikh family. The family lore has it that after her marriage Mehar Kaur continued to visit the gurdwara regularly; two of her sons (and a daughter) eventually became Sikhs.[3] This in itself was not unusual for a Punjabi family, where customarily the eldest son would often have his hair kept unshorn and be brought up as a Sikh. However, what was unusual, was for a young daughter to take such a bold step, possibly transgressing parental authority, all on her own: we are told that as an adolescent, Baljit Kaur Tulsi went to the gurudwara, alone, and formally adopted Sikhism. The ceremony, besides a change of name (in this case, from a generic Kaushalya to the typically Sikh, Baljit Kaur) would have entailed taking *amrit* ('nectar' or sweetened water stirred by a double-edged sword) and undertaking to adopt the five holy symbols (hair or *kesh*, sword or *kirpan*, underwear or *kacchera*, comb or *khandhā* and steel bracelet or *kara*) of a Khalsa Sikh. Indeed, following this ceremony she always carried a *kirpan*

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[2] Harnam Kaur, also Harnam Kaur Nabha (1898-1976), was the daughter-in-law of Kahn Singh Nabha (1861-1938), a Punjabi scholar associated with the Singh Sabha movement.

[3] All details pertaining to Baljit Kaur Tulsi's early life have been graciously provided by her sons, Ravi Tejpal Singh Tulsi and Kavi Tejpal Singh Tulsi. They have also shared with me the out-of-print books of their mother.

on a *gatra* (cloth strap) worn over her clothes. However, to understand the significance of this seemingly private act one needs to look at the milieu in which it took place and consider factors such as educational opportunities, socio-religious background and identity politics that shaped Tulsi's sense of the self.

Discussing girls' educational options in the early 20th century Lahore in the context of Kinnaird Collage, Tulsi's *alma mater*, Maskiell writes:

> The type of education given to any Punjabi child was a family decision […] Order of birth often made a difference for a daughter's educational chances. The eldest daughter would usually have an arranged marriage while still in her teens. A younger daughter would be allowed to receive a longer period of education and to delay her marriage. Often this reflected the father's growing influence among the elders of the family. The more established he was professionally, the easier it would be for him or his wife to postpone a younger daughter's wedding. The pattern was probably also connected with a tendency toward indulging the youngest (or only) daughter, a common practice among all communal groups. A few early twentieth-century Punjabi families included fathers who had received an English education and who wanted their daughters 'to do something new,' as one early alumna described her father. (1985, p. 60)

With Baljit being the youngest child, all the above factors would have been at play. Undoubtedly, she was the best educated among the four siblings, with her degrees, B.T. and M.A.,[4] displayed after her name on the title page of all her books, not a mean ambition in times when a Punjabi woman's persona was subsumed in that of her father or husband.

It would be safe to assume that the event of her *amrit* ceremony would have taken place sometime around 1930 or thereafter, probably when Tulsi was at Kinnaird Collage, the first women's collage to be established in Punjab (1913). Described as "a rare early twentieth-century institution that promoted female intellectual equality and encouraged women to consider professional careers after graduation", it was headed by Isabell Tylor McNair (its principal from 1928 till 1950), a strong advocate of "Western ideas of female intellectual equality." (Maskiell, 1985, p. 57). "In contrast to provincial government and university policies on women's education" when "during the 1920s and 1930s, university officials supported a special provision for women's domestic training as part of the Punjab University's liberal arts curriculum", the same was gently subverted in Tulsi's *alma mater*, with "the Kinnaird missionary staff direct[ing] student life and extracurricular activities away from training women for domestic roles to teach them to be informed teachers and responsible citizens." (p. 57). The atmosphere at Kinnaird Collage and the impact its charismatic principal and teachers exerted on its students would have provided Tulsi not only with an excellent grasp of English but also a roadmap for future career: after acquiring a professional degree, she became a teacher, of Maths. She worked as a teacher before and after her marriage, rising to the rank of the deputy director of Department of Social Welfare, Punjab.

An affluent, middle-class Lahore household like that of Tulsi's father would have been highly attuned to political and religious cross-currents at work in public domain/s. With Bua Ditta Bal being a follower of Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformist organisation (1875), the household would have seen a steady influx of pamphlets and tracts expounding movement's beliefs as well as its position vis a vis the other socio-religious reform movements at work in the Punjab, such as the Singh Sabha (1873) and the Ahmadiyya (1889), the first representing Sikhs and the second,

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4   Baljit Kaur obtained her B.A. from Kinnaird Collage; after her marriage (1938) she continued her studies, obtaining her B.T. in 1939 and her M.A. in 1956 (Tulsi, 2019, p. 30).

Muslims. With an eye on creating "new (and often competing) versions of 'true' Hinduism, 'true' Islam, and 'true' Sikhism' […] [the] dominant strategy was to eliminate the apparent fluidity that had characterised earlier practice […] [and] demarcate communities that would then be grounded exclusively in sanctioned beliefs and practices" (Rinehart, 1998, p. 186), those to be subsequently disseminated in print. However, even the most cursory glance at the print culture of the late colonial Punjab reveals its unique linguistic contours. Though the colloquial language used by the Punjabis irrespective of religious affiliation was Punjabi, it was Urdu that came to be designated as the official language of colonial government across the Punjab (1854), the status quo remaining in place until the end of colonial rule in 1947 (Mir, 2010, p. 41). Similar acts of nominating Urdu as the official language of British administrative units such as North West Provinces (1837) and Oudh (1858), triggered off, c. 1860s, the Hindi-Urdu controversy with Hindi projected as the language of the Hindus and Urdu as the language of Muslims. This "controversy spread to other provinces, including the Punjab, which […] proved to be an even more complicated and contested linguistic terrain as activists there associated specific religious communities not only with Hindi and Urdu but with Punjabi as well." (p. 23). While Arya Samaj promoted Hindi (though most of its tracts in Punjab continued to be published in Urdu else English) and Muslim organizations favoured Urdu, Punjabi, written in *gurmukhī* script, was claimed as a distinct Sikh language.[5] Farina Mir expounds:

> […] to this end, Singh Sabha intellectuals such as Bhai Vir Singh and Kahan Singh Nabha wrote extensively in Punjabi on Sikh themes, and the organization established its own printing press, the Wazir Hind Press (est. 1892), and petitioned the government for social recognition of Punjabi in schools and the government. Partisans of Hindi such as the Arya Samaj similarly petitioned the state to make Hindi the language of provincial education and government. Muslim groups […] countered with petitions asking the state to maintain its support for Urdu. (Mir, 2010, p. 23)

Moreover, "[a]part from their concerns with reforms in religion and women's education", the movements "also led to the hardening of religious identities", while simultaneously producing "images of idealized womanhood to legitimize and consolidate their religious identities." (Minocha, 2018, p. 35) As demonstrated by Doris Jakobsh (2006, pp. 210-235) in her discussion on the feminisation of the Sikh ritual, one of the issues debated at length by the Singh Sabha reformers was the very question whether women could be initiated into the Khalsa, and if so, how. Ultimately, "[a]t the annual meeting of the Singh Sabha […] in 1900, a motion was passed that the form of initiation […] was to be identical for men and women" (p. 210). The "Singh Sabha claims of females' unobstructed inclusion within the order of the Khalsa necessitated novel versions of history" (p. 227) that would extend the concept of equal female participation historically, including participation in the *amrit* ceremony, right to the times of guru Gobind Singh, the founder of the Khalsa. With the last guru's wife, Sahib Dewan, styled now Sahib Kaur and the proliferation of Sikh-specific names for girls, it was only natural that "Kaur had become the signifier of Sikh female collective identity" (p. 232).

Among the figures of authority, present in Baljit Kaur's early life and tied to the Singh Sabha movement, one of the most important would have been Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957), "author of numerous novels, poems, religious histories, biographies of the Gurus, pamphlets, newspaper articles and tracts, […] the father-figure amongst Punjabi writers who turned to writing in Punjabi at a time when it was not considered a language of literary speech among the learned in Punjab" (Mohinder Singh, 2020, p. 118); man voted in 1999 "the most influential Sikh of the

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5 Punjabi, written in Perso-Arabic script (shahmukhī), was the most prevalent medium of Punjabi literary production, though Sikh sacred texts were recorded in gurmukhī. At present, Indian Punjab uses the gurmukhī script while Pakistan Punjab, the shahmukhī.

century."(p. 117). One of Bhai Vir Singh's earliest literary creations was the historical novel, *Sundarī* (1898), set in the 18th century Punjab when Sikh political fortunes were at their lowest. The adventures of its heroine, Surasti, a Hindu girl kidnapped by a Mughal chief and rescued by a Khalsa warrior only to take *amrit* (and a Sikh name, Sundar Kaur or Sundari), set Bhai Vir Singh on the project of writing an *imaginary history* of the Sikh community. (Murphy, 2012, pp. 134-145). Though easy to dismiss as "didactic, with a repetitive plot, and moreover [...] suffused in a cloying morality" (Malhotra, 2020, p. 41), *Sundarī* never went out of print, influencing countless generations of wo/men readers, including Baljit Kaur. In her analysis of the novel, Malhotra foregrounds several issues that would have been pertinent to an impressionable reader in the process of fashioning her own identity: an attempt, on the part of the author, to create "a coherent Sikh/Khalsa community and a new Sikh woman" and the parallel project of exploring "a genealogical self, as also a self-associated with an identifiable Sikh/Khalsa community" (p. 42). Baljit Kaur's opportune appropriation of Sikh identity and her conscious choice of Punjabi as the vehicle of poetic utterance brought together the social, the political and the personal already present in her life. A brief overview of linguistic choices of some other writers of Tulsi's generation, all Punjabi speakers connected to Lahore, reveals a plethora of possible trajectories, making Tulsi's choice less obvious and thus more remarkable: English—Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), Khushwant Singh (1915-2014); Urdu—Krishan Chander (1914-1977), Rajinder Singh Bedi (1915-1984); Punjabi—Amrita Pritam (1919-2005), Kartar Singh Duggal (1917-2012), the last also writing in Urdu and English; Hindi—Upendranath Ashk (1910-1996), Bhisham Sahni (1915-2003).

Baljit Kaur Tulsi's long, close connection with the person of Bhai Vir Singh is attested to in many, not always tangible, ways. However, recent edition of Tulsi's selected poems, *Āo sakhī / Come, friend* (2019), contains an interesting document (pp. 155-156) which links the two directly. It is a facsimile of a short letter, one of many in the possession of Tulsi family, written by Bhai Vir Singh and addressed to Baljit Kaur. Dated 25.7.52, it lovingly opens with *srī kākī jīo*, 'dearest child', and discusses a manuscript she had sent him. As explained in the note introducing the letter and its author (p. 154), Bhai Vir Singh used this form of endearment specifically when writing to or speaking with two people, the well-known Punjabi poet, Dhani Ram Chatrik (1876-1954), and Baljit Kaur Tulsi, the first always addressed as *kākā jī* (son, child) and the second, as *kākī jī* (daughter, child).

Baljit Kaur's family also mentions her encounter with the two towering literary figures associated with Gandhi and Indian independence movement, Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore. Apparently at a function presenting Tagore to Lahore society, young Baljit Kaur approached Sarojini Naidu, who was conducting the event, with a request to allow her to recite her Punjabi poem composed specially for the occasion. The poem was received well and Tagore invited her to visit him next day at his hosts' residence, where she was asked to sing *gurbāṇī*. It is plausible to assume she chose something she knew by heart, hence from the repertoire of daily prayers, which would have included Tagore's favourite *arātī* hymn (by Guru Nanak), already translated by him into Bengali. Both Rabindranath Tagore's and Sarojini Naidu's works were probably on Baljit Kaur's reading list, the title of one of her poetry collections, *Premānjulī* (1959) or *Love Offerings*, possibly styled on Tagore's Noble prize-winning volume, *Gitanjali* or *Song Offerings* (1910). Similarly, Naidu's influence on Tulsi, so far unstudied, might be glimpsed in Tulsi's translations of the Sikh hymns where "sensorial language, its emotive effect and [the] underlying aesthetic ideals" (Hoene, 2021, p. 967) seem to echo Naidu's "multisensorial scenescapes that evoke the Indian principle of *rasa*." (p. 966). The same reading list probably included writings of Puran Singh (1881-1931), scientist, mystic and "a prolific author in both Punjabi and English who was drawn back from a restless spiritual search to Sikhism by [Bhai]

Vir Singh's example." (Shackle, 2014, p. 120)

Tulsi's poems, which initially appeared in Punjabi magazines (Navĩ dunīã̃, Prītam, Phulwaṛī), caught the attention of the reading public early on, much before her first volume of poetry came out in a book form in 1945. The very first history of Punjabi literature in English, published in 1933 and written by Mohan Singh (actually: Mohan Singh Uberoi Diwana, 1898-1984), has one short paragraph which tellingly sums up contemporary Punjabi writing by women:

> Women have begun to handle social and religious themes but as yet neither inspiration nor aspiration has been strong enough in any one of them to produce a piece of prose or poetry of note. Education and social freedom have as yet only touched and adorned their exterior. An exception may be made of Harnam Kaur and Baljit Kaur whose verses have attracted some attention. (Singh, 1956, p. 91)

What is of interest here is not only the fact that, in this book on Punjabi literature, Baljit Kaur, then seventeen, is mentioned as a promising poet, but that she is mentioned under her Sikh name, possibly at first merely her *nom de plume* and, later, the name denoting her chosen identity.

3. *Anand*: Translation as spiritual journey in search of the self

Of the four books by Tulsi, listed in the Introduction, two have two iterations: *Revelation of Divine Bliss* (1981) and *Divine Effulgence of the Formless Lord* (1985). While the first, showcasing the English rendering of *Anand* of Guru Amar Das, re-appears as *Divine Bliss* (1990), the second is re-titled in the subsequent issue simply as *Japu Sahib* (1988)[6]. Besides modified titles there is also a clear change in the organization of the text/s in the second iterations, with sharp departure from the notion of 'poetic exegesis' and strong emphasis on closer rendering of the original compositions.

In the case of *Japu Sahib*, both the 1985 and 1988 iterations are marked as first edition, making them, for the purpose of research, two different books, which indeed they are. The 1985 volume (subtitled "Part I") comprises only the first 49 stanzas of the original composition, the first line of each given first in transcription, then in *gurmukhī* script, and followed by 'poetic exegesis' in English. The 1988 volume includes all 199 stanzas of *Jap(u)* and their presentation is different. All verses are now placed in two parallel columns, one for the Punjabi originals, the other, their English renderings, with all potentially difficult words glossed at the bottom of the page. The text in question being a litany of One Being's names, the glossary makes an informed reading much easier. There are also marked differences regarding the peritexts attending both *Jap(u)* volumes. A brief comparison demonstrates for example that "Proem", made up of a short note addressed to the reader and telling of the author acquiring her true understanding of the sacred composition through the revelatory 'Grace of the Lord' (Tulsi, 1985, p. 9), and two visionary poems, titled respectively "Vision of Mother Earth" and "Vision of a woman writhing in labour pains"[7], are dropped in the second iteration. So is the introduction, "Meditating on Jap Sahib" (pp. 16-22). The second, 1988 rendering, has instead "Preamble" (Tulsi, 1988, pp. viii-xix), with subsections clearly marked as "Words", "Lilt of the verses", "Words — Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian" and "Chhand-meter", the same changing the mode of the introduction from

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[6] *Jap Sahib*, with *Jap* written also *Japu* (the final 'u' is short and usually not pronounced), is a composition by Guru Gobind Singh, found in *Dasam Granth* and a part of daily prayers or *nitnem*.

[7] I have amended the title of the poem from "Vision of a woman writing in a labour pains" (this is the exact reproduction of the title) to "Vision of a woman writhing in labour pains" as the first two lines of the poem read: 'Cry, cry not, O woman, in pain! / Writhe writhe not, O woman in suffering!' (Tulsi, 1985, p. 12); I am attributing the difference to a typo introduced in printing, possibly an unwitting male intervention.

the spiritual (1985) to the scholarly (1988). In both cases the introductions are meticulously dated and appended by Baljit Kaur Tulsi's full name and address. In the case of the first book, the date given is 4.10.1984; in the case of the second, 15.3.1988, allowing for easy compilation of chronology.

Interestingly, Tulsi choose to rework the rendering of *Jap* before revisiting *Anand*, which had been published much earlier (cf. Tulsi, 1981, 1990). The guess here would be simple expediency. As already noted, the first rendering of *Jap* comprised only the first 49 stanzas and was sub-titled 'Part I', with Tulsi probably at work on other parts. Having the material fresh in her mind and having possibly rethought her approach to 'poetic exegesis' versus close translation, she opted for the second, subsequently producing a totally new English version of the whole *Jap*.

The case of the two iterations of *Anand* is slightly different though again marked by clear movement from 'poetic exegesis' to translation more closely aligned with the original. Moreover, while *Revelation of Divine Bliss* (1981) is marked as first edition, *Divine Bliss* (1990) carries the information that this is a second edition, knitting the two closely, that, too, despite their different titles and subtitles. The introductory sections, titled "Preamble", are identical, the only difference being one additional sentence in the 1990 edition: "This book is being printed for the second time. Efforts have been made to give meanings in English version of the verses, along with quintessence of the Divine message, to help seekers of the divine path." (Tulsi, 1990, p. 24) However, the new presentation of the original text and its English translation is similar to that already encountered in the second iteration of *Jap*. In the case of *Anand*, the earlier, 1981 version presents each stanza by giving its number, first line of the original text in transcription and the 'poetic exegesis' in English. There is also an abundant use of exclamation marks emphasizing the translator's state of spiritual wonder (cf. Puran Singh, 1921; Sher Singh, 1938, for similar usage). The 1990 version displays the text using two parallel columns (like in the second *Jap* rendering of 1988), one for the Punjabi text in *gurmukhī*, second for its English translation. The translation keeps close to the original without resorting to lengthy exegesis conspicuous in the 1981 version. However, each two-column exposition is followed by a commentary ranging from a couple of paragraphs to a couple of pages, depending on the stanza. The form of presentation of the sacred text and its English translation, in two columns placed side by side, followed by a very personal commentary, attests to the enhanced sense of the authorial self, endowed with authority more perceptible than in the earlier iteration, as well as Tulsi's growing confidence in her role as translator-exegetist. Neither the authorial peritexts nor the English renderings of the sacred text betray anxiety over stylistic choices in presentation of meaning or its translatorial expansions. Rather, one may discern their author's conscious recourse to an ornate, archaizing language reserved at one time for the sacred, which might at first sight seem surprising considering the fact that though writing in the 1970s or 1980s, Tulsi adopts stylistic register reminiscent of the early 20th century Indian poetry in English with its strong "revival of classical Indian aesthetics, including *rasa*" (Hoene, 2021, p. 966). *Rasa* and its trappings play important role in Tulsi's literary writings, including translation, but the issue cannot be addressed here for the lack of space.

To understand better some of Tulsi's translatorial strategies and trace the trajectory of her development as a translator of sacred texts, let us examine briefly the first stanza of *Anand*, given first in transcription, and compare its poetic renderings in English, authored respectively by Tulsi and Kaur Singh. It is pertinent to remember that, both for Tulsi and Kaur Singh, the sacred text was a part of their lived lives, its words reverberating in their mind and evoking strong emotional responses whenever the stanzas, memorized in childhood, were recalled. For them, the act of translation was thus not about teasing out the meaning from a reluctant text but, rather, molding the overabundance of its signification into equally eloquent English

phrases. Below, I give the first stanza of *Anand* (GGS 917) in transliteration (1a), followed by my very literal translation (1b) in which I try to retain the original word sequence and the more poetic renderings by Tulsi (1c) and Kaur Singh (1d).

Example 1a

anandu bhaiā merī māe / **satigurū mai pāiā** //
satguru ta pāiā sahaja setī / mati vajīā vādhāīā //
rāga ratana parvāra parīa / sabadu gāvaṇa āīā //
sabdo ta gāvahu harī kerā / mani jinī vasāiā //
kahai nānaka anandu hoā / **satigurū mai pāiā** // 1 //

Example 1b

Bliss [I have] attained, my mother / **true guru I have found**
True guru I found with ease / in [my] mind rose sounds of jubilation
Ragas [and their?] jewel[-like] families [and] fairies / the word to sing have come.
The word is sung [by those], God / in whose mind resides
Says Nanak, bliss came about / **true guru I have found**

Example 1c

O mother! I have attained **Divine Bliss**. Enlightenment of the eternal **Lord**!
With the revealment of Truth, the force of evil vanished. My Inner self echoed with
    blissful, devotional and sacred songs.
All the nine muses felt inspired to sing the Divine word, in melodious strain, in
    harmonious course.
Let all sing the Divine Word in chorus, who have attained the Lords.
Nanak, **Divine Bliss**, Delightful spirit, Enlightenment of the Eternal Lord, has been
    attained. (Tulsi, 1990, p. 25)

Example 1d

My mother, I am in **bliss**, for I have found my **True Guru**,
The **True Guru** I found so **easily**,
    my mind rings with felicitations.
Jewel-like melodies with their families and fairies from afar
    have come to sing the Word within me.
Those with minds that house the **Divine**,
    they sing the sacred Word.
Nanak says, I am in **bliss** for I have found my **True Guru**. (Kaur Singh, 2019, pp. 133-134)

While both translations keep close to the original, there is a clearly discernible difference in rendering of certain key words and phrases as well as the adoption of literary style and register. But let me start with similarities. As one can see, *anand*, understood as an intense feeling of joy experienced by devotees in their submission to god or by mystics in their meditative trance (cf. Olivelle, 1997), is rendered as 'bliss' in both cases, in line with the standard understanding of the term, though Tulsi qualifies the same further by adding 'Divine' and introducing capital letters. Similarly, *sabadu/sabado* is rendered as 'Word', expounded by Tulsi as 'Divine Word', and given once as 'Word' and once as 'sacred Word' by Kaur Singh. The original has the bare *sabadu* or 'word' but in the GGS context *sabadu* always stands for 'divine utterance' else 'hymn' though its primary meaning is simply 'word', 'sound'. However, the two translators approach the key term *satguru/satigurū* differently. While Kaur Singh chooses to keep close to the literal meaning 'True Guru' — with 'true' for *sat/i* and *guru/ū* retained in English — Tulsi maintains respectful distance by opting for 'Eternal Lord' in the first and last line, and Truth in the second. Though for both translators *satguru/satigurū* stands for One Being [*Ikk Onkar*], Kaur Singh's rendering expands the semantic scope to include indirectly One Being's agents (like the Gurus),

while Tulsi's use of formal register fences the meaning in, raising the issue of the under-explored synergy between theological reasoning and translation (Hanna, 2019, p. 384).

The two translators also deal differently with the word *harī* of the fourth line, where *harī* is the usual (Hindu) appellation for God. Neither translator keeps the word in its original form, untranslated. Kaur Singh uses the more generic 'Divine' eschewing 'God' (on her views on the use of the same more below) and Tulsi resorts to 'Lord/s'. Though Tulsi's lexical choices seem more conservative and do not breach her traditional sense of the sacred, they intuitively follow the train of thought found later in the post-modern, feminist renderings of Kaur Singh. But in this case, the same could be attributed simply to Tulsi's Sikh worldview needing to distance itself from the un-Sikh elements — e.g., names for god(s) shared with other religion(s) — in line with the puristic aspirations of the Khalsa, while simultaneously giving free rein to author's poetic imagination.

In her essay, "Translating Sikh Scripture into English", Kaur Singh claims that "Jewish and Christian vocabulary and worldview are internalized and continue to be reproduced in modern translations" (2007, p. 42) of the GGS. Asserting that "[t]erms like 'God', 'Lord' and 'Soul' have distinctive connotations and belong to a particular value system, so they should not be imported uncritically into translations of Sikh literature" (p. 46), she proposes to translate *gurbāṇī* without using these terms and follows with her own, very successful examples set against other, authoritative translations. Such a clear-cut statement of purpose was undoubtedly easier to formulate or voice for a self-professed "Sikh feminist scholar" (p. 34) than for a Sikh woman translator of an earlier generation, socialized in a pre-feminist linguistic milieu and unequipped with the latter's vocabulary and stylistics. Von Flotow's suggestion that "[t]ranslators live between two cultures, and women translators live between at least three, patriarchy (public life) being the omnipresent third" (1997, p. 36) seems very pertinent in Tulsi's case, especially in view of the self-aware, gradual unfolding of her sense of authority through steady progression, from creation (her own poetry) to transcreation ('poetic exegesis') and finally, translation, as well as her constant re-thinking of her verbal choices and literary style.

A quick overview, inspired by Kaur Singh's contention regarding the use of 'God', of Tulsi's two English renderings of *Anand*, produces interesting results. While in the earlier, 'exegetic' version 'God' appears in 24 out of 40 stanzas, and in some cases, a number of times (e.g., in stanzas 21, 22, 33, 38 — four times each), the later version has only seven stanzas with 'God' (that, too, mostly with single use), of which two — 33 and 38 — overlap somewhat with the earlier usage tied basically to *harī/hari*; though rendered here as God, in other places in the composition the preferred rendering for the same is 'Lord'. It would appear that with the passing of time Tulsi felt the need to refer to One Being, irrespective of the term used in the original, by words different than 'God', an epithet lavishly resorted to earlier, and her first new choice was 'Lord'. In light of Flotow's views (1997) expressed in the context of debunking the myth of an 'invisible' translator for a translator that leaves a mark, possibly a 'gendered' mark on the text, one is inclined to see this shift of Tulsi's, combined with the need to revisit earlier renderings by preparing their new editions, as yet another evidence of an evolving sense of the self, including the translatorial self, in search of a clearly defined spiritual space and a new articulation. Though seemingly still tied to the patriarchal worldview with her preference for 'Lord', an epithet strongly eschewed by Kaur Singh, a close reading of Tulsi's translations and commentaries (alongside other peritexts) combined with retroactively readjusted understanding of her poetry (not discussed here), reveals a persona passionately devoted to knowing her Lord, the One Being, and resolutely expressing her all-consuming love by cloaking it in recalcitrant lyricism (cf. Rosenstein 2020).

In spite of the fact that both translations appear within a few years of each other, Tulsi's second iteration of *Anand* in 1990, and Kaur Singh's book containing the same in 1995[8], their language registers could not be different. Beyond the obviously personal (including the issue of naturally distinct idiolects), the other possible reasons could range from the generational to ideological. Tulsi's choice of the specific English register, which as demonstrated, she was engaged in modifying with each successive publication, was guided by an underlying need to retain the sacred character of the text in focus while simultaneously resorting to worn out, over-used vocabulary to express her innermost feelings that could not be expressed otherwise without calling undue attention to the self. Dubbing women poets 'the thieves of language' Ostriker (1985, pp. 315-316) writes:

> What distinguishes these poets, I propose, is not the shared, exclusive *langage des femmes* desired by some but a vigorous and various invasion of the sanctuaries of existing language, the treasuries where our meanings for "male" and "female" are themselves preserved. I have elsewhere examined the ways in which contemporary women poets employ traditional images for the female body – flower, water, earth – retaining the gender identification of these images but transforming their attributes *so* that flower means force instead of frailty, water means safety instead of death, and earth means creative imagination instead of passive generativeness.

It would be interesting to adopt Ostriker's lens and revisit Tulsi's peritexts attending the first iteration of *Jap* (1985), specifically the two poems, "Vision of Mother Earth" and "Vision of a woman writhing in labour pain", which were dropped from the second iteration as probably no longer required, the author having said her piece and moved on.

Writing in the context of Arabic translations of the Bible, Hanna (2019, p. 366) notes that, "[t]he increasing tendency to produce translations with the highest Arabic register drove early Arabic-speaking Christian translators to use phraseology from the Quran, which was seen, in addition to its religious authority, as the normative standard of language usage." Similarly, in the past, most translations of South Asian sacred texts, including the Sikh, availed of the 'high symbolic capital' of the English-language Bible, supplemented by other masterpieces of literary canon, often resorting to their archaic/archaizing language in an effort at 'domesticating' unruly Oriental text. Tulsi's translation quoted above introduces, for example, 'all nine muses', attempting to de-exoticize *raga*s before it became fashionable to retain such words untranslated in the text. Kaur Singh, starting from a different position and addressing different audience, simply renders the same as 'melodies'. But in another instance of a similar domestication resorted to by Tulsi, where the original phrase, *vedā mahi / in the Vedas*, is earlier glossed as '[in] the Holy word' (Tulsi, 1981, p. 50), the same is amended later to 'in Holy Vedas' with no discernible sense of anxiety (Tusi, 1990, p. 54). Likewise, Tusi's use of an English idiom to underline the veracity of Guru Nanak's message, "O, men of disbelief, / Reflect upon / The **gospel truths**" (Tulsi, 1981, p. 54), which did not appear to the then translator as incongruous or inappropriate in a Sikh context, was dispensed with in the later, terser iteration of the same stanza, by keeping closer to the original, "Says Guru Nanak, / Without recitation of the **True-Word** no liberation can be attained." (Tulsi, 1990, p. 58) Von Flotow (1997, p. 35) believes that "[t]ranslations published in a cultural context affected by feminism are remarkable for the metatexts that draw attention to the 'translator effect', the mark each translator, as gendered individual, leaves on the work". She qualifies this further by adding, "[i]n case of translators who identify themselves as feminists,

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[8]   The Penguin Classics edition of Hymns of the Sikh Gurus (2019) used in this paper was originally published as The Name of My Beloved. Verses of the Sikh Gurus (1995) in USA and republished under the same title in India in 2001.

these texts display a powerful sense of the translator's identity" (p. 35). But it is equally true that other (gendered) subjects, even if working in very patriarchal milieu and not thinking of themselves as feminists, leave indelible marks on their translations as well though probably in a more elusive manner. Tulsi's spiritual journey takes her from the poetically encoded visions of One Being, visions given to verbal exuberance and ecstasy, and presented in the form of outright lyrics else 'poetic exegesis' to more streamlined but no less ecstatic utterances of the texts re-visited under the guise of translation.

4. In lieu of conclusion

Following the recent release (3 November 2019) of a collection of Baljit Kaur Tulsi's poems, *Āo sakhī. Collection of Poems by Baljit Kaur Tulsi*, most media reporting the event referred to her as a poetess and spiritualist, the last descriptive, especially in the case of a woman, not heard often today. Its use, probably warranted by Tulsi's interest in things religious and her study and translation of *gurbāṇī*, indicates the high regard she was held in by people who knew her personally and admired her religious devotion, while surreptitiously finding her to be a fascinating enigma. Tulsi's recourse to a very specific type of language in her English translations, a very individual idiolect linked strongly to an earlier era, may be possibly understood better by studying it through the lens of the late colonial uses of English in poetry authored by Indians. Though referencing Sarojini Naidu's poetic output, Hoene's observations (2021, p. 968) could easily apply also to Tulsi, for whom Naidu was a figure of authority: "[her] sensuous sensescapes are heavy with adjectives and adverbs, which render them effusive and exalted to the point of eccentricity. But there is more to […the] poetic sensescapes than mere exaltation"; Hoene concludes by saying, "Representing the non-visual senses through the written word creates a tension of representation" (p. 968), a conundrum perceptible in Tulsi's English renderings of the sacred hymns and her very personal engagements with the texts as attested by the authorial peritexts. The present, exploratory study of Tulsi's translations, which are discussed here for the first time in English[9], conjures a glimpse of a persona consistently focused on the Sikh way of life, with everything else — poetic oeuvre, translations, professional carrier — subsumed in a desire to grasp the Ineffable and put the inexpressible experience in words.

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[9] I assume there might be studies devoted to Tulsi's life and work, both her poetry and her translations, in Punjabi, probably unpublished.

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Femmes traductrices de textes religieux
dans le christianisme orthodoxe

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Women translators of religious texts in Orthodox Christianity – Abstract

This paper discusses the visibility of the feminine identity of the small number of women who have undertaken the translation of Orthodox Christian religious texts in France and in Romania. A distinction must be made between the sacred text itself, in other words, the Bible, and other religious texts, which describe the divine but are not considered to be of divine inspiration. Within Orthodoxy, there is no official document outlining canonical rules for the translation of the sacred text or liturgical or other religious texts, but the Tradition enforces male and female roles in the domain of translation. The study mainly concerns the case of an Orthodox nun who translated the Psalms into French at the end of the 20th century (the translation was published in 2007, two years after her death), but makes several references to other women translators. It is possible to conclude that all of these translators approach the translational act not only with piety and devotion, but also in a manner that is compatible with the feminine way of relating to the sacred within Orthodox Christianity.

Keywords

Women, translation, religious text, Orthodox Christianity, feminine identity

1. Introduction

La pratique de la religion a toujours assigné des rôles différents aux hommes et aux femmes. Prenant comme point de départ l'hypothèse selon laquelle toute démarche traductive du texte religieux devrait supposer une familiarité du traducteur ou de la traductrice avec le référentiel traduit, nous aimerions réfléchir dans ce travail sur l'affichage et la visibilité d'une identité féminine lors de quelques initiatives de traduction de textes de ce type. Nous ferons référence au christianisme orthodoxe[1] ainsi qu'à deux espaces culturels qui nous sont familiers, à savoir les cultures française et roumaine. Si cette dernière est considérée comme une culture traditionnellement orthodoxe, caractérisée par une pratique de longue date de l'Orthodoxie (qui remonte pratiquement aux origines du peuple roumain) et une forte imprégnation par l'expression de la foi orthodoxe, la première a commencé à accueillir l'Orthodoxie vers le début du siècle dernier seulement, par l'intermédiaire de différentes émigrations d'origine orthodoxe (Dumas, 2009), lorsqu'elle était encore majoritairement catholique mais déjà confrontée à un processus croissant de sécularisation. Nous ferons aussi la distinction entre texte sacré, de révélation, en relation directe avec le divin, et donc d'inspiration divine, et texte religieux, à référentiel religieux, de « description » du divin.

2. Les femmes dans l'Église orthodoxe

Les fonctions et la place de la femme dans le christianisme en général ont constitué l'objet d'étude de nombreux travaux de théologie (Behr-Sigel, 1987), d'anthropologie (Manolache, 1994) ou de sociologie religieuse. D'un point de vue strictement théologique, la position de l'Église orthodoxe à l'égard des rôles et de la position de la femme n'est pas très différente de celle de l'Église catholique. À charismes égaux avec les hommes, les femmes sont néanmoins exclues du ministère sacerdotal, qui reste l'apanage exclusif des hommes ; elles ne peuvent donc pas être ordonnées prêtres ou consacrées évêques. En revanche, elles participent pleinement au sacerdoce royal universel (1 Pierre 2, 9), en « égale mesure » que les hommes : « Du fait de leur baptême, tous les fidèles possèdent ce sacerdoce commun ou royal » (Le Tourneau, 2005, p. 554), qu'ils exercent par la réception des sacrements, par la prière, la charité, l'organisation d'activités philanthropiques, etc. Ce type de ministère semble d'ailleurs leur être réservé, les femmes se montrant beaucoup plus actives et visibles par leurs actions que les hommes (Dumas, 2017).

Le métropolite russe Hilarion Alfeyev, l'un des plus renommés théologiens orthodoxes contemporains, tente d'expliquer l'interdiction de l'accès des femmes au sacerdoce consacré en termes d'opposition « naturelle » entre la maternité – spécifique aux femmes – et la paternité (notamment spirituelle), qui ne leur est pas propre :

> Dès le début, le sacerdoce implique la mise en pratique d'une paternité spirituelle. Une femme peut être mère, épouse, fille, mais elle ne peut être père. La maternité n'est pas inférieure à la paternité, mais autre est sa mission, autre est sa fonction. […] Si l'Église orthodoxe rejette l'ordination des femmes, introduite dans les Églises protestantes, ce n'est pas parce que l'Orthodoxie campe sur des positions traditionnelles et conservatrices, encore moins parce qu'elle considère la condition des femmes comme inférieure à celle des hommes, mais parce qu'elle prend très au sérieux la paternité dans l'Église, et ne veut point s'en priver en confiant à la femme une fonction qui n'est pas la sienne. (Alfeyev, 2001, p. 125)

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[1] Nous comprenons ici par christianisme orthodoxe la confession chrétienne qui est restée fidèle aux dogmes, au culte et à l'ecclésiologie fixés par les sept conciles œcuméniques du premier millénaire de son existence, avant le grand schisme (1054) d'avec l'Église d'Occident, restée fidèle à Rome.

Il s'agit du point de vue canonique, unanime, de la théologie orthodoxe dans son ensemble, au sujet de cette interdiction concernant les femmes, exprimé ici par un théologien russe élevé dans une culture traditionnellement orthodoxe. Nous avons néanmoins essayé de montrer ailleurs (Dumas, 2017) qu'à l'intérieur de la pensée orthodoxe, fort conservatrice et traditionnelle, se manifeste ces derniers temps une tension évidente entre la perpétuation d'une conception plutôt traditionnelle à l'égard de la position de la femme dans l'Église, qui caractérise la plupart des pays majoritairement orthodoxes, et une évolution de cette conception, notamment dans les communautés orthodoxes de la Diaspora, qui touche aussi les premiers, sous l'influence de celles-ci. Enracinées en France, pays européen par excellence des droits de l'homme et de l'émancipation de la femme, minoritaires numériquement par rapport aux autres religions et connaissant une pluralité de traditions (à cause de leurs origines), ces communautés orthodoxes ont été confrontées depuis longtemps déjà aux défis du mouvement œcuménique, et à de nombreuses rencontres inter-orthodoxes organisées sur des sujets considérés tabous dans les pays majoritairement orthodoxes, dont celui de l'ordination des femmes.

Cette évolution ne se produit pas tellement au niveau du centre, mais plutôt vers la périphérie, une périphérie située en dehors des « noyaux durs » des pays traditionnellement orthodoxes, en l'occurrence en Occident, dans les communautés de la Diaspora. C'est le cas de la France, où l'Orthodoxie est apparue et s'est manifestée rituellement à partir du début du XXᵉ siècle, notamment par l'intermédiaire des émigrations provenues de pays majoritairement orthodoxes (Dumas, 2009). Mentionnons, en guise d'exemple, le point de vue « osé » d'une célèbre théologienne orthodoxe, Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, auteure d'un livre sur le ministère de la femme dans l'Église (1987), où elle développe une tendance favorable à l'ordination sacerdotale des femmes dans l'Orthodoxie :

> L'Orthodoxie ne peut plus se permettre de dire que c'est un sujet qui ne la concerne pas. Aujourd'hui, environ un tiers des étudiants en théologie au séminaire de théologie orthodoxe Saint-Vladimir à New York sont des femmes. À l'Institut Saint-Serge, à Paris, des femmes sont chargées d'un enseignement théologique. Je ne dis pas qu'il faut que des femmes soient ordonnées demain chez les orthodoxes, je dis qu'il faut explorer la question. Ce qui me choque dans le refus du sacerdoce féminin, c'est qu'on conteste qu'une femme puisse recevoir les dons de l'ordination. [...] Les orthodoxes doivent se demander si l'ordination de femmes remet en cause l'essentiel de la foi ecclésiale, de la compréhension orthodoxe du sacerdoce ministériel. Ne s'agit-il pas plutôt de l'expression historique de ce ministère ?[2]

D'autres interdictions de nature rituelle, dont l'enjeu théologique est sous-tendu par des motivations anthropologiques, visent également les femmes dans leur contact avec les différentes formes de manifestation du sacré, pendant certaines périodes de leur vie d'épouses et mères lors desquelles elles sont considérées impures (Dumas, 2017). Autrement dit, ce qui pose problème est leur identité féminine. Mais comment le concept d'identité, si disputé dans tant de domaines et de disciplines, est-il compris à l'heure actuelle ? Comme nous l'avons dit ailleurs, il fait référence à l'unicité d'une personne, à ses traits caractéristiques propres définis par rapport et à l'égard des autres individus insérés dans la « même » vie sociale et culturelle (Dumas, 2019b, p. 390). En dépit de la stabilité du noyau dur de sa structure, et donc, implicitement, de ses composantes (par exemple, la langue et la religion), l'identité définit une réalité dynamique, en permanente évolution, et non pas une donnée immobile. Aussi surprenant que cela puisse paraître à des personnes nées dans des cultures laïques, où

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[2] https://womenpriests.org/fr/oecumenisme/mercier-les-femmes-pretres-vues-par-des-orthodoxes/, consulté le 30 octobre 2021.

le religieux est séparé du social, la religion fait intimement partie de l'identité des traductrices auxquelles nous consacrons cette étude.

3. Oser traduire le religieux : la femme et le sacré dans le christianisme orthodoxe

Avant de nous intéresser aux différentes manières dont les femmes se rapportent au sacré à l'intérieur des cadres établis par les « canons » de l'Église orthodoxe, il faut revenir sur une distinction importante, que nous allons utiliser tout au long de ce travail et qui concerne les textes sacrés et les textes religieux.

Les contenus référentiels des deux catégories sont de même nature, religieuse, et sont en lien étroit avec la foi chrétienne telle qu'elle est vécue par les fidèles dans l'Orthodoxie. C'est l'origine de ces contenus qui fait la différence entre les textes sacrés et les textes religieux. Dans le premier cas, cette origine est de nature divine, l'être humain n'étant que l'instrument de transmission de la vérité de Dieu, de Ses faits et gestes, dont il a été témoin grâce à l'agir divin intervenu par révélation dans sa vie d'élu. Dans le second, l'être humain « raconte » les manifestations visibles du divin dont il a été témoin au niveau de sa propre pratique ou de celle d'autres témoins privilégiés, reconnus par la Tradition de l'Église. Tant les auteurs que les traducteurs, en tant que premiers lecteurs des deux catégories de textes, ont conscience que la sacralité dont sont imprégnés ces textes est différente, graduée. Comme les femmes connaissent déjà certaines restrictions rituelles en matière de contact avec le sacré, leurs initiatives (et, implicitement, leurs approches) pour traduire les textes sacrés et religieux sont profondément marquées aussi par des interdictions. Ainsi, elles n'ont pas le droit d'entrer dans le sanctuaire des églises (considéré comme la partie la plus chargée de sainteté de celles-ci) sauf pendant les offices de consécration ; elles ne doivent théoriquement pas entrer dans l'église, vénérer les icônes, les reliques des saints ou tout objet sacré, porteur de sainteté, ou communier pendant leurs règles, avant qu'elles aient retrouvé leur « pureté », ni pendant une période de quarante jours après un accouchement (Dumas, 2017).

La plus importante et la moins explicite de ces interdictions, qui fonctionne néanmoins sous la forme d'un tabou en matière d'initiative traductive du sacré est la suivante : les femmes ne traduisent pas le texte sacré de la *Bible* dans l'Orthodoxie. Elles savent, tout simplement, qu'elles n'ont pas le droit de le faire. Dans la culture roumaine, profondément orthodoxe depuis ses origines, l'histoire des traductions bibliques ne connaît pratiquement aucun cas de femme qui ait entrepris une telle démarche traductive, ou bien qui ait « osé » traduire la *Bible*, l'*Ancien* ou le *Nouveau Testament*. Le siècle dernier, caractérisé par une effervescence retraductive du texte sacré, s'est distingué par la reconnaissance culturelle de plusieurs versions confessionnelles de la Bible en langue roumaine, reconnues canoniquement par l'Église orthodoxe, majoritaire en Roumanie (et réalisées par des traducteurs ecclésiastiques, des clercs, y compris de la haute hiérarchie, des évêques et des patriarches, et par quelques théologiens laïques), ainsi que par l'Église catholique romaine, par les chrétiens évangéliques ou par certaines factions néo-protestantes. Nous comprenons ici la traduction confessionnelle du texte sacré de la Bible comme une traduction religieuse accomplie par des traducteurs ecclésiastiques confirmés et légitimes, à destination liturgique, c'est-à-dire destinée à être utilisée dans la pratique de l'Église chrétienne qui l'autorise et la valide institutionnellement à cette fin. Et pourtant, deux femmes ont été désignées par l'Église catholique romaine pour participer à un projet de traduction interconfessionnelle du *Nouveau Testament*, publié en 2006, comparable à la *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible* réalisée en France : Smaranda Scriitoru et Cornelia Dumitru, en vertu, sans doute, de leurs compétences de double nature, confessionnelles et linguistico-culturelles. Il s'agit d'un projet plutôt ambitieux et progressiste, accompli sous les auspices de la Société Biblique Interconfessionnelle de Roumanie, créée en

1992 à Bucarest par un collectif mixte de traducteurs, constitué de deux orthodoxes (hommes), deux catholiques (femmes), un adventiste et un baptiste. Ce projet n'a néanmoins pas joui d'un grand écho dans la culture roumaine, qui n'a fait que l'enregistrer à côté de toutes les autres démarches retraductives du texte sacré. En effet, comme la culture européenne d'Occident, la culture roumaine se caractérise par de nombreuses « traductions d'autres traductions » (Meschonnic, 2001, pp. 12-13), notamment pour ce qui est du *Nouveau Testament*, où se manifeste la plupart des différences de traduction de nature confessionnelle. En même temps, en matière de mise en évidence culturelle des femmes dans leurs relations avec le texte sacré, la même Société Biblique Interconfessionnelle de Roumanie a pris l'initiative de publier successivement, en 2019 et en 2020, une *Bible pour les femmes – Biblia pentru femei*, qui reproduit la traduction biblique protestante la plus connue de Roumanie, appelée la version Cornilescu d'après le nom de son traducteur (Dumitru Cornilescu). Cette visibilité féminine s'accomplit au niveau paratextuel, le texte biblique étant accompagné d'un ample paratexte signé par des femmes, destiné à expliquer « la parole de Dieu » selon des thématiques et des sujets particuliers, susceptibles d'intéresser les femmes, mais également à travers plusieurs citations tirées des écrits de femmes pieuses de différentes époques, et par la présentation de plus de cent portraits biographiques de femmes présentes dans la *Bible*.

La culture française, où l'Orthodoxie est, comme nous l'avons déjà vu, assez récente, ne connaît pas de démarches confessionnelles de traduction intégrale de la *Bible* à individualisation chrétienne-orthodoxe. On ne peut donc pas parler d'initiative traductive orthodoxe du texte biblique accomplie par des femmes, puisque ni hommes ni femmes ne se sont attaqués à une telle démarche. Sur le plan culturel, on retrouve toutefois des femmes traductrices du texte sacré dans le cadre d'un projet appelé la « Bible d'Alexandrie », selon le nom du texte source de la traduction – la Septante. Initié en 1986 par l'helléniste Marguerite Harl et hébergé par les éditions du Cerf, ce projet consiste dans la publication en volumes séparés d'une traduction en français de la Septante. Nous l'évoquons ici tout d'abord pour la participation féminine à sa mise en œuvre, mais aussi par rapport à l'importance du texte source de ces traductions. Comme nous l'avons déjà précisé à plusieurs occasions (Dumas, 2019a), pour l'Église Orthodoxe, le texte de la Septante est considéré comme le texte d'origine par excellence de toute traduction biblique utilisée dans la pratique rituelle et la liturgie orthodoxes :

> La plupart des Églises Orthodoxes utilisent aujourd'hui encore, pour les Psaumes comme pour le reste de l'Écriture Sainte, l'ancienne version grecque des Septante, ou des traductions en d'autres langues établies sur ce texte grec. [...] L'attachement aux Septante est une forme de la fidélité à la Tradition, au sens proprement théologique du terme. (Deseille, 2015, p. I).

> La Bible des Septante apparaît vraiment comme la Bible de l'Église apostolique. [...] Pour les Pères de l'Église, la Bible authentique ne pouvait être que la Bible grecque des Septante. Le lien étroit qui unit la version des Septante au Nouveau Testament, aux Pères de l'Église et aux textes liturgiques, explique donc que, pour l'Église orthodoxe, l'utilisation liturgique d'une version faite directement sur l'hébreu briserait l'unité et l'harmonie qui existe entre son enseignement doctrinal, sa vie spirituelle et ses textes liturgiques, et lui ferait perdre l'un des signes majeures de sa catholicité historique, de son identité à travers le temps avec l'Église des Apôtres et des Pères. (Deseille, 2015, pp. VIII-IX, XII-XIII)

Toutefois, l'appartenance à l'Orthodoxie n'est pas une caractéristique des femmes traductrices ayant participé au projet de la Bible d'Alexandrie (nom autrement « plus » hellénistique, par sa référence toponymique, que la Septante). Ces femmes sont des spécialistes du grec ancien et classique, de la patristique ou de la littérature grecque, et la plupart universitaires : Marguerite Harl (helléniste, spécialiste de la patristique et de la langue grecque postclassique), Françoise Vinel (enseignante de patristique et également traductrice de saint Maxime le Confesseur, Père de l'Église fort apprécié dans l'Orthodoxie), Cécile Dogniez (spécialiste en judaïsme hellénistique), Monique Alexandre (spécialiste de la patristique grecque et du judaïsme hellénistique), Laurence Brottier (enseignante de langue et littérature grecques), Roselyne Dupont-Roc (professeure de grec biblique à l'Institut Catholique de Paris), Isabelle Assan-Dhôte (spécialiste en judaïsme hellénistique), Jacqueline Moatti-Fine (traductrice du grec), Madeleine Petit, Geneviève Fravrelle, Anita Méasson, Laurence Vianès, Claudine Cavalier.

Les femmes n'ont pas le droit de traduire le texte sacré de la *Bible* dans l'Orthodoxie et ne prennent pas cette initiative. Et pourtant… Dans la Diaspora orthodoxe implantée en France, à la périphérie donc de la zone de manifestation de la foi et de la pratique rituelle orthodoxes traditionnelles, une femme a entrepris de traduire une partie du texte sacré, les Psaumes du roi David, très utilisés dans la liturgie et la prière de l'Orthodoxie. Il s'agit d'une femme consacrée, c'est-à-dire une religieuse : la moniale Anastasia (1942-2005). Française d'origine et mère de trois enfants, ancienne enseignante de chinois à l'université Paris VII, Delphine Weulersse s'est convertie à l'Orthodoxie en 1993 au monastère de Bussy-en-Othe (de tradition russe, mais dépendant de Constantinople), l'un des plus grands monastères orthodoxes féminins de France, où elle devint moniale en 2002 sous le nom d'Anastasia. C'est pendant sa vie monastique qu'elle a découvert la beauté toute particulière du *Livre des Psaumes* en slavon, langue liturgique de l'Église russe, qui résonna avec les différentes souffrances de son âme, très marquée par la perte d'un fils adolescent. Également traductrice, à partir du russe et du slavon, de divers offices et prières pour les éditions de son monastère, la moniale Anastasia a non seulement osé traduire les Psaumes, mais elle l'a fait d'après la version en slavon du texte grec de la Septante, qui est, à son tour, une traduction. Ainsi, le *Psautier liturgique orthodoxe. Version de la Septante,* traduction, introduction et notes par Delphine Weulersse (Moniale Anastasia), préfacé par Boris Bobrinskoy, est-il paru en 2007 aux Éditions du Cerf.

Personne ne s'est posé de questions ni sur l'audace de cette initiative féminine de traduire les Psaumes, ni sur l'infraction à la règle déontologique que constitue l'acte de traduire non pas à partir de l'original mais d'après une autre traduction. Le prestige de la maison d'édition ayant publié cette nouvelle version française du *Psautier* ainsi que la notoriété et l'autorité théologique du père Bobrinskoy, « parrain » de la publication et signataire de la préface, grand théologien orthodoxe français, doyen honoraire de l'Institut de Théologie orthodoxe « Saint Serge » de Paris, ont suffi pour légitimer sa démarche. Une démarche profondément subjective, mentionnée dans l'Introduction signée par la traductrice et soulignée par Jean-Claude Larchet, le plus grand théologien orthodoxe français laïc contemporain, dans un compte-rendu : « Ne trouvant satisfaisante aucune traduction française du *Psautier de la Septante*, et ayant été d'emblée fascinée par la version slavonne de ce texte, elle décida d'en réaliser elle-même une traduction »[3]. Autrement dit, la principale motivation de cette démarche de retraduction a été l'insatisfaction de la traductrice à l'égard des autres versions françaises du *Psautier* de la Septante, qui ne semblaient pas respecter de façon littérale la version slavonne du texte de facture liturgique qu'elle avait pris pour source.

Toute retraduction contient en soi une critique plus ou moins explicite de la ou des traduction(s) précédentes. Meschonnic (1999) l'affirmait de façon claire à l'égard justement des traductions

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[3]   https://orthodoxie.com/recension-psaut/, consulté le 3 novembre 2021.

bibliques, engendrées successivement par la « critique qu'elles imposent » (p. 436). L'audace de l'acte de retraduction accompli par la moniale Anastasia est donc amplifiée aussi par la critique sous-jacente des autres versions françaises du *Psautier* qu'il présuppose. Mentionnons que, pour l'usage liturgique orthodoxe, les Psaumes avaient déjà été traduits en langue française, d'après le texte grec, par le père Denis Guillaume[4] ainsi que par le père archimandrite Placide Deseille (le plus grand théologien orthodoxe français contemporain), dont la version du *Psautier des Septante* est considérée comme la meilleure (Larchet, 2016, p. 100). Une autre retraduction liturgique chrétienne-orthodoxe du *Psautier* « selon la version grecque des Septante » a été entreprise en 2014 par les moines orthodoxes français du monastère de Cantauque, de juridiction roumaine[5] (Dumas, 2019a, p. 102). Comme on peut aisément le constater, toutes les autres traductions de ce texte sacré sont signées par des clercs-moines, par des hommes consacrés donc, religieusement habilités et canoniquement légitimés pour le faire.

4. Sacré, profane et consacré : construction et visibilité d'une identité féminine

Revenons maintenant sur l'identité féminine de la moniale Anastasia. Comme nous l'avons déjà précisé, il s'agit d'une religieuse, donc d'une femme consacrée, qui a fait don de sa vie à Dieu par son choix d'embrasser la vie monastique. Même si, de façon doctrinaire, théologique et spirituelle-canonique, aucune distinction n'est faite, du point de vue des rôles – c'est-à-dire des fonctions et des charismes – entre les femmes consacrées et les femmes laïques, épouses et mères de famille, dans l'Orthodoxie, une différenciation existe à ce sujet au niveau des représentations et de l'imaginaire populaire construit dans les pays traditionnellement orthodoxes. Une religieuse est une femme qui a consacrée toute sa vie à Dieu, qui a choisi un mode de vie menée dans la contiguïté du sacré, dans le but de se préparer pour le salut de son âme (Dumas, 2009, p. 76), observant les vœux de la pauvreté évangélique, de la chasteté et de l'obéissance (Deseille, 2013). Elle est représentée par l'imaginaire populaire comme plus proche de la condition de sainteté, à laquelle devraient aspirer tous les fidèles. Cela se voit même au niveau des interdictions qui visent les femmes dans leur approche du sacré, les religieuses ayant par exemple le droit de franchir le seuil du sanctuaire dans les églises, comme si leur habit monastique estompait leur appartenance au genre féminin. La sagesse de type populaire reflétée par les sentences et les maximes de la culture roumaine connaît d'ailleurs des formules qui synthétisent cet imaginaire, une certaine manière trop sobre de se vêtir, une pratique ascétique trop zélée étant assimilées exclusivement aux religieuses, censées mener une vie plus vertueuse que les femmes laïques : « tu n'es pas moniale, voyons », ou bien, « on dirait une bonne sœur ».

Certes, l'Orthodoxie est moins ouverte à l'assignation de rôles, de ministères ou de positions ecclésiastiques aux femmes que les Églises protestantes ou néo-protestantes. D'ailleurs, on l'accuse souvent de conservatisme et d'un manque d'évolution. Il ne s'agit donc pas de traduire la *Bible* intégralement comme l'a fait Julia Evelina Smith (1792-1886), par exemple, dans les communautés baptistes et adventistes. Et encore, dans le cas de Smith, le respect « religieux » du littéralisme comme principe de traduction exprime une dévotion typiquement féminine

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[4] Traducteur prolifique de textes liturgiques orthodoxes, le père Denis Guillaume n'a toutefois pas traduit les Psaumes sous la forme d'un Psautier, mais tels qu'il les a rencontrés dans les livres et les offices liturgiques.

[5] *Psautier selon la version grecque des Septante*, Monastère la Théotokos et saint Martin, domaine de Cantauque, 2014. Une traduction plus ancienne – peut-être la première – des *Psaumes* des Septante en français a été entreprise par l'helléniste français Pierre Giguet à la fin du XIXe siècle, dans le cadre d'une traduction intégrale de l'Ancien Testament : *La Sainte Bible*, traduction de l'Ancien Testament d'après les Septantes par P. Giguet, vol. III, Paris, Librairie Poussielgue Frères, 1872.

à l'égard de la sacralité du texte, faite de pudeur et de révérence, attitudes qui caractérisent l'ensemble de sa traduction. Comme les plus pertinents de ses exégètes l'ont déjà montré, sa traduction de la *Bible* (qui est, en fait, une retraduction) « ne constituait pas de toute évidence un projet féministe » (von Flotow, 2002, p. 310), de mise en avant ou d'affichage socioreligieux de sa féminité, mais une démarche de compréhension plus intime du texte sacré, à travers une approche directe du texte source, « revêtu » en anglais. De ce point de vue, la motivation de Smith rejoint en quelque sorte celle de la démarche de retraduction des *Psaumes* entreprise par la moniale Anastasia.

Pour revenir à cette dernière, la visibilité de son identité féminine est doublement assurée par la mention de son prénom laïc féminin, Delphine, suivi de son nom de religieuse, précédé de l'indication exacte de ce statut particulier de femme consacrée à Dieu : « moniale Anastasia ». L'identité féminine est ainsi construite discursivement par la mise en évidence de sa féminité d'avant et d'après son entrée dans la vie monastique, sous le signe d'une évolution au niveau de sa démarche personnelle de se rapporter au sacré. Une féminité consacrée à Dieu par le choix de quitter le profane pour embrasser le sacré, à travers un changement ontologique de vie menée dans un espace et un temps sacrés, en tant que religieuse[6]. C'est justement ce changement de vie qui légitime un peu plus l'initiative de traduction de la moniale Anastasia.

De l'extérieur du paradigme de la foi et de la logique doctrinaire de la Tradition de l'Église orthodoxe, on pourrait se poser la question suivante : pourquoi les femmes ne seraient-elles pas appelées à traduire la *Bible* ? Pourquoi n'auraient-elles pas ce droit et cette responsabilité, qui semblent réservés exclusivement aux hommes ? Il nous semble que la réponse ne devrait pas être cherchée au niveau de la différence de genre (malgré l'abondance des travaux développés à ce sujet, ces dernières années, dans plusieurs domaines, dont la sociologie, la philosophie, l'analyse du discours, la psychanalyse), même si, dans l'Orthodoxie, le corps de la femme est encore envisagé à travers une tension entre le pur et l'impur dans son contact avec le sacré[7], à cause de sa physiologie distincte de celle des hommes. Dans la continuité de la conception judaïque (voir, entre autres, Lévitique 15,19-30), leur corps (pourtant, « temple du Saint-Esprit », en égale mesure que celui des hommes selon Paul 1 Corinthiens 6,19) est considéré comme impur pendant les règles mensuelles, ainsi qu'après l'accouchement. Néanmoins, dans l'imaginaire doctrinaire et religieux-populaire, l'habit monastique effacerait tout simplement cette tension, ou du moins l'estomperait-il.

L'interdiction implicite de traduire la *Bible* se justifierait à travers l'interdiction traditionnelle de l'accès des femmes à des fonctions, statuts et rôles jugés exclusivement masculins dans l'Orthodoxie. Et la Tradition, appelée sainte et orthographiée avec majuscule, est considérée comme la deuxième source de révélation divine par les orthodoxes, à côté, justement, des textes sacrés. Il nous semble pertinent d'évoquer ici un événement survenu dans une communauté orthodoxe en France, constituée de quelques moniales qui accueillent de temps en temps des religieuses de Roumanie, en vertu de leur appartenance canonique à l'Église roumaine. Pendant les vêpres solennelles de Pâques, l'évangile est lu en plusieurs langues, afin de souligner l'universalité de la foi chrétienne. Dans un pays traditionnellement orthodoxe comme la Roumanie, seuls les prêtres (hommes) ont le droit de lire publiquement le texte sacré ; la sœur roumaine a ainsi refusé l'invitation de lire l'évangile en roumain. Son refus s'explique donc par le fait que, traditionnellement, une femme, même consacrée, n'a pas accès à certains rôles dans la vie liturgique de l'Église orthodoxe.

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[6] Pour faire ainsi un clin d'œil au célèbre syntagme utilisé par Mircea Eliade, à savoir celui de « l'homme religieux » (Eliade, 1965), défini par opposition à l'homme non religieux, tributaire d'une vie consommée dans un espace et un temps profanes, de nature sociale, appelé « l'homme moderne ».

[7] De nombreux travaux d'anthropologie étudient les différentes interdictions du contact d'un être impur avec le sacré, rencontrées dans diverses religions (Caillois, 1939).

La traduction du *Psautier liturgique orthodoxe* par la moniale Anastasia représente une preuve de l'évolution de l'interdiction concernant la traduction du texte sacré par les femmes des pays traditionnellement orthodoxes, plus conservateurs, vers les régions périphériques de la Diaspora orthodoxe, comme la France. Dans ce cas précis, la transgression a été faite par une femme consacrée, qui bénéficie donc d'une reconnaissance de légitimité. De surcroît, la traductrice s'est contentée de traduire le texte sacré non pas dans son intégralité, mais partiellement, et d'une manière qui récupère le sacré sous sa forme actionnelle, rituelle, liturgique : en effet, les *Psaumes* de David ont été traduits sous la forme d'un Psautier liturgique.

Voyons maintenant ce qu'il en est de la traduction des textes religieux par les femmes orthodoxes, dans la direction de la distinction que nous avons faite ici entre texte sacré et texte religieux. En premier lieu, toute femme qui prend l'initiative de traduire un texte religieux de facture chrétienne-orthodoxe doit nécessairement être une femme orthodoxe, c'est-à-dire concernée par le paradigme de la foi. Elle doit être orthodoxe si elle veut que son acte de traduction aboutisse à sa fin, c'est-à-dire qu'elle se fasse publier par une maison d'édition à spécificité chrétienne-orthodoxe et qu'elle ait des lecteurs intéressés par la problématique dont il est question dans la traduction. Si la femme consacrée, perçue comme étant à mi-chemin, en quelque sorte, entre la femme tout court et la femme-presque-égale-aux-hommes dans l'Orthodoxie, s'accorde le droit de traduire le texte sacré (ne serait-ce que partiellement), toute femme orthodoxe a le droit de traduire des textes de spiritualité et de doctrine orthodoxe, à condition qu'elle soit ancrée dans la tradition et la pratique de la foi orthodoxe. Comme nous l'avons montré ailleurs, il nous semble que l'identité des traductrices des textes religieux chrétiens-orthodoxes s'exprime en termes d'adhésion profonde aux contenus traduits, d'ancrage personnel dans le paradigme de la foi, dans la « certitude de l'Invisible » (Dumas, 2019b). Encore plus que dans le cas des traducteurs hommes.

Une définition du concept de « texte religieux chrétien-orthodoxe » s'impose. De toute évidence, les textes religieux sont des textes qui renferment un discours religieux ; dans notre cas, il s'agit du discours chrétien-orthodoxe, qui est un type particulier de discours, à référentiel religieux chrétien-orthodoxe, caractérisé par des traits linguistiques particuliers aux niveaux lexical, morphosyntaxique, sémantique et pragma-stylistique. Selon les particularités socioculturelles de l'espace géographique où il est produit, et l'imaginaire linguistique (Houdebine, 1998, p. 12) construit par les usagers des deux langues-cultures qui l'accueillent (le français et le roumain), le discours religieux acquiert des traits particuliers spécifiques (Dumas, 2018, p. 8). La connaissance de ces particularités doit se retrouver parmi les compétences de nature linguistique, culturelle et religieuse des traductrices ; des compétences à la fois « pratiques » (construites au niveau d'une familiarité vécue aux côtés des manifestations rituelles, concrètes, du référentiel traduit), et théoriques, « de bibliothèque » (Lavoie, 1992).

Comme tout texte religieux chrétien en général, les textes à spécificité confessionnelle chrétienne-orthodoxe peuvent être de différents types : liturgiques, catéchétiques (d'initiation doctrinaire), théologiques, patristiques, homilétiques (d'interprétation des fragments évangéliques), ou à contenus spirituels (de spiritualité). La culture roumaine de la fin du XXe siècle abonde en exemples de femmes traductrices de textes chrétiens-orthodoxes de tous ces types, du français en roumain. Pourquoi cette délimitation temporelle ? Avant la chute du communisme en décembre 1989, la publication des livres religieux, en langue originale ou traduits, était strictement interdite en Roumanie. D'ailleurs, la plupart des maisons d'édition spécialisées dans la publication de ce type de textes ont été fondées à partir de 1990, en tant qu'éditions diocésaines mais aussi laïques, de culture chrétienne. La plupart des traducteurs en roumain des livres des théologiens orthodoxes français, parus en France juste avant et après 1990 aussi, sont des femmes, et bon nombre d'entre elles sont reconnues comme

les traductrices officielles de quelques grandes personnalités de l'Orthodoxie d'expression française, agréées et préférées à la fois par les maisons d'éditions et les auteurs traduits. C'est le cas de Marinela Bojin, par exemple, excellente traductrice en langue roumaine de la majorité des travaux de Jean-Claude Larchet (publiées aux éditions Sophia de Bucarest) ; pour notre part, nous avons traduit six livres du père archimandrite Placide Deseille (parus aux éditions Doxologia de la Métropole de Moldavie et de Bucovine, de Iași).

La plupart des livres de théologie ou de spiritualité orthodoxe disponibles en langue française ont été traduits du grec, du russe ou du roumain, langues associées à des cultures traditionnellement orthodoxes, par des hommes ou des femmes situés à l'intérieur de l'Orthodoxie. Nous aimerions évoquer ici à titre d'exemple le cas d'une traductrice ayant travaillé sur les écrits de l'un des plus grands pères spirituels grecs contemporains, canonisé par le Patriarcat de Constantinople, le père Païssios du Mont Athos, ainsi que des textes fondamentaux de la littérature russe de spiritualité, signés par les saints Théophane le Reclus, Nil Sorski ou Païssy Vélitchkovsky. Il s'agit de sœur Svetlana (Christine) Marchal, née dans les années 50, ancienne religieuse catholique devenue, après sa tonsure monastique dans l'Orthodoxie, la moniale Photinie. Tout comme la moniale Anastasia, la moniale Photinie a connu un parcours de vie qui l'a profondément marquée : de scientifique française, enseignante de mathématiques, elle est devenue religieuse orthodoxe et supérieure d'un petit monastère en Grèce, sur l'île de Corfou[8]. Il s'agit d'une femme profondément ancrée dans la spiritualité orthodoxe, comme les auteurs qu'elle a traduits. Elle est aussi plurilingue et traduit vers sa langue maternelle, le français.

5. Pour conclure

Dans cette contribution, nous avons insisté sur la seule initiative féminine de traduction partielle du texte sacré identifiée dans l'Orthodoxie. Nous avons également évoqué, de manière plus large, la question de l'identité féminine des traductrices de textes religieux chrétiens-orthodoxes, puisque leurs traductions s'inscrivent dans la lignée des démarches féminines « normales », habituelles, de traduire des textes spécialisés de nature culturelle et, surtout, cultuelle dans ce cas précis. Les femmes qui traduisent de tels écrits, en général de leur propre initiative ou à la demande de certaines maisons d'éditions (spécialisées), sont intimement concernées par les contenus référentiels traduits, ancrées dans la pratique religieuse, et munies de très bonnes compétences linguistiques (et culturelles-religieuses) dans les langues sources de leurs traductions. Leur identité féminine est avant tout une identité chrétienne, orthodoxe. De plus, dans la plupart des cas, on peut constater une relation de fidélité entre ces traductrices et les auteurs qu'elles traduisent, qui exprime non seulement la confiance de ces derniers dans leurs compétences (pour ce qui est des auteurs vivants), mais aussi une relation spirituelle personnelle, affichée de façon explicite dans certains paratextes de leurs versions.

De toute évidence, ces femmes traductrices de textes chrétiens-orthodoxes ont une approche pieuse de l'acte traduisant, qui représente une manière proprement féminine, oserait-on dire, de se rapporter au sacré. Ainsi certaines d'entre elles ressentent-elles le besoin d'une préparation spirituelle avant de traduire ces textes, faite en général de prière et parfois de jeûne, qui pourrait être comparée à celle des peintres d'icônes les plus scrupuleux, qui se préparent de la même façon avant de commencer à représenter les manifestations du divin.

Dans l'Orthodoxie, il n'y a pas de document officiel ecclésiastique qui contienne des règles canoniques précises concernant la traduction des textes sacrés et liturgiques, comme c'est

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[8]   http://apantaortodoxias.blogspot.com/2020/03/gerontissa-photinia.html, consulté le 19 octobre 2021.

le cas dans l'Église catholique par exemple[9], ou qui interdise aux femmes de traduire la Bible, intégralement ou en partie. C'est la Tradition qui se charge de surveiller et de prescrire l'approche considérée comme étant respectueuse, pieuse et canonique, adoptée par des traducteurs ecclésiastiques autorisés, concernant la forme et le contenu de ces textes. Les traducteurs du texte sacré sont exclusivement des hommes, mais les autres textes religieux peuvent être traduits par des hommes ou des femmes. Au niveau de cette répartition des rôles – certes implicite, mais connue et respectée par les femmes orthodoxes –, les femmes sont invitées à traduire le religieux sous sa forme de narration descriptive et interprétative de la Parole révélée dans les textes sacrés, et à afficher ainsi une identité féminine chrétienne qui ne cesse d'être imprégnée par les contenus référentiels traduits. Nos recherches nous permettent d'affirmer que l'exemple de traduction partielle du texte sacré auquel nous avons consacré la plus grande partie de cette étude est un cas de figure à part, isolé, rendu possible par son accomplissement en dehors d'une culture traditionnellement orthodoxe, dans la Diaspora. Autrement, dans l'Orthodoxie, les femmes traductrices se contentent de respecter une codification canonique de type traditionnel et de nature prescriptive à l'égard de la traduction du texte sacré.

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[9]   La cinquième instruction post-conciliaire, *Liturgiam authenticam*, approuvée par le pape Jean-Paul II le 20 mars 2001 est un véritable traité de traduction dans lequel Rome édicte des règles précises et contraignantes pour la traduction de la Bible et des textes liturgiques, analysée en détail par Delisle (2005).

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Julian of Norwich: A female translator of the divine

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Abstract

The paper discusses two modern translations by women of a unique religious text which can be construed as a translation itself, as it is an account of mystical visions. The author is Dame Julian of Norwich, a fourteenth-century English mystic and anchoress, the title is *Shewings* [showings, or revelations]; the language is Middle English. The uniqueness of Julian's vision lies in its female character: Christ is perceived as a Mother, and this metaphor is developed by Julian in an elaborate way. The paper adopts an ethnolinguistic perspective; in particular, it applies the concept of linguistic worldview in the analysis of the original text and its translations. The aim is to describe the metaphor of God's maternity along with Julian's style as the linguistic expression of the author's worldview, and to take a parallel view of two translations (by Elisabeth Spearing and Mirabai Starr) into modern English. In other words, the modern translations are viewed as women's translations of a woman's translation of God's message as revealed to Julian. The analyses suggest that the translations differ largely in terms of strategies adopted and the resulting shifts in worldviews conveyed: from faithfulness to the original to a very modern recontextualization.

Keywords

linguistic worldview, translation by women, gender in translation, Julian of Norwich, God as Mother

1. Women as mediators and translators

Women have always been translators or, to use the feminine form of the word, translatresses. In their own environments, often limited to their homes, they have acted as mediators and messengers, negotiators or 'buffers' in misunderstandings and conflicts between family members. These roles seem to be inscribed, above all, in the stereotype of the mother, traditionally supposed to shield her child from the father's wrath. Since translation is a kind of mediation too (Katan, 2009), it makes sense to claim that translation is women's natural talent: women and translation naturally go hand in hand. This is, in a way, highlighted in Polish, my first language, which has two words for 'translation': *przekład* and *tłumaczenie*, the latter also meaning 'explanation'.

Indeed, in the patriarchal world of Christianity, where until very recently women were expected to stay out of the public sphere and even in their homes to remain mostly silent, translational activity opened to female voices one of few spaces for personal expression. Though partly concealed in their translations, the voices of translatresses had chances of marking their presence as writers. By way of digression, the online dictionary WikiDiff[1] explains that "the difference between **translator** and **translatress** is that **translator** is a *person* who translates text, film or other material into a different natural language while **translatress** is a *woman* who translates" (WikiDiff, emphasis in bold type and italics is mine), which brings out the old notion of female inferiority. Still, it is the word *translatress* that Sherry Simon adopted as the term to refer to female translators in her seminal book *Gender in translation. cultural identity and the politics of transmission* ([1996] 2005), which begins with the remark:

> Because they are necessarily "defective," all translations are "reputed females." In this neat equation, John Florio (1603) summarizes a heritage of double inferiority. Translators and women have historically been the weaker figures in their respective hierarchies: translators are handmaidens to authors, women inferior to men. (Simon, 2005, p. 1)

In the section entitled "Enter the translatress" of the book quoted above, Sherry Simon documents the work of some of the female translators in the history of humankind, noting their primary focus on the honourable activity of translating religious texts, which was one of few roles outside the family circle deemed appropriate for them. Women have been linked to translation mainly since the Renaissance. Translating was for them a way "to give themselves a public voice and to ensure themselves a place in the world of writing" (Robinson cited in Simon, 2005, p. 43), a way that "provided a camouflage for involvement in text production and an opportunity for some degree of creativity" while it "did not directly challenge male control of that culture." (Krontiris cited in Simon, 2005, p. 43) Since religious topics were deemed acceptable, already during the Reformation women could, and did, resort to religious translation and thus made their voices heard, even if the works were published anonymously.

2. Mystical texts as translations, translations as retranslations

Whether or not a mystical experience occurs beyond language or in words, attempts to speak about it or write it down are also its translations, and mystics often report that language is too inadequate a tool to convey it in a satisfactory manner. Consequently, translations of verbal accounts of mystical experiences can be conceptualised as retranslations – and all of them are, by definition, fallible.

As William James noted in *The Varieties of religious experience. A Study in Human Nature*

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[1]   Unlike dictionaries with a long-established reputation, WikiDiff is a popular source which may contain unrefined definitions of concepts; they are, nevertheless, interesting to take into account as reflections of popular beliefs or worldviews.

(1977, pp. 367-368), a mystical experience bears four distinctive traits, two of which are its obligatory characteristics while the latter two are its usual qualities. First of all, it is ineffable, in the sense that language appears to be inadequate to describe it; secondly, it is noetic, i.e. experienced as a kind of given, infused knowledge or illumination. Thirdly, it is often transient and, lastly, it is passive on the part of the human being, who feels overwhelmed by a superior power.

When envisaged as a translation of infused knowledge, the verbal record of a mystical experience can be seen as its echo encoded in a medium which is different from the original. Doubts as to the precision of that medium are voiced, among others, by George Steiner:

> Here we flounder in deep waters. If a text is 'revealed', if its initial encoding is then transferred into a mundane and fallible sign system, that of secular and post-Adamic speech, to what truth functions, to what correspondent faithfulness can any translation aspire? Is there not a covert but intractable 'contradiction of categories' (to use Aristotelian terms) in the mere notion of the translation of a revealed text? (Steiner, 1993, p. xiii)

This thread is taken up by Reuven Tsur, in whose view writing down a mystical experience means an attempt to preserve "a nonconceptual state of mind emerging from a stretch of conceptual language", i.e. to transfer "perceived qualities from reality to some semiotic system, or from one semiotic system to another" (Tsur, 2003, p. 7).

3. Julian of Norwich's *Shewings*: translation into language and the question of linguistic worldview

Let us focus on one such example that encompasses all of the characteristics mentioned above: an account of a mystical experience written down by a woman as a book entitled *Shewings* [showings, or revelations], authored by a fourteenth-century English mystic known as Dame Julian of Norwich. Born into a wealthy family, at the age of 30 she fell gravely ill and, while seemingly dying, she had several visions of Jesus and conversations with him. Little more is known about her, only that, after the visions, she became an anchoress, spending the rest of her life immured in a cell or a set of cells adjacent to the church of St Julian in Norwich. It is not obvious whether she was a consecrated nun or a secular anchoress, or whether she had been married before. In the long period devoted to solitary worship of God, she was revered by her contemporaries, who sought and valued her advice. She left behind a large volume, or, to be more precise, two volumes of spiritual visions, one shorter (known as the Short Text) and one longer (the Long Text) – the latter containing not only visions but her meditations on them. It is also not certain whether she wrote herself or dictated her book to a scribe; what has survived until today are one manuscript of the Short Text and three of the Long Text, with all extant copies produced later than Julian's time, due to which they differ slightly in their linguistic features (see, for instance, Spearing, 1998, p. xxxvii). The contemporary English-speaking reader needs an intralingual translation to fully comprehend the book since the original, written in Middle English, is not readily accessible. There are several translations into modern English.

The characteristics of Julian's writing have been outlined with great sensitivity to style by Elisabeth Spearing, one of Julian's modern translatresses (Spearing, 1998, pp. xxxviii-xli). I will therefore follow her stylistic diagnosis below, while in the remaining part of this study I will attempt to trace some of those characteristics in the translations. Some of the features highlighted by Spearing are:

- female imagery, especially Julian's crucial concept of Jesus as a mother;
- spoken, colloquial style; vernacular English vocabulary with a noticeable avoidance of

words of Latin origin, which may be a reflection of Julian's oral account (and of the possibility that she may have dictated her text);

- specific syntax, characterised by very long and complex sentences, consisting of many clauses and conjunctions as well as scarce punctuation, due to which Julian's text resembled the rhythm of speech;

- scarce paragraphing (the original has very long stretches of text; a division into shorter paragraphs has been done by translators into modern English);

- frequent repetition of certain key words expressing important concepts, especially those referring to God: 'grace', 'gracious', 'graciously'; 'homely'; 'kind',

- chapter headings (which may have been added by scribes rather than provided by Julian herself).

As aptly noted by Elisabeth Spearing, Julian's original text reveals "the sound of a woman's speaking voice" rather than the tone of "a Victorian bishop" (Spearing 1998, p. xxxviii). This remark leads me to considerations of language as an interpretation of reality and the theory of linguistic worldview. Stemming from the thought of the philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt on the one hand, and the American anthropologists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf on the other, it is now being developed mainly by Slavic linguists. Among them, Polish cognitive ethnolinguistics deserves special attention due to its broad research methodology that enables comprehensive analyses of worldviews embedded in languages (see, for instance, Bartmiński, 2012 and Głaz, 2019, or the recent, English editions of the Polish journal *Etnolingwistyka* [*Ethnolinguistics*]). Within the cognitive ethnolinguistic approach, a worldview can be traced in a given language as a system (including its lexis and grammatical categories), in texts produced in that language as well as in 'co-linguistic' data, such as cultural phenomena that accompany that language (a concise account of the methodology is given e.g. in Gicala, 2021).

In this study I draw on the concept of linguistic worldview and its research methodology and adapt it to literary translation. I contend that individual texts can be treated as unique linguistic worldviews, detectable against a broader worldview contained in the language in which those texts are created. Furthermore, I conceptualise translations as reconstructions of those individual worldviews, drawing from the larger resources of a given target language with its standard worldview reflecting the mentality of the community of its speakers (Gicala, 2013 and 2021).

Following such a conceptualisation of translation, I approach the *Shewings* of Julian of Norwich as a linguistic expression of her individual worldview, which – *via* uniquely feminine linguistic means, in a text that seems to overflow with words – reports her revelation of God's love in terms of maternity, and her reassuring message that "all shall be well" and we will be saved. It can be assumed that a translation should reflect, or reconstruct in the target language, this linguistic overflow and maternity-based imagery, shared from the abundance of Julian's heart.

4. Linguistic worldviews in modern English translations by women

In this section, I will look at two modern translations of Julian's book[2], treating them as women's translations of a woman's translation, since (in view of what was said above) Julian's account of her experience is a translation itself. How did she encode her mystical experience in human language?

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2   As each of the published modern translations analysed in this paper is based on a compilation of the three extant manuscripts of Julian of Norwich's Long Text, I adopt the 2010 source text edition, transcribed anew and carefully annotated in all cases of textual differences between the manuscripts, as the one that can serve as a comprehensive and optimally balanced basis for comparing the two translations in question.

Let us now turn to the corpus itself. The present analysis focuses on excerpts comprising most of Chapter 60 of the Long Text and its two translations. Each source text passage (Julian of Norwich, 2010, pp. 333-336) is followed directly by the modern English translation by Elisabeth Spearing (Julian of Norwich, 1998, pp. 140-141), and then by a more recent translation by Mirabai Starr (Julian of Norwich, 2013, n. pag.). The respective versions are abbreviated as follows: JN – Julian of Norwich; ES – Elisabeth Spearing; MS – Mirabai Starr. Julian's medieval text in the edition quoted here had a number of elements highlighted in bold; I have removed the original bold print and used bold to mark elements I am analysing. Also, since the original chapter considered here is a single stretch of text, undivided into paragraphs and with apparently disorderly punctuation (some sentences end with a comma and on occasion new sentences begin with a small letter), I have divided it into five segments (examples 1-5). In my discussion of the translated excerpts I use italics for the key metaphor of motherhood, bold type for other metaphors, and underline for omissions, reductions or additions in a given translation.

Example (1)

JN: Our kynd Moder, our Gracious Moder, ffor he wold al holy become our Moder in al thyng, he toke the ground of his werke full low, & ful myldely in the maydens womb, & that he shewid in the first where he browte that meke mayde aforn the eye of myn Vnderstondyng in the simple statur as she was whan she conceivid. that is to sey Our hey God is sovereyn wisdom of all in this low place he raghid him & dyte him ful redy in our pore flesh himselfe to don the service & the office of Moderhede in all thyng,

ES: *Our natural Mother, our gracious Mother (for he wanted to become our mother completely in every way)*, undertook **to begin his work** very humbly and very gently in the Virgin's womb. <u>And he showed this in the first revelation, where he brought that humble maiden before my mind's eye in the girlish form she had when she conceived;</u> that is to say, our great God, the most sovereign wisdom of all, was raised in this humble place and **dressed himself in our poor flesh** to do the service and duties of motherhood in every way.

MS: *God chose to become our Mother in all ways*, humbly and tenderly **cultivating the ground** of his work in the womb of a maiden. Our transcendent God, the glorious wisdom of the universe, emptied himself into this earthy place and **made himself entirely available through our own poor flesh**. In this form he himself offered the unconditional service and duties of motherhood.

The passage displays more than one interesting feature, the most important of which is the image of Christ's motherhood. Although not unheard of before in the Bible itself as well as in some early Christian writings, where it appears frequently (though not exclusively) in texts authored by women[3]–Julian's treatment of God as a mother is exceptional in her extensive elaboration of that image, for which Chapter 60 is the most noteworthy. Apart from being detailed, the image here is built upon what seems to be the stereotype of a mother: a woman who gives birth to a child and who nurtures the child by fulfilling the typical responsibilities

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[3] See, for instance, Isaiah 49:1, 49:15, 66, 13, and Matthew 23:37. These, however, are just isolated occurrences of God's maternity. Among medieval female writers and mystics who applied the concept of motherhood to God are Marguerite d'Oygnt, Mechtild von Hackeborn, Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Siena and Bridget of Sweden. The imagery was particularly detailed in the writings of Marguerite, who compared Christ's death on the Cross with a woman's labour, while Angela and Catherine described the Church as a mother, using the images of breasts and milk (Sikorska, 1996, pp. 110-111).

of providing food and love (as will be seen below). This passage contains the first instance of the image of Christ's motherhood, expressed by mentioning how he undertook the duty of a mother.

Side by side with this dominant concept of motherhood are some other images that accompany it (marked in bold). In her translation, Spearing follows the source text by using the lexeme "work", while Starr resorts to the agricultural metaphor of "cultivating the ground". Secondly, where Spearing refers to Jesus adopting the human form as "dressing himself" in it, Starr makes a more abstract reference to Jesus "making himself available" in the human body.

In regard to the flow of text, the beginning of the excerpt reveals that Elisabeth Spearing's translation is as literal as possible and contains all repetitions present in the original, whereas Mirabai Starr's rendering opts for concision. Moreover, Starr leaves out completely part of the source text. A pattern seems to emerge.

> **Example (2)**
>
> **JN**: The Moders service is nerest redyest & sekirest, [Nerest for it is most of kind. Redyest for it is most of loue. And sekerest] for it is most of trueth; This office ne myte, ne couthe ne never non don to the full but he alone.
>
> **ES**: The mother's service is the closest, the most helpful and the most sure, for it is the most faithful. No one ever might, nor could, nor has performed this service fully but he alone.
>
> **MS**: Being nearest to our own nature, the mother's serving is most immediate. Being unconditionally loving, the mother's service is most willing. And being the truest thing there is, the mother's service is most certain. <u>Only God could ever perform such duty.</u>

Passage (2) describes the ideal of a mother and makes it clear that this ideal can only be fulfilled by God. As in example (1), Mirabai Starr cuts short Julian's eloquence and leaves out the repetition, while at the same time adding her own explanation. In contrast to this strategy, Elisabeth Spearing follows the original almost word for word.

> **Example (3)**
>
> **JN**: We Wetyn that all our Moders beryng is us to peyne & to deyeng. And what is that but our very moder Iesus he alone beryth us to joye & to endles lyving blissid mot he be: Thus he susteynith us within himselfe in love & traveled into the full tyme, that he wold suffre the sharpist throwes & the grevousest peynes that ever were or ever shall be, & dyed at the last & whan he had don & so born us to bliss, yet myte not al this makyn aseth [t]o his mervelous love, & that shewid he in these hey overpassing wordes of love: If I myte suffre more I wold suffre more: he myte no more dyen but he wold not stynten of werkyng, wherfore than him behovyth to fedyn us for the dereworthy love of moderhede hath made him dettor to us,
>
> **ES**: We know that our mothers only bring us into the world to suffer and die, but our true mother, Jesus, he who is all love, bears us into joy and eternal life; blessed may he be! So he *sustains us within himself* in love and *was in labour for the full time* until he suffered the sharpest *pangs* and the most grievous sufferings that ever were or shall be, and at the last he died. And when it was finished and he had *born* us to bliss, even this could not fully satisfy his marvellous love; <u>and that he showed in these high surpassing words of love</u>, 'If I could suffer more, I would suffer more.' He could not die any more, but he would not stop working. So next he had *to feed* us, *for a mother's dear love has made him our debtor.*

> **MS**: We are aware that when our mothers give birth to us we end up suffering and dying. But what is this? Our true Mother Jesus, embodiment of all love, gives us a birth that leads only to never-ending joy and eternal life. Oh, what blessing! In love, he *labors to carry us inside himself, until we come to full term*. Then he suffers the most painful blows and excruciating *birth pangs* that ever have been or ever shall be endured, only to die in the end. And when he had finished dying, and *birthed* us into endless bliss, still all this could not satisfy his wondrous love. This is why he said, "If I could suffer more, I would suffer more." He could not die anymore, but he did not want to stop working on our behalf. And so now he must *nourish* us, *which is what a mother does*.

In the original, this passage elaborates the feminine God-as-mother worldview by adding details: here is an image of Jesus in the process of giving birth to a child, having carried it in the womb until the ninth month, after which he feeds the newborn. The two stages, first carrying the child in the uterus and then giving birth at the right time, are present in the translation by Elisabeth Spearing, who uses the verb "to labour" with the meaning of 'giving birth'. In Mirabai Starr's rendering, the mother struggles to carry the child in her womb (the verb "to labour" is used here in the sense of 'to work') until the ninth month, which implies that what is difficult is not only the delivery itself but the pregnancy too. Also, in line with her overall tendency towards greater textual clarity, Mirabai Starr explicates the suffering of Jesus as "birth pangs", although the original does not refer to the context of childbirth.

Moreover, Starr uses the lexeme "birth" as a verb, which is correct but unusual (neither the *Longman dictionary of English language and culture* nor the *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* list it as a verb). What this may imply is the presence of a non-literal meaning, which might be interpreted as taking the emphasis off Christ's immediate, bodily involvement (via his physical pain and death) in people's salvation. Similarly, Starr's use of the verb "to nourish" where both the original and Spearing use "to feed" modifies the meaning by adding a non-literal tint to it. Indeed, while 'feeding' denotes giving food, 'nourishing' means either providing healthy food or supporting an idea or a plan.

Other choices made by Starr in order to recreate Julian's vision include, yet again, a more concise treatment of two elaborate clauses present in the original and rendered word for word by Spearing. It is also interesting to observe her explicitation of the object of Jesus' work after childbirth: "working <u>on our behalf</u>".

> **Example (4)**
>
> **JN**: The Moder may geven hir Child soken her mylke, but our pretious Moder Iesus he may fedyn us with himselfe; & doith full curtesly & full tenderly with the blissid sacrament th*at* is pretious fode of very lif, & w*i*th al the swete sacram*en*ts he susteynith us ful mercifully & graciously And so ment he in this blissid word wher th*at* he seid, I it am that holy Church prechith the & techith the, that is to sey all the helth & lif of sacram*en*ts, al the Vertue & grace of my word, all th*at* godness th*at* is ordeynid in holy Church for the I it am.
>
> **ES**: The mother can give her child her milk *to suck*, but our dear mother Jesus can feed us with himself, and he does so <u>most generously and most tenderly</u> with the holy sacrament which is the precious food of <u>life itself</u>. And with all the sweet sacraments he sustains us *most* <u>mercifully and most graciously</u>. And this is <u>what he meant in those blessed words when he said</u>, '<u>It is I</u> that Holy Church preaches and teaches to you'; that is to say, 'All the health and life of the sacraments, all the power and grace of my word, all the goodness which is ordained in Holy Church for you, <u>it is I</u>.'

MS: *Her Tender Breast*

The <u>human</u> mother can *suckle* the child with her milk, but our beloved Mother Jesus can feed us with himself. This is what he does when he <u>tenderly and graciously</u> offers us the blessed sacrament, which is the precious food of <u>true life</u>. <u>In mercy and grace</u> he sustains us with all the sweet sacraments. <u>This is what he meant when he said that he is the one that Holy Church preaches and teaches about. In other words, Christ-the-Mother is entwined with the wholeness of life, which includes all the sacraments, all the virtues of the Word made flesh, all the goodness that Holy Church ordains for our benefit</u>.

This passage further develops Julian's view of God as our mother: after timely delivery, the mother proceeds to feed her newborn with life-giving nourishment. Again, while Spearing reconstructs the original in modern English, Starr both shortens Julian's text and makes the imagery more concrete. The shortening concerns expressions of emotionality which the translator considered, perhaps, excessive for the mentality of the contemporary, not necessarily Christian reader; clarification, of course, suggests that Starr wanted to remove possible ambiguity. For this purpose, Starr provides this section with a heading[4], "Her Tender Breast", where, interestingly, she uses the feminine gender (the possessive adjective 'her') in reference to Jesus. This, however, happens only in the section title, whereas in the text itself Jesus is referred to as "he". A lexical example of specification is Starr's use of the hyponym "to suckle", referring only to mammals, in place of the hyperonym "to suck" which is present in the source text and in Spearing's version.

A significant alteration is Starr's use of the reported speech in place of the direct speech in the original and the earlier translation. The direct words of Jesus revealing himself to Julian through the phrase "it is I" are reported, rather than quoted, by Mirabai Starr, who introduces a more indirect account: instead of a first-person message, there is an interpretation, which might create an effect of distancing the reader from the text. In "A Note on the Translation", Starr gives insights into the reasoning which guided her strategy: "Julian uses certain terms that fit for her time but which I feel could alienate my contemporaries – particularly those among us who are not Christians yet are on a serious path of spiritual awakening and seek wisdom teachings in multiple traditions." She describes her translations of Christian mystical texts[5] as "a dance between fidelity to the original and accessibility for a new audience", targeting "people of all faiths and none". She also admits to having to resist her "impulse to change some of my subject's more dogmatic notions to suit my own interspiritual sensibilities." (Starr, 2013, n. pag.) Various degrees of the abovementioned fidelity to the original can also be traced in Example 5 below:

Example (5)

JN: The Moder may leyn the Child tenderly to her brest, but our tender Moder Iesus he may homely leden us into his blissid brest be his swete open syde & shewyn therin party of the Godhede & the joyes of hevyn with gostly sekirnes of endless bliss [...].

ES: The mother can *lay the child tenderly to her breast*, but our tender mother Jesus, he can familiarly lead us into his blessed breast through his sweet <u>open side</u>, and show within part of the Godhead and the joys of heaven, with <u>spiritual certainty</u> of endless bliss [...].

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4   This is not an isolated occurrence: Starr's entire translation is divided into titled sections which are shorter than the original chapters.

5   Apart from *The Showings…* by Julian of Norwich, Mirabai Starr's translations of Christian texts include *The Interior Castle* by Saint Theresa of Avila, *Dark Night of the Soul* by Saint John of the Cross as well as some collections of prayers. Starr is also an international speaker on the issues of inter-spiritual dialogue.

> **MS**: The human mother can *tenderly lay the child on her bre*ast, but our tender Mother Jesus can lead us directly into his own tender breast through his sweet <u>broken-open side</u>. Here he reveals a glimpse of the Godhead and some of the joys of paradise, with the <u>implicit promise</u> of eternal bliss.

In this last example, the attention of the careful reader is drawn to some details which complete the motherhood image. A difference can be noticed between the two translations where the choice of preposition is concerned. In Spearing's translation, which follows the source text in the use of "to" ("lay the child... *to* her breast"), the image continues the theme of breast-feeding: in order to breastfeed the child, the mother holds him closer to her nipple. The preposition "on" used by Starr ("lay the child *on* her breast") activates the meaning of "breast" as 'chest': the mother holds the baby so as to make it lie on her chest. Consequently, whereas in Spearing's version the whole passage compares a woman's breastfeeding with Jesus' feeding us with himself, Starr juxtaposes a mother's gesture of tenderness with Jesus' openness to people. While both renderings fall under the overall motherhood theme, Spearing's translation is more faithful to Julian's intention of further emphasizing God's specifically female function of breastfeeding, rather than God's closeness to humanity.

Another relevant element of the concept of Christ's motherhood is the more concrete image of his "broken-open side" in Starr's translation: perhaps another case of explicitation for the sake of non-Christian readers, who may not immediately recall the account of the Crucifixion. Lastly, there is a difference between "certainty" and "promise". Of course, when given by God, the two are theologically equivalent; from the human point of view, however, the former means an unquestionable guarantee while the latter may give the human being slightly less assurance.

To sum up Example 5, the choices made by the two translators, Elisabeth Spearing and Mirabai Starr, support, respectively, either the view of God as a breastfeeding mother, evoking connotations of absolute, blissful union with her baby, or of God's motherly love expressed as a tender gesture, which seems to involve slightly less closeness and intimacy.

5. Conclusions

In accordance with the aim of the present study, the analysis above described the metaphor of God's maternity along with Julian of Norwich's style as the linguistic expression of her worldview and traced the characteristics of that female worldview in two modern English translations done by women. In the analysis, these modern translations were viewed as women's renderings of a woman's account, or translation, of God's message received by Julian. Since mystical experiences are usually difficult to express in human language, Julian probably wrote down her account of God's love, tenderness as well as suffering for the sake of man in terms that were familiar to her as a woman: motherly love, pregnancy, childbirth. It was interesting to see to what degrees the two translators either followed Julian of Norwich's conceptualisations of God's love or dressed the author' ideas in the frameworks of their own minds. The two modern English translations can be treated as a translation series containing some departures from the original linguistic worldview consisting, among others, in certain shifts in the female perspectives.

Elisabeth Spearing's translation is certainly faithful to the original text. It pays attention to Julian of Norwich as a female author, to her colloquial style and her use of maternal imagery when describing God. Spearing's strategy of minimal intervention may have been dictated by her awareness that she was translating a voice that she regarded as uniquely female in the treatment of the divine. Some thirty years later, Mirabai Starr used a different translation

strategy to render Julian's text into modern English. Her translation tests the limits of the original text's malleability in several ways, producing a very modern adaptation. All three aspects considered in this study, namely text layout, grammatical as well as personal gender, and the use of metaphor have clearly been rendered differently in Starr's version. Not only has Julian's record of her vision undergone profound recontextualization, or rewriting[6]: this translator speaks with her own voice more than Elisabeth Spearing, and does so confidently and with a sense of purpose.

Liz Herbert McAvoy views Julian's account as "the motherhood matrix" and describes it in terms resembling the holistic approach apt to embrace a text as an author's linguistic worldview:

> [...] there is no doubt that Julian's writing is saturated with images drawn from being a woman in the world; allusions to childbirth, motherhood, sexuality and domesticity, for example, combine to form a powerful statement asserting the centrality of female experience to the redemptive process and its articulation. (McAvoy, 2004, p. 69)

It must be admitted that both translations emphasize the conceptualisation of the divine as feminine and maternal: sustaining life, giving birth, feeding, welcoming, and protecting. However, they do this in different ways. Where Spearing's translation conveys this comforting worldview by carefully reconstructing the original perspective of Julian of Norwich, including the mystic's emotional, exalted means of expression, Starr seems to considerably alter some of the female imagery as well as the flowing syntax of the original, and thus recreates a voice that in her rendering is more sober and restrained, yet more accessible to contemporary, not necessarily Christian readers, inhabitants of the global village.

To conclude, it seems plausible to suggest that it is in the hands of courageous women translators of the divine to enable the Christian view of the male, paternal God to gradually shift, with each new translation, towards conceptualisations of God which highlight God's equally female, maternal nature.

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[6]   In the words of Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, "whatever their intention, [rewritings] reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way." (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1995, p. ix)

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Queen Katherine Parr as a translation bellwether:
The instances of Mary and Elizabeth Tudor

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Abstract

Queen Katherine Parr (1512?-1548) is mostly remembered as King Henry VIII's sixth and last wife who nursed her incapacitated and irascible husband towards the end of his life. Her intellectual contribution is often overlooked in spite of Parr being the first English woman to ever have published a book under her own name in England. As a humanist and a devout first-generation Evangelical, she became interested in translation in the vernacular as a means of spreading the New Learning as well as Protestant interpretations of the Gospel. This paper explores her commitment to the translation of Erasmus's *Paraphrases of the New Testament* (1524), as well as her influence on her stepdaughters, princesses Mary and Elizabeth Tudor, through the study of their correspondence. In addition, it addresses the way Queen Katherine's influence on the religious sphere was praised by such contemporaries as Thomas Bentley and John Bale. Indeed, the queen quickly understood the power of translation as a form of expression, not only as the rendering of the original author's ideas, but also, more importantly, as a mode of voicing personal ideas and a way to reach posterity, especially at a time when women were, by law, particularly restricted in the sphere of religious opinions. Queen Katherine Parr encouraged the princesses to join her translation endeavor and thus encouraged them to express their own voices in devotional literature.

Keywords

Reformation, translation, Queen Katherine Parr, Tudor, Erasmus

1. Introduction

When King Henry VIII (r.1509-1547) broke from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, he may not have anticipated the innumerable and longstanding consequences brought to England. Indeed, the independence of the Church of England paved the way for the infiltration and establishment of the Protestant Reformation. Even though the monarch truly remained a Catholic at heart, members of his entourage swiftly became convinced by the new reading of the Scriptures embodied by Evangelicalism. Whilst the Henrician schism was mostly implemented for personal reasons (Henry wanted a male heir), the then secretly Protestant members of his entourage benefitted from its completion. Among them was Henry's sixth and last wife, Queen Katherine Parr (1512?-1548), who belonged to the first generation of converted English Protestants and who actively, though clandestinely, promoted the new faith[1]. In the public memory, the Tudor monarch's wife is often remembered as the king's kind and compassionate last wife, who saw Henry VIII's marriage proposal as a divine sign, cared for her incapacitated husband and created a sense of reunited family by bringing the royal children together. But she was also the first English woman to publish under her own name. This study reveals how translation became part and parcel of Queen Katherine Parr's expression of her faith. After a discussion of the religious context, it focuses on the queen's evolution as a translator, before turning to her influence on the royal princesses, Mary and Elizabeth Tudor.

2. Katherine Parr and the confessional context

Queen Katherine Parr was an intellectual and her way of creating unity among Henry's children was through study. She understood and believed in the function of intellectual pursuit; her aptitude for such endeavors was inherited from her mother, Lady Maud Parr (1492-1531), who had encouraged her own children, including her daughters, to study. Naturally, when Katherine became the royal children's stepmother, she encouraged them to follow in her footsteps.

Evidence suggests that Katherine Parr was a well-versed linguist. Although scholars disagree about her degree of mastery of the Latin language, she may have been introduced to its study from an early age through the reading of the Book of Hours, *Horae ad Usum Sarum,* published in 1495. Parr and the renowned English scholar Roger Ascham (1515-1568) corresponded in Latin in 1547 (James, 2008, p. 31). The inventory drawn up upon the queen's death also mentions books in both Italian and French. At least two copies of the New Testament in French were found, as well as "a book of parchment written in Italian" (Mueller, 2011, pp. 634-635).

Parr's newly acquired status as a queen quickly helped her develop a large intellectual and scholarly network. As a devout Protestant, her interest was first and foremost religious and, at a time when texts became available in the vernacular, she rapidly understood the power of translation as a way to reach people and to teach within and also beyond her private sphere. In view of her thirst to become versed in the Scriptures and her wish to encourage others to discover what she considered as the true religion; translation seemed an ideally suited exercise. All these aspects turned her into an evangelical agent eager to spread the Gospel.

Even though at first the intellectual context may have seemed favorable to her enterprise, Queen Katherine was soon confronted with King Henry VIII's hostility to Protestantism, expressed in *The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for Any Christian Man*, commonly known as *The King's Book*, published in 1543. Indeed, after the Protestant-friendly *Ten Articles* (1536), Henry had back-pedaled as he witnessed the rapidly increasing number of Lutherans in the

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[1] For the sake of clarity, the terms 'Protestantism' and 'Protestant' are used in this article even though they became widely used to refer to the evangelical movement only during the reign of Mary I (MacCulloch, 1996; Ryrie & Marshall, 2002).

country. He consequently had his Parliament pass a series of restrictive laws in 1539: *An Act Abolishing Diversity in Opinions*, better known as the *Six Articles*, and, in 1543, the *Act for the Advancement of True Religion*, limiting the reading of the Bible to members of the higher spheres of society, and among whom women were only permitted private reading. However, the queen persisted in conducting in her personal apartments secret private Bible study groups, known as conventicles. As she brought together her Protestant entourage, she attracted the wrath of the Court's conservative faction who attempted (and almost succeeded) to overthrow her by denouncing her to the king. In a famous episode related in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, Katherine Parr barely escaped arrest and charges of heresy (Foxe, 1576, p. 1237).

3. Katherine Parr as translator

On April 25, 1544, London printer Thomas Berthelet released the anonymous translation into English of *Psalmi seu precationes ex variis scripturae locis collectae*, a series of Latin psalms originally published by Catholic Bishop John Fisher in Cologne, around 1525. The translation appeared under the title *Psalms and Prayers taken out of Holye scripture, Anno Domini MDXLIIII*. It remained anonymous for some time, until chronicler John Strype (1643-1737) first attributed it to Katherine Parr in his impressive *History of the Church of England* (Strype, 1603, p. 204). Recent scholarship on Parr corroborates his assertion (James, 1999, pp. 200-208; Mueller, 2011, pp. 197-200).

Psalms and Prayers offers a collection of passages taken from the Vulgate and from apocryphal sources by Fisher, organized and rearranged by Parr in fifteen psalms. The first eight psalms deal with the sinner's torments, while the final seven evoke the sinner's desire to be delivered from his or her enemies (Mueller, 2011, pp. 200-204). By appropriating someone else's words, in the manner of plagiarism and rewriting, which was a common and accepted practice at the time, translation became a way for Queen Katherine to start expressing the anxiety of her soul and her desire for salvation. She adopted Fisher's choices to express her own faith, and for the first time she publicly expressed her fervor. We can detect an early attempt to contribute to the spreading of the Scriptures in the vernacular. As early as May 1544, she kept a printed pocket version of her own translation and ordered twenty copies to be shared with members of her household. This translation marks the first stage of the queen's public (though understandably limited) literary and devotional activity.

4. The translation of Erasmus's *paraphrases of the New Testament*

In her *Psalms and Prayers*, Katherine Parr was active on the intellectual scene as a translator. She also added her personal touch in the form of two prayers, which she is believed to have penned. The book was composed during the siege of Boulogne in the summer of 1544, at which time she was named regent, in the absence of the king. She added a *Prayer for the King* and *A prayer for men to say going into the battle*[2], both of which did not go unnoticed by Nicholas Udall (1504-1556) who praised her "[...] for composing and setting forth divers most godly *Psalms and meditations* of your own penning and setting forth [...] England can never be able to render thanks sufficient" (Mueller, 2011, p. 162). Udall, a humanist preacher with Protestant sympathies, highlighted the queen's contribution to the country as well as to the Protestant cause. Indeed, one of the novelties brought by Protestantism was to promote the writing of texts in the vernacular.

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[2]   In a compelling article, Micheline White refutes the veracity of Parr having added these prayers. According to her, these were not Parr's original compositions, as historians have assumed, but translations of Erasmus's "Inituri prælium" from his Precationes aliquot novæ (White, 2020, pp. 67-91).

Katherine Parr shared, along with Udal and other intellectual figures, the task of translating Erasmus's *Paraphrases of the New Testament,* which had been published in Basel in 1524 by humanist printer Johann Froben (c. 1460-1527). The motivation behind this venture was two-fold: to facilitate the reception of Erasmus's work as a didactic humanist project, and to help readers access on their own the Scriptures as well as texts dealing with doctrinal matters. Katherine Parr had established contacts within both the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, both of whom asked for financial aid, which she granted. It remains unclear whether the queen herself spearheaded the project or benefitted from the total or partial help of various intellectual authorities, possibly including Nicholas Udall. On this matter, historians disagree. According to Susan Felch, Nicolas Udall asked the queen to become involved in the project, while Janel Mueller affirms that the project was conceived by Parr herself, who subsequently requested that Udall supervise (Mueller 2011, p. 200; Felch, 2008, p.42). In any case, the queen's involvement is to be seen on various levels. In addition to actually translating a text passage, she may have been the *maître d'ouvrage* at the origin of the endeavor, the architect leading a team of translators from various backgrounds and trainings. Moreover, she also had the role of *maître d'œuvre*, the recipient of the translated text, as the dedicatory epistle reveals. She was inextricably connected to the project.

Queen Katherine took it upon herself to divide the tasks and assign the different parts of the translation to members of her household as well as to her close entourage. Her private correspondence supplies information on this matter. Indeed, in order to translate the Paraphrase of Mark, she sought the help of Thomas Caius (?-1572), an Oxford academic who had become her private chaplain. She also asked the aid of one of the King's private physicians, George Owen (1499-1558), who was well known for his Protestant sympathies, as a letter from Thomas Caius dated September 30th, 1545 clearly shows (Mueller, 2011, p. 108). In his capacity as royal physician, Caius also cared for Princess Mary, the future Mary I (r. 1553-1558), who was very close to her stepmother. The princess, who remained faithful to Roman Catholicism, her mother's faith, first agreed to join the project and started working on passages of the Paraphrase of John and subsequently withdrew, arguing violent bouts of migraine which supposedly prevented her from being fully involved. The commonly accepted theory is that Mary realized she had agreed to be part of what she at first thought was a humanist project and soon afterwards understood that most contributors were Protestant. Given her beliefs in the Roman Catholic faith, this alone was enough to create a situation which was not acceptable to her. The queen's correspondence shows her wish that Princess Mary be part of the intellectual circle of her time and leave a legacy for posterity. She encouraged her to continue working on her translation and to publish under her true identity. As her correspondence reveals, Parr felt compelled to insist when she saw the princess's reticence. The following excerpt is taken from a letter dated September, 20th. There is no mention of the year but Janel Mueller suggests 1545 or 1547, which corresponds to the time span during which the project took place:

> I pray you to [...] signify whether you wish it to go out most happily into the light under
> your name, or whether rather by an unknown author. (2011, p. 88)[3]

The queen proceeded to highlight the fact that Mary's dedication and commitment to the translation project might contribute to the princess's posterity as an author, and insisted on the recognition this would bring:

> To which work really, in my opinion, you will be seen to do an injury, if you refuse
> the book to be transmitted to posterity on the authority on your name for the most
> accurate translating of which you have undertaken so many labors for the highest good

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[3]   Punctuation and spelling have been modernized.

of the commonwealth; and more than these (as is well enough known) you would have undertaken, if the health of your body had permitted. Since no one does not know the amount of sweat you have laboriously put into this work, I do not see why you should reject the praise that all confer on you deservedly. However, I leave this whole matter to your prudence, so that whatever position you wish to take, I will esteem it most greatly to be approved. (Mueller, 2011, p. 88)

Facing the princess's unwavering refusal, Katherine Parr found a replacement in the person of one of her own chaplains, Francis Mallet (?-1570), who took over where the princess left off and completed her work. He did so under the direction of Nicholas Udall, who wrote the dedicatory preface. He dedicated his translation of the Gospel of Luke to the queen. Parr may also have personally contributed by translating, with great enthusiasm and application, the Paraphrase of the Gospel according to Matthew. Thus, in his *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, John Strype wrote: "But I am apt to think Queen Katherine herself might do one [chapter] at least, and perhaps that upon St. Matthew" (Strype, 1547, p. 48). Historian Robert Dick Sider confirms Strype's hypothesis, in his critical edition of Erasmus's works. He claims that Parr was involved in the choice of translators working on the project and submitted their contributions to Udall, who became in charge of proofreading and publishing (Sider, 1984, p. xxx). Through this collaborative translation enterprise, Katherine Parr's contribution to religious Court literature in the vernacular is crucial, and her awareness of posterity shows she thought the project would produce a monumental text. One can only speculate as to whether this translation was merely meant to be a scholarly project targeting an intellectual elite, or if its initiators put together a scheme destined to promote an alternative version of the Bible in English, known as *Matthew's Bible*[4]. If this was the case, the project, and Katherine Parr's spearheading it, played a substantial role in the establishment of the Reformation in England. Indeed, a few years later, King Edward VI (1547-1553) demanded that each parish buy a copy of the *Paraphrases* as well as the Great Bible, both to be displayed in their church (for further details about this point, see Van Parys-Rotondi, 2017). Fifteen thousand copies of the translation are known to have been in circulation at the time.

The queen's dedication to this translation project raises the question of female contributions to intellectual life within the context of the time. In his preface to the first translation of Montaigne's *Essays*, linguist and lexicographer John Florio (1553-1625) stated that "all translations are reputed femalls" (1603), illustrating the fact that translation was considered as an endeavor requiring little or no thought. Jaime Goodrich suggests Early Modern women translated more for personal reasons than for public reasons, since the exercise was seen as a feminine response to the process of intellectual stimulation (Goodrich, 2008, pp. 2-3). The translation of the *Paraphrases* is a remarkable achievement, given the fact that it was made in an intellectual context in which public sphere matters were reserved for men. This added to the Act for the Advancement of True Religion which already imposed a strict legislative framework and a set of restrictions.

5. Katherine Parr as a mentor to Princess Elizabeth

Soon after the *Paraphrases* project was completed, the queen became involved in another publication. The siege of Boulogne turned out to be a fruitful period for her, as she met daily with Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), Archbishop of Canterbury, one of the protagonists of the Reformation in England; it is very likely the latter impacted Parr's decision to convert to

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[4] Several English translations of the Bible were authorized in England by Henry VIII: Tyndale's Bible (1526), Coverdale Bible (1535), Matthew's Bible (1537) and The Great Bible (1539).

Protestantism. At his instigation, she began working on her own devotional manual, which assembled a series of psalms and prayers. Given the religious context and the bouts of fury the King was prone to late in his life, she waited until after his death to make public her Protestant work, which was published in November 1547 under the title *The Lamentacyon of a Synner*. As was often the case, the final product was not an entirely original work, having been very much inspired by another woman's work: *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* composed in 1530 by Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549), whose spiritual commitment had a strong impact on Parr. A decade earlier, Anne Boleyn (1501?-1536) had received a copy of the original from the author herself while she was sojourning at the French Court between 1514 and 1521. Anne's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, had kept her mother's French connections alive and worked on a translation, consulting either the 1533 or the 1539 edition of Le *miroir de l'âme pécheresse*. In the short space of a few weeks, she produced its English translation, entitled *The mirror of gold for the sinful soul*, and offered it as a gift to Katherine Parr to celebrate the new year 1545. The title refers to a poem by Lady Margaret Beaufort, Elizabeth's great-grand-mother, which she had already translated into English in 1506 and entitled *The myrour of golde for the synfull soule*. The identity of the members of Elizabeth's entourage, if any, who encouraged the princess to delve into this project is unclear. For obvious reasons, it seems plausible to assume they were either her royal parents or close members of her household. One of her tutors, Jean Bellemain, a French scholar known for being a staunch Calvinist, is believed to have assisted her (Elizabeth was only eleven years old at the time) as she had not yet fully mastered the French language, which she clearly did later in her life. The presence of Jean Bellemain as one of Elizabeth's preceptors is notable, as he translated *The Lamentacyon of a Synner* into French under the title *La complainte de l'âme pécheresse* after 1546.

Furthermore, Protestant churchman and controversialist John Bale (1495-1563) profusely mentioned the princess's commitment in his edition of her translation and was followed by Thomas Bentley, who published Elizabeth's translation under the title *A Godly Meditation of the Christian soul...compiled in French by Lady Margaret queen of Navarre, and aptly translated into English by the right virtuous lady Elizabeth, daughter to our late sovereign King Henry the viii*.

Throughout his work, he repeatedly praised the princess's endeavor and included an engraving of Elizabeth crowned and kneeling at Christ's feet, showing her as a model of piety. There may have been, one might imagine, an influence working both ways between the queen and the princess, as Elizabeth's just and apt translation may, in return, have been a model for Katherine Parr's work on *Lamentacyon of a Synner*. Elizabeth accompanied her work with a letter in which she praised Katherine Parr's brilliant wit and mentorship:

> NOT ONLY knowing the affectuous will, and fervent zeal, the which your highness has towards all godly learning, as also my duty towards you (most gracious and sovereign) […] And therefore have I (as for a say, or beginning) following the right notable saying of the proverb) afore said) translated this little book out of French rhyme, into English prose: joining the sentences together as well as the capacities of my simple wit, and small learning could extend themselves. […] (MS Cherry 36, fols 2r-4v, reproduced in Mueller & Marcus, 1992, pp. 6-7)

She proceeded to ask the queen to correct and amend any inaccuracy or wrong choice of words she might have made and, in doing so, she positioned herself as a pupil with her schoolmaster:

> And although I know that as for my part, which I have wrought in it: (as well spiritual, as manual) there is nothing done as it should be: nor else worthy to come, in your grace's hands, but rather all unperfect and incorrect: yet do I trust also that howbeit it is like a

work which is but new begone, and sharpen: that the file of your excellent wit, and godly learning, in the reading of it (if so it vouchsafe your highness to do) shall rub out, polish, and mend (or else cause to mend) the words (or rather the order of my writing) the which I know in many places to be rude, and nothing done as it should be. But I hope that after to have been in your grace's hands: there shall be nothing in it worthy of reprehension and that in the mean while no other (but your highness only) shall read it, or see it, less my faults be known of many MS Cherry 36, fols 2r-4v, reproduced in Mueller & Marcus, 1992, pp. 6-7)

Once the work was completed, as was common practice among learned women, Elizabeth embroidered the book cover with forget-me-not motifs, the corners being adorned with tri-color pansies embroidered with purple, yellow and green silk thread. In the center the initials 'KP' are clearly visible (Davenport, 1899, p. 33). As Jane Donawerth points out, Elizabeth selected strong and convincing symbols as a manner of showing her recognition and attachment to her stepmother by choosing pansies, which symbolized the concord and harmony Katherine had brought within the royal family (Donawerth, 2000, pp. 3-18; Perry, 1990, pp. 31-32). This translation is an undeniable mark of respect, affection and, more importantly, an affirmation of Parr's influence on the young princess. It may also be the starting point of Elizabeth's deep interest in translation and intellectual work in general.

One year later, Elizabeth completed her translation of Katherine Parr's first devotional manual, *Prayers stirring the mynd vnto heauenly medytacyons*. Originally published in June 1545, it consisted of a reformulation of Book III of Thomas à Kempis's *De Imitatio Christi*. The princess produced a trilingual version in Latin, French and Italian, and offered it as a gift to her father in celebration of the new year 1546. Her heritage came to the fore; her efforts forged strong connections with her great-grand-mother Margaret Beaufort and her stepmother, both of whom contributed to devotional literature. In so doing, Elizabeth also contributed to the circulation of ideas, as is evidenced in a passage from the only surviving letter from Elizabeth to her father, dated December 30, 1545. Not only does she recognize Katherine Parr's extraordinary talent as a translator, but she also expresses gratitude to her father, the King, for willing her the required qualities and skills for achieving such a task:

Which work, since it is so pious, and by the pious exertion and great diligence of the most illustrious queen has been composed in English, and on that account may be more desirable to all and held in greater value by your majesty, it was thought by me a most suitable thing that this work, which is most worthy because it was indeed a composition by a queen as a subject for her king, be translated into other languages by me, your daughter. May I, by this means, be indebted to you not as an imitator of your virtues but indeed as an inheritor of them. (MS Royal 7.D.X. sigs, 2r-5r, reproduced in Marcus, Mueller & Rose, 2000, p. 10)

This period marked the beginning of a long-standing translation practice in Elizabeth's life, as she produced several translations of devotional texts, continuing Parr's legacy and marking her own as one of the first English Protestant women of letters.

6. Conclusion

Through her works and translations, Katherine Parr undeniably succeeded in becoming a respected member of the intellectual sphere of her epoch. She acted as a link between the scholarly world and the royal family and participated in the religious debate at a time when women were not only forbidden to read the Bible by the Act of Advancement of True Religion but prohibited to do so because of the traditional Paulinian reading of the Scriptures on the

basis of the apostle's statement "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (King James Version, 1 Corinthians 14:34). The queen understood the power of words and found an opportunity to engrave her name and that of her entourage into posterity. Furthermore, her correspondence reveals a strong awareness of the impact of intellectual scholarship. Her commitment to the Reformation was acclaimed by her contemporaries and, as Nicholas Udall once wrote, Katherine Parr remains one of those who "edif[ied] the faithful congregation" (Mueller, 2011, p. 162) as she paved the way for other women to follow.

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"One God equally alive under any name":
Wanda Dynowska (Umadevi) and spirituality in translation
between India and Poland

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Abstract

The paper discusses the translation work of Wanda Dynowska (Umadevi), a Polish translator, editor, publisher, journalist, poet, and educator, who devoted herself to bringing together the Polish and Indian cultures. A biographical sketch and an overview of the place of religious/ spiritual writing in Dynowska's output are followed by an analysis of her translation of Raihana Tyabji's contemporary narrative of bhakti devotionalism: *The Heart of a Gopi* (1936). Drawing on the approach of 'humanized' translation history and translator studies, based on paratextual material and archival documents, Dynowska's choice of this unusual piece of writing by a nominally Muslim female author is linked to similarities in the author's and the translator's biography and personality: un-orthodox religiousness, views on the role of women, and social position as educated female associates of Gandhi's. Dynowska's foreignizing translation, seemingly at odds with her self-proclaimed aim of popularizing knowledge about India among Poles, is also contextualized in light of her personal beliefs and circumstances: her idea of and relationship with Indian culture, and her independence, as a self-publishing translator, from editors, publishers or critics, who could otherwise influence her strategy.

Ewa Dębicka-Borek & Zofia Ziemann

"One God equally alive under any name":
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between India and Poland

1. Introduction

Wanda Dynowska (1888-1971), also known under her Indian name Umadevi, was a Polish translator, editor, publisher, journalist, poet, educator, and activist. Having settled in India in the mid 1930s, she devoted herself to bringing together Poles and Indians, two nations which she believed to share special affinity. The life and work of this "multidiscursive mediator" (Pym, 2009, p. 33) seem to merge into one deeply personal project or, indeed, "mission" (Dębicka-Borek & Ziemann, 2021), with interconnections between particular forms of occupation (social activism, journalism, poetry, translation, publishing, etc.), as well as between the genres she worked on as an author, translator, editor, or publisher (ancient and modern poetry, fiction, political writing, and philosophical, spiritual or religious texts). In what follows, we focus on Dynowska's work in the area of religious translation, here understood very broadly as the translation of any text "perceived as sacred or holy or used for any purpose considered sacred by a faith community", "either within organized religions or at the margins of, including beyond the control of institutionalized religions" (Israel, 2019, p. 323).

An example of an unorthodox, indeed controversial text that stretches even this broad definition is a booklet of bhakti devotionalism written by a nominally Muslim female author: Raihana Tyabji's *The Heart of a Gopi* (1941). This unusual narrative and its Polish translation by Dynowska are discussed in the final part of the present paper, following a general overview of more canonical spiritual and religious writing in the translator's output. First, however, we present a biographical sketch, focusing on Dynowska's personal experiences and beliefs that shed light on her approach to Indian culture in general, religious writing from India in particular and, ultimately, her treatment of Tyabji's text. In so doing, we follow Anthony Pym's call for a "humanized" translation history (2009; see also Chesterman, 2009), which seeks to trace the mobility (life and professional trajectories), multidiscursivity (activities other than translating), and individuality of particular intercultural mediators (their beliefs, tastes, motivations, allegiances). This allows for nuancing traditional methodological dichotomies (Pym, 2009, pp. 30-31), avoiding anachronous generalizations (for example those concerning national culture, nation, and state; cf. p. 26), looking into "decision-making as an ethical activity", and raising "wider questions about subjectivity and communication" (p. 45). Based on paratextual material and archival documents, we reconstruct the (micro)history of Wanda Dynowska and her work (Munday, 2014) to present this extraordinary figure to the international community of translation scholars[1] and to demonstrate how the historical context (political history of Poland and India) and personal circumstances (Dynowska's upbringing and background in theosophy) help understand the translator's decisions, both on the macro-level (choice of author/text) and micro-level (particular translation solutions).

2. Wanda Dynowska's background: theosophy, empowerment, translation

Wanda Dynowska was born in 1888 in Petersburg, Russian Empire, to a well-off Polish family. She grew up on her mother's estate on Lake Istal in Polish Livonia (present-day Latvia), a historically Polish territory under Russian rule. While her parents' unhappy marriage was nothing unusual in itself, the fact that Helena Dynowska (née Sokołowska) separated from her husband, lawyer Eustachy Dynowski, and took full charge of bringing up the young Wanda (Trzcińska, 2015, p. 166), was a solution untypical for the time. Helena was a strong mother figure, instrumental in the development of Wanda's unorthodox, eclectic and synthesising approach to spirituality, her patriotism, and her awareness of women's potential as active members of the society. A pious Roman Catholic and church benefactress, at the same time

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[1]   Apart from Dębicka-Borek & Ziemann (2021), there are only two English-language publications devoted exclusively to Dynowska (Tokarski, 1994; Dębicka-Borek, 2018), neither of which focuses on translation.

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she was believed to be a clairvoyante and a mystic, communing with angels, elves, and spirits (Trzcińska, 2015, p. 166). Flesh-and-blood visitors to her home included notable Polish artists and intellectuals, who came from Warsaw, Vilnius, and other cities to seek inspiration in the peaceful Livonian province. For Wanda, living in this "haunted house" (Tokarski, 1994, p. 89) combined with a literary salon was a formative experience. Growing up, she believed in the presence of the supernatural in the world around her, and had a strong affection for nature and the countryside. On the other hand, she received high-class private education, developing a passion for literature, philosophy, and languages; apart from her native Polish and fluent Russian, she also knew French, Italian, English and Spanish, and possibly Latvian (Tokarski, 1994, p. 90). She read the *Bhagavad Gita*[2] (in Russian translation), alongside the Bible and the Quran (Trzcińska, 2015, p. 170).

Wanda's open-mindedness and intellectual curiosity were combined with strong patriotic feelings and the belief that the true locus of the Polish 'national spirit' is culture and religion. At the time of her birth, Poland had not existed on the political map of Europe for almost a century – since the third partition of its territory between Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1795 (Davies, 1982, pp. 511-546). Polish Livonia had been under Russian dominance even longer, since 1772. In this historical context, the survival of the stateless nation depended on its ability to cultivate tradition. Adhering to Roman Catholicism was an identity statement in itself, given the privileged position of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Russian Empire. A major influence on Wanda – with respect to both her literary style and her views — was the work of Polish Romantic poets, persecuted by the tsarist regime for supporting the Polish fight for independence in the first half of the 19th century.

Anti-Russian sentiments may be one reason why, from hindsight, Dynowska emphasized that her interest in esotericism, developed in late teens, stemmed not from personal contacts but from memories of previous incarnations and from her own reading (Tokarski, 1994, pp. 90-91). Notably, the book she cited as her first major esoteric inspiration was J.C. Chatterjee's *La Philosophie ésotérique de l'Inde* (1899; Polish translation 1911). Dynowska downplayed influences from the Warsaw Theosophical Society (subordinated to Russian authorities in the former Polish capital city), even though one of her private tutors was a member of this organization: the Polish Neoromantic author Tadeusz Miciński, fascinated by India. Similarly, even though in her twenties Dynowska travelled to Moscow and met some prominent representatives of the theosophical movement, she acknowledged Western-European theosophists instead.

Esotericism, occultism, and theosophy gained popularity in the 19th century as a response to the over-rationalisation of positivism and empirio-criticism. From the very beginning, these spiritual movements attracted many women and were connected with the fight for women's rights, to the extent that we can speak of a "proto-feminist turn" in late 19th-century esotericism (Hess & Dulska, 2017, pp. 53-54; see also Faxneld, 2017). The Theosophical Society was co-founded by the Russian occultist Helena Blavatsky in New York in 1875, and in Dynowska's time it was headed by the British social activist and feminist Annie Besant. Combining Western esotericism (especially Qabalah) with ancient European Neoplatonism as well as Asian religions (especially Vedanta Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Sufism) theosophy was envisaged by its proponents not as a religion in itself, but rather as the pursuit of Truth that underlies all religions, philosophy and scientific knowledge.

After World War I, Dynowska moved to Warsaw to (re)organize the theosophical movement in service of the newly re-established independent Polish state. In 1923, the Polish Theosophical

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[2]   All Sanskrit titles, names, and terms are spelled here in a simplified anglicized version, without diacritics.

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Society (PTS), with Dynowska as secretary general, officially became a branch of the Theosophical Society based in Adyar, India (Hess, 2015, pp. 55). This phase of activity was reflected in her translation work. In 1919, a Warsaw publishing cooperative named "Adyar" brought out what seems to have been her first book-length translation: the Polish version of *At the Feet of the Master* by the Indian thinker Jiddu Krishnamurti, a key figure in the theosophical movement and Dynowska's fascination for decades to come (Tokarski, 1994, pp. 98-100). In the following years, "Adyar", the PTS, and its press organ, *Przegląd Teozoficzny* ("Theosophical Review"), published a number of theosophical works in her translation from English, e.g. Irving S. Cooper's *Reincarnation* (1928).

Apart from translating crucial theosophical texts in connection with her official function, Dynowska also followed more personal and literary fascinations. In 1930 in Paris, she came across *The Prophet* (1923), a mystic poem by the Lebanese-born author Khalil Gibran, a Maronite Christian influenced by Sufism and theosophy, whose works would later become immensely popular with representatives of the New Age movement. Struck by the originality, "depth of thought", and "Beauty" of the text (Dynowska in Gibran, 1954, pp. vi-vii), she immediately translated selected chapters and circulated them among friends; the book was published in whole only in 1954 in India (followed in 1956 by another translation from Gibran: the volume of gospel-inspired stories *Jesus, the Son of Man*).

Dynowska moved away from institutionalized Catholic church[3], but not from the Christian God, whom she experienced in nature, as testified in her diary entry from a hike in the Polish Tatra mountains shortly before leaving for India:

> I feel constrained in the church, even during the mystery of the Mass and the rituals whose power I know, yet do not resonate with it today. There, God is set in ready-made forms, long enclosed, [He is] revered consciously, intellectually loved. From my soul nothing comes as a response. He does not speak to it from the altar. But here He is alive. (Dynowska, [1935] 1948, pp. 205-206)[4]

In 1935, Dynowska travelled to Adyar to attend the Congress of the Theosophical Society, and, fascinated by India, kept prolonging her stay. Over the next four years, she travelled extensively, studied under the Hindu guru Shri Ramana Maharshi (whom she believed to have "spiritually brought" her to India; Dynowska, 1971, p. xxvii), met Gandhi and got involved with the Indian National Congress, and adopted the Indian name Umadevi[5], which she used interchangeably or jointly with the Polish one. This did not mean, however, that she already then decided to settle in India. She maintained contact with her homeland through copious correspondence, and at the outbreak of World War II she tried to return to support Poland's fight and to reunite with her ageing mother. She travelled all the way to Romania, but did not manage to get through the Polish border. Having returned to India, she found employment in the Polish consulate in Bombay. Interestingly, her position there can be interpreted as a case of conflicted allegiance. As an official governmental body, the consulate depended on good relations with British authorities, so Dynowska's endorsement of the Indian independence movement was a source of tension (Hradyska, 1971). Yet she stood by it, seeing parallels

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[3] According to Kazimierz Tokarski, in the 1920s, she turned to the Liberal Catholic Church: "she became enthusiastic about the prospect of establishing this church in Poland and translated the liturgy" (1994, p. 93).

[4] All translations from Polish sources are by the authors of this article.

[5] According to Hindu myths, Uma (Sanskrit Umā) is the name of a daughter of Himavat, who personifies the Himalayan mountains; she married god Śiva. The term itself may denote splendor, light, fame, reputation, quiet, night, or even turmeric. Devi (Sanskrit devī) means a goddess, queen or a high-ranked woman, worship, reverence. The compound appears to convey the meaning of 'Goddess Uma'.

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between the British Empire's colonial rule and the oppression of Poles by the Russian Empire and then Soviet Union (Dynowska, 1938-1939, undated). The post-war dominance of the latter contributed to her decision to stay in India; having adopted Indian citizenship, she only visited communist Poland twice, in the 1960s. Thus, although for several years Dynowska's livelihood in a sense depended on a white supremacist system (cf. Hooks, 2015), her perception of India and Indians was far from imperialist – which is not to say that it was not biased in another way.

Dynowska embarked on a lifetime mission to bring together Poles and Indians — through translation, publishing and editorial work, and journalism, as well as numerous educational, cultural and social initiatives, especially with the community of Polish World War II refugees in India. As follows from her late 1930s correspondence with her literary agent in Warsaw, Tadeusz Szukiewicz, among the topics with which she tried to interest Polish editors and publishers (mostly unsuccessfully) was "the Hindu woman". She felt that this aspect of Indian society is misunderstood by Europeans; her experience of travelling as a single woman across the country was different. In her scathing review of a book of travel writing by Hanna Skarbek-Peretjatkowicz, which appeared in Poland in 1936, Dynowska blamed the author, among other things, for presenting a distorted view:

> [...] no holy book of Hinduism describes the woman as morally or socially inferior to man. [...] Respect for the woman in general, and almost reverence for the older woman, especially the mother and grandmother, is the basis of Hindu life. [...] Mrs Skarbek-Peretj[at]kowicz completely misrepresents the social position of the widow. [...] Shaving the head is not a sign of disgrace, but, like in our culture, of "monastic vows". (Dynowska, 1938-1939; attached to an undated letter)

Yet in correcting Skarbek-Peretjatkowicz, whose book indeed presented India from a narrowly Eurocentric perspective, Dynowska herself committed a fallacy. Her idealized view reflected her own beliefs rather than the actual social reality. She was consistent in propagating this image of Indian women, also in the religious context:

> The various names of Shakti in Hinduism express Her various kinds of energy, that is the aspects of Her infinite Being. There are few countries and cultures in the world in which the real role of the woman would be understood and respected as much as it is in India, and the knowledge about the energy of the sexes is infinitely deeper and more versatile here than elsewhere. (Dynowska, 1948, p. 228)

In fact, Dynowska's general view of India may be interpreted as fetishizing in that it focused on the positives and ignored conflict, as well as colonial in that it ignored difference, treating the multiple ethnicities, languages, and religions of the subcontinent as minor alterations of what she believed to be the 'Indian soul'. This was a projection of her theosophical ideal of unity, of one universal Truth manifesting itself in different ways; well-intentioned, it nevertheless led to a generalizing and thus simplifying perception.

That said, Dynowska could not ignore the grim reality in the aftermath of Gandhi's assassination. Disillusioned with the instrumental use of Hinduism as a weapon in the national/ethnic and religious conflict with Muslim Indians (Hradyska, 1971), eventually, in the last decade of her life, she was drawn to Mahayana Buddhism. In 1960, she moved to Northern India to help Tibetan orphans that had found themselves there following the Chinese invasion. Focusing on charity and educational work, she also studied Buddhism with Tibetan monks; the Dalai Lama himself remembered her decades later as his "Polish mother" (Manning, 2017).

The circumstances of Dynowska's passing and burial symbolically summarize her pan-religious life. She spent the last year of her life in a Catholic convent in Mysore, Southern India,

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surrounded by Tibetan refugees who lived in the area (Tokarski, 1994, p. 103). She received last rites from the Archbishop of Mysore and died clad in a red festive sari, in a meditative yoga position (Potulicka, 1971), holding a crucifix (ZŁJ, 1978, pp. 23-24). In accordance with her last will, she was buried in the Tibetan Buddhist rite.

3. Religious writing from India in Dynowska's translation

Already in 1938, Dynowska wrote to her Warsaw-based agent Tadeusz Szukiewicz: "What is deepest and most interesting about India is religion, realism, and new revival movements based on moral principles – would it not be too 'difficult'"? (29 November 1938). She had difficulties finding editors or publishers willing to acquaint the Polish reader with these subjects, and this was probably the main reason why she decided to establish her own independent publishing initiative in India. In 1944, together with Maurycy Frydman aka Swami Bharatananda, a Polish-Jewish engineer who had adopted the Hindu way of life, she founded the Indo-Polish Library/ Biblioteka Polsko-Indyjska (henceforth, IPL and, respectively, BPI), whose motto was "to show India to Poland and Poland to India"[6]. It should be emphasized that it was a non-profit venture, marked by financial struggle throughout its thirty-year history; Dynowska used her own savings to support it and secured funds from foreign benefactors and Indian authorities.

Indian religious writing constituted a major part of the titles published by Dynowska and Frydman in Polish. The first BPI volume, published in 1944, was not a translation, but Dynowska's own account of a solitary pilgrimage to Hindu holy places in the Himalayas (see Illustration 1).

Illustration 1. Wanda Dynowska among local acquaintances on her pilgrimage in the Himalayas.
Tadeusz Pobożniak Collection, Institute of Oriental Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków

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[6] For an overview of this publishing enterprise, see Dębicka-Borek & Ziemann (2021). Full list of IPL/BPI's publications can be found in Glazer, 2009, pp. 591-596. Due to space constraints, the IPL/BPI books mentioned but not quoted here are not included in the references.

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Three years later, apparently encouraged by Maharshi (Dynowska, 1947, p. vii), she published a translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* – one of the key holy texts of Hinduism, part of the ancient epic *Mahabharata*. She might have worked from the Sanskrit original (Łozowska, 2008), drawing on commentaries and the help of local scholars (Dynowska, 1947, p. vii), and likely also with reference to other translations into European languages. Not the first rendering of this piece into Polish, Dynowska's translation was an attempt at making it relevant to Polish readers in the aftermath of World War II, and even making an ideological point. *Gita* thematizes prince Arjuna's moral doubts before the decisive fratricidal battle central to *Mahabharata*. They are dispelled by his charioteer, who is in fact Krishna himself: fighting evil is Arjuna's highest duty as a Kshatriya (warrior), regardless of his being related to soldiers of the opposing army. In this sense, the translation of *Gita* can be seen as the translator's patriotic message to her Polish readers, encouraging them not to accept the Soviet-controlled government of the post-war People's Republic of Poland, and to keep fighting, even against compatriots who have embraced the new communist order.

This is suggested in the dedication: "To those who are faithful to the Dharma of Poland, who fight with their lives for the Spirit of the Nation, this wonderful Book of faith to One's Own Truth is dedicated by the Translator". The concept of pursuit of Truth was very dear to Gandhi, who was a major influence on Dynowska. At the same time, she interpreted *Gita* in terms of the theosophical concept of universal Truth sought through different religions; this is visible in both her preface and in a brief introduction by the philosopher and future politician Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan[7]:

> It is a book rising beyond faiths and churches, even though it belongs to the religious literature of Hinduism. [...] Anyone who reads Gita—regardless of the world religion they represent – will find in it a key to the spiritual truths of their own religion, for the Truth about which it speaks is all-encompassing. (Radhakrishnan in Dynowska, 1947, p. i)

This non-exclusive approach to religion could also be found in the Indian mystic movement of bhakti, which Dynowska saw as the key to Indian culture. It emphasized the worshipper's personal and deeply emotional relationship with the deity, regardless of gender, caste, or indeed religious affiliation. According to John Hawley, the idea of the movement consolidated in the 20th century, but it dates back to the period of ca. 500-1700 C.E. Bhakti "evokes the idea of a widely shared religiosity for which institutional superstructures weren't all that relevant [...]. It implies direct divine encounter, experienced in the lives of individual people" who "turn to poetry, which is the natural vehicle of bhakti", composed in all major languages of India and involving Hindu, Sufi, Buddhist, Jain and Christian "religious sensibilities" (2015, pp. 2-3). The Sanskrit term, which can mean "being a part of", "attachment", "devotion", "homage", "worship", "piety", "fondness", "love" etc., is usually rendered in English as "devotionalism"; yet, as Hawley put it, "if that word connotes something entirely private and quiet, we are in need of other words" (2015, p. 2).

In an essay titled "The Hindu Bhakti", Dynowska wrote: "In none of the eight European languages I know have I found the right equivalent of the word 'Bhakti', which seems to express more than any other the most characteristic and deepest feature of the Indian soul, since the most ancient past to this day" (Dynowska, 1959, p. 1). The text dates from the second half of the 1930s and was meant as a press article, but met with a lack of interest from editors in Poland. Eventually, two decades later, Dynowska published it herself, as a preface to the first volume of her most remarkable achievement as a translator and editor: a six-volume

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7 Radhakrishnan became the vice-president (1952-1962) and president (1962-1967) of India; acquaintance with him exemplifies Dynowska's social position.

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anthology of literature translated (often indirectly and/or in collaboration) from different Indian languages (see Dębicka-Borek & Ziemann, 2021, pp. 72-74). Dynowska leaves the word *bhakti* untranslated or renders it into Polish as *żarliwa miłość*, "ardent love". She emphasizes that, in order to understand it, one must immerse oneself in Indian nature and Indian life, rather than studying "old Sanskrit texts" (Dynowska, 1959, p. 3). Not only was the bhakti tradition amply represented in the anthology, but the concept was regarded by Dynowska as legitimizing her whole project: "This and only this [experience-based understanding of bhakti] gives me the right to speak of this aspect of the Indian soul and to attempt to translate into Polish a number of songs, both most ancient and modern: folk songs, by anonymous as well as famous and great poets" (Dynowska, 1959, p. 3).

Alongside occasional examples of secular writing, Dynowska's anthology, whose successive volumes were published in the 1950s and 1960s in two editions, comprised many religious and philosophical texts, mainly ancient and early modern, from various traditions. For the Sanskrit volume, she translated excerpts from the holy Vedic hymns, the Upanishads, Yoga Vasishta (a religious-philosophical treatise), Puranic hymns praising Vishnu, Shiva, and the Goddess, excerpts from the *Mahabharata*, the writings of Kashmiri Shaivites, and Buddhist books. The Tamil volume included excerpts from the Tamil *Ramayana* and bhakti poems of Alvars and Nayanmars (Vaishnava and Shaiva saints, respectively), Hindi – the works of bhakti poets and mystics (e.g. Ramananda, Kabir, Dadu, the 16th-century female poet Mirabai), excerpts of Tulsidas' adaptation of the *Ramayana*, Surdas' songs celebrating Krishna; Gujarati –Krishnaite songs of Narasimha and Dayaram (bhakti); Marathi—poems in the bhakti tradition (e.g. Tukaram); Bengali—Buddhist works, songs of the Bauls (minstrels with syncretic beliefs, chiefly based on Sufism and Bengali Tantric Vaishnavism), classical Vaishnava poetry, hymns to Shakti.

Dynowska's introduction to the Marathi volume contains a telling example of her universalizing interpretation of the concept of bhakti. In the context of the cult of Krishna, she writes:

> These oddest mystics of love express the unfathomable source of most delicate, most ecstatic feelings that the human heart is capable of. Very often, in all religions, the object of this cult in the *Divine Birth-Giver*, *Matrix of Universe* — whether we call Her Mother of God or a Hindu calls her by hundredths names, depending on Her form which he addresses—power, love, or action: *Durga, Lakshmi, Sarasvati*, etc. etc., or a Chinese [calls Her] Mother *Kuan Yin*, there is no difference whatsoever [sic] in the content or direction of adoration. The most ardent, fondest love is also bestowed on the *Divine Child*, whether *Christling* [Pol. *Chrystusik*, Christ + diminutive suffix] in the stable or *Shri Krishna* in the midst of child's play and mischief or as a Lad with a flute, using the power of its harmony to summon the souls [...]. (Dynowska, 1960, p. vii)

The likening of young Krishna to baby Jesus is somewhat risky, since the souls summoned by the Hindu god through the music of his flute were symbolized by young and attractive female devotees, evoking an erotic fascination (Kinsley, 1988, pp. 84-85).

Having turned to Buddhism, Dynowska brought out Buddhist texts in individual volumes, although in general her translation activity decreased in the 1960s, as she devoted most of her time to working with Tibetan youth. In 1962, she published the translation of *The Gospel of Buddha* by Paul Carus (English original 1894), followed in 1965 by an edited collection of excerpts from Mahayana Buddhism writings, and in 1967 by an anonymous Tibetan folk song on Buddha's dharma. As suggested in her handwritten dedication in a copy of the Mahayana volume, what Dynowska found particularly attractive about it was the concept of the selfless, noble Boddhisattva, an altruistic being on the path to Buddhahood.

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Dynowska's religious translations included also works by contemporary spiritual masters, such as the above-mentioned Shri Ramana Maharshi (1957), Shri Aurobindo (two books on yoga, 1958 and 1962) and Swami Vivekananda (*Karma Joga*, 1962). Among the translations of classical religious and philosophical texts on the one hand and works by well-known contemporary spiritual teachers on the other, there stands out a work by a living female author far less recognised than the gurus who usually captured Dynowska's attention.

4. Raihana Tyabji's *The Heart of a Gopi* and its Polish translation

Raihana Tyabji (1901-1975) was born into an influential Muslim clan. Her maternal grandfather, Badruddin Tyabji, was the third President of the Indian National Congress. Her mother, Ameena, advocated girls' education and India's freedom from the British, and her father, Abbas, educated in London, after his career as the chief judge in the then Baroda state, joined Gandhi's movement (Thakkar and Mehta, 2011, p. 155, Lambert-Hurley, 2013, pp. 573-574). Today Raihana Tyabji is mostly remembered as one of the closest associates of Gandhi (cf. Mehta, 1977; Thakkar & Mehta, 2011) and contributor to the dialogue between Hindu and Muslim communities and the fight for women's empowerment. Although towards the end of her life she disagreed with some of Gandhi's concepts (e.g. celibacy in marriage, depriving women of colourful garments, unconditional non-violence), she remained faithful to his main principles. Since 1947, the year of India's proclamation of independence, she lived in Gandhi's ashram in New Delhi, where she was perceived as a holy woman who treated "neurotic patients of all kinds" due to her "devotional calling" (Mehta, 1977, pp. 209-210). She was also known as a gifted singer and composer of bhajans, devotional songs.

In her seventies, she thus described her religious identity:

> I am Sufi. I don't call myself Mussalman because I don't believe in and do not belong to the Mussalman sect. But I am Islamic, in that I accept whole-heartedly the blessed tenets of Islam, and the way that I live my way of living, is that of a Muslim monastery. (Thakkar & Mehta 2011, p. 217)

And: "My own path is that of *bhakti*, the path of merging" (Thakkar & Mehta, 2011, p. 228).

In 1926, Tyabji wrote a short book of prose, which she claimed to be an outcome of "a tremendous, irresistible urge to write" about Krishna (cf. Lambert-Hurley, 2014, p. 570). For three days, the story "came pouring out [...] faster than the ink could flow", and the author "had a distinct sensation of being possessed by some force outside [her]self" (Tyabji, 1941, pp. v-vi). Having understood that this is "the revelation of God's way with a soul that is ripe for spiritual awakening", where "the soul turns into a Gopi, sees him, and lives [...] near His Feet, for ever afterwards", she called the book *The Heart of a Gopi* (Tyabji, 1941, pp. vi-vii).

Encouraged by her father and her close friend Kaka Saheb Kalekar (a disciple of Gandhi; Tyabji, 1941, p. vii), Raihana self-published the book only in 1936, although it had likely been circulated before (Mukul, 2015, p. 74). Letters by Hanuman Prasad Poddar, who in early 1920s co-established the publishing house Gita Press and the magazine *Kalyan*, both serving as platforms for Hindu nationalists, reveal, however, that she wanted to publish *Gopi* with his press. Explaining his refusal to Tyabji, Poddar argued that the publication could lead to her being accused of not adhering to Islam (Mukul, 2015, pp. 74-75). On the other hand, he published Tyabji's nine articles in *Kalyan*, four out of which were on Krishna (Mukul 2015, p. 393).

The Heart of a Gopi employs the traditional trope of the god Krishna frolicking with Radha and other gopis, i.e. milkmaids, in Vrindavan. In the context of religious movements focused on Krishna as a cowherd, this motif serves as a powerful metaphor of a god-human relationship. Radha is already married, hence her passion for Krishna breaks social norms: whereas she

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symbolizes a devotee eager to sacrifice everything to be close to the god, Krishna stands for the charming and attractive god (Kinsley, 1988, pp. 81-82).

Tyabji's protagonist and first-person narrator is Sharmila, a girl from a rich family married to a poor cowherd, whose sisters and mother abase her continuously. After a chance encounter with a group of gopis excited about Krishna, Sharmila, too, becomes fascinated with the playful young god; she feels his presence, and finally starts seeing him. Her love for Krishna helps her suffer insults from her sister-in-law. Yet, as she explains to her concerned husband, what she loves in Krishna is not his body but his soul and virtues (Tyabji, 1941, pp. 62-63). The tale ends with a scene where the whole family, including Sharmila's parents, husband, and his sisters and parents praise Krishna upon his appearance. Full of vivid, detailed descriptions of nature and song and dance, as well as passionate confessions of love, the book's imagery and tone merges religious worship with pastoral and erotic elements.

The Heart of a Gopi attracted substantial attention; it had several reeditions (1941, 1953, 1971, 1977) and was translated into French (1938, 2016), German (1977), Dutch (1995), and Telugu (1984, 1992). As Siobhan Lambert-Hurley argues, the text owed its success chiefly to crossing the boundaries between various religious traditions and thus rejecting "an exclusively 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' (or, indeed, 'Sikh' or' Christian') paradigm", a feature observable also in the case of other South Indian figures and communities, who due to their rejection of organized forms of worship in Hinduism and Islam became important both for the bhakti movement and Sikh sects, or Sufi poets who integrated Hindu, mostly Krishnaite, elements into Muslim poetry (2014, p. 571). Another factor which might have contributed to the continuous interest in *The Heart of a Gopi* is that it can be read as "a personal narrative, an evocation of the self" (Lambert-Hurley, 2014, p. 572), with Sharmila as the author's alter-ego. Seen this way, the metaphorical language of bhakti allows Tyabji to justify her own life choices, chiefly with regard to abandoning affluent family life in favour of Gandhi's ideals, but also to express her sexuality, obviously at odds with the vow of celibacy that she took inspired by him. The role of gopi provided Tyabji with a way of articulating her earthly desires as spiritual fulfilment that is without actual consummation, and it has been argued (Lambert-Hurley, 2014, p. 592) that her model for the figure of Krishna may have been Gandhi himself (Lambert-Hurley, 2014, p. 592).

Dynowska's Polish translation of *The Heart of a Gopi* was released in 1948 with Biblioteka Polsko-Indyjska (the publishing note reads: "Published by Umadevi for the Indo-Polish Library, Bangalore") as the second foreign-language version of this text after the French. However, the translator must have worked on it much earlier, as she mentions the book in a 1939 letter to Szukiewicz, inquiring whether he found a publisher for it. Apart from the obvious relevance of bhakti, the reason why Dynowska chose to translate Tyabji's text might have been similarities between the two women. Both belonged to Gandhi's circle, worked as social activists, and seemed to share views on religion and women's empowerment; neither married or had children. An interesting translation shift suggesting a heightened sense of female community – regardless of whether it was consulted with the author or constitutes the translator's personal input – occurs in the dedication: while the English original reads "Dedicated to a Gopi I know and love" (Tyabji, 1941), the Polish, here in back translation, has: "Dedicated with all my love to all Gopi – Milkmaids, and especially one, whom I know and love" (Tyabji, 1948).

The translator's preface, titled "About the Author", briefly presents Tyabji's biography, including her religious background and her involvement with the Indian National Congress. It demonstrates to what extent Dynowska embraced the author's views, interpreted as matching her own, and also suggests a personal acquaintance:

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> Raihana Tyabji [...] is an odd phenomenon, even for India, which abounds in odd phenomena more than any other country. [...] [S]he believed since childhood in Truth present in *any* religion. [...] Raihana has been a Bhakta (bhakta – a person of passion, loving God ardently) of the one God who is equally alive under *any* name that the human heart gives to Him. [...] She is fond of Christ, Zoroaster, and Buddha. [...] Raihana is a friend of Poland, which she proved a number of times [...]. (Tyabji, 1948, pp. i-iv, emphasis in the original)

This is followed by Tyabji's short note to the Polish edition of *Gopi*, which somewhat resembles Dynowska's rhetoric in her dedication and preface to *Gita*, published one year before.

> Deep darkness is flooding the world today. Let us try and share the small light that we have. Let us extend our hands to each other through space and look for more of this light, more and more. [...] Krishna's flute – the symbol of one, universal and eternal Truth – keeps playing its melodies, always sending its song to all corners of the world; anyone can hear it and take this divine song into their heart. [...] Hear it, my Polish brethren. (Tyabji 1948, p. 1)

While for Tyabji the "darkness" probably meant the atrocities surrounding the partition of India (1947), Dynowska could have also referred these words to the tyranny of communist authorities in Poland in the aftermath of World War II.

Given Dynowska's non-discriminatory approach to religious denominations and her belief in the universal truth beyond surface differences, one could expect that her translation would seek to efface the foreignness of Tyabji's text to make it as accessible as possible to the Polish reader and facilitate the transmission of the 'message'. The English original is not complex in terms of syntax or style; however, it is studded with Indian terms denoting religious concepts, proper names, elements of the natural world, musical instruments, household items, etc. They are not moderated by any paratextual explanations, which means that Tyabji assumed that they would be familiar to readers of the original, i.e. the English-speaking Indian elites[8] and, to a lesser extent, the British living in India. However, the readers of the translation would have found Indian terms and the concepts they signify radically foreign, even if Dynowska's most immediate target was the local community of Polish wartime refugees, rather than readers in Poland. In fact, she is known to have complained about the former group's lack of interest in and ignorance of their surroundings.

Nevertheless, rather than finding domesticating paraphrases or even omitting some of the Indian terms to facilitate the reading experience, Dynowska usually opts for a Polish transcription without any paraphrase, and only explains them in fifty-six endnotes. It should be noted here that the placing of notes at the end of the booklet rather than as footnotes may have resulted from Dynowska and Frydman's notorious difficulties with the technical side of their publishing enterprise (problems with typesetters, lack of special types etc.), as opposed to being the translator's choice (see Dębicka-Borek & Ziemann, 2021, p. 70). The last page of the Polish edition of *Gopi* contains an apology: "For reasons beyond the publisher's control – the closing down of the old printing press – we had to print the explanations [endnotes] without Polish diacritical marks, which the readers will kindly forgive us". Either way, the accumulation of foreign-looking words makes the Polish text challenging despite its otherwise simple language and uncomplicated plot line.

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[8] This target group is suggested by Tyabji's choice of English rather than Urdu as the language of her narrative.

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The following examples, given in the original English, with Polish 'equivalents', as they appeared in Dynowska's version, added in square brackets, give an idea of Dynowska's treatment of Tyabji's text:

> They call him also "Mohan" [Mohan] and "Nand-Krishna" [Nand-Kiszor] and "Kanyaiya" [Kanhaja] and "Kanha" [Kanha] (Tyabji, 1941, p. 23/1948, p. 11)

> Taking therefore my shining lota [lota] from the shelf, I ran out blithely to the little stream that flows through the tamarind grove nearby and began practicing a new step in Râsa [Raasa] [...]. The lota [lota] on my head for balance, my hands free to clap the "padar" [padar] of my saree [sari] drawn and tucked [...] I danced round and round, counting [...] "Mâ-a-dha-va, Mâ-a-dha-va" [Ma-a-dha-wa]. (Tyabji, 1941, p. 46/1948, p. 39)

> That was Samâdhi [Samadhi], that divine trance [...] — that bliss unutterable when the Soul stands at last face to face with the Paramâtmâ [Bóg], and knows "This am I" [Nim JEST. Tat Twam Asi]. (Tyabji, 1941, p. 45/1948, p. 38)

In the last example, Dynowska renders *Paramâtmâ* as "God" [Pol. *Bóg*], yet, as though to make up for this domesticating gesture, she adds the Sanskrit expression absent from Tyabji's text, which only gives its English approximation: "Tat Tvam Asi" from Chandogya Upanishad. Similarly, when Tyabji writes "I must water that Tulsi plant from which he plucked leaves for worship" (1941, p. 6), Dynowska not only leaves the exotic botanical name (without adding the generic explanatory noun "plant"), but adds another foreign term, the Sanskrit *Puja*, rather than using a Polish equivalent of the English general "worship": "Muszę podlać *Tulsi*, z którego rwał dziś listki do *Pudży*" (1948, p. 5; emphasis added). In these instances, the translator seems to assume the role of an editor, stepping in for the author to offer her Polish reader additional information on the details of Hindu rituals – not only in the endnotes, which explain "Tat Tvam Asi", "tulsi", and "Puja", but already in the main text.

Domesticating functional equivalence, generally absent from the main text, appears in the endnotes, for example when Dynowska likens the fragrant flowers and leaves of tulsi to thyme (Pol. *macierzanka*), describes king Kansa, who wanted to kill Krishna upon birth, as "the Hindu Herod", or god Madan or Kama as Amor. Apart from such paraphrases, however, the endnotes offer detailed explanations, sometimes turning into paragraph-long, almost ethnographic mini-essays. For example, with reference to tilak [rendered in Polish in the same form], Dynowska not only explains the symbolic meaning of the sign painted on the forehead, but also tells the Polish reader how it is made (with "red powder 'kumkum', sometimes with fragrant sandalwood paste, or, in the North, in Kashmir – with saffron"; Tyabji, 1948, p. 3). Some notes also contain instructions on pronunciation, e.g. "gadza-gamini (gaja-gamini): emphasis on the first syllable of the second word" (Tyabji, 1948, p. 6). Dynowska indeed set the bar for her target reader rather high.

As regards the crucial term *bhakti*, it appears in the Polish text in its original form six times, and receives only a cursory explanation in the endnotes, together with its personal cognate, *bhakta* (two occurrences): "Bhakta – a lover of god, ardent admirer, devoted to the love of the Supreme One under His various forms and names. Bhakti – love, ardour for Him" (Tyabji, 1948, p. 67). This surprising constraint in otherwise elaborate footnotes may be interpreted as Dynowska's reverence for the idea, which she finds irreducible to an explanation. Since Tyabji's whole story is a praise of bhakti, and it involves two dialogues specifically discussing its nature (1941, pp. 40-41 and pp. 67-68), the translator seems to have believed that the Polish reader would glean its meaning from the context.

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5. Conclusion

As a contemporary text by a female author who was not known as a writer, philosopher or spiritual master, Raihana Tyabji's narrative of bhakti devotionalism stands out in Wanda Dynowska's translation output. However, the translator's choice becomes understandable in light of her personal interests, beliefs, and circumstances, which coincided with Tyabji's. As in other titles in Biblioteka Polsko-Indyjska/Indo-Polish-Library, Dynowska used her privileged position as a translator, editor, and publisher in one to control which Indian texts would be communicated to the Polish readers and how. In the case of Tyabji, both the original and the translation embrace a certain type of deeply personal spirituality and celebrate women's challenging of social norms, an idea fitting Dynowska's idealized image of the position of women in India, and her general view of women's right to self-expression and to pursuing their chosen lifestyle. However, while readers of the English *Gopi* who were familiar with Tyabji's life could interpret her text also as an autobiographical parable, in the Polish translation, with the shift in target audience, a different aim is foregrounded by the translator: educating Poles about Indian customs, traditions, nature, geography, etc., and, most importantly, fostering their understanding of Indian (and, especially, bhakti) spirituality. Rather than presenting the booklet as a romantic pastoral with some elements of spiritual teaching, Dynowska, as usual, chose to use this opportunity to propagate knowledge about India.

Given her failed attempts at interesting Polish publishers with Tyabji's book and her own essays on the Hindu woman and the concept of bhakti, Dynowska was aware that her choice of texts and themes would not easily resonate with Polish readers, but she still carried her plans through. While the circulation and reception of her translation work in general requires further research, it is safe to say that it was largely limited first to theosophical, then scholarly (Indological) circles. Dynowska's respect for Indian foreignness and her 'didactic' approach seems to have been too uncompromising and demanding for the Polish common reader. For this reason, and because of the lack of support from professional publishing institutions which could have helped distribute her work, Dynowska's lifetime goal of showing India to Polish readers as she saw it – unity in diversity and familiarity in foreignness – proved well-nigh utopian.

6. Acknowledgements

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Non-feminist women translators of the Bible:
Swedish translator Viveka Heyman as a case in point

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Abstract

This paper discusses the work of Viveka Heyman (1919-2013), the first woman to translate the Hebrew Bible into Swedish. It argues that Heyman's translation strategies were informed by a radical form of cultural relativism; as a consequence, she rejected all forms of critique of male bias and misogyny in the biblical texts, a critique that according to her was voiced from a present-day cultural context. She contended that such bias was only to be found in interpretations and translations of the biblical texts, and not in the source texts themselves. For a woman translator of the Bible, this stands out as a less common approach. The case of Viveka Heyman is thus used in this study to illustrate how women translators may translate the Bible (and other religious texts) in more ways than one, and for a number of different reasons.

Keywords

Bible translation, women translators, Viveka Heyman, cultural relativism, feminist translation studies

1. Introduction

The literary critic, author, and translator Viveka Heyman (1919-2013) was the first woman ever to translate the Hebrew Bible into Swedish. The first translations of Hebrew Bible books into Swedish appeared already in the 14th century; in 1541, the first complete translation of the Bible into Swedish was published. Being revised several times, this translation came to dominate Sweden for several hundred years. The 20th century saw a new authorized version, published in 1917. These projects were all collaborative or collective endeavours, and none of them included women as translators. By contrast, Viveka Heyman's appearance on the stage of biblical translation did not come in the context of an official committee or as a contractor for a new authorized version; it was a wholly personal and individual project. During a period of almost forty years, she published her one-woman translations of large parts of the Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs, 1960; Qohelet, 1961; Job, 1969; Proverbs, 1970; 1-2 Samuel, 1977; Genesis, 1979; Psalms, 1981; and the Latter Prophets, 1996.

As will be explored in this paper, through her translations Viveka Heyman took positions on matters of interpretation and translation that differ from those generally expected from women translators. Such expectations were gradually formed during the wake of early Western feminist translation in the 1980s and onwards (see the discussion in section 3), leading to the articulation of specific translation strategies as well as assessments of source text features that were deemed problematic from a feminist point of view. Viveka Heyman, however, did not accept such assessments. For example, according to Heyman, the idea that the biblical texts were characterized by 'male bias' (e.g., Bird, 1988) presupposed present-day culture and society as a norm, whereby the biblical texts inevitably fell short[1].

Feminist translation is arguably situated at an intersection between descriptive research and prescriptive practice. As such, it both shapes and conveys specific translational norms. As already suggested, this seems also to form and affect expectations on women translators more generally. With Viveka Heyman as a case in point, this paper aims to critically address and discuss such expectations. In other words, an important rationale for the paper is similar to that of Hassen, who seeks "to investigate the assumption that a translator's feminine gender automatically results or leads in/to a woman-centered or feminist reading of the source text" (2012, p. 3).

In this paper, I will pursue the following line of argument: feminist translation expects women translators of the Bible to use translation strategies that 'intervene' in(to) the source texts. Such an expectation is based on the assumption that the biblical source texts are marked by different forms of male bias which need to be dealt with by the translator. Viveka Heyman however did not think such conceptions applicable to the biblical texts. Her work therefore challenges assumptions which, since early feminist translation of the 1980s and 90s, have turned into a form of essentialization of women translators (i.e., women translators are ascribed certain characteristics connected to their gender). This phenomenon has perhaps been particularly noticeable when it comes to women translators of the biblical texts, simply because the Bible is often considered as the prime example of a misogynist or male biased text (e.g., Long, 2013, p. 471). Implicitly or explicitly, there seems hence to exist an expectation on women translators to perceive certain problems connected to the translation of particular texts in a specific way — precisely because they are women. However, as I will argue in what

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[1] Viveka Heyman's first translation of a Hebrew Bible book was published in 1960, thus decades before the feminist translation assumptions referred to were first being articulated. However, in feminist translation studies, they are frequently used to discuss historical, and not only contemporary, translation (e.g., Castro & Ergun, 2018). It should also be noted that Heyman's work was published during a long period of time, with her last full-length book in 2000.

follows, women translators may translate the Bible in a number of ways and — perhaps more importantly — for a number of reasons.

I will start the paper by introducing the work of Viveka Heyman, outlining some of her main translation strategies and her discussion of important Hebrew Bible source text features. I will mostly draw on paratextual material in the form of the introductory essays that accompanied her published translations. I introduce the concept of cultural relativism as a way of explaining Heyman's understanding of the Hebrew Bible. This will be followed by a discussion of feminist issues in biblical translation, with a view to placing Heyman in this context. Differences and similarities between Heyman's approach and some of the assumptions of feminist translation will be underlined. Next, Heyman's participation in a public discussion with non-fiction author and debater Birgitta Onsell during the 1990s, in connection to a state-funded offical project to translate the Bible into Swedish, will be related. This will further highlight the deviations between Heyman's translation strategies and those of feminist translation. The extent of Heyman's cultural relativism will also be illustrated. The paper will end with a general discussion and some final conclusions.

2. Viveka Heyman: translation strategies and principles

Viveka Heyman was born in 1919 in Uppsala, north of Stockholm, to Jewish parents. After studying at the university in Uppsala for three years, she moved to Stockholm in 1946 to work at the syndicalist newspaper *Arbetaren* [The Worker]. During this time, Heyman became an increasingly productive literary critic. In 1948 she unexpectedly moved to the new-born state of Israel, where she lived several years. Initially, she lived at different kibutzes, and then in Jerusalem, where she studied Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew at the Hebrew University. In 1955 she published her first translation into Swedish, a collection of Jewish short stories which was hailed by Swedish newspapers as a pioneering work, letting Swedish readers get a glimpse of modern Hebrew literature. In the same year, she also published a collection of poems. By this time, Viveka Heyman had moved back to Sweden to live in Stockholm, although she frequently traveled to Israel for the rest of her life.

In 1960, Heyman published her first translation of a Hebrew Bible book, the Song of Songs. The translated text was preceded by a lenghty preface, where Heyman (1960, pp. 5-23) outlined her views of the interpretation and translation of the text. In very harsh terms, she criticized the Swedish 'authorized version' of the time, a fairly idiomatic translation of the Bible into Swedish published in 1917. According to Heyman, this translation had downplayed the erotic language of the Song of Songs, thereby draining it of most of its original content. In her opinion, the reader of this translation could not experience what the source text had originally conveyed. Thus, in her own translation, Heyman made extensive use of erotic metaphors. In fact, the dialogues of the Song of Songs were, as she put it, "nothing else than a number of literary moulded orgasms" (p. 11)[2]. The translation received numerous reviews, generally praising Heyman's rendering.

Encouraged by this, Heyman immediately embarked on her next translation, of the book of Qohelet (Ecclesiastes). It was published one year later, in 1961. In the preface (pp. 5–31), Heyman for the first time showed her strong affinity with the Romantic movement and its interest in the Hebrew Bible (on this, see, e.g., Høgenhaven, 2018). Heyman insisted that the source texts, as well as the character of Qohelet himself could only be grasped through a study informed by "empathy" (*inlevande studium*, Heyman, 1961, p. 8). To understand the Bible, one needs to enter it, as it were, and apprehend the biblical texts on their own terms.

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[2] All of Heyman's work was originally published in Swedish. When I quote Heyman here and in the following, the translations into English are my own.

This much resembles the 'psychological interpretation' of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics (see Schleiermacher, 1998). Related to this is the idea, put forward by Heyman in the preface, that the logic of the Hebrew Bible is radically different from Western, Aristotelian logic (Heyman, 1961, pp. 10-11). The logic of the Bible is, instead, the "logic of poetry" (p. 10). Here, Heyman quotes in an almost verbatim way the first chapter of Johann Gottfried Herder's *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie* (1782-1783). According to Herder, the Biblical Hebrew language could be compared to the violently rocking waves of a stormy ocean. This is typical of the non-modest aesthetic preferences of the Romantics and their precursors, with Rousseau as one of the most important influences. In a similar way, Heyman stated that encountering the texts of the Hebrew Bible should resemble being "hit by a shock, by a thunderstorm" (1980a, p. 23). In terms of translation strategies, this brings to mind Lawrence Venuti's notion of 'foreignization,' a strategy aiming to give the reader of a translated work an "alien reading experience" (2008, p. 16). Not surprisingly, in outlining his concepts of 'foreignization' and 'domestication,' Venuti (2008, pp. 83-98) draws heavily on Schleiermacher and his notion of "cultural difference" (Venuti, 2008, p. 95).

One of the ideas brought forth by the Romantics was that of linguistic relativism (Leavitt, 2015), which means that language and mode of thought or world-view are closely related. As Herder put it: "A people has no idea for which it has no word" (quoted in Leavitt, 2015, p. 84). In the preface to her translation of the Book of Psalms (1981), Viveka Heyman explicitly sided with such ideas. To take one example, she stressed the fact that Biblical Hebrew lacks the grammatical category of tense. According to Heyman, this was an indication that the ancient Hebrews possessed a particular "conception of time" (*tidsbegrepp*; Heyman, 1981, p. 18). The fact that Biblical Hebrew was linguistically structured in a certain way thus determined its speakers' mode of thought. The Biblical Hebrew verbal system hence indicated a specific 'Hebrew thinking' (cf. Koch, 1991, pp. 3-24).

This kind of linguistic relativism put forward by Heyman may be seen as a specific instance of the broader concept of cultural relativism (Brown, 2008; Donnelly, 1984; on the concept of relativism, see Hales 2011). Cultural relativism stresses the (partial) incommensurability between different cultures, which is connected to variances of world-view or mode of thought. Thus, world-views may not be explained as outcomes of universal (e.g., biological) factors. By this follows that there are "no universal criteria for adjudicating between differing world-views" (Baghramian & Carter, 2020, §4.1[b]). Viveka Heyman's attempt to study, interpret, and translate the biblical texts 'on their own terms' thus resembles the position of the anthropologist Franz Boas, the founding father of modern anthropology and a strong proponent of cultural relativism, who "unremittingly preached [to his students] the necessity of seeing the native from within" (Robert Lowie, qtd. in Brown 2008, p. 364 n. 3, addition mine). This could also be a neat summary of Viveka Heyman's conception of how to study the Hebrew Bible: it has to be approached from within.

In the following section, I identify a few important aspects of feminist translation, eventually narrowing down the discussion to issues of biblical translation. I then address how these differ from the ideas voiced by Heyman.

3. Heyman's strategies versus feminist translation approaches

Many Bible scholars and translators agree that the language of the Bible is the "product of patriarchal society and serves to perpetuate androcentric perspectives" (Bird, 1988, p. 95 n. 1). Feminist translators of the Bible and other religious texts have over time discussed and conceptualized different strategies for dealing with this kind of male bias (e.g., Simon, 1996, pp. 111-133; Von Flotow, 1997, pp. 52-57). In what follows, I review some of the main notions

which feminist (Bible) translation has highlighted, to prepare the ground for my discussion of the strategies used by Viveka Heyman and assess how they differ from those generally implemented by feminist translators.

The first thing that should be noted is that 'feminist translation' is not, of course, a unitary concept. It naturally encompasses a number of different standpoints. Nevertheless, a few prominent features can be singled out. I will very briefly discuss the following terms, which can be characterized as different but interconnected approaches to the task of translation: intervention, re-writing/meaning production, and activism. They are all closely related. First, intervention is a concept that may be traced back to the Canadian school of the 1980's (see Von Flotow, 1991); it continues to be prominent in feminist translation to this day (Castro & Ergun, 2018; Von Flotow & Kamal, 2020). Second, intervention is generally understood as a form of re-writing (Karpinski, 2015), whereby the translator becomes an active part in meaning production (Fisher, 2010). According to Simon (1996, p. 13), feminist translation therefore "foreground[s] female subjectivity in the production of meaning." Third, as intervention not only has linguistic but also political implications, it is not uncommon to label it as a form of feminist 'activism' (e.g., Castro & Ergun, 2018). What these approaches have in common is an attempt to move beyond the idea of translation as a search for equivalence between source text and target text. In the words of Karpinski (2015), they oppose the traditional "concept of fidelity to the original" (p. 23; see also, e.g., Vander Stichele 2002; Arrojo 1994; on the sexist connotations of the terms 'fidelity' or 'faithfulness,' see Chamberlain's 1988 seminal paper).

What the approaches discussed above have in common is that they are grounded in an attempt to foreground women translators and their experience. The way these approaches were first articulated, as well as the context in which this took place, entail that women translators in many cases have continued to be associated with them. Occasionally, this also works backwards in time, as it were. A striking example is how Castro & Ergun (2018), in an attempt to focus on examples of 'feminist' translation before the Canadian school, discuss several 17th- and 18th-century women translators; their work is gathered under the umbrella term "feminist intervention" (p. 127). The work of these women translators is thus interpreted in terms of feminist translation approaches or strategies outlined in the 1980s and early 90s, in a specific linguistic and cultural context (Wallmach, 2006). I will return to this point in the concluding discussion.

In Bible translation, intervention strategies involving the use of gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language have been increasingly common from the 1980s onwards (Strauss, 1998; Clason, 2006). The New Revised Standard Version (1989) was one of the first major translations to employ gender-neutral language; the 1996 revised "Inclusive Language Edition" of the New International Version may also be mentioned. More recently, the German *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (2007) has sparked both interest and controversy (see Köhler, 2012). Such gender-neutral and gender-inclusive translations use strategies that may indeed by termed feminist; by Nord (2002), they are explicitly connected to "feminist ideology" (pp. 110-111). This is because they aim at "remov[ing] the cultural bias" of the biblical source texts (Strauss, 1998, p. 60), which includes different forms of male bias (Von Flotow, 1997, pp. 52-53; Ellingworth, 1987). "Removing" something from the source texts clearly implies some sort of intervention strategy. Accordingly, in line with feminist translation more generally, feminist Bible translation by and large rejects the notion of linguistic or semantic 'fidelity' to the source texts (Vander Stichele, 2002; Pippin, 1998; Castelli, 1990; see, however, Bird, 1988).

This brings us back to the central character of this paper: Viveka Heyman. She argued that the literary and cultural features identified as problematic male bias are not, in fact, present in the biblical source texts: in her opinion, such features are exclusively the outcome of fallacies

in interpretation and translation of the source texts (Heyman, 1961, pp. 10-21, 27-31; 1980b, pp. 68-69, 82-83; 1981, pp. 14-15). Therefore, in her work, Heyman sought to correct such misinterpretations. One example is her discussion of the concept of 'original sin,' derived from Genesis 3. According to Heyman, this notion did not stem from the source text, but from the interpretation of the Christian fathers, notably Augustine (Heyman 1980b, p. 69). Heyman also argued that the common conception that Eve had been created subordinate to Adam (Genesis 2) was indeed the result of a fallacious interpretation. Eve was in fact created as a "companion" (*motstycke*) to Adam (Heyman, 1980b, p. 69), and not as a 'helper,' as someone supposed to serve the man. According to Heyman, this latter idea had been implied by earlier translations. She explicitly stated that the source text was not to blame for any misogynist tendencies, but rather the Swedish 'authorized version' of 1917 (Heyman, 1980b, p. 87), which rendered Gen 2:18b "I will make for him a help, one that is suitable to him" (translation mine)[3]. In contrast to what was conveyed by this translation, Heyman's contention was that Eve was indeed created equal to Adam.

Another example of such exegesis is to be found in Heyman's translation of Proverbs (1970). In the introduction, Heyman stated that the depiction of women in this book marks a complementary view on their role and character in relation to men (pp. 17-18). Thus, in biblical society, women did not occupy a "marginal position" (Newsom, 1989, pp. 156-157), but a different, complementary position. In other words, if 'patriarchy' is defined as a hierarchical structure where one group of people (i.e., women) is subordinate to another group (i.e., men), Heyman's contention would be that this definition is simply not applicable to the biblical source texts but, rather, the outcome of fallacious interpretation and translation.

Other translators who have criticized male bias in earlier biblical translations usually acknowledge that it exists already in the source texts (e.g., Korsak, 2002); it has since been reproduced or even strengthened in translation (see Michaud, 2020). These views thus clearly deviate from Heyman's take that the source texts themselves do not carry with them any such bias. Heyman's criticism of Bible translations was directed also at contemporary translations, for example the Swedish state-funded biblical translation *Bibel 2000*, a project which had started in the 1970's and thus parallelled her own translations. Since it according to her was too idiomatic, Heyman explicitly called this translation a "distortion" of the source texts (Heyman 1980b, p. 85; for an extended discussion, see Pleijel, 2019a, pp. 127-146)[4]. In the following section, I discuss Heyman's debate with the Swedish author Birgitta Onsell during the 1990s on the subject of male bias in the Bible, which sheds further light on the extent of Heyman's cultural relativism.

4. Debating Birgitta Onsell

From the second half of the 1980s, the Swedish non-fiction writer and debater Birgitta Onsell (1925-2012) wrote several popular books and essays on the Hebrew Bible, containing feminist critique of different forms of male bias in the biblical texts. When the translation project

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[3] As noted by one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper, the Hebrew text of Gen 2:18 and 20 contains the phrase ʿ*ezer knegdô*, which opens up for any translation to stress both the 'helper' (ʿ*ezer*) and the 'companion' (*knegdô*) aspect (e.g., NRSV, "I will make him a helper as his partner"). However, the wording of the 1917 Swedish translation definitely rules out this implied possibility, exclusively stressing the 'helper' aspect of the source text.

[4] While Heyman, having published her first translation of a Hebrew Bible book in 1960, was the first woman to translate parts of the Hebrew Bible into Swedish, it should be noted that several women took place in the committee that carried out this state-sponsored translation. For an account by one of these translators, see Pleijel, 1996.

Bibel 2000, mentioned above, was starting to come to an end in the late 1980s and early 90s, Birgitta Onsell persistently voiced her critique against this project. According to her, because of the Hebrew Bible's condescending stance towards women, the new translation should be endowed with an introduction pointing out these problematic features (e.g., Onsell, 1999). In the wake of Onsell's campaign, several members of the Swedish parliament (Riksdag) placed a bill in 1990 on this issue: since the translation project *Bibel 2000* was organized and funded by the state, the Swedish Government should instruct the translation committee to include the kind of foreword that Onsell had suggested. In 1995, a new, similar bill was put forward; it spoke of "an incomprehensible, hateful attitude to women that permeates especially older parts of the Bible" (Parliamentary motion bill nr. 1994/95: Kr408; translation mine).

Viveka Heyman vigorously opposed these initiatives. In an essay, printed in 2000, she debated Birgitta Onsell in rather harsh terms. Interestingly, Heyman began by stating that "indisputably, the Bible — from its first page to its last — is set in a patriarchal society, where man reigns" (Heyman, 2000, p. 11). However, she then explained that "when we encounter customs which differ from our customs, we must not assume that they are inferior compared to ours, simply because they are different" (p. 12). Thus, on the one hand, Heyman acknowledged male bias in the biblical texts, but on the other she would not criticize it as such, since doing so would have entailed imposing anachronistic standards on the biblical texts. It thus seems plausible to suggest that Heyman would not have agreed with the normative or prescriptive statements that inform much of feminist scholarship on the Bible, including feminist translations of the holy scripture (cf. above, section 3). For example, Bird's (1988) definition of sexist language in the Bible as "language that employs masculine terms and images *inappropriately* to describe human and divine reality" (p. 95 n. 1; emphasis mine) is a normative statement that Heyman most likely would not have agreed on, simply because she did not share the basic premise that features of the biblical source texts could be described as "inappropriate."

As a consequence, such criticisms were called into question by Heyman and discussed by her in connection to a number of specific biblical texts, in order to show that these texts had been erroneously interpreted as misogynist. Heyman's interpretation of Genesis 2, arguing that Eve was a companion (and not a helper) to Adam, has already been mentioned. Another example discussed by Heyman is how women were considered impure after having given birth (Leviticus 12). According to Heyman, this was not because of any denegrating stance towards women or their' bodies, but purely a matter of culturally conditioned fear of blood, which was assumed to hold a person's 'soul' (*nephesh*) (Heyman, 2000, p. 13; cf. Pleijel, 2019b, pp. 162-163). Another case, put forward by Birgitta Onsell as an example of misogynism in the Hebrew Bible, was the prophet Nahum calling the city of Nineveh a prostitute or whore (Nah 3:4). According to Heyman (2000), this was not because Nahum despised women, but simply because the grammatical gender of the noun 'city' (*'iyr*) is feminine in Hebrew (p. 21). Thus, Heyman implied that, had 'city' been grammatically masculinine, Nahum would instead have chosen a male metaphor.

Whether or not one agrees with Heyman's exegesis of these texts, the interpretations put forward appear to make sense. However, other examples show a more controversial exegesis, for example when Heyman discusses the assumed rapes of, respectively, Tamar and Dinah (2 Samuel 13; Genesis 34) (Heyman, 2000, pp. 16-19). Her line of argument is that if one knows enough about the cultural background, the general opinion that Genesis 34 chronicles how Dinah is raped must be revised. Heyman refers to a stipulation in Deut 22:28-29, according to which a man must marry a woman if he has had sexual intercourse with her. According to Heyman, Dinah and Sechem loved each other and wanted to get married, which is why they had sexual intercourse in the first place: to force their parents to let them marry. Unlikely as

this seems, the interpretation stands out as even more unlikely in light of the story's ending, where Dinah's brothers say to their father, "should our sister be treated like a whore?" (New Revised Standard Version)[5]. As for Tamar and Amnon (2 Samuel 13), Heyman attributes great importance to the bread Tamar bakes at Amnon's request. In her exegesis, Heyman introduces an object that is not even mentioned in the source text: the bread peel that Tamar supposedly uses for baking the bread. According to Heyman, Amnon fools Tamar to leave in another room the bread peel, otherwise she would have used it to knock him senseless. By this, Tamar shows that she is a "resolute girl" (*resolut flicka*; Heyman, 2000, p. 18). The actual sexual violence, however, goes unnoticed by Heyman. And as already noted, the bread peel at the center of Heyman's exegesis is not even mentioned in the biblical text. It might thus be seen as an extreme form of 'psychological interpretation' (see section 2), according to which the interpreter's ability to delve into the world of the text is sufficient for deducing this kind of information.

I would like to mention, in connection to these two examples, an instance from earlier work by Heyman for the newspaper *Arbetaren* (see Pleijel, 2019a, pp. 56-57). During the early 1970s, Swedish news media gave much prominence to the rape of a young girl by a North African sailor on leave from his ship in Stockholm. It was reported that initially the girl had consented, but then changed her mind. The sailor, however, would not accept this and went through with the intercourse. Viveka Heyman wrote about the case in *Arbetaren* and, according to her opinion, the sailor could not be condemned for having acted this way: in his culture, a woman who indicated that she wanted to have sexual intercourse could not change her mind. All in all, in Heyman's view, the girl was to blame, since she had acted in a way that did not respect the sailor's culture. Horrifying as this line of argument indeed seems, it appears as the logical consequence of a form of radical cultural relativism (see Donnelly, 1984). In other words, Heyman basically held that cultural and historic variations "are exempt from legitimate criticism by outsiders," as Donnelly (1984, p. 400) has it. As already suggested, a radical cultural relativism is evident also in Heyman's strategies of interpretation and translation when it comes to the texts of the Hebrew Bible.

5. Concluding remarks

Moving on to the concluding discussion, I will seek to summarize the connections between Viveka Heyman, cultural relativism, and feminist conceptions of translation, to show how Heyman might be understood as a translator who challenges several of the assumptions that are generally made about women translators of the Bible.

I would like to first summarize Viveka Heyman's overall view on what the biblical texts represent and how they should consequently be translated. Three main points can be singled out. 1) According to Heyman, the Bible is indeed set in a patriarchal context, and it is important to acknowledge the cultural context within which the scripture emerged. 2) This, however, should not lead to criticism against features which may be perceived as male biased, since this would entail assessing the biblical texts from the perspective of present-day culture and society. In other words, even though Heyman did occasionally use the terms 'patriarchal' or 'patriarchy,' she did not give them a pejorative sense. This position is a logical consequence of Heyman's cultural relativism. 3) Accordingly, the anachronisms that according to Heyman were evident in the history of biblical exegesis and translation should be revised and corrected. With the hermeneutics of the Romantic movement as an important source of inspiration, this may only be done by 'returning' to the source texts, by assuming their standpoints, striving to adhere as closely as possible to them in translation. Thus, a translation strategy such as intervention,

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[5]   I want to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this out.

which implies 'altering' the source texts or 'adding' to them would, according to Heyman, be untenable. At the same time, Heyman's own translations could indeed 'deviate' from the source texts, linguistically speaking[6]. This should not be seen as an inconsistency on her part, but once again as a consequence of her affinity with the Romantic movement, resulting in the idea that fidelity to the 'spirit' (*Geist*) of the source text could in fact leed to 'freer' translation strategies (Pleijel, 2019a, pp. 214–217). Since translation according to the Romantics and their precursors meant delving into "the inner spirit of a work" (Baildam, 1999, p. 111), a translation could be idiomatic, even a paraphrase, while still being 'true' or 'faithful' to the original (for an extended discussion, see Huyssen, 1969).

If not always on a practical level, on a general level Heyman's positions are clearly at odds with many of the central assumptions of feminist Bible translators. Her unwillingness to 'alter' the source texts by 'intervening' into them was discussed above. For the same reason, Heyman would not have agreed to gender-neutral or gender-inclusive translations. Nor would she have agreed with another position held by a minority of feminist translators or translation scholars, namely that biblical translations should in fact convey the Bible's male bias, in order to expose it (Simon, 1996, p. 125; Bird, 1988; cf. Henitiuk, 2019, p. 440; for a discussion of this position with respect to Qur'an translation, see Hassen, 2011, p. 222). The reason Heyman would have rejected these positions is that they are voiced from a perspective that, according to her, does not acknowledge the cultural and linguistic contingency of the biblical texts; they seek to expose 'male bias' as deeply problematic, and not simply as a feature among others of the biblical texts. It should perhaps be noted that the kind of far-reaching cultural relativism demonstrated in such contentions has potentially problematic implications, not least if it becomes equated or confused with moral or ethical relativism (cf. Brown, 2008; Lukes, 2008). As Vander Stichele (2002, p. 155) aptly noted,

> [a] literal rendering of the text may be considered unproblematic when it concerns Homer, but not when it concerns the Bible. The reason is that the Bible is not considered just another ancient book, and its translations are not meant for private use only. Biblical texts are part and parcel of public discourse. As such, they reflect and shape people's identity.

Needless to say, this insight has been an important rationale for feminist scholarship on the Bible, with consequences where its translation is concerned. The use of the Bible, generally as a translated text, has in different ways affected women's lives during centuries. This is precisely why women translators, from Julia E. Smith onwards, have sought to translate the Bible in the service of women's liberation (Cho, 2011).

But is this true for women translators of the Bible in general? This brings us back to what I have argued in this paper: that Viveka Heyman's work is relevant to investigate as a case that highlights and, indeed, flouts many of the assumptions that feminist translators and feminist translation scholars have made about women translators. In more recent research, the essentializing tendencies of earlier feminist translation have been called into question (Castro & Ergun, 2017; Von Flotow & Farahzad, 2017; Brown, 2020). And yet, the translation strategies once associated with what is now being perceived as an essentializing understanding of women as translators are still being employed and expected when it comes to precisely

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[6] One example is Heyman's recurring, somewhat bizarre tendency to include literary motifs and concepts from the Icelandic sagas in her Hebrew Bible translations (Pleijel, 2019a, pp. 217-220). In the introduction to her translation of Samuel (Heyman, 1977, pp. 38-39), she suggested that the Old Norse language of the Icelandic sagas shared an affinity with the Biblical Hebrew language. This affinity, however, went deeper than the surface structure of the respective languages: the Hebrews and the medieval Icelanders shared the same 'primitive' mode of thought (cf. Pleijel, 2019a, p. 93), and the linguistic utterances that were an expression of these modes of thought were thus essentially equivalent. They shared the same *Geist*, as it were.

women translators. In other words, translation strategies first articulated in the context of the 1980s and early 90s feminist translation, exclusively dealing with women translators, continue to be associated with feminist translation, and *thus* with women translators. Arguably, such essentializing understanding is an outcome of the second wave-feminism context of early feminist translation (see Von Flotow, 1991). However, informed by a radical form of cultural relativism, and thus refusing the kind of universal standards commonly associated with second wave feminism, Viveka Heyman in fact seems to have had more in common with third wave feminists, stressing the cultural, linguistic and historical contingency of experience (Snyder, 2008; on feminism and cultural relativism, see Brems, 1997).

Taking Viveka Heyman as a case in point, I have suggested in this paper that women translators of the Bible may perceive issues of translation in a number of different ways. This regards specific translation strategies or approaches, as well as more fundamental ideas on what the biblical source texts represent, and how they should be understood. All in all, Viveka Heyman can thus perhaps best be described as a non-feminist translator of the Bible — not because she renounced feminism as such or as a political project, but because she did not consider it applicable to the biblical texts. Paradoxically, this is why her way of thinking about translation and her translations still matter today: they not only question assumptions about what feminist translation might be, but also assumptions about women translators.

6. Acknowledgements

7. References

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Natalie Duddington's religious translations from Russian:
Faith in translation

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Abstract

This article examines translations of religious texts from Russian into English by Natalie Duddington (1886-1972), better known as an assistant to the prolific translator Constance Garnett. I consider 'religious' to refer to both spiritual and scriptural texts, given the overlap between religious and secular values in Russian culture. I explore Duddington's career as a translator from the perspective of her traditionally female *habitus* (Simeoni, 1998) which dictates Duddington's "invisibility" (Venuti, 2008). I argue, however, that invisibility is not necessarily imposed on a female translator by the rules of the cultural field in which she operates. Instead, I analyse Duddington's translatorial *hexis* (Charlston, 2013) to show that, somewhat counter-intuitively, a translator can choose voluntarily to relinquish her own voice in the process of intercultural mediation, to further her perceived higher spiritual purposes. Duddington contributed to the British cultural field as a translator of Russian religious philosophy and literature, and as an author of her own philosophical works. Through these activities, she did not seek a more privileged position in society or to receive great personal gain. On the contrary, her main objective was to bring British and Russian people closer through shared spiritual wisdom.

Keywords

Woman translator, religion, translation, habitus and hexis, Russian religious philosophy, Natalie Duddington

1. Introduction: Duddington's *habitus* and *hexis*

Natalie Duddington (1886-1972) was "regarded as an exceptionally wise woman, for she not only was profound, but she also had the wisdom [not to complain] that she was the silent ghost, one might say even a modest stooge, who helped Constance Garnett to remain as the celebrated translator of Russian novels" (Hill, 1999, p. 101). If we follow the sociological turn in Translation Studies and attempt to define *habitus* as a system of dispositions influencing how an individual acts in his or her social trajectory (Meylaerts, 2011, p. 1), we will, indeed, discover that the translator Natalie Duddington was a kind of 'ghost', or at least an exemplary case study in translator invisibility in the sense of Venuti (2008).

Duddington, a translator of Russian classics and religious philosophy, long remained in the shadow of Constance Garnett (1861-1946), one of the most famous and prolific translators of Russian literature into English. Garnett published seventy-one volumes of translated Russian classics, but it is rarely acknowledged that her extensive output was partly a result of her collaboration with Duddington, who was her principal assistant from 1906, when she moved to Britain from Russia to study philosophy at University College, London.[1] Duddington was a noteworthy student, "a keen, indeed brilliant, intellect, rather sphinx-like features and a considerable sense of humour–a very remarkable young woman" (Garnett, 1970, p. 78). Independently from Garnett, Duddington translated Russian philosophical texts, but given that translations are generally considered "as inferior productions compared with originals" (Long, 2011, p. 47), Duddington's contribution to the field did not receive much attention, and thus she remained only a 'ghost' in philosophical circles.

Duddington's 'ghostly' status is evident in her private life, too. This position in the Garnetts' lives was reinforced by her possible secret affair with Edward Garnett (1868-1937), the husband of Constance and a celebrated critic of Russian literature (Smith, 2017, p. 224). Duddington was also a 'ghost' in her own marital life. After she first moved to Britain, Natalie stayed in the house of a married couple, John and Elisabeth Duddington. John, Rector of Ayot St Lawrence, and Natalie swiftly fell in love with each other. John wanted to marry Natalie, but he could not divorce his wife (at that time there was no divorce by mutual consent). John and Elisabeth Duddington separated, and Natalie cohabited with Duddington, as his common-law wife. Although she assumed John's family name and had children with him, Natalie had to remain John's mistress until 1954 when Elisabeth died. Because of his infidelity, John had to resign his church position, and temporarily lost his income (Winnington, 2020, p. 51). This encouraged Natalie to continue her work as a translator, although she believed that her role as a housewife came first. She admitted that she dealt with her writing and translation work only in odd moments away from domestic duties (Lasunskii, 1972, p. 180). As a native Russian speaker, Natalie Duddington possessed linguistic capital, but she did not try to act as an ambassador for her native culture. That role had already been successfully appropriated by the Garnetts who, as "cultural custodians," alternated "between playing the guardians of the domestic canon, on the one hand, and importers of innovations from foreign-cultures, on the other" (Sela-Sheffy, 2008, p. 620). As Britain was not Duddington's motherland, she could not build a reputation as a "coloniser" in the way that the Garnetts did ("[…] for translation has also been figured as the literary equivalent of colonization, a means of enriching both the language and the literature appropriate to the political needs of expanding nation" (Chamberlain, 1988, p. 459)).

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[1] Even Sherry Simon, an advocate for female translators' voices, refers to Duddington only as "a native Russian speaker" (as Garnett's most significant and consistent collaborator we may reliably assume Simon is referring to Duddington here and not Garnett's other, more fleeting assistants), "The rhythm of Constance Garnett's production was astounding. She would set herself daily objectives for translating and invariably stick to them. Very often she worked in collaboration with a native Russian speaker" (Simon, 2005, p. 66).

But was Duddington unable, or perhaps unwilling, to do this? Following translation scholar Rakefet Sela-Sheffy's exploration of the translator's role as a mediator, we might suppose that Duddington wished to be a cultural custodian, but failed. I believe, however, that this conventional assumption is unlikely.

In this article, I challenge the prevailing, rather shallow perspective on Duddington — that she was a female Russian emigrant living in Britain who, despite her degree in philosophy, long restricted herself to assisting a prominent translator lacking formal training in translation. This is the view of Duddington that we receive when interpreting her professional background (*habitus*) through a Bourdieusian filter. I question the conventional idea that the external circumstances of Duddington's life were of greater importance than her internal spiritual motives, which she revealed in her articles, in prefaces to her translations and in her private papers. My aim is to show Duddington's personal ambitions rather than what the mechanisms of the literary field direct us to assume she would have wanted. Following the ongoing discussion on how *habitus* may fail to satisfactorily accommodate human complexity (Simeoni, 1998, Sela-Sheffy 2005, Meylaerts, 2011), I rely on another, more finely-tuned Bourdieusian term, *hexis*. According to Charlston, *hexis* augments "the repertoire of Bourdieusian theoretical tools applicable to translation"; he defines *hexis* as embodying, "in the minutiae of the translated text, a defiant, honour-seeking attitude of the philosopher-translator with regard to specific oppositions in the surrounding field" (2013, p. 55). My goal is to reveal Duddington's inner motivation — i.e., her *hexis* — to *deliberately* relinquish her own voice, an act which happened to coincide with later scholarly assumptions about translators' "invisibility" (Venuti, 2008). In this paper, I argue that what looks like the traditional female *habitus* of an 'invisible' translator, was in fact, Duddington's *hexis*. Duddington consciously dedicated her translation activity towards achieving higher spiritual purposes in conformity with her philosophical and religious views. She believed in the world as an "organic whole", in the words of the philosopher Nikolai Losskii whom she would later translate (1928), each part of which is equally meaningful before God, and she saw her task as making this 'whole' more united. She, therefore, made it possible for the English-speaking audience to understand Russian spiritual thinkers by translating their works into English leaving as little evidence of her interference as a translator as she could. My task now is to show that Duddington's female *hexis* was far from the superficial role of a passive 'ghost': she did not allow the British cultural field to exhaust her energy and talents; she was subservient neither to the Garnetts, nor within her own house (as her partner's mistress rather than legal wife), nor in her philosophical background, nor with her editors. I start therefore with Duddington's life story, and trace how her background influenced the development of her spirituality. Then I move on to discussing how Duddington's religious views influenced her work as a translator and as an independent philosopher. I conclude by analysing Duddington's personal understanding of her mission as an intercultural mediator. Although she never expressed this vision explicitly in her published works, it is strongly evident in her private papers which I had a chance to view in the Leeds Russian Archive and in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts (Moscow).

2. Duddington's life

Duddington's *hexis* was formed by the search for knowledge which early on transformed into her quest for spiritual 'Truth'. Natalie Duddington (née Ertel') was educated at home until her fifteenth birthday in 1901, when she entered Alferov's gymnasium in Moscow. After two years she transferred to Syuitin's gymnasium in St Petersburg "which was more to her liking" (Garrett, 1982, p. 23). "She is such a very clever girl, so clever that she has always been treated as though intellectually grown up since she was about ten years old" (1904) — wrote

Constance Garnett to her husband Edward upon meeting Natalie in 1904 at the Ertel's' estate, Aleksandrovka (near Voronezh). Garnett met Natalie's parents through the agency of her Russian revolutionary friends, the Kropotkins. Like Petr Kropotkin, Natalie's father, Alexander Ertel' (1855-1908), had been imprisoned in St Petersburg's Peter-and-Paul Fortress and later exiled. Although he had been a famous writer whose novel *The Gardenin Family* (*Гарденины*, 1890) was appreciated by Lev Tolstoy (Tolstoy, 1983, pp. 320-321). Ertel' gave up his writing career in order to secure a more favourable way of life to support his family. He partly shared Tolstoy's views on the simplification of life, but he took up full-time estate management of the big estates of other Russian noble families believing that "to distribute one's property among beggars is not the whole truth. It is also necessary to preserve all that is good in myself and in my children: knowledge, culture, a whole number of truly valuable habits, most of which require not theoretical but *hereditary* transmission" (Bunin, 1951, pp. 127-128). Natalie Duddington learned from her father's example.

The Ertel's were well-known Anglophiles and were seeking at that point an English governess for their daughters, especially Natalie, who had become very fond of England after visiting that country in 1900. Natalie Duddington and her father had spent a week in Vladimir Chertkov's English home on Hayling Island. (Chertkov was one of the main promoters of Tolstoy's religious ideas in Russia and Britain.) This may have stimulated Natalie Duddington to improve her English, and so Constance Garnett was recommended as a language instructor to the Ertel's. By the time Garnett arrived at Aleksandrovka, the Ertel's had already found another teacher but, nevertheless, Constance Garnett and her son were welcomed to stay over the summer as guests. It was the starting point of a long-lasting friendship between Constance Garnett and Natalie Duddington as well as of their productive cooperation.

Before moving to Britain in 1905, Duddington was taking the women's courses offered by the University of St Petersburg, but she did not find her fellow students' fascination with politics "conducive to her studies" (Garrett, 1982, p. 23). Thus in 1906, she decided to enrol at University College London. Sebastian Garrett notes that Duddington's determination to pursue her English studies was not the only reason for moving to London. He believes she was guided by her other great passion — theosophy — which advocated for a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. "When a move from Russia seemed advisable, London, where there was to be a theosophical congress, was the natural place to go" (Garrett, 1982, p. 25). He marks an important distinction between Natalie and her father: "whereas he [Ertel'] hardly dared, even at the end of his life, to be convinced of the rightness of his answers to the great questions of life, Natalie very early sought and found certainties, first in theosophy and then in Russian Orthodoxy" (p. 25). Theosophy and Russian Orthodoxy were the prop and stay of the young woman who would later, if not at first legitimately, take the name of Natalie Duddington. But Garrett misses the importance of the role played by philosophy in shaping Duddington's spiritual *hexis* and translating career. Invisible as she may have been as Constance Garnett's assistant, in the arena of philosophical translation Duddington's role was at least as important as Garnett's was in the world of literature. Duddington became the first mediator to introduce and translate Russian philosophy for the British public.

3. Duddington and spirituality: from theosophy to the Orthodox religion

In St Petersburg, Natalie Duddington had enthusiastically participated in the Theosophical Society (it was founded in 1875 in New York and had followers all over the world, including four circles in St Petersburg). However, she lost interest in theosophy soon after entering the UCL where she received both her BA (in 1909) and MA degrees (in 1911) in philosophy. While in the UCL she came under the influence of the professor and philosopher, G. Dawes Hicks

(1862-1941), who worked primarily on theory of knowledge and philosophy of religion. In a letter dated 18 February 1910, Duddington wrote:

> As for the spiritual atmosphere, which was so dear to me in the theosophical circle in St Petersburg, it was completely replaced by the influence of our professor Dr Hicks. He is extraordinarily devoted to his work, and the sphere of higher thinking is the main thing in life for him. (Chertkov, 1900-1910, my translation)

Natalie Duddington's first translation without Garnett's involvement was *The Justification of the good: An essay on moral philosophy* (1918) by Vladimir Solov'ëv (1853-1900), the first and most prominent Russian philosopher who built a philosophical system, independent of Western influences, in the second half of the 19th century. She also dedicated to Solov'ëv her very first article, published in 1917 in the *Hibbert Journal*. In this article Duddington discussed the main strands of Solov'ëv's teaching, which proclaims the Christian religion as a vessel of universal 'Truth': "His attitude to the practical questions of his time was not merely the result of temperament and upbringing; it was entirely determined by one central principle to the service of which he devoted his whole life. This principle was the principle of the Christian Religion" (1917, p. 435). Although Christianity was the main engine of Solov'ëv's philosophy, the Orthodox creed never impeded his train of thought; his philosophy that helped him to avoid the performative aspects of religion. Solov'ëv believed in the unity of all Christian Churches and in the possibility of overcoming doctrinal differences between them; partly as a result of this, he embraced Catholicism towards the end of his life, although he never actually left the Orthodox Church. In his work *La Russie et l'eglise universelle* which appeared in Paris in 1889, Solov'ëv called for Christian Universalism, meaning the union of three *equal* Churches — Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant — with the Pope as *primus inter pares.*

Duddington's translation of Solov'ëv was warmly greeted by English-speaking audiences already familiar with the idea of the Unification of the Churches. This had been strongly promoted in Britain during the 19th century by the followers of the Oxford Movement, which celebrated a religious revival in the Church of England (Brown & Nockles, 2012). According to the Movement's ninety *Tracts for the Times* (1833–1841)*,* the Anglican Church was considered as one of three branches of the Christian Church; the other two were Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Among the main proponents of the Movement seeking the unification of the Christian Churches was the High Anglican theologian, John Henry Newman (1801-1890); it comes as no surprise that Solov'ëv was described by a French Jesuit, Michel d'Herbigny, as *'un Newman russe'* (1918). At the beginning of the Movement, the High Anglican Church prioritized the building of connections with the Roman Catholic Church, rather than with Orthodoxy. However, towards the turn of the century, this situation changed: the Anglican Church lost any hopes of merging with Rome, and turned its attention to the Russian Empire[2]. The latter had more global influence than any other Orthodox state, and would soon support the British Empire in World War I. After the Russian Revolution, Solov'ëv's ideas of the Universal Church were further developed by the Russian spiritual thinkers Nikolai Berdiaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Ivan Il'in, Semën Frank and Nikolai Losskii, who refused to support the Soviet regime, were expelled from the Soviet Union and shipped to Europe in 1922 aboard the famous 'philosophers' ships' (Chamberlain, 2007). In Britain, their work was welcomed by the followers of the Oxford Movement. The combined ecumenical efforts of the Anglicans and Orthodox Christians resulted in the foundation of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, a society that has been promoting relations between the Christian denominations since 1927 (Salapatas, 2013, p. 34).

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[2] In 1896 an edict from Pope Leo XIII was published wherein the intentions of the Anglican Church to unite three branches were rejected (Leo XIII, 1896).

Many of these developments, including the Fellowship, were made possible by Duddington's translations of the works of Russian philosophers into English, as well as by the articles she published about them in the *Journal of philosophical studies* (1926-1935). Duddington worked so actively because she passionately supported the potential merger between Churches. She defined the characteristic feature of Russian Christianity as "the realization of an all-embracing unity, in which the whole does not abolish the independence of the parts, but includes them within itself, and in which every part exists not for itself only, but in and for the whole" (1926, p. 24). The works of Russian spiritual thinkers, according to Duddington, epitomise this key feature. We should note that Duddington's first love, theosophy, espoused the same idea: the theosophists' original aim was to "draw together men of goodwill whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others" (Maclean, 2015, p. 16). Duddington's adherence first to theosophy, then to Solov'ëv and religious philosophy, and later (through their agency) to Orthodoxy, formed stages in her search for the primal source of the same idea of all-embracing unity. Although she became devotedly Orthodox, like Solov'ëv, she was less concerned with specific rituals than with shared Christian spiritual and moral experience (Duddington, 1925).

Duddington lacked theological education and her understanding of Orthodoxy was unconventional. She tended to translate texts by Russian spiritual thinkers which resonated with her own world view. As Duncan Large observes, one of the key aims of translating philosophy is to achieve "a reinvigorating impact on indigenous philosophical tradition" (2018, p. 313). She did not want to promote the works of her native thinkers in order to maintain her "social status, and invest considerable efforts in establishing a distinctive professional prestige" (Sela-Sheffy, 2008, p. 610) for herself; the act of translation read through Duddington's *hexis* is the outcome of her desire to infuse the idea of spiritual unity into English-speaking people as a step towards spreading this unity in the wider world.

4. Duddington's translation of Russian religious philosophy

The first work by a contemporary Russian philosopher which Duddington rendered into English was *The intuitive basis of knowledge* by Nikolai Losskii (1870-1965). Losskii was Duddington's teacher in her St Petersburg secondary school; they kept in touch throughout her life, and Natalie translated many of Losskii's works into English. As Professor Hick noted in his preface to Losskii's text (written at Duddington's request): "Professor Losskii is fortunate in having secured for his book a translator who, in addition to her other qualifications, possesses a wide knowledge of English philosophical writings, and who is herself an earnest worker in the fields of philosophy" (Losskii, 1919, p. vi). Losskii saw the aim of Russian religious philosophy as the elaboration of a Christian conception of the world, which would show "the wealth of content and the vital force of the fundamental dogmas of Christianity" (p. vi). This messianic idea was first introduced by Dostoevsky, developed by Solov'ëv, and finally enunciated by Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1948) in his work *The Russian idea.* Analyzing the inconsistency and complexity of the Russian soul, Berdiaev claimed — repeating a long-standing Slavophile idea — that the Russian nation would bring new spiritual light to the world (1947, p. 2).

Like other Russian religious philosophers, Losskii was preoccupied with the development of his own "all-embracing solutions of the problems" (Duddington, 1926, p. 101) in order to bring the Christian 'Truth' to a world mired in materialism. He expressed this most strongly in *The world as an organic whole*, translated by Duddington in 1928. Losskii attempted to create a united philosophical system depicting society as an organism "each part of which freely fulfils its appropriate function" and which is diametrically opposed to the idea of society as "a mechanical assemblage" (1928, p. 346). According to Losskii, all parts of the world are

interconnected through their unity with God, as the divine 'Truth' is common and universal.

Duddington was not only Losskii's translator but also his student and, therefore, by translating his texts she developed and extended her own philosophical horizons (Large, 2018, p. 314), which enabled her to write and publish philosophical articles of her own. Duddington also considered herself a student of Garnett; she acknowledged that her experience of working with Constance was "a great school of translation art" (Lasunskii, 1972, p. 192, my translation). After Garnett retired, Duddington continued translating Russian literature by herself. She did this not simply because of financial needs (the implications of her *habitus*) but because she believed that Russian spiritual thought was best expressed in secular literature (a view derived from Duddington's *hexis*): "Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Solovyof have a more vital message for us than the author of the dogmatic theology, Metropolit Makary" (1919, p. 22).

The Christian 'Truth' which Duddington found in the works of theosophists and religious philosophers shone most brightly through the works of Russian writers. Assuming the role of a translator from Russian into English while maintaining her personal autonomy as a spiritual thinker, Duddington reconstructed herself as a cultural gatekeeper (Marling, 2016), mediating between two cultures. She transmitted to British readers not only Russian fiction, but also the 'Spiritual Truth' perceived by Russian thinkers. To overcome the 'separateness' between cultures and to make the world united as an "organic whole" (Losskii, 1928), this 'Truth' had to be shared universally — a project which Duddington facilitated.

5. Duddington's translation of Russian literature

Duddington did not distinguish between Russian writers, religious philosophers and theologians as purveyors of wisdom. She believed that all great Russian thinkers searched for the same all-embracing 'Truth'; they were not "content, as many English philosophers are, with confining themselves to the patient study of some particular group of problems, reserving judgment with regard to the wider issues, but are eager to find an explanation of the world as a whole" (1926, p. 101). The same idea was expressed by the Russian religious philosopher Semën Frank (1877-1950) in the introduction to his *Anthology of Russian religious thought,* translated into English by Duddington. Frank's *Anthology* includes chapters dedicated to the writers Lev Tolstoy, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, and Viacheslav Ivanov; the acknowledged philosophers Nikolai Fedorov, Vladimir Solov'ëv, Vasilii Rozanov, Evgenii Trubetskoi, Nikolai Losskii, Nikolai Berdiaev, Lev Shestov and Semën Frank himself; and to the theologians Father Pavel Florenskii and Father Sergii Bulgakov. Frank calls all of them "spiritual fighters" and "prophets" and described them as *religious* thinkers in a very particular way:

> In contrast to the purely theoretical minds who explore the world in a disinterested and dispassionate way […] these people achieved some new understanding of the meaning of life through an internal spiritual struggle and personal religious experience. They showed us new paths of life, they fought against social beliefs and assessments, they preached new (or old, but forgotten) higher values (1996, p. 645, my translation).

Duddington managed to translate and publish many works by Russian "spiritual fighters", including poets and novelists such as Pushkin, Goncharov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Turgenev, Merezhkovskii, Akhmatova, Zaitsev and others. To some extent they all believed themselves to be endowed with a degree of prophetic potential, permitting them to glimpse some aspects of the 'Truth' in their writings, since "Russian art and philosophy both fulfil a messianic and prophetic function, in so far as they are directed at transcendent goals beyond this world, due to be realized in the future" (Davidson, 2000, p. 649).

Tracing the roots of the prophetic status of Russian writers, Davidson concludes that the image of the writer was transformed from "an aesthetic literary category (modelled on the classical and European tradition) into the spiritual and historical category (modelled on the biblical tradition)" (2003, p. 508). This developed into a Russian messianic idea presented through the perspectives of Russian literature. Nikolai Berdiaev (1874-1948) considered Russian writers to be vehicles for this messianic idea:

> The great Russian writers of the nineteenth century created not from the joy of creative abundance, but from a thirst for the salvation of the people, of humanity and the whole world, from unhappiness and suffering, from the injustice and slavery of man. The coming themes of Russian literature are to be Christian even at times when in their own thought Russian writers reject Christianity. (1947, p. 25)

Duddington translated Berdiaev's *The Destiny of man* (1937), and she pursued his religious perspective on Russian writers in her article "Classical Russian Literature": "The centre of interest for Russian writers is the human soul, man's place in the universe, the meaning of his life, and his final destiny; in the words of an English critic, 'they see man against the background of eternity'" (1956, p. 1). In her article, Duddington developed a system for dividing Russian writers into two groups: (1) those who believed in God and maintained that "the value and significance of life lies in the fulfilment of His will", and (2) those who had "no religious faith and poignantly feel the meaninglessness of man's existence" (1956, p. 2). However, both believers and unbelievers recognised "that the presence of *meaning* in the world depends on the existence of God". On this basis, therefore, Duddington described Russian literature as "essentially religious in spirit":

> Accordingly, both the believers and the unbelievers are really stating the same truth, though they approach it, so to speak, from different angles: the first affirm that life has a meaning because God *is*, the second, by their whole artistic presentation of life, show that if there is no God, life is meaningless. (1956, p. 2)

Most of Duddington's translations of fiction lack either prefaces or introductions, as she aimed to create "the effect of transparency" — the illusion that there is no difference between the translated text and the original one. Bourdieu claims that "[…] very often with foreign authors it is not what they say that matters so much as what they can be made to say. This is why certain particularly elastic authors transfer so well. All great prophecies are polysemic" (1999, p. 224). Since Duddington believed that Russian prophets should speak for themselves, only in very few cases did she write an opening statement to emphasise the religious spirit of a text and the way it reflected the universal 'Truth'.

For the same reason, Duddington wrote a preface to her translation of Ivan Turgenev's novel *Smoke* (1867). In comparison with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Turgenev was neither a prophet, nor a spiritual teacher. Duddington applied her literary system to Turgenev's art to prove that the writer belonged to the same spiritual tradition as the others. In the words of Berdiaev, Turgenev was Christian even when in his own thought he rejected Christianity:

> Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were believers, and saw that the purpose and meaning of man's life depended upon his relation to God; Turgenev was not a believer, and for him man was meaningless. The whole of Turgenev's work brings out the tragic conflict between 'the infinite aspiration, the eternal insignificance of the life of man'. (Duddington, 1949, p. x)

The main theme of Turgenev's art, according to Duddington, was love: "the very essence of which is to transfigure life and shed a magic radiance upon it" (1949, p. x). In her preface,

Duddington refers to Solov'ëv's essay *The Meaning of Love* (1894) to proclaim that, in the language of philosophy, "love opens our eyes to the mystical value of personality […] lovers see each other as God sees us in the celestial light of our immortal spirit — infinitely precious, unique, and irreplaceable" (p. x). For Duddington, Turgenev conveyed this 'Truth'. She also tried to present love as a universal, divine experience when introducing her translations of forty-seven love poems by Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) which Duddington published in 1927. In her preface, she admitted that to turn poetry into prose was scarcely forgivable but, in Akhmatova's case, "the essential qualities of her art may be felt even in a lame rendering into another language" (1927, p. 5). She underlined Akhmatova's clarity of spiritual vision: the light of love never blinded Akhmatova but permitted her to see her lover's real self. The novels of Turgenev and the poems of Akhmatova are Russian to the core, but imprinted with the universal and divine image of love which everyone can fathom. Duddington believed that it was the quality of 'universality' which made Russian writers great: "[…] take Dostoevsky's characters: their life and behaviour are almost unthinkable outside Russia, and yet they have a profound significance for people of every nationality" (1956, p. 2).

Duddington set out to make the universal 'Truth' of Russian texts acceptable to English-speaking people as her mission. This was of primal importance since the task of a man as a self-conscious being, according to Duddington, was "to further the process of the reunion of all creatures with one another and with God" (Losskii & Duddington, 1923, p. 351). Russian thinkers expressed 'Divine knowledge' in their writings, and the process of learning from their revelations united their readers. The aim of a translator was to make these 'great' texts accessible in order to let people regard this 'Truth' and to become united through its agency. Therefore, one could not expect Duddington to agree with Daniel Simeoni's modern identification of translators with subservience (Simeoni argues that "to become a translator in the West today is to agree to becoming nearly fully subservient: to the client, to the public, to the author, to the text, to language itself or even, in certain situations of close contact, to the culture or subculture within which the task is required to make sense" (1998, p. 12)). Duddington directed readers on their path to higher knowledge, and she mediated that path.

6. Duddington's understanding of translation as mediation of the 'truth'

To understand the translation philosophy Duddington adopted, I turn to her philosophical essay "Our Knowledge of Other Minds" (1918-1919), published in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (Oxford University Press). In her text, Duddington questions the popular idea that one can only understand another person's feelings if one is personally familiar with these feelings. She believed that two distinct processes are at work: experiencing emotions, and reflecting upon them. One cannot, of course, feel another's emotions directly, but there is no difference between rationally analysing your own mental state and that of another individual. In order to do this, one needs to step aside and observe one's own emotions as if they are attributed to someone else. Duddington gives the example of a child who, for the first time, witnesses their mother being angry, and thus learns what anger is before experiencing it. Through analogous contemplation of other people's feelings, we can learn to understand ourselves better. Duddington's idea was disputed by Joshua C. Gregory, who argued that differing interests prevent human beings from understanding one another, and the mutual understanding can be obtained only "in the most fundamental parts of life — just at those points where common feelings and common modes of expression provide a basis of inference" (1920, p. 450). Duddington disagreed and published her reply to Gregory, in which she further developed her theory (1921). It was essential for her to prove that the knowledge of other minds can be shared even with those who have very different life experiences. As a translator,

Duddington transmitted the works of spiritual thinkers who glimpse the divine 'Truth' to give every layperson a chance to learn how to contemplate it in his or her own right.

Sela-Sheffy gives examples of translators whose self-declared "incentive to translate is to bestow their own advantage on the local readership" (2008, p. 613), whilst their real *hexis* was to assert themselves in the cultural field. Duddington's *hexis* included the transmission of spiritual knowledge received by 'prophets', a prophetic act in itself since a prophet is an intermediary who delivers spiritual messages to humanity. Her task was to communicate the message as clearly and closely to the original as possible so the message would be understood by English-speaking readers almost as the emotions of a mother (for example, the anger referred to earlier) are grasped by her child. Duddington took her responsibility very seriously. Her remarkable correspondence with the editor, Alfred J. Rieber, an American historian specializing in Russian and Soviet history, is a good example of this. After receiving Duddington's translation of Kliuchevskii's history, Rieber expressed his indignation at the quality of the translation: "[…] Some of my corrections are, as was to be expected, clarifications in the terminology which only a historian could make. But the bulk of my work involved an attempt to re-work awkward sentence structure and make substitutes for poor choices of words" (Duddington, 1894-1990). Duddington's reply reinforced her credentials as an accuracy-oriented translator. She wrote:

> I am sorry that you have taken a dislike to my translation of Kluchevsky [sic]. I think I have rendered his meaning accurately, expressing it as clearly and concisely as is consistent with his style which, as you know, is often extremely cumbersome and involved. A translator must strive to preserve the general character of the original while making the text as readable as possible; every good author has his own way of writing which should not be obliterated. […] Had I known that as editor you consider yourself entitled to correct my choice of words and constructions of sentences, I would not have agreed to undertake the translation. No English editor has ever interfered with the way in which I did the work entrusted to me. (1894-1990)

This made Rieber reconsider his accusations and send apologies.

7. Conclusion

This textual manifestation of Duddington's female *hexis* challenges the notion that Duddington was subservient either to her editor or to her own considerations of social reputation (for example, the regard of those who might have found her marriage illegal — she worked under the name of her common-law husband — or her few philosophical articles unsatisfactory). She was subservient only to the highest, all-embracing 'Truth' which she was determined to promote. In her private correspondence Duddington occasionally complains about poorly written texts which she had to translate for commercial reasons, and which were usually published without indicating the translator's name. However, when she believed in the intrinsic value of a text, she was ready to translate it almost for free not because she, as a woman, could not find another job, but because she felt a personal connection with the text. Such was the case with her translations of Bunin, and of Frank's *Anthology*, as her private papers show. Thus, translation work was not primarily a source of money for her but, rather, a spiritual vocation which, in its own way, supported ecumenism as well as cultural connections between Russia and Britain. Natalie Duddington was much more than Garnett's 'ghost'. Her wider translation work embodied and articulated her keenly-felt religious and philosophical views. Therefore, it is appropriate to acknowledge her contribution by remembering her as a prominent mediator between two cultures.

8. Acknowledgements

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Women translators and paratextual authority:
The frameworks of religious translation

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Abstract

This article examines the paratexts of religious works translated by women and considers how these can create frameworks which assert institutional authority. By analysing how authority is embedded in the multi-layered structure of paratexts of religious translations, the study considers the restraining role of paratexts and their ability to replicate hierarchical structures around translated works. A different typology of the function of paratext is thus illustrated, where spaces are employed to control the translated work rather than to allow greater female visibility or agency. To demonstrate this typology of the paratext, the article uses a sample of translations published by two of the most successful women translators of Catholic religious texts in the Anglophone world in the nineteenth century: Mary Anne Sadlier and Mary Austin Teresa Carroll. This study demonstrates that as women translators were gaining a foothold in the world of religious publishing in the nineteenth century, their work was embedded in an institutional structure of sameness, collective endeavour and regulation. The layers of authority to be found in the paratexts of the translations of women translators in this period emphasise the importance of examining translations in their totality, and not just the linguistic features of the source and target texts.

1. Introduction

When examining the work of women translators, attention is often paid to paratexts, to the extent of the woman's visibility, to the presence of commentary on the translation and to the sociological and cultural trends that can be tracked in these spaces. It has been argued that paratexts can be used by female translators to create a space for their voice or assert their own identity (Batchelor 2018, p. 36). This article will examine paratexts in relation to women translators of religious texts and, rather than view these as spaces for female presence and expression, it will examine how paratexts can create regulated frameworks for religious translations. In so doing it will illustrate a different typology of the function of paratext where spaces are employed to control the translated work rather than to allow greater female visibility. By analysing how authority can be embedded in the multi-layered structure of paratexts of religious translations, this article will thus examine the restraining role of paratexts and their ability to replicate hierarchical structures around translated works. To demonstrate this typology of the paratext, the study will use a sample of translations published by two of the most successful women translators of Catholic religious texts in the Anglophone world in the nineteenth century: Mary Anne Sadlier and Mary Austin Teresa Carroll. These translators were at the forefront of rapidly expanding popular religious publications in this period but, despite their prominence as translators of religious texts, their works were nonetheless framed with paratextual elements which gave precedence to the institutional patriarchal and hierarchical structures.

2. Paratext: Definitions

Texts are often accompanied by a variety of paratextual material which may include introductions, prefaces, dedications, indexes, marginalia, glossaries, frontispieces and so forth. These paratexts can impact on the reception and the understanding of the text itself and have been the subject of much attention since Gérard Genette drew attention to their form and function in the 1980s. For Genette the paratext was a 'threshold' or 'vestibule' which transformed a text into a book. He divided the paratext into *peritext* and *epitext*, with the former relating closely to the book itself (e.g. cover, title, foreword, epilogue, etc.) and the latter consisting of statements about the book beyond the book itself such as reviews, interviews, letters, diaries, articles (Genette, 1997). In this article, I will be looking at both peritextual elements such as the prefatory material preceding translations and also epitexts such as advertisements, which provide a threshold for interpretative readings of the text and influence reception patterns. Although Genette's proposal that translations of texts are themselves paratexts has not been widely accepted, the overall theorising of paratext has been welcomed by scholars of translation who have embraced the notion that paratexts are 'thresholds' through which readers access texts (Batchelor, 2018)[1]. Researchers have examined the significance of paratext in not merely understanding the cultural and historical significance of texts, but also in analysing the interventions in the text made by translators, publishers and, at times, readers. Early modernists who study translations have underlined the limitations of Genette's model and how early modern practices complicate a unidirectional understanding of paratext (Belle and Hosington, 2018, p. 9). In aiming to provide a more nuanced, translation-specific approach to paratext, scholars have studied dedications, title pages, footnotes, annotations and illustrations, together with prefaces, prologues, and epilogues, questioning how paratexts can reframe translations, with discursive and visual interventions (Belle and Hosington, 2018; Batchelor, 2018; Pellatt, 2014; Coldiron, 2015; Hosington, 2015). The shaping

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[1] Batchelor (2018) deals extensively with the legacy of Genette and the use of paratexts in translation research; see also Tahir-Gürçağlar (2002).

and framing strategies evident in the paratext have revealed not only the variability of liminal printed spaces, but also the 'plasticity of the paratextual space' (Belle and Hosington, 2018, p. 4). Paratexts can thus be seen to refashion the material they are presenting and frame interactions with the text.

The position of women translators in relation to paratext has been studied by early modern scholars who have questioned how paratexts can be used to situate female translation activity within the print and publishing context in which their work was produced (Hosington, 2014). The impact of prologues, colophons, imagery, interventions by printers, and translator prefaces have been important points of consideration when analysing the first forays of women in the print world. That most of these early modern women were translating religious texts is not an insignificant point. Subsequent studies have examined the interaction between the woman translator and the paratextual apparatus with Hassen, for example, using online paratexts connected to women's translations of the Qur'an to analyse the translators' visibility. In the well-established discussions on translator visibility, paratexts have been identified as places of female visibility and Hassen argues that feminist translators have used paratextual elements such as prefaces, introductions and annotations to ensure their visibility (Hassen, 2012, p. 66). She further questions in her research whether the female voice is highlighted and used to challenge patriarchal discourse, or whether the female identity is concealed and the distinctive female voice effaced (Hassen, 2012).

In most studies on women and paratext, the central issue of concern has been the visibility of women in these spaces and, to a lesser degree, the agency displayed by the translator in paratexts[2]. This article will expand the understanding of paratexts as expressions of female visibility/invisibility in the translated text, to also consider how the paratext can provide a controlling framework for the translation. To investigate the use of paratexts in religious translation, I will examine a selection of religious translations by Catholic women in the nineteenth-century Anglophone world. During this time, with the advent of new print technology, there was a large expansion of religious translations, and new cohorts of translators contributed to this expanding publication activity, particularly in the realm of popular religious texts. Women began to feature much more widely in Catholic religious publications and it is crucial to understand how their input was framed and controlled in the publication process. This is not to state that other cohorts of translators did not also find their work framed with similar structures; rather, it is to point out that even when women translators were gaining a foothold in the field of religious translations, their publications were embedded in an institutional structure of sameness, collective endeavour and regulation. In this context, traditional readings of the paratextual thresholds of their work in terms of visibility and agency are not adequate, and it is vital to acknowledge the controlling structures within which these emerging women translators had to work. The examination of a different typology of paratext, which highlights contextual authoritative mechanisms, demonstrates how, despite the expansion of print and increased interventions in the publishing world, female translators worked within a clearly-defined hierarchical structure.

3. Paratexts as controlling mechanisms

When faced with the increased circulation and translation of religious works on the back of the development of industrial print in the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church saw the need to establish rules to deal with the democratisation of access to texts, while at the same time continuing to propagate a centralised orthodox message. At the end of the nineteenth century, published regulations reflected these developments with clear statements of hierarchical

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[2] See for example Simon (2000) and Henitiuk (2011).

structures and rules governing translational activity. In chapter 4 of the 1897 decrees issued by Leo XIII it is stated that:

> 44. Printers and publishers should remember that new editions of an approved work require a new approbation; and that an approbation granted to the original text does not suffice for a translation into another language.

> 45. Books condemned by the Apostolic See are to be considered as prohibited all over the world, and into whatever language they may be translated. (Leo XIII, 1897)

The decrees formalised the requirement for multiple types of religious publications (prayer or devotional books or booklets; catechisms and books of religious instruction; books and booklets of ethics, asceticism and mysticism) to receive permission from ecclesiastical authorities before publication. Translations of these works also had to be submitted to ecclesiastical authorities. These rules became part of Canon Law in 1917 under Title IV (Cann. 822-832) and the Church was careful to enumerate the position of translations as needing the approval of the local ordinary for publication. Canon 829 explicitly said that '[t]he approval or permission to publish some work is valid for the original text but not for new editions or translations of the same.' (Peters, 2001)

Control mechanisms are prominent in the paratexts of Catholic religious translations from this era through *nihil obstats*, *imprimaturs* and approbations, and they evidence how the Catholic Church applied structures to deal with the expansion of the cohort and profile of translators and publishers in the nineteenth century. It has been argued that 'holy texts positioned on the periphery of a culture's literary polysystem tend to be treated with more latitude than those centrally placed and receive correspondingly less attention in translation terms unless some specific reason arises' (Long, 2005, p. 6). However, the paratexts show us that, despite being geographically and linguistically on the periphery, the translation of religious devotional works was not allowed more latitude than liturgical and scriptural works. This is important because women were much more prominent in the translation of what might be considered peripheral religious works such as devotional texts but, despite this, they were still subject to the controlling central mechanisms of the institutional structures. They were not passing under the radar due to their distance from the institutional core; instead, they were firmly embedded in the institutional framework.

4. Approbations

One of the most striking paratexual features of nineteenth-century Anglophone Catholic translations consisted of approbations placed before published translations. Approbations were declarations which, as the word suggests, demonstrated approval of the translation and declarations of its quality. The apparatus of the approbation was used in the text to offer assurance to the reader as to the quality and utility of the work and the faithfulness of the translation. Let us examine in detail the approbations contained in one such work, *The Life of St. Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop, Confessor and Doctor of the Church, Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer*, published in New York by P. O'Shea in 1874. The translation was by an Irish nun based in America, Mary Austin Teresa Carroll, who was referred to on the title page not by name, but as 'a member of the Order of Mercy'. The first approbation in this publication came from the translator's ordinary, the archbishop of the area in which she lived, and it stated:

> Having submitted to a careful examination the work, original and translated, of a member of the Order of Mercy residing in our diocese, we cordially and earnestly recommend them to the faithful under our charge. Napoleon Joseph, Archbishop of New Orleans.

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The approbation was endorsed within the book by a further thirteen bishops who stated that they 'cheerfully concurred' with the words of the most Rev. Archbishop of New Orleans (Bishops of Natchitoches, Natchez, Mobile, Galveston, Little Rock, Philadelphia, Columbus, Cleveland, New York, Burlington, Albany, Scranton, Brooklyn). An established system of patronage was drawn upon in order to achieve these endorsements, and in providing his approbation for the translation, the Bishop of Marysville (E. O'Connell) said:

> Dear Sister in Christ: You honor me highly by asking my approbation of your forthcoming "Life of St. Alphonsus Liguori," the last, but not the least illustrious Doctor of the Catholic Church. Let me assure you, dear sister, that I hail your Life of St. Alphonsus as much as I do the admirable "Vindication" of his Theology by the Redemptorist Fathers; convinced as I am that both these works will put the great Doctor's sanctity and learning in a clearer light, and promote throughout this country the devotions which your favorite Saint had so much at heart, I remain, dear sister, your obliged servant in Christ. (Carroll, 1874, p.vii)

The translator had clearly asked members of the Catholic hierarchy in America to approve her work. This support, expressed through the approbation, highlighted certain elements. Firstly, it is stated that the work has been 'carefully examined by learned priests', which illustrates the monitoring of the translation and, even if the person who grants the approbation has not personally checked the work, they confirm that the book has been through a quality control process. These statements show how the paratextual material could provide reassurance to the religious reader that the work was an accurate translation conforming to expected norms. Secondly, the bishops assert the utility and value of the translation to members of the Catholic community. It is recommended as useful to both members of the clergy and to the wider Catholic faithful, with the Bishop of St. Augustine, Florida stating that it 'cannot fail to prove exceedingly interesting'. Thirdly, some of the approbations emphasise the network of patronage where the endorsement by one ordinary encourages endorsement by others. There is obviously a ripple effect of approval, as one bishop shows when he says:

> I therefore take great pleasure in giving my approbation to the Life of the Saint, by a Member of the Order of Mercy, authoress of the "Life of Catharine McAuley" etc., relying on the recommendations it has received from the learned and most worthy Archbishop of New Orleans, and other high dignitaries. (p. vi)

A final element of the approbations is a reinforcement of the standing of the translator as seen, for example, in the approbation from John J. Hogan, Bishop of St. Joseph, who writes:

> I could not hesitate to write my name in recommendation of anything coming from your pen; for you have already very much surprised and edified myself and many others by your successful labors, in which I am glad to learn that you are persevering. I have read all your books, and some of them several times over. (p. vii)

Approbations which preceded translated works were therefore a means of quality assurance, but also an opportunity to confer authority on a book. The prominent nature of the endorsements in the text spoke to the official and authorised nature of the translation and conferred an additional status to the text. The praise for the translator contained in approbations, even if expressed in formulaic terms, must be acknowledged as bolstering confidence in the competency of the person who had translated the work.

The endorsements contained in the approbations can be considered as testimonials, a mixture of standardised statements of admiration and declarations of quality. Here it is important to remember that the use of approbations was not restricted to women translators: the practice

was firmly embedded in Catholic publications in the Anglophone world from 1850s as evidenced in Catholic Almanacs, Directories and Catalogues. What becomes clear from a consideration of approbations is that women translators who wished to publish Catholic works in nineteenth-century America, needed to participate in the system of patronage and recommendation which would ensure official sanction of a book. Therefore when women translators found space in the publishing world of religious translations in nineteenth-century Catholicism, it was very much a controlled space where the patriarchal and hierarchical structures of the Catholic Church were maintained. The completion of a translation at a geographical distance from the Vatican, forced the Church to adapt in order to accommodate this individual endeavour within an institutional context and approbations were a means of placing the translation back into a collaborative framework. Although the translation was completed far from the institutional centre of Rome, it was firmly reconnected into the Catholic network through the multi-layered paratextual commentary and endorsement. It was once again part of the collective, with the translators conforming to a regularised and agreed ethos. Therefore, despite the geographical and linguistic expansion of the Church in the nineteenth century, it maintained this centralised control and collective endeavour in its multilingual publishing outputs.

For Mary Austin Teresa Carroll, the translation and publication of the *Life of St. Alphonsus Liguori*, with its commendations and declarations of support, placed it firmly within a religious community and sanctioned its use for that group. The levels of concurrence and consent evidenced in the approbations highlight the structures in place which framed the work of an Irish nun translating in New Orleans in the nineteenth century. The translator certainly saw her activities as part of her community involvement:

> This work, undertaken through obedience, has been for us a labor of love and devotion.
> It is hoped that it will become, if we may so speak, a popular life of the great Doctor, the
> size and price of which will place it within the reach of the multitude. (Carroll, 1874, p.x)

The approbations that Carroll obtained gave the work sanction but also a marketing opportunity. Approbations were not just a feature of printed translations, they were also used as part of the advertising structures and appeared regularly as endorsements of the book which was for sale. One of the most prolific female translators of religious texts in the Anglophone world in the nineteenth century was Mary Anne Sadlier. An Irish woman by birth, she moved to Canada and then to the United States and was deeply involved in the family publishing business D&J Sadlier[3]. In contrast to many other female religious translators in the nineteenth century, her name was widely featured in the frontispiece and title pages of her translations, and her privileged connection to the publishing firm run by her husband certainly gave her an advantage in gaining recognition. When her religious translations were advertised in the Catholic press in America, they invariably featured notice of the approbations that the work had obtained. So, for example, when the translation *The history of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ* from the French by Mrs. Sadlier *was* advertised in *The Catholic Telegraph*, 16 April 1853, the blurb for the book said that it was published 'with the approbation of the Most Rev John Hughes, D. D., Archbishop of New York'. This was a regularly used endorsement for Sadlier's translation as the below advertisement demonstrates:

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[3]   For more on Sadlier, see Hernadi (2001) and Milan (2018).

NEW AND ELEGANT

Illustrated Works,

Published with the Approbation of the Most Rev. John Hughes, D. D., Archbishop of New York.

LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF GOD—With the History of the devotion to her; to which is added

THE LIVES OF ST. JOSEPH, ST. JOACHIM, AND ST. ANNE, translated from the French of Abbe Orsini, by Mrs. J. Sadlier. To be completed in twenty-two parts, with a fine steel engraving in each.

THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; also,

THE HISTORY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES—From the French of Father De Ligney, by Mrs. J. Sadlier. To be completed in twenty-four parts, with a fine steel engraving in each. A new edition of

Figure 1. *Sadliers' Catholic Directory, Almanac and Ordo* (1864, p. 72)

The prominence of approbations in the religious translations of both Carroll and Sadlier draws attention to the need to view the paratextual material accompanying their translations not just in terms of visibility and agency, but in terms of structures and institutional practices. The framing apparatus of approbations illustrates the embedding of the female translator within a structured Catholic publishing space. Approbations were not exclusively used by women translators but, as we see in the case of Carroll and Sadlier, when prominent and successful women translators published their work within this framework, they became part of the regulated and hierarchical systems of Catholicism's publication enterprise. The paratext provides indications on the nature of these structures and the processes that accompanied the publication of religious texts in the nineteenth century. Carroll was ambitious for her work; she wanted it to be placed within the reach of the multitudes. In order for this to happen, she needed to work within the institutional framework and collaborate with the hierarchical structures which would sanction and promote her work. The paratextual evidence shows how these women engaged with the realities of the marketplace and how their religious translations contained traces of this publishing context.

5. Institutional frameworks

The presence of hierarchical structures of the Catholic Church in the paratexts reminds us of the importance of the institutional context on discursive strategies, social functions and effects of translations (Koskinen, 2008 and 2014). For Venuti, this contextual situation is crucial and he argues that institutions, 'whether academic or religious, commercial or political show a preference for a translation ethics of sameness, translation that enables and ratifies existing discourse and canon, interpretations and pedagogies' (Venuti, 1998, p. 82). Institutional translation can generally be characterised as collective, anonymous and driven by an underlying aspiration for sameness (Schäffner, Tcaciuc & Tesseur, 2014; Koskinen 2011), and the paratexts of religious translations by women in the nineteenth century reveal that this institutional ethos permeated their work and left visible traces in their publications. The women who translated Catholic religious works in the nineteenth century were subject to the institutional desire for 'sameness' and their practice reflects this in the continued declarations of the faithfulness of their approach. In the case of Carroll, repeated declarations of the fidelity of her translation belied the fact that the text she published was in fact an amalgamation and not necessarily a clear copy of an original. This deviation did not detract, however, from the

ethos of sameness as the publication complied with the tenets of the institutional core and thus remained faithful to its origins. This adherence to sameness and fidelity is evidenced in the layers of approbations and the statements of approval inserted before the translations, confirming the ideological and institutional alignment of the work. The approbations which endorsed translations drew attention to the accuracy, conformity and faithfulness of the work, and invariably praised fidelity, both textual and spiritual[4].

The central importance of the institutional structures in the translated religious work by women can be further gleaned in the paratext from the attribution of the translated work on the title page. In this paratextual space, the women who translated the works were generally referred to not by their names, but instead in anonymous or pseudonymous form. A common attribution of translation was, for example to 'A Catholic Nun' or 'A member of the Order of Mercy'[5]. This anonymity and self-effacement of the individual revealed the dominance of the institution rather than the person. The gender of the translator was not hidden when the translators signed themselves 'An Ursuline Nun' or 'A Sister of Mercy', but the form of anonymity was an indication of the supremacy of the collective religious identity. The topos of the woman translator who is modest and reluctant for fame stretches back to the early modern period (Hosington, 2014) and was still remarkably enduring in the nineteenth century. Only in rare cases is the female translator named (as for example in the case of Mary Anne Sadlier). The dynamics of the anonymity can be analysed at the level of invisibility of the translator but it also must be seen as a moment of institutional dominance, where the adherence to the collective effaces the individual visibility[6].

The female translator thus mediated between languages in her translations but was also a mediator of the powerful structures of institutional religion[7]. The paratext is crucial in understanding how the translation creates meaning, and the culture of the institutional framework of these translations is as much part of the text as the linguistic elements. The Catholic Church has a long history of team translation, of collective work, especially for Biblical texts, with strong hierarchical co-ordination. The completion of a religious translation by a single author was re-inserted into this collective framework through the paratext, where the support and endorsement of the religious institution was evident. Within the context of Qur'an translation, Hassen has discussed the paratext of a religious translation which shows no Islamic religious institution supporting or endorsing the female translator's work (Hassen, 2012, p. 71). This independence from the institution of the Catholic Church would have been unthinkable for a female translator in the nineteenth century, who relied on the support and approval structures of the institution in order to publish a work. The paratext clearly shows both the ideological alignment with the translated text and the institutional structures which allowed the female translator to access the publishing market.

6. Authority

As Lynne Long has argued, the translation of sacred texts by female voices raises fundamental issues of authority (Long, 2011, p.48) and the paratexts of these translations reveal multiple

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[4] For a more detailed discussion of notions of faithfulness in nineteenth-century Catholic religious translation, see O'Connor (2019).

[5] On religious translation and the use of pseudonyms by women in Ireland in the nineteenth century, see Milan (2015) and O'Connor (2017).

[6] In the nineteenth century translators could often be anonymous, but the dynamic behind this anonymity was not uniform, and differences exist, for example, between anonymity in genres such as religious or literary translation, and also between formats such as book or periodical publishing.

[7] On the issue of translation as mediation, see Liddicoat (2016).

authoritative inputs in these translations, from translators, publishers, editors and religious institutions. I wish now to turn to a final element of the paratext, the translator's preface, where the female translator establishes her authority and positions her work in relation to the contextual situation and previous translations. Not all religious translations contain a preface from the translator, but those prefaces written by women translators reveal much about the positioning of their work.

These prefaces can be a mixture of confidence and authoritative declarations combined with self-deprecation and humility. The confidence is clearly displayed if the woman's work is a retranslation, and if the previous translation had been carried out by a man. It is a significant statement of intent and purpose to re-translate a work completed by a man, and involves a value judgement of the previous translation. When Mary Anne Sadlier published her *History of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1853), a translation of a French work by François de Ligny, in the preface she addressed the shortcomings of the previous translation by Brian Arthur Molloy in 1846, stating that 'the translation was not approved of by American readers' (Milan, 2018, p. 373). The willingness to question other translations provides evidence of the confidence of the female translator who puts forward an alternative translation and publication.

In such prefaces, expressions of confidence can also sit beside statements communicating humility. For example Mary Anne Sadlier introduced a translation, saying that she has 'hastily thrown it into an English form' but at the same time she underlines its utility and importance, asserting that the work is for the benefit of 'our own people, both parents and children' and that the whole world is awaking to the vital importance of a religious education for the rising generation (Sadlier, 1904, p. 4). Therefore, despite describing it as a 'simple volume', she nonetheless announces that it will provide most useful lessons. In her address to the reader in another translation, Sadlier similarly both praises and downplays her contribution, stating that the work comes with high recommendations, even allowing for what it loses in the translation (Sadlier, 1854).

This combination of on the one hand downplaying the translated work produced by the female translator, while at the same time emphasising its utility and importance, speaks to the difficult intermediary positions that women translating religious text experienced. They could express their ambition for their works, as did Carroll in her preface to her *Life of Liguori*, where she hoped that her work would become popular and would reach the 'multitude' (Carroll, 1874, p. x). At the same time however, the work is presented as a dutiful act and it is humbly placed before the reader: 'This work, undertaken through obedience, has been for us a labor of love and devotion'. Another translation by Sadlier of a religious work by Collot was accompanied with the approbation of the ecclesiastical authorities of Montreal and also a translator's preface highlighting the utility of the work (Sadlier, 1853). The sentiments expressed in the prefaces capture the difficult balancing act required of women translators in the nineteenth century, combining confidence and humility, ambition and subservience.

7. Conclusion

The layers of authority to be found in the paratexts of the translations of women translators in the nineteenth century highlight the importance of examining translations in their totality, and not just the linguistic features of the source and target texts. The paratextual apparatus of translation impacts on the perception and reception of a text and, through the many components that make up the paratext, a new level of meaning is created which is not just explanatory in nature. At a time of rapid changes in the world of print in the nineteenth century, women translators gained a small but expanding foothold in the realm of Catholic publications. Their activities were transnational and translingual but, as the paratexts from

their works suggest, the control structures shared similar characteristics. The paratextual material captures the multiple thresholds of these works in the nineteenth century: the encasing of the work in approbations, the protestations of humility and faithfulness, and the insertion of the publication into the institutional system, all of which reveal the structured framework within which these women translators operated. Women may have experienced greater visibility as translators of religious texts in the nineteenth century, but their growing presence was not disruptive to the world of Catholic publishing; rather, as the paratexts show, it was firmly embedded in the hierarchical structures of the institutional centre.

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The uncharted experience of women translators
of the Qur'an in Turkey

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Abstract

The translation of the Qur'an has a long tradition in Turkey. Although it hosts a diverse and rich translational texture, the field is, unfortunately but not surprisingly, governed by an androcentric voice. Women's contribution is considerably weak compared to hundreds of Qur'an translations by men. To this date there are only three translations by women in Turkey. The first was undertaken by Medine Balcı (1991), who avoids guided reading of the Qur'an and opts for interlinear-verbatim translation, the second by Necla Yasdıman (2006), who instrumentalizes the Qur'an as a grammar book for Arabic language instruction, and the third by Ayşa Zeynep Abdullah (2019), who overtly challenges patriarchal biases in the reading of the sacred text. The present study aims to uncover the mechanisms behind the marginalized Qur'an translations by the three women and to give voice to their silenced agency in the field. By comparing and analyzing these unique cases, I outline the particularities of Turkish translations of the Qur'an by women while questioning the feminist agenda (or absence thereof). This uncharted status of Turkish Qur'an translations by women translators reveals how discourse can determine positions and modes of certain translations in a cultural system.

1. Introduction

The divine message of the Qur'an has been circulating across borders and in different societies and cultures since its revelation in the 7th century. Its transfer has been ensured via translation-oriented text production practices ever since. The translation of the Qur'an has long been subject to discussions in different fields such as theology, sociology, translation studies and also, not surprisingly politics, in Turkey, a country with a decisive majority of Muslim population. Some of the most frequently visited issues are: the inimitability of the original, the accuracy or the appropriateness of the translation method used, the personal and professional profiles of the translators and the linguistic peculiarities of Arabic vis-à-vis Turkish (Afsar & Azmat, 2012; Akdemir, 1989; Akpınar, 2011; Durmuş, 2008; Elmalılı, 1960; Rahman, 1988; Saleh, 2003). The long account of Qur'an translation in Turkish, which can be dated back to the 15th century (Wilson, 2014, p. 20), has hosted complex and diverse translational practices and translatorial experiences. Glancing through the available literature on the Qur'an, one can easily notice the striking male presence in the field. It can safely be asserted that male voices determine the tone of the field both in translational, discursive and scholarly areas concerning religious text production, in the Turkish context. The data available in bibliographical studies (see Binark & Eren, 1986; Hamidullah, 1993; Üstün, 2013) on the translations of the Qur'an in Turkey reveal that there are only three women translators of the Qur'an, compared to hundreds of male translators. In this context, women largely remain out of the major scholarship generated by men, and in consequence, androcentric tendencies characterize the field of Qur'anic studies. This paper aims to shed some light on the mechanisms behind translation-oriented religious text production practices by women. However, rather than producing generalized claims about women's translations of the Qur'an into Turkish, I focus on individual case studies and reveal their positionality within their social, political and cultural frameworks (von Flotow, 2000). By marking the distinctive features of each case, I intend to give voice to the hitherto unheard female translators working in the Turkish context and to contribute to the role of women translators of religious texts around the world.

The three Turkish translations of the Qur'an produced by women are *Kur'an-ı Kerim ve Kelime Meali* (1991) [The Qur'an and its Word-for-Word Meaning] by Medine Balcı, *Kur'ân Tahlili: Arapça Gramer Işığında Sözlük-Meal-Tefsir* (2006) [The Analysis of the Qur'an: A Dictionary, Meaning and Exegesis of the Qur'an in the Light of the Linguistics of the Arabic] by Necla Yasdıman, and *İndirilme Sırasına Göre Yüce Kur'an-ı Kerim ve Meali* (2019) [The Qur'an according to the Order of the Revelation and its Meaning] by Ayşa Zeynep Abdullah. The publication dates show that only once every fifteen years a woman's translation of the Qur'an into Turkish appeared, in comparison to the large numbers produced by men during the same period. To introduce their renditions to the Turkish audience, Balcı, Yasdıman and Abdullah present their main motives for translating the sacred text, which includes challenging available translations in order to produce a more accurate rendering of the Qur'an with new perspectives and translation strategies.

The study begins with a critical study of each translation and focuses on distinctive features such as methods of translation, personal and professional habitus (Bourdieu, 1996) of each translator as well as their discourse on their renditions of the sacred text. It continues with a comparison of the three translations vis-à-vis their positionality in the wider context of Qur'an translations in Turkey. The mechanisms that contribute to the scarcity of women translators of the Qur'an in Turkey are then discussed, with a particular attention to the framing references of being a woman in the field of Qur'an translations.

2. Unveiling the women translators of the Qur'an in Turkey

Except for brief introductory passages available on publishing houses' websites, it is almost impossible to find any information about the three women, who have so far translated the Qur'an into Turkish. It is my contention that they do not receive the attention they deserve, considering the challenging and significant work they have undertaken in a male-dominated Muslim country. In what follows, I first introduce their different stories, then I analyze and discuss their translations.

2.1. Medine Balcı (1959-): The first woman translator of the Qur'an into Turkish[1]

Medine Balcı was born in Erzincan in 1959. She grew up in a devout and intellectual family. Her first teacher was her father, who taught her how to read the Qur'an and also the fundamentals of Islamic practices. She only received formal education at primary school level. Afterwards, her further education mainly consisted in private tutorials by eminent Islamic scholars of her time. In her own words, she was lucky to be accepted as a disciple of Fahreddin Dinçkol[2], who had a great impact on her. Balcı began to receive systematic Islamic education in 1971 under the guidance of Dinçkol, and simultaneously continued her Arabic education via private courses. At present, Balcı leads a reclusive life, with no presence on digital platforms, and devotes all her time to her students and continues to study the Qur'an (M. Balcı, personal interview, May 25, 2020).

With her work *Kur'an-ı Kerim ve Kelime Meali* (1991) [The Qur'an and its word-for-word meaning], Medine Balcı became the first woman to translate the Qur'an in Turkey. Balcı defines her rendition as the natural outcome of her educational process rather than a pre-planned project. In other words, she did not intend to produce a Qur'an translation and to publish it. She began to prepare her word-for-word rendition (which she defines as *kırık meal*[3]) to help her father understand the Qur'an better. After a while, she began to give Islamic lectures to women in her entourage (i.e. people who heard her name and came from different parts of Istanbul to attend her lectures). It was there, she deeply felt the need for a well-prepared and systematic Qur'an translation. Thus, she decided to produce a more comprehensive verbatim translation with annotations for her students, to be used in her lectures (again, with no intention to publish, as she stresses). The diversity of her new students required more in-depth research in the field. In this regard, Balcı lists a few sources that she used in her translation process. She refers to a work by Fikri Yavuz (1924-1992) on the Qur'an and states that she also benefited from approximately fifteen already available Qur'an translations. Besides, she emphasizes the fact that her work was an individual and not a collaborative project, and that she did not receive any professional help from others. She insists on the importance of Arabic-Turkish lexicons for a verbatim translation, and she narrates her arduous research in lexicons when she could not be sure of a translation equivalent and preferred not to consult other Qur'an translators. Sometime after completing her translation and sharing it with her students, she decided to publish her work to make sure that more people gain access to it. In her opinion, her work was her duty, as a Muslim believer, in an attempt to challenge some of the Qur'an

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[1] All the information given in this section is based upon the personal interview I conducted on 25 May 2020 in a private setting with no digital recording (due to her request to do so).

[2] Fahreddin Dinçkol is a prominent Islamic figure in the 1970s who is well-known as the imam of the Princess Islands.

[3] Kırık meal is quite a common practice in Qur'anic training in Turkey, in which each word in an ayah is matched with the corresponding Turkish word. In this practice, the Qur'an is analyzed at word level and the reader is encouraged to decipher the meaning of the relevant verses by comparing the Arabic words with their Turkish equivalents.

translations of her time, which she accuses of distorting the meaning of the sacred text. On this point, Balcı (1991) provides an explanation for her preference for an interlinear-verbatim translation, in the preface of her translation (p. 2). She states that, despite its non-fluency in the target language, a verbatim translation is a safeguard against inaccurate interpretations of the Qur'an.

Interestingly, Balcı personally funded the publication of her translation without relying on any publishing house or receiving financial support from private or public institutions. She also comments on the reception of her word among Islamic circles and mentions few instances when she presented her translation to Islamic scholars and religious leaders at the time. She happily recalls their positive reception of her work. The fact that she felt the need to get her translation reviewed by them and her emphasis on their approval can be interpreted because of the authorial androcentrism dominating religious text production practices in Turkey. It should be noted that, in the interview I conducted, Balcı seemed proud about being a woman translator of the Qur'an, but she did not express any concerns about male dominance in the field of Qur'an translations in Turkey either. Despite the uniqueness her case, Balcı speaks about herself with utmost modesty. As a productive author with more than thirty books in the field of theology, she is aware of the opportunities she had compared to the women of her generation, and she seems to shy away from taking any pride in her contribution. At the end of her interview, she pointed out that men and women are equal before God, which, from a feminist perspective, makes her case more intriguing.

2.2. Necla Yasdıman (1962-): The most visible woman translator of the Qur'an in Turkey?

Necla Yasdıman was born in Bursa in 1962 and received a formal education. After finishing high-school, she attended the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University. She subsequently completed her MA and PhD in theology and held various positions within the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs. Yasdıman continues her professional life as a faculty member at İzmir Katip Çelebi University, in the department of Arabic Language and Literature.

Besides holding a PhD in the field of Islamic studies, Yasdıman's active engagement in language teaching determines her role both as an instructor and as a translator. In 2008, she founded an educational institute called 'Cemre Eğitim Kurumları', which delivers Arabic language courses. Her first books, entitled *Arapça Öğreniyorum* [I am learning Arabic] (1997) and *Adım Adım Kur'an Dili* [Step by Step the Language of the Qur'an] (2001), are used in this institution as course books. One can safely state that Yasdıman's primary motivation was language teaching rather than producing works specifically for Qur'anic studies. In her work, the grammatical structure of the sacred text is prioritized, the original is divided into sections and presented as a book. Yasdıman's subsequent work on the Qur'an entitled *Kur'ân Tahlili: Arapça Gramer Işığında Sözlük-Meal-Tefsir* (2006) [The Analysis of the Qur'an: A Dictionary, Meaning and Exegesis of the Qur'an in the Light of the Linguistics of the Arabic], on the other hand, appears in several volumes and provides an elaborate analysis of the sacred text. It includes the translation and exegesis of the Qur'an accompanied by a lexicon of Arabic terms. Clearly, it is an arduous and comprehensive study. Besides, Yasdıman (2006) dedicates her translation to women who conduct scholarly research in Turkey despite all the difficulties and disadvantages they face (p. 3). What is more, Yasdıman's involvement in Qur'an translation is not limited to the written medium. She makes use of contemporary technological advances in the field of multimedia and offers Arabic learners a CD containing exercises on the grammatical structure of the Arabic language used in the Qur'an.

Compared to Balcı, Yasdıman's perspective on Qur'an translation is very different. Indeed, her translational practice is intertwined with her profession as an Arabic instructor. Yasdıman has

a personal website[4] and a YouTube Channel, which makes her more visible than other women translators of the Qur'an. However, one should note that her visibility is a consequence of her dual professional engagement. In fact, it is more as a language teacher than as a Qur'an translator that Yasdıman has acquired the recognition she enjoys. It is possible that Yasdıman deliberately instrumentalizes her translation of the Qur'an in order to promote Arabic language education in Turkey. Besides, the fact that she is commissioned by a professional publishing house (i.e. *DDY*, primarily known for coursebook publications for theology faculties) supports her position as the second translator of the Qur'an into Turkish. To sum up, Yasdıman is a captivating example of a practical woman who translated the Qur'an for educational/ pedagogical purposes.

2.3. Ayşa Zeynep Abdullah (1974-): The last and most enigmatic woman translator of the Qur'an in Turkey

Ayşa Zeynep Abdullah was born in 1974 and the name is a pseudonym. Her real identity remains enigmatic. Her theological education was provided by her father, who is a theologian[5]. No information is available concerning her formal education in Arabic and Qur'anic studies. She does not reveal the motives behind her decision to use this specific pseudonym, but one can easily notice the Islamic reference of the names (i.e. Ayşa, Zeynep and Abdullah[6])

The reluctance to reveal information about the translator due to security concerns is expressed in the interview (Abdullah, 2019b). Indeed, Abdullah (2019b) claims that she was afraid that certain radical Islamic groups might hurt her or her family. Moreover, her parents and her children were against the publication of the translation because they did not approve of her translational decisions. As a result, she took the decision not to publish her translation under her own name, avoiding personal attack from outside and even from within her family. She also adds that another key reason for remaining anonymous (for which she is criticized) was the choice she made in her translation, entitled *İndirilme Sırasına Göre Yüce Kur'an-ı Kerim ve Meali* (2019a) [The Qur'an according to the Order of the Revelation and its Meaning]. As the title clearly suggests, the translator followed the chronological order of revelation rather than the order in the established original. In the preface, Abdullah (2019a) explains that the alteration in the order of the ayahs makes them more understandable because they are placed in their temporal and spatial context (i.e. the period when and where the ayahs were revealed) (p. 4).

Abdullah's popularity does not only stem from the enigma surrounding her translation. She is also presented as the first woman translator of the Qur'an into Turkish (Abdullah, 2019b), which is inaccurate. The under-voiced and un-politicized discourse of the former two female translators (i.e. Balcı and Yasdıman) seems to have left the stage empty for their successors. The interviewer refers to her translation of the Qur'an as the first to be undertaken by a woman in Turkey, and the translator proudly agrees (Abdullah, 2019b). One might find this hardly surprising, given that the previous two translators remained largely invisible[7]. However, this does not necessarily mean that Balcı and Yasdıman are not well-known among certain sects

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4   Necla Yasdıman's personal website is http://www.neclayasdiman.com.

5   This information is provided by Abdullah herself in the interview (17 October, 2019) which was published in a website titled as "eşitlik adalet kadın platformu" [platform of equality, justice, woman].

6   Ayşa and Zeynep are names of Prophet Mohammad's wife and daughter respectively, and they are frequently preferred in Islamic circles to name newborn girls. Abdullah means 'servant of Allah' and is also the name of Prophet Mohammad's father.

7   On this point, it should be repeated that the visibility Necla Yasdıman enjoys indeed derives from her recognition as a promoted Arabic instructor rather than as a woman translator of the Qur'an.

and Islamic circles in Turkey. The ignorance or denial of the former translations was probably due to promotional concerns. That is to say, the focus on 'being first woman translator of the Qur'an' is motivated by marketing strategies and financial gains. However, Abdullah still deserves to be given credit for being the first woman translator of the Qur'an with feminist agenda, since she places being a woman translator at the core of her translational discourse.

Unlike, Balcı and Yasdıman, Abdullah (2019b) claims her right and position as a woman translator of the Qur'an and voices her criticism of the dominance of male translators and religious scholars even on issues that particularly concern women. She defines her rendition as a challenge to gender inequality and presents her choice to change the order of the surah as an example of her feminine perspective, which had an impact on her reading of the sacred text (Abdullah, 2019b). However, this feminist rhetoric she voiced in her interview is not reflected in the preface of her translation. Intriguingly, there is no reference to or mention of the gender of the translator in the long introductory paragraphs by Abdullah (2019a, p. 4). The reason for this is not given, which leaves one wondering whether it was the translator's personal choice, or a decision taken by the publishing house. However, where the accuracy of her translation is concerned, Abdullah's boldness is remarkable. She explains that her work is a culmination of reading all the available Qur'an translations and finding the best meaning through her own understanding, comparative readings and crosschecking her translation. This process helped her to understand the message sent to the believers and gave her the motivation to help others read in the same way (Abdullah, 2019b).

Furthermore, the publication process of her translation is narrated with a clear emphasis on the difficulties and challenges she faced to get her translation published. Abdullah (2019b) contents that no publishing house in Turkey would dare to publish a Qur'an translation by a woman translator. As a result, she did not even approach any of them and self-funded her translation. Funding her translation privately, according to her, allowed her to keep her identity secret, while expressing her understanding of the Qur'an *ad libitum* as a woman without any intervention from conservative and male dominated institutions controlling Qur'an translations in Turkey. Finally, Abdullah's choice to keep her identity secret and her bold discourse on Qur'an translation with a clear focus on her gender makes her case worth analyzing in this study.

3. A comparative analysis of the translational practices and translatorial profiles of Balcı, Yasdıman, and Abdullah

The cases of Balcı, Yasdıman and Abdullah have appeared as borderline instances uncovering the mechanisms behind the Qur'an translation practices conducted by women translators in Turkey. Each case proved to be representative of different underlying ideologies and modes of translation with varying temporal and spatial frameworks that govern the translation processes.

Probably, the most suitable word to describe the three cases discussed above would be 'diverse'. Balcı, Yasdıman and Abdullah have different educational backgrounds shaped by either formal or non-formal/private education. The level of their competence in Arabic is also determined by their different circumstances. Indeed, Balcı's informal education in Arabic and Islamic sciences seems to have directed her Qur'an translation towards conventional approach (I should note, here, that conventional refers to the established methods such as interlinear-verbatim translation – *kırık meal* — frequently used in Qur'an translations in Turkey). Yasdıman's formal education, on the other hand, seems to have steered her towards the pedagogical areas, as a result, she has produced a Qur'an translation which is also used as a grammatical exercise book for Arabic learners. The last woman translator of the Qur'an, Abdullah, in comparison, refers to other areas of social sciences in her discourse on the Qur'an translation, which raises the question whether she did receive any formal education in any of these scholarly fields.

The publication of the first woman translator of the Qur'an into Turkish was in the early 1990s, which is quite late considering the long history of Qur'an translations in the Republican Turkey dating since the 1920s. The non-existence of any female translator before that time requires further research on the political, social and cultural structure of Turkey (which is beyond the scope of this study). However, it is safe to say that the 1990s was a turning point in Turkish history, witnessing the rise of various Islamic movements in the political and cultural arena as well as new forms of social life and opportunities especially for the women (Göle, 2000). In this regard, it is possible that the enriching Islamic revival of the decade might have had an impact on the publication of Balcı's Qur'an translation in 1991. The following two translations were published in the new millennium. The 2000s witnessed greater advancements in the printing press and an increase in the number of publishing houses with different areas of interest. This might have eased the path for Yasdıman (2006) and Abdullah (2019a) to publish their Qur'an translations.

Balcı's translation published in 1991, gave women access to the male-dominated field of Qur'an translation in Turkey and lifted the veil of silence, but one might rightfully wonder, to what extent? There are significant differences between the visibility of these three translators. For instance, it is not possible to find any information on Balcı or to establish contact with her through digital communication means (i.e. email, phone etc.). She does not use any social media platforms or give interviews either. She has, however, a closed circle of disciples with whom she continues to study the Qur'an, which is why, she is visible to a limited extent. Her name is also well-known in the field of Islamic studies in Turkey, but she keeps her discourse quite modest and does not put any emphasis on being a woman translator of the sacred text. By contrast, Yasdıman has a multi-media visibility thanks to a personal website. As a Qur'an translator, she is very active and has contributed to the field of Qur'an translations with a number of books on Arabic language, in which she integrated the translation of the sacred text as the fundamental linguistic practice. However, her role is largely known as an Arabic language instructor rather than a woman translator of the Qur'an. In comparison to her predecessors, Abdullah's position is more complex; she is well-known in the field of Qur'an translations in Turkey and unlike Balcı and Yasdıman, she puts a clear focus on being a 'woman' translator and wants the reader to receive her translation accordingly. In other words, in her view, being a woman has impacted her translation and made her work stand out from those undertaken by male translators. However, Abdullah's bold and intriguing discourse contradicts with the realities of her life, considering the fact that she could not put her real name on her translation, nor reveal her face. Her remarkable visibility on the level of rhetoric (which refers to the image intended to be created by her statements) is accompanied by an utmost secrecy on the level of identity, which blurs the conceptualization of visibility in this highly religion- and politics-oriented context.

Furthermore, each translator seems to have been influenced by a different ideology, which makes each case particularly interesting. Balcı, for instance claims that, initially, her translation sprang out of the need for a better understanding of the Qur'an for her students. Her main aim was to help her disciples understand the doctrines of the sacred text through her translation. At a later stage, she decided to publish her translation after discovering certain Qur'an translations which, in her opinion, distorted the meaning of the original text. Thus, she claims that her translation was intended to correct inaccurate Turkish translations of the Qur'an available at the time. Yasdıman, on the other hand, seems to have adopted a highly market-oriented strategy. That is to say, she has produced and designed her translations according to the needs of Qur'anic language learners. As an Arabic language instructor, Yasdıman attributes her rendition a dual function; teaching people how to speak Arabic and helping them understand

the meaning of the Qur'an. The third translator, Abdullah, has also adopted a different strategy with a feminist agenda. She expresses her criticism of male dominance in the field of Qur'an translation. Accordingly, Abdullah (2019b) declares that she has produced her translation in order to present the female perspective to correct inaccurate male-centered interpretations of certain Qur'anic verses and to expose gender inequality that is imbedded in conventional belief systems.

However, the three female translators seem to share one key similarity, namely their translation translational strategy which could be defined as 'deconstructive'. They all challenge the existing (established) version of the Qur'an in their translation and deconstruct the unity of the source text at varying levels. In Balcı's translation, for instance, the original is broken into lexical elements and the meanings of individual words are prioritized over the integrity of whole/ complete sentences. Balcı adopted this approach in order to help her readers understand the meaning of the Qur'an independently. In Yasdıman's case, the original is transformed into a grammar book with an emphasis on the syntax and morphology of the source text. The translator adopted this strategy in order to help readers learn Arabic through the Qur'an and enable them to understand it through their own language competence. Abdullah took this strategy a step further. Exceeding lexical and syntax levels, she changes the established order of the surahs by arranging her translation according to the temporal framework (i.e. the order of the revelation). The main reason behind her new reconstruction is to prevent the misinterpretation of certain ayahs (verses) which, according to the translator, is a result of the decontextualization caused by the order used and preserved in the established version of the Qur'an. Abdullah presents her strategy as a bold approach in order to ensure that the sacred text is understood freely without influence from male-dominant interpretations and translations of the Qur'an in Turkey.

Balcı, Yasdıman and Abdullah adopted similar translations strategies, however, a comparative analysis of their translations of key ayahs such as Q 2:187, 2:223, 2:228, Q 4:3, 4:34, Q 30:21 that particularly concern women can give an idea about their key differences and the unvoiced and/or claimed gender-sensitive approaches of the three translators. This comparison could help us answer the question whether they, as women translators, (un)intentionally pose any challenge to the dominant male voice or reproduce it (Hassen, 2011). To answer this question, I have comparatively examined translations of ayahs Q 2:187, 2:223, 2:228, Q 4:3, 4:34, Q 30:21 by Balcı, Yasdıman and Abdullah respectively. The results of the analysis are compatible with the above-outlined discourse of the translators. The first and second translators, Balcı and Yasdıman, maintain their low profile concerning the feminist agenda. That is to say, they do not add any different interpretation from a woman's perspective to the relevant verses. Abdullah, on the other hand, clearly deviates from her predecessors and makes her woman perspective clear in her translation.

Due to space limitations, this section only includes excerpts from translations of the verse Q 30:21, which, in my view, represents a valid example to display and question the existence of any gender-sensitive approach in the translations of the three women translators of the Qur'an:

> Size kendi nevinizden kendilerine ısınmanız için zevceler yaratmış olması, aranızda bir sevgi ve merhamet getirmesi de O'nun ayetlerindendir. Şüphe yok ki bunda iyi düşünen bir topluluk için ibretler vardır. (Balcı, 1991, p. 828)

> [And of his signs is that He created wives from your own kind for you to like peacefully and He ordained love and kindness between you. Indeed, in that are signs/lessons for people who well reflect.][8] (Balcı, 1991, p. 828)

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8   Translations provided in square brackets are mine, unless stated otherwise.

> Kendi (cinsi)nizden kendileriyle huzura kavuşacağınız eşler yaratması, aranızda muhabbet (sevgi ve dostluk) ve rahmet kılması, Onun ayetlerindendir. Doğrusu bunda düşünen bir toplum için dersler vardır. (Yasdıman, 2006, p. 509)

> [And of his signs is that He created wives from your own kind for you to live with in tranquility and He ordained love and kindness between you. Indeed, in that are signs/ lessons for people who give thought.] (Yasdıman, 2006, p. 509)

> Ve onun işaretlerinden birisi de içlerinde sükûn bulasınız diye size kendi nefislerinizden (bilinçlerinizden) eşler (beden) yaratmasıdır. Şüphesiz bunda düşünebilen bir kavim için nice İşaretler vardır. (Abdullah, 2019a, p. 338)

> [And one of his signs is that He created matches (body) from your ourselves (your consciousness/soul) for you to find tranquility in them. Indeed, in that are signs/lessons for people who give thought.] (Abdullah, 2019a, p. 338)

This verse is frequently visited in feminist discussions on the Qur'an, specifically as a reference to marital harmony. The key controversy created by this ayah is the interpretation that woman was created for man to find peace, tranquility, love and kindness in her rather than focusing on the mutual dependence of man and woman on one another. In other words, it infers the superiority of man over woman, but with a possible gender-egalitarian reading.

The first translation shows that Balcı (1991) maintains conventional interpretations in her rendering, where she uses the words 'wife/spouse' and guides the reading of the ayah without any hints for a particular feminine perspective. In a similar way, the second translator Yasdıman does not challenge the 'woman for man' reference explicated-above, and maintains the mainstream reading. Abdullah on the other hand, abandons the conventional rendering by formulating word-tricks in which she changes 'spouses/mates' with 'body' and 'for you' with 'from you/your consciousness'. Abdullah also omits the words 'love' and 'mercy' in order to support the intended interpretation in her translation. I should note here that to discuss the appropriateness or accuracy of any of these translations is beyond the scope of this study. However, within the limits of these descriptive examples, it is my opinion that Abdullah (2019) still deserves credit for being the first woman translator of the Qur'an in Turkey to produce a feminist translation of the sacred text, to defy her two female predecessors and to challenge the dominant male voice that governs the field of Qur'anic studies and translations.

4. The reception and publication of women's translations of the Qur'an in Turkey

Various Qur'an translation studies conducted in different social, political and cultural contexts share one phenomenon in common around the world: androcentric hegemony. In this respect, Turkey constitutes an example *par excellence*. The uncharted status of the Qur'an translations by women reveals how deliberate silencing acts can determine the position of certain translations in a cultural system.

Women's invisibility in the practical and professional milieu of Qur'an translations in Turkey is well-attested at the meta-narrative level as well. First of all, there is a widespread ignorance about women translators of the Qur'an in the academic field. There is no scholarly work dedicated to any of the Qur'an translations undertaken by Balcı, Yasdıman and Abdullah. It is difficult to understand the reasons behind this oversight and the low number of women translators in this field, but there could be various explanations.

First, female intelligentsia in Turkey is a marginalized group and men are the overwhelming majority in the field of Islamic studies. Secondly, the issue of qualification comes to the fore. Receiving formal or conventional Arabic education in an Arabic-speaking country appears to

be a required credential for Qur'an translators. Considering the conditions, especially before the 1980s, this kind of education was not as accessible to women as it was for men in Turkey, which led to the under-education of women in Qur'anic Arabic as they did not have the chance to attend most of the prestigious Arabic institutions abroad. Finally, and — in my view — most probably, many women who have high-level competence in Arabic language and Islamic knowledge would not dare to translate the Qur'an in fear of facing criticisms about their ability to translate the Qur'an. Most of these women also lack or do not have supporting networks, which could affect their self-confidence and relegate them in a 'secondary' and 'minority' status in the field of Qur'anic studies in Turkey.

Furthermore, women translators in this field do not receive the attention they deserve in the publishing industry. None of the Qur'an translations by women are promoted in a gender-sensitive way. Indeed, neither of the publishing houses (*Ebrar, DDY* and *Hermes* respectively) have printed Balcı, Yasdıman and Abdullah's[9] translations with an emphasis on the fact that they were produced by women. This could be because of the oversight or ignorance of the male-dominated field of Qur'anic studies and translations that does not help — and sometimes actively prevents — women translators express their voices and claim their rightful positions. In fact, among the hundreds of promotion pages on Qur'an translations in several periodicals and bulletins in Turkey, women's translations are not given the opportunity to stand out, which casts a shadow on women's contribution and forces them to operate behind the scene.

Moreover, financial issues concerning the production and publication of each translation clearly expose their underprivileged positions. None of them received any payment for their translation services. In fact, Balcı and Abdullah have published their Qur'an translations by investing their personal wealth rather than receiving any financial support from anyone or any institution. Moreover, the publishing houses of each translator seem to have a limited cycle of circulation. For instance, the agency *Ebrar Yayınları* only published works of Medine Balcı, her husband and her mentor Fahreddin Dinçkol. *DDY*, probably, published Yasdıman's translation because she was already well known for her coursebooks used in Theology faculties. The publishing house printing Abdullah's translation *Hermes Yayınları*, appears to be a non-conventional/marginal publishing house specializing in religious books on spiritual journeys, new belief systems and practices of worship. Despite the social and financial difficulties, it is still possible to find all translations in mainstream bookshop websites in Turkey, such as *D&R*, *Kitapyurdu*, *Idefix*, etc. This can be interpreted as a sign of the demand for and readers' acceptance of women's translations of the Qur'an (though it might constitute a relatively small group) in Turkey.

5. Conclusion

One of the aims of this study is to give voice to the women translators of the Qur'an in Turkey. Despite hosting a diverse and rich translation history, the field of Qur'an translation in Turkey is still governed and dominated by an androcentric voice. The translations of Medine Balcı (1991), Necla Yasdıman (2006) and Ayşa Zeynep Abdullah (2019) have emerged as distinctive productions concerning modes and ideologies of translation. Medine Balcı as the first woman translator of the Qur'an does not adopt any feminist agenda in her translation of the sacred text. She views her contribution as the duty of a modest believer whose main goal is to ensure the transfer of the holy text's true meaning to the target culture. In Necla Yasdıman's case, the translation is adapted for pedagogical purposes, and transformed into a grammar book to serve her main intention of teaching Arabic language and enabling her readers to understand the

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9   The feminist arguments concerning the case of Ayşa Zeynep Abdullah and her Qur'an translation derive from her personal interview. This individual act of promotion is not underwritten by the publishing house.

Qur'an independently. Despite taking pride in producing such a voluminous work, Yasdıman does not adopt any gender-sensitive discourse either to position her contribution among Qur'an translations in Turkey. By contrast, the most recent woman translator, Ayşa Zeynep Abdullah, who chose to remain anonymous, sets her agenda with a feminist approach. Abdullah asserts that her gender determines her reading of the Qur'an and that her interpretation aims to challenge the male-biased perspective that governs Qur'an translations in Turkey.

Finally, the 'secondary' and 'minority' status of women translators of the Qur'an mirrors the conditions that govern the field of religious texts production in Turkey. Considering their contribution in the dissemination of the sacred text's message in different societies and cultures, women translators of the Qur'an deserve more attention in both scholarly and professional circles.

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Significance of women's involvement in (re-)translating the Chinese Bible

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Abstract

The history of the translation of the Chinese Bible can be traced back to 1822, when the Chinese version of the Holy Scripture was first published in Selangor, India by Baptist missionary Joshua Marshman (Wylie, 1867). Since then, translation of Chinese Bibles has continued under the auspices of Bible societies such as the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Worldwide Bible Society, the Catholic Church, as well as under the leadership of individual translators such as Rev. Lu Chen Chung and independent scholar Feng Xiang. The involvement of women in the translating and editing process has also evolved from male-dominated teams to a more gender-inclusive, collaborative setting. This study discusses the importance of women's involvement in the translation process by first tracing how women's role in churches were undermined in Hong Kong due to interpretations based on the different translations of the Bible into Chinese. The paper also aims to shed light on how the gender-related scriptures have been treated, by way of comparative textual analyses of biblical annotations across various Chinese Bibles. It can be seen that when women editors and translators are placed in truly leadership roles, women-related issues can be addressed more effectively.

Keywords

Female Bible translators, hermeneutics, Chinese Bible translations, female church leadership, feminist theology

1. Background

Hong Kong likes to pride itself on equal opportunities among men and women. According to the latest survey (2020) by the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, women holding leadership positions such as managers or administrators, for instance, rose from 20 % to 35 % between 1991 and 2019 (Census and Statistics Department, 2020). But such improvement in opportunities for women in the secular world is not replicated in churches. According to the latest figures by the Church Renewal Movement in 2014, of the 1,114 senior pastors and ordained ministers in Hong Kong, 246 or 22 % are women, a slight improvement from 20 % in 2009, while males account for 78 %, (878 ministers). The obstacles to the ordination of women, according to the report by the Hong Kong Women Christian Council[1], can be divided into four areas: 1) From the socio-cultural perspective, Hong Kong being a traditional Chinese society, it is still male-dominated, which in turn bears on the involvement of women in church ministry. 2) The present church structure does not have a system for approving women's ordination. 3) Some churches base their decisions on the needs of the churches and the nature of ministry. For instance, women can have certain roles and lead worship, but they may not preach from the pulpit. In the training of theology students, feminist theology is insufficiently taught. 4) Women need to take into consideration more factors than men in being church leaders, for example how to strike a balance between the roles of pastor, wife and mother.

The experiences which I collected from personal contacts suggest a fifth obstacle: differences in interpretation of biblical texts, sometimes caused by the translations of the Bible into Chinese, have often become a cause for the refusal of female ordination and for the subordination of women in churches in Hong Kong. This led me to consider the importance of women's involvement in the translation of the Bible, especially with respect to passages in the scriptures relating to the role of women. In an open letter entitled "can Lutheran churches ordain female pastors?", the late Reverend Wu Ming Chieh from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (Wong, 2001, p. 48) pointed out the three passages generally used to oppose female ordination: 1) what the husband is to the bride, Christ is to the church (1 Cor 11:3-16) and, therefore, to ordain a woman would imply that the woman takes up the role of husband and father in the family; moreover, since "the Christian minister is Christ's representative, this implies a spiritual authority in the church that belongs to the man."; 2) "women should remain silent in the churches." (1 Cor 14:34-36), and 3) "For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner." (1 Tim 2: 8-15) The above excerpts from the scriptures appear to point to the subordination of woman to man owing to the Order of Creation, to women's alleged weakness in facing temptations, and that they are being ordered by Paul to remain silent.

The above interpretation did not come as a surprise but rather, confirmed my observation of women's role in churches, on which the interpretation of gender-related biblical verses had an impact. As early as 2007, when I attended a wedding at a very traditional church in Hong Kong, what the male church leader said in his wedding sermon struck me. He opined, based on Genesis 2:18 which says "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him", that the role of women is to help or assist the man, as the Chinese translation of the excerpt suggests. According to him, deep in their hearts men need women to support their decisions and, therefore, his advice was as follows: "I always told the church sisters, wise women should pretend to be stupid." His comments again did not come as a surprise, as this

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[1] This is according to the annual report published by Hong Kong Christian Women Council, 1995.

is also demonstrative of the traditional Confucian view of women's derogatory role as well[2].

While the letters of the apostle Paul are commonly cited by churches in the Chinese community to justify women's subordinate role in church, what is not cited as argument for empowering women is Paul's consistency in his hermeneutics. His interpretation is a form of allegorical reading, which is not only reflected in 1 Timothy 2:13-14, but also in his figurative interpretation of the figures of Hagar and Sarah. In 1 Timothy 2:13-14, Paul's theology of women's subordination is based on the creation order, for Adam is created first, and also derived from the sin of woman, for she is the one who was deceived. In Galatians 4:22-26, Paul took Hagar and Sarah figuratively – Hagar represents the covenant from Mount Sinai, which is in slavery, while Sarah stands for the free Jerusalem.

2. Revisiting the Hebrew Bible and its Chinese translation

For the purpose of textual analysis in this paper, rather than studying the Chinese translations of Pauline literature to investigate its impact on women's role, I would like to focus on the Old Testament, which provides the foundational texts allegorically interpreted by Paul in the New Testament. Two issues that primarily lead to Paul's conclusions are: is man created before woman? And is woman the one who was deceived and, hence, the sinner? In what follows, I will draw on Old Testament scholar Phyllis Trible's interpretation of a number of gender-related scriptures and compare them with different Chinese Bible versions in an attempt to understand their impact on Chinese readers.

Phyllis Trible's feminist approach in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (1978) overturned the traditional thinking of women's subordination, because it is Chapter 2 of Genesis, not Chapter 1, that played a critical role in the church's positioning on gender equality. According to Trible, the literal meaning of 'Adam' in Hebrew language is 'earthling', which is a genderless term. In other words, in Genesis, 'man' should not be understood as 'male' until God took 'its' rib to form a companion, Eve. If Adam is an 'earthling' in the beginning rather than the 'male', then 1 Tim 2: 8-15 does not pose any issue: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (NIV). Indeed, according to Genesis 1:27, "[NIV] God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Thus, the male and female were created at the same time. Is woman the one being deceived, and thus a sinner? Phyllis Trible goes on to show Adam's presence when the serpent approached Eve, as the scripture is careful to point out that the man is with her (Trible, 1978, p. 113) and plural verb forms are used in the dialogue between the woman and the serpent. Adam remained silent and passive, and his responsibility is obvious.

Trible further elaborates on the original meaning of 'helper' in Genesis 2:18, a word which, in Hebrew, designates a 'companion'. Consequently, woman is not an 'assistant' but one who corresponds to the other half on an equal basis. That said, being a helper does not necessarily imply inferiority; the use of 'helping' in Psalms 33:20 and other biblical verses is synonymous to 'protecting' and even 'saving'.

How is 'helper' translated and interpreted in the Chinese context? Where translations in modern English range from 'helper' to the more neutral term 'companion', the Chinese translations have not evolved significantly over the years. Thus, the new translation of Genesis

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[2]   Confucianism is often associated with oppressing women, including the teaching that women should be subordinate to their fathers during childhood, husbands during marriage, or sons during widowhood. One of the direct references to women in the Analects is "Women and servants are hard to deal with" (Analects 17.25).

2:18 in the Chinese New Version (CNV) published by Tien Dao Publishing House (which later established Worldwide Bible Society) in 1992 reads: "我要為他造個和他相配的幫手" [I will make him an *assistant* corresponding to him]. The translation of this excerpt in the Revised Chinese Union Version (RCUV) is exactly the same as the earlier Chinese Union Version (CUV), the canonized Bible translation into Chinese published in 1919: "我要為他造一個配偶幫助他" [I will make him a *spouse* to help him]. The Chinese Catholic Studium Biblicum reads: "我要給他造個與他相稱的助手" [I will make him an *assistant* compatible to him]. Lu Chen Chung's version reads: "我要為他造個幫助者做他的配偶" [I will make a *helper* as his spouse]. The above Chinese translations reveal that terms such as 幫手 [helper] or 助手 [assistant] 幫助者 [one who helps], if used singly without further elaboration, lead to assumptions about the inferiority of women. It is only the RCUV/CUV version that adopts a more neutral translation of the excerpt: "我要為他造一個配偶幫助他" [spouse who helps him]. To sum up, it comes as no surprise that such translations led the Chinese elder in the church to bring his understanding from a patriarchal ideology into the interpretation.

3. Source text analysis of Biblical commentaries

While the translation of 'help' in Genesis 2:18 across the various Chinese versions of the Bible has remained fairly the same for decades and, hence, a source for gender-biased interpretations, certain devotional and study Bibles in the market strive to provide extensive annotations to explain the role of women to provide a balanced viewpoint. I will base my analysis on Nord's translation-oriented source text Analysis (T.O.S.T.A.) to analyze the skopos (purpose) and intended readership at the macro level. Since the notion of "functional equivalence" proposed by Eugene Nida, consultant of several Bible Societies including United Bible Societies, has had a significant impact on the study of Bible translations especially in the functional approach by scholars such as Katherina Reiß and Hans Vermeer. Nida himself regularly drew on examples from Bible translation to illustrate his views on equivalence but other Bible translators, including those working into Chinese, have frequently used this approach (Peng, 1992, pp. 1-16).

Peng Kuo-wei, editor-in-chief and project consultant of the Chinese Union Version Study Bible, opined that the first thing to do when embarking on a translation of the Bible into Chinese should be to decide which is the intended readership, in order to determine the skopos and the most suitable translation strategy. He reckoned that, from a functionalist viewpoint, it is necessary to clarify the skopos as either documentary or instrumental, before a definition of faithfulness can be reached (Peng, 2019b, p. 252). In Nord's view, documentary translation aims at producing in the target language a record of a communicative interaction in which a source-culture sender communicates with a source-culture audience via the source text, under source-culture conditions. Instrumental translation, on the other hand, aims at producing in the target language an instrument for a new communicative interaction between the source-culture sender and a target-culture audience, using the source text as a model (Nord, 1997, p. 47). According to Peng, the Chinese Bible translations in the past century, including the Chinese Union Version, the Revised Chinese Union Version (2010) and today's Chinese version, can be classified as instrumental translation or, more specifically, heterofunctional translation, in which the concepts and terms in the target culture are employed to achieve, in the target culture, functions similar to those of the source text in the source culture (Peng, 1992, p. 5).

I will begin textual analysis by comparing the annotations concerning Genesis 2:18 in two devotional Bibles. Annotations and paratexts more generally are important sources of information for scholar researching the reception of a text. Gerard Genette defines paratexts as "those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (peritext) and outside it (epitext), that mediate the book to the reader: titles, and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications,

prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues and afterwords" (1997, p. xviii). Tahir-Gürçaglar (2002) points out the significance of this textual, extratextual and paratextual material for translation research, as it is important in "offering clues about a culture's definition of translation"; she explains that it provides "a valuable insight into the production and reception of translated texts" (p. 45). The first text under study is the Devotional Bible for Women published by Chinese Bible International in 2006; it provides an extensive commentary. Under the leadership of Tsang Suk Yee, a female editor-in-chief, the making of this devotional Bible involved Chinese female contributors, mostly pastors from North America, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other countries, who wrote devotional passages and annotations in the following seven areas: spiritual life, personal growth, work, marriage, singlehood, interpersonal relationship, family, and parenting. The circulation of this Bible is not limited to Hong Kong; indeed, the project targeted an international audience of overseas Chinese Christian women. According to the preface (Devotional Bible for Women, 2006, pp. i.-iv.), the purpose of the translation is to help women better understand the full picture of the Bible in a contextualized approach, in response to the ever-increasing demands and difficulties that women face in a knowledge-based economy, in areas of marriage, identity, workplace and spirituality, amongst others. As such, the skopos of the translation is to contextualize the Bible for modern readers, as the preface clearly states (p. iv). In other words, this is a Bible that emphasizes both study and application of scriptures, so that Christian women have a better understanding of their life stories from the Bible, can learn how to live out their faith and find out solutions to their challenges by studying the Word of God.

Example 1 contains an annotation on Genesis 2:18 in the Chinese Union Version's translation. It is an example of the important contribution of female publishers and editors in redefining women's role:

Example 1

又有人以為女人既是「幫助者」，就只能擔當輔助的角色。原來舊約「幫助者」常指戰友同盟，不能就此斷定幫助者與受助者的從屬關係。

所謂「獨居不好」，是指出人的群性，也指出神要男女互補。神造女人，是要她與男人合作，共同完成神賦予人的使命。所以，兩性間是合作的關係，而非權力的駕馭。

默想

　耶和華神說：『那人獨居不好，我要為他造一個配偶幫助他。』」（創2:18）

心靈的鏡子

妻子幫助丈夫，既非出於自卑，也非出於高傲，乃是不卑不亢追求在主裡的合一。

Gloss:

Some consider women as "helpers" and can only perform assistant roles. However, "helper" in the Old Testament often refers to ally, hence one cannot jump to conclusion on the superior/ inferior relationship between those who help and those who are helped. When we say "it is not good that men live alone", it refers to the social nature of human beings. It means God wants men and women to complement one another. God made women to cooperate with men in order to complete the mission given by God. As such, both genders are in a collaborative relationship and not a power relationship.

Devotional verse: The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18)

Spiritual Reflection
Wives help husbands not out of self-pity nor self-pride; rather, it is out of pursuit for unity in Christ.

In terms of intended readership, with Chinese female Christians as the primary target audience, the Devotional Bible for Women successfully became the first and, at the time of writing, still one of the few Chinese Bibles that appeals to the female Christian community. It contains a collection of a thousand short essays and notes, over forty stories of biblical female characters, as well as a women-focused preface set for each book in the Bible. The Devotional Bible is marketed with a reddish or purple book cover and a feminine design, complete with over three hundred colorful illustrations. Perhaps it is this innovative editorial approach that gained this devotional Bible the third prize in the third annual Gold Book Award Prize Presentation Ceremony organized by the Association of *Christian Publishers* Ltd. in Hong Kong, in 2007. It can be assumed that the reach of this devotional Bible would include only female Christian readers. As such, while promoting collaboration between men and women, the extended annotations could only have a bearing on female readers, while leaving the male community out of the target audience.

The second text under study is the Soul Care Bible, published by Worldwide Bible Society in 2010. In what follows, I examine the same biblical passage. The difference between this version and the Devotional Bible for Women in terms of their emphasis on gender equality is noticeable, as revealed by macro level textual analysis in the sense of Nord, 2005. The Soul Care Bible, also a devotional Bible, is basically a Chinese translation of the Soul Care Bible published in the US, but with an addition of over sixty articles written by Chinese church leaders and counsellors to suit the Chinese context. The purpose or skopos of this Bible is to provide spiritual guidance to Chinese Christians relating to wide-ranging topics which cover emotional and stress management, marriage, employment, youth problems, amongst others. In a similar way to the Devotional Bible for Women, it places emphasis on the application of biblical texts. As such, the intended readership is not only women but any lay Christians, with a particular focus on counsellors, church workers, seminarians as well as pastors[2]. The articles are written by a mix of female and male writers, and the volume is distributed widely in Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas Chinese Christian bookstores. The editor-in-chief and the consultant team comprise of exclusively male church leaders and scholars, assisted by a team of predominantly female translators responsible for translating the devotional Bible from English to Chinese. In this collaborative translation process, the editor-in-chief decided on the topics and the contributor list for the articles, and had the final say in case of any disputes in the translation process.

While the Devotional Bible for Women has an extended section on gender equality based on Genesis 2:18, text in the Soul Care Bible the emphasis of the commentary of the same biblical text is on the importance of sex within marriage, as Example 2 reveals:

Example 2

神曾容許亞當感受孤獨,然後他創造了夏娃,使亞當從她身上認識親密無間一體感的意義。這是世上第一宗一見鍾情的例子,只消看一眼,亞當就深印在心, 戀上了夏娃。

神創造亞當和夏娃成為一個關係單位,性是讓他們聯合的部分黏合劑。從起初,神設計了身性, 男人與女人可以藉此建立奇妙的關係。性是針對人類的孤單而創造的奇妙關係,然而必須在男女關係一個重要的組合之下才能運用, 這個組合就是婚姻。

Gloss:
God allowed Adam to experience loneliness. He then created Eve, who let him experience a sense of physical intimacy. This is the first example of love at first sight. Adam was in love with Eve who left an indelible mark in his heart.

God created Adam and Eve as a relationship unit. Sex is the catalyst for their unity. From the beginning, God designed bodily sex through which man and woman can create a wonderful relationship. Sex is a wonderful relationship created to address the human loneliness, but this must be applied within an important combination in this male-female relationship, and this combination is called marriage.

Among the topics of the articles written within the framework of this project, suppressing women's role in church leadership was not discussed. Rather, there is a separate article to address men's concerns, including the question of how men respond to the phenomenon of increasing female power in the society (Soul Care Bible, 2001, p. 1690). When a male editor-in-chief decides on the topics, it appears that supressing women's leadership does not concern him as much as the issue of increasing female empowerment.

Apart from these two devotional Bibles, study Bibles published by various Bible societies and Christian publishers in Hong Kong also provide annotations concerning Genesis 2:18 although, due to their concision constraint, they are shorter and refer to a range of verses rather than a specific scriptural verse. The intended readership for Study Bibles are seminarians and church workers; they serve as a tool for cross-referencing or exegetical purpose and contain fewer devotional passages or illustrations than devotional Bibles, though discussion, reflective questions and additional information are increasingly added to appeal to lay readers (Kwong, 1987, p. 1). While the book's publishers are located in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the circulation of these Bibles is not limited to the local region. The volumes are distributed worldwide, and their intended readership are global Chinese Christian readers. Peng Kuo-wei, editor-in-chief of the Chinese Union Study Bible (CUSB), noted that, as the heterofunctional translation strategy adopted by Chinese Bible versions at the present time cannot satisfy the expectations of target readers who are interested in documentary translation (i.e., a Chinese translation which is more faithful to the original), such needs can be met by using an instrumental translation with additional notes providing linguistic, historical, geographical, and cultural information. In other words, the documentary skopos can be achieved by producing a study Bible. Peng further added that the provision of the cultural framework of the source language text through a well-designed translation in CUSB does help the target language readers to gain more accurate understandings of the biblical messages, according to the feedback from participants to their Bible Society's workshops using CUSB as course materials. Editors for the two other study Bibles I have examined for the purpose of this research also confirmed[3] that they aim to bring about a study Bible that reflects the original Hebrew culture.

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[3] An interview with Ms Serena Chan, executive editor of Worldwide Bible Society, Hong Kong, conducted on 23 July 2020 confirmed the above information.

CGST (China Graduate School of Theology) Study Bible	神為亞當造配偶， 使夫婦可以互相配搭。V.21[沉睡] :指感覺器官暫時停止發揮功能; 故沉睡和見異象常連在一起(創15:12;伯4:13, 32:15;賽29:10)且提到[沉睡的靈]。22[肋骨]:此詞可指胸前的肉或骨、是最接近心臟的部位; 表明丈夫和妻子平等的地位,以及親密的程度。(創2:18-21) Back translation: God created a spouse for Adam, so that husband and wife can collaborate with each other. V. 21 [deep sleep]: it means the sensory organs stop functioning. Deep sleep and visions often go hand in hand. See Genesis 15:12; Job 4:13, 32:15; Isaiah 29:10. It also mentions [spirit of deep sleep] 22 [rib]: this refers to the flesh or bone in the chest, which is closest to one's heart; **this shows that husband and wife are of equal status**, and their degree of intimacy. (Annotations for Gen 2:18-21)
Chinese Union Study Bible	我要為他造一個配偶幫助他 - 宜作[我要給他造個與他相稱的幫助者](參[思])。從2:19-20可知,這幫助者不排除是走獸或飛鳥。另外, 在舊約中, 神也被稱為幫助者(詩 33:20; 70:5; 121:1-2) I will make him a spouse to help him – better to translate as [I will make him a helper that corresponds to him (refer to Catholic version]. From 2:19-20 we know that this helper may refer to beasts or birds. In the Old Testament, God is described as the helper (Psa 33:20; 70:5; 121:1-2)
CNV Study Bible (Worldwide Bible Society)	本章最後八節是神造女人的記錄。人需要伴侶,不能孤獨。亞當看完了一切活物—給牠們取了名字,卻找不到可以配合他,幫助他的(20節). 神給他造了女人,是與他同樣有靈性的人。成為他的配偶,長相廝守的伴侶,終生的合作者,建基在愛與無私的給予上。亞當稱她為'骨中的骨,肉中的肉", 叫她做"女人"。從聖經此處記載,可以看見:1,男人先於女人,就像父母先於子女, 這種次序是神所定(林前11:8-9;弗5:22-25;彼前3:1,7)。2,**"夫妻"站在同等地位上共同生活, 同甘共苦,彼此相悅(23-24節)**. 夫妻為神所配合(22節,可10:9),是永久的盟約(24節;可10:7-8), 3 夫妻間應完全互敬互信,無猜無忌,生活在完美的愛裡(25節)。The last 8 chapters record how God created woman. Human beings need companions and cannot live alone. Adam, after seeing all creatures and giving them names, cannot find one that can help him (v. 20) God created woman for him, one who has the same spirituality as him to become his spouse, a life-long companion and collaborator, and their relationship is based on love and unconditional giving. Adam called her "bone of bones, flesh of the flesh", and called her "woman." From the Bible one can see that 1, man is created before woman, just like parents are before children, this creation order is decided by God (1 Cor 11:8-9; Ephesians 5:22-25; 1 Peter 3:1,7) 2 **"husband and wife" live together on the same status**, they experience good and bad times together and please each other (v. 23-24). Husband and wife are put together by God (v.22, Mark 10:9), in an everlasting covenant (v. 24; Mark 10:7-8), 3 husband and wife should respect and trust each other and live in perfect love (v.25) (Annotations for Genesis 2:20-25)

Table 1: Annotations concerning Genesis 2:18 in three Chinese study Bibles.

The length of annotations in the Study Bibles was often limited by typographical issues such as the space available for typesetting[4]. That said, the choices made by reviewers or editors of what to pick and what to leave out in a short note is of paramount importance. As seen in the above annotations on Genesis 2:18, they are all concerned with gender equality in one way or another. In the CGST version, gender equality was not tackled directly based on Genesis

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[4] Andrew Kwong (1987), one of the key reviewers of the CGST Study Bible, suggested additional questions and supplementary information to fill up blank spaces in an earlier edition of this Study Bible; such typesetting arrangements had an impact on the layout for the current version.

2:18, but on the fact that Eve was made out of Adam's rib, which implies her equal status with Adam. The annotation started with a brief remark: 神為亞當造配偶, 使夫婦可以互相配搭 [God created a spouse for Adam, so that husband and wife can collaborate with each other]. A collaborative relationship does not imply that both husband and wife are equal. It is worth noting that the contributor of the annotations for the Book of Genesis in Chinese translation, a renowned Old Testament Scholar, wrote an extensive exegetical commentary for Genesis 2-3 in his other published work (Kwong, 1997, p. 233). He clearly pointed out that, Genesis 2:18, 'help' does not convey any sense of inferiority and pointed out that the Hebrew word `*ezer* [helper] is also used to describe God as a "helper" of his people, for example in Psalm 33:20. However, such clarity cannot be seen in the annotations he wrote for the CGST Study Bible. In Worldwide Bible's CNV Study Bible it briefly mentioned that husband and wife live together as equals as Genesis 2:23-24 says. Among the three versions, the Chinese Union Study Bible is the most unambiguous in pointing to readers that 'helper' — is a term which describes God in several biblical passages.

As previous studies suggested that the weakness of woman in facing temptations is usually cited as a reason for denying women ordination, Genesis 3:6 should serve as a powerful argument against such proposition. Phyllis Trible (1978) pointed out that the Hebrew text makes it clear that Adam was present when the serpent talked to Eve. However, among the three Bible versions discussed above, only CUSB made a point to refer to Adam's presence, though its annotations are shorter compared to the other two. In fact, the contributor for the Book of Genesis in the CGST Study Bible did elaborate, in his later published commentary, the presence of Adam in Genesis 3:16 as a way to support the wife's decision to eat the fruit, in view of the fact that he did not object or protest but remained silent throughout (Kwong, 1997, p. 285). This contributor also went at lengths to explain in his commentary that Adam's presence during the temptation of Eve in Genesis 3:6 was implied in the Hebrew source text. For instance, he quoted from Old Testament scholar Savran regarding Adam's presence and highlighted the use of plural 'you' when the serpent spoke to the woman (Kwong, 1997, p. 275), meaning that the man was also addressed. However, no annotation was made on this verse at all in the CGST Study Bible.

CGST Study Bible	Nil
CUSB	宜作[又給了與她在一起的丈夫] (和修)。顯示當妻子與蛇談話時,亞當一直在場。 Back translation: Better to translate as "also gave to the husband who was with her" (RCUV). It shows Adam has always been present when Eve was talking to the serpent. (Annotation for Gen 3:6)

CNV Study Bible (Worldwide Bible Society)	罪實質上是人不信任神,不相信神的話,要自主(見2:16)。真正的信仰是基於信任與神交往,生出順服來(約14:15)。見創3章一文。女人的決定是基於實質價值、對美觀的欣賞和心靈得滿足。就摘下果子來吃了:她這樣做,就與死亡及黑暗之王結盟。神無條件、不能抗拒的揀選,是她現在唯一的盼望(見3:15註)。他也吃了:男人成了叛徒。他有足夠動機信任和順服神,但卻選擇了不順服(6:5,8:21)。亞當藉著神的委託,代表了人類,作為約的頭目,使死亡臨到所有的人; 正如基督使生命臨到所有信靠祂的人(羅5:12-19)。Sin is a form of self-opinion, it is essentially distrusting God, and distrusting his words (see 2:16) Real trust is based on trust and a relationship with God, which gives rise to obedience (John 14:15). See the article on Genesis 3. The woman's decision is based on the physical value, an appreciation of beauty and spiritual satisfaction. She took the fruit and ate it: When she did this, she already tied knots with death and darkness. God's unconditional and irresistible calling is her only hope (see 3:15 annotations). He also ate: man became a traitor. He has enough motivation to trust and obey God, but he decided to disobey (6:5, 8:21). Adam represents humankind, the head of the covenant through the commission of God, his decision gave rise to death that fell upon all human beings; just as Jesus sent life upon all those who trust in him (Romans 5:12-19) (Annotation based on Gen 3:6)

Table 2: Annotations concerning Genesis 3:6 in three Chinese study Bibles.

In the CGST version, the annotations were authored by CGST teachers, students, alumni as well as biblical scholars, upon invitation. These annotations were then reviewed by China Graduate School of Theology teachers or individual scholars who had research interests or expertise in a particular book in the Bible. The final draft was proofread by the editor-in-chief before it was sent to print. This Bible was meant to fulfil the growing need for a study Bible that contains annotations, cross-references and preface for each book, written within a Chinese context that suits Chinese readers, as study Bibles on the market at the time of publication were mainly direct translations from English Study Bibles. After twenty years of planning, preparation and coordination, this version was published in 2000. While the editor-in-chief was a CGST female faculty member, the team of reviewers who review the manuscripts were predominantly male scholars, some of whom were responsible for the project's overall planning and for inviting contributors[5]. The role of the editor-in-chief mainly focused on the proofreading and polishing of the manuscript before it was sent to print.

The CNV Study Bible is basically a translation of an English study Bible of the reformed tradition[6] edited by a team of theologians; it contains the important creeds and declarations used in reformed churches, such as the Westminster Larger Catechism. In addition to the over sixty theological articles translated from English, this Chinese Bible also contains over ten articles on the fundamentals of the Christian faith written by Chinese biblical scholars. The male editor-in-chief was assisted by a female executive editor in all proof-reading, editing, printing, and reprinting matters. The Chinese annotations, translated from the English version, reflect the theology of the reformed traditions which to a great extent do not favour an egalitarian position as they uphold the authority of the Bible denying women access to the ministry of the word. Thus, theologically, this study Bible has affinities with the CGST Study Bible, whose

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[5]   According to my online interview with Esther Ng, the chief editor of CGST Study Bible (on 22 August 2020), Andrew Kwong is the contributor for the annotations in the book of Genesis, in which he has research expertise.

[6]   The annotations for this Bible were translated from the annotations in Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible (2003), which is a major revision and expansion of an earlier publication entitled New Geneva Study Bible (1995).

main editors and major contributors are rooted in the Chinese evangelical tradition that has downplayed women's church leadership. Both the evangelical and reformed traditions in the Chinese society that attach importance to a literal interpretation of scriptures could partly explain the less gender inclusive nature of the paratexts. The case of women ordination for the Christian Missionary and Alliance Church in Hong Kong, an evangelical denomination (see discussion later in this paper) explains how ordained female ministers are still subject to a male-dominated system. On the contrary, CUSB set itself apart from the other two study Bibles as CUSB is interdenominational and works under the auspices of United Bible Societies, which established itself as the interdenominational and non-sectarian organisation[7]. CUSB is therefore more interested in producing textual notes that help readers understand the textual issues of the source texts in terms of the most up-to-date textual-critical scholarship, rather than steering readers towards a certain theological viewpoint.

In the case of the Chinese Union Study Bible (CUSB), the annotations are based on the Bible Society's very own revised Chinese Bible version, known as the Revised Chinese Union Version (RCUV). This version was published in 2010 as an update to the hundred-year-old Chinese Union Version (CUV) which appeared in 1919. According to Peng Kuo-wei, editor-in-chief of this project commissioned by United Bible Societies, the motivation was to compensate the communication deficiencies of traditional Bible translation (i.e., the strategy for rendering the source texts) as well as to update Chinese Union Version's readers on the current state of Biblical scholarship (Peng, 2019a, p. 7). While other non-Bible Societies versions achieved the instrumental dimension of translation via application notes, i.e., paratexts, he opined that the Bible Societies' stance on these application notes is that they may be "wrongly conceived as the meaning or intent of the source language text and they may also have the potential to mislead the target language readers to think that these notes represent the only ways to connect the texts with the readers' contemporary situations." He added:

> For these reasons, the Bible Societies discourages the use of application notes. A less problematic way to realize the instrumental side of the communicative interaction is probably through raising relevant questions by following the trajectories sprung from the documentary information in the study Bible. (Peng, 2019a, p. 9)

This explains why the length of annotations in CUSB is relatively shorter than the other two study Bibles, although their shorter length does not reduce their effectiveness in communicating gender inclusivity. The Bible Society retranslation of In its Revised Chinese Union Version (2010), Genesis 3:6n contains the addition of 與她一起的 [who is with her] as a pre-modifier to Adam to show his presence in the face of temptation[8]. Since this revision has been made in RCUV compared to the previous version of CUV, it is reasonable to assume that the Bible Society made a point in the annotations for Genesis 3:6 to show readers that a revision has been made. During the process of compilation, annotations for the Old Testament were first written by their project consultant Old Testament Biblical scholar Graham Ogden which were then translated into Chinese by a team of translators hired on the basis of their credentials. As I investigated the translation process of the three Bible translations into Chinese, it emerged during the interviews I conducted that all the publishers valued the collaborative translation process, and all translators were selected based on their merits and credentials rather than on

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[7]   More information about United Bible Societies is available on the website www.unitedbiblesocieties.org

[8]   According to an email reply from Dr Liang Wangwei, one of the reviewers for RCUV Old Testament, it is the Bible Society's translation consultant Dr Yu Suee-Yan that suggested the revision on Gen 3:6, to better reflect the source language meaning. Dr Liang, the only female reviewer for the Old Testament, did not participate in the revision of the book of Genesis.

their gender[9].

Given the less visible mention of gender equality in the annotations in two of the three study Bibles discussed in this study, what are the reasons behind this choice, considering that women were involved in the collaborative process? I have endeavoured to reveal that, though seemingly in leadership roles in the editorial process, women were often relegated to assistant roles under the authority of male reviewers or consultants. In other words, the authority of exegesis and the overall planning of the book project remained with the male biblical scholars. Female editors were responsible for the coordination, liaison or proofreading process, or at best involved in reviewing a particular book in the Bible rather than taking up the de facto leadership role in spearheading the direction or editorial approach of the study Bible. Secondly, since the target audience of these study Bibles is especially the general public, the editorial team had to take marketability into account in the preparation of commentaries that were suitable for both genders.

4. Impact on churches

The way in which translations into Chinese shape the interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 often leads to important denominational decisions, including the question of the ordination of women. As such, the importance of women's involvement in the translation process in view of empowering future female leaders cannot be underestimated. This can be eloquently illustrated by the ordination of women within the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Hong Kong, which is an evangelical church. No female ministers were ordained until 1992, when the Alliance Bible Seminary, sponsored by this denomination, initiated an official discussion on female ordination and subsequently rejected it. The church union committee set up a theological viewpoint committee to conduct research on the theology of women ordination. Consultations were carried out with female coworkers, senior pastors, preachers and deacons, to discuss the church's viewpoint. In the end, in May 1998, it was resolved that as long as the church was governed by men (Cheung, 1998), women of talent and "good conduct" should be allowed to take up pastoral roles. In the document the committee published in June 1998, the Pauline interpretation of the creation order is cited to determine the role of women in church:

> 創世記第二章中有關創造的記載則強調男女之間被造的差異，並且在這差異中　學習相輔相成，尋求以不同的角色互相配搭。保羅從亞當夏娃的被造過程中指出　亞當領導夏娃的一種從屬關係和創造次序，這種從屬關係來自三方面：第一，亞　當的首先被造（林前十一8，提前二13），而這首先被造的身份帶來如長子一樣的地位和領導的責任（西一15-18）；第二，夏娃出自亞當，因此男是女的源頭，　這創造的次序和模式給予亞當權柄為夏娃命名（創三20），這命名的行動包含著　領導的意義（創二20、23）；第三，夏娃是為亞當而造的（林前十一9），使她成　為幫助他的配偶（創二18），叫男女能同心協力建立家庭和治理全地。

Gloss:
The differences between men and women are stressed in Gen 2, and such differences imply complementation of the roles. Paul pointed out that Adam is the leader of Eve from the creation order, and this comes from three aspects: 1) Adam was created first (1 Corinthians 11:9, 2 Timothy 13), giving him the position to lead as a first-born son (Colossians 1:15-18). 2) Secondly, Eve comes from Adam, so man is the head of woman, and has the authority to name her (Genesis 3:20), implying a leadership role (Genesis

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[9]   Interviews for the purpose of this study were conducted in July 2020 with Peng Kuo-Wei, editor-in-chief and translation consultant of the Chinese Union Study Bible Series, Esther Ng, chief editor of CGST Study Bible, and Serena Ng, executive editor of Worldwide Bible Society.

2:20,23). 3) Eve is created for Adam, making her a spouse that assists him (Genesis 2:18) so that they can build up a family and manage the earth.

Although it was decided that women can be ordained, their role continues to be downplayed. Ordination is, according to the denomination, a ceremony that does not endow the ordained person with spiritual power, gifts or a title. Based on such understanding of ordination, which is more of a form of recognition for the spiritually, the denomination considers that the ordination of women does not go against any biblical principles, as long as they operate under the leadership of male pastors. Women pastors are still, in this sense, created as 'helpers' suitable for men, as the Chinese (and other) translations go.

5. Conclusions

To sum up, as the above comparative textual analysis reveals, when women are involved in the overall leadership of the publication of a translation of the Bible into Chinese, as in the case of the Devotional Study Bible for Women, issues of female inequality are more likely to be addressed and discussed. While retranslations of the Bible are still the domain of predominantly male biblical scholars in the Chinese community, women's perspectives can still be brought to the fore by way of gender-inclusive commentaries and annotations.

The reasons behind the lack of female involvement in Bible translation in the Chinese community are multifold: evangelical churches and seminaries in the US, a popular destination for Hong Kong-based seminarians, have long adopted a complementarian model where women are relegated to assistant roles and there is only a very small number of female pastors, according to Maureen Yeung, former principal of Evangel Seminary in Hong Kong. The lack of support for female seminarians is not conducive to training women. Some US evangelical seminaries did not welcome female seminarians until the 1960s or even the 1970s. As there is an increase in the number of Chinese women becoming biblical scholars in recent decades, Maureen Yeung foresees that there will be more women involved in the translation of the Bible into Chinese in the near future. In an interview on 27 August 2020 she opined that Chinese men have become more supportive of their wives' careers and pursuit of degrees (including doctorates) which might be higher than those the men hold. Family commitments, which used to hinder women from envisaging further education in the past, are becoming less of an issue, with the help of supportive husbands.

To achieve a noticeable change in the foreseeable future, revisiting Pauline hermeneutics and the Hebrew Bible are crucial aspects of theological education. But it is a long road ahead, in view of the opposition from evangelical and reformed churches which are less receptive to a revolutionary feminist approach. A female theology graduate once told me that theology students were warned by the pastor not to take courses on feminist theology because it is dangerous (the reasons for such perceived danger deserve discussion in a separate paper). Within a Christian setting, education at this stage can only start at interdenominational seminary schools that are more open to a feminist approach and, from there, a more academic approach towards biblical interpretation could be relayed to future generations down the line.

As in the case of study Bibles, a thorough approach to textual-critical scholarship can help seminarians gain more accurate understanding of the source text and its gender-related content. Additionally, in a secular university setting, translation programmes can introduce feminist approaches in translation theory modules so as to train potential religious text translators inspired by their feminist predecessors. Just as Luise von Flotow pointed out, translators' positionality is undeniable: the translator always "writes from a specific moment, from within a specific culture and usually sub-culture, and often in dialogue with the social

and political culture of the moment" (2000, p. 18). An ideological shift can only come about slowly, and it may be years until we see more gender-inclusive annotations and translations for which women are in charge. But there is hope, as long as society as a whole continues to head towards gender equality.

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Unmuting and reinterpreting the *Mahabharata* through feminist translation in *The Palace of Illusions* (2008)

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Abstract

The *Mahabharata* is arguably the most well-known Hindu epic in modern day India. Despite the fact that it is not, strictly speaking, a religious text, the notion(s) it vehiculates concerning what constitutes the correct gendered code of conduct continue to shape the minds and practices of a majority of Hindus in India. The original *Mahabharata*, I contend, promotes a subservient position of women within their interpersonal relations and the larger domain of society, and legitimises patriarchal codes that restrict and controls women and their bodies in both the private and the public sphere in contemporary Hindu society. In this context, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) provides for what I perceive to be a feminist translation of the original; by making the central female character the narratorial voice, it problematises taken-for-granted notions of ideal Hindu womanhood. This translation un-silences and re-centres the marginalised people (women and lower castes) whose stories were otherwise left unsaid in the original *Mahabharata*. Divakaruni's feminist translation also delves into tabooed topics such as female sexuality and pleasure. I argue that Divakaruni's *Mahabharata* demystifies the unquestioned authority of *Mahabharata* as a text that defines appropriate Hindu womanhood, so that her translation is not just a literary work but also becomes a tool for societal change.

Keywords

Mahabharata, feminist translation, Hindu epic, *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), Hinduism

1. Introduction

The *Mahabharata* is, arguably, the most widely known, read, and taught Hindu epic in present day India. As I was growing up, I read the *Mahabharata* in school and watched televised versions of it, so much so that it came to define what Hinduism meant to me. Even though the *Mahabharata* is not strictly a religious text, its power over the Hindu public is arguably greater than the *Vedas* or *Puranas* precisely because of its immense popularity. In this article, I first explain why an epic has been elevated to the position of a sacred text. I will then briefly touch upon the question of male authorship and outline the way in which I (re)define the concept of translation. I discuss Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) and, by applying a feminist perspective to her version of the *Mahabharata*, I seek to highlight how the novel is essentially a translated work that unveils the intentional silences and absences in the original text. I elaborate on how Divakaruni speaks of otherwise tabooed subjects, thus effectively talking or, rather, writing back to the original author. Lastly, I conclude by explaining why de/reconstructing texts such as the *Mahabharata* through translation is crucial to the feminist discourse in India. Since the widely popular *Mahabharata* continues to capture and shape the Hindu way of life, re-translating the story in a new manner allows for "the enunciation of multiple feminisms and their various contradictions within the Indian context, and for the creation of common ground between feminists and Indian women at large" (Luthra, 2014, p. 137). I undertake a personal *unlearning journey* via Divakaruni's translation of the famous epic and rely mostly on my life experience as a Hindu and a feminist (the terms oftentimes clash with each other).

2. Legitimising Hindu epics as sacred texts

Hinduism, arguably one of the oldest religions in the world, is polytheistic. As someone who was raised a Hindu, over the years it became clear to me that the tenets of Hinduism are not entirely strictly fixed. Indeed, Hinduism allows for multiple interpretations of what the religion constitutes and how it should be practised, with only very few rules (such as not eating beef) that must be adhered to. Moreover, polytheism allows for blurring the distinction between what can be labelled a religious Hindu text and what is not religious. As commonly accepted, Hinduism derives its wisdom from the *Vedas,* the *Puranas* and the *Upanishads* (Vohra and Sharma, 2014, p. 100). However, what captures the popular imagination are the two Hindu epics: the *Mahabharata*, written around the 4th century BCE and the *Ramayana*, written around the 5th century BCE (Basu, 2016b, n.p.).

While the authority of the *Vedas, Puranas* and *Upanishads* as sacred texts of Hinduism is rarely questioned, the two epics have a somewhat contested or, rather, confusing position in terms how they perceived by the general public, scholars, and theologians. I see them essentially as religious literary works that not only have Hinduism embedded in their narratives, but also have the power to shape how Hinduism is practised. For instance, the story of the *Ramayana* is that of a Hindu deity, Lord Ram who defeats the evil Ravan. Lord Ram's victory is celebrated in India as *Dussehra*, followed by *Diwali*, which commemorates his return to his kingdom of Ayodha. With its "100,000 verses", the *Mahabharata* is "the longest epic poem ever written" (Basu, 2016a, n.p.). It is "eight times as long as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together" (Hopkins quoted in Erney, 2019, p. 486), and it includes the Hindu scripture of *Bhagavad Gita*, whose title means "The Song of the Divine Lord". The fact that arguably the most sacred Hindu scripture is a part of a mythological epic does not challenge the legitimacy of the *Gita*. This is precisely because, given the open, fluid nature of Hinduism, the border between what is considered a sacred text, and what is mythology, or epic, or folklore, is porous. Consequently, these genres do not function in contestation but, rather, converse, collide and shape each

other. In other words, it can be said that the *Mahabharata* derives its validity from the fact that it houses the *Gita*, just as the *Gita* is validated by being a part of the *Mahabharata*. This fluidity is further mobilised when people draw on the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* to define appropriate Hindu culture (the term 'Hindu' is often used erroneously to denote what is in fact a multi-religious India). While the lessons to be drawn from these immensely popular texts are numerous, they also foreground some severe shortcomings, one of which being the deliberate silencing of the female characters in these narratives.

3. Male authorship and authority

Unsurprisingly, the authors of both the *Ramayana* and of the *Mahabharata* are male, and assumed to be the human avatars of Brahma, the Hindu God of Creation. The author of the *Ramayana*, Valmiki, is believed to be an actual person, while the author of the *Mahabharata* also complied the *Vedas*, and was called Ved Vyasa. Although many see Ved Vyasa as the name of the person who wrote the *Mahabharata*, others argue that it was simply a title bestowed on the person who organised the *Vedas* (since that is what 'Ved Vyasa' actually means). Nonetheless, even though the identity of the author is contested, there seems to be little doubt that it *must* be a man. One cannot help but wonder why it has never been pointed out that the author may as well have been a woman? Perhaps it is unimaginable, in a society that continues to be seeped in patriarchy, to think that a woman can have the calibre to write an epic this great. Perhaps the thought of a woman as the author of the *Gita* makes the general public and the (male) theologians extremely uncomfortable, as it would entail that Hindus have been following religious dictates defined by a person belonging to the weaker, to-be-dominated sex. Perhaps feminists would not in fact like to think it may have been a woman because, should that be the case, how could they then explain the glaring yet casual dismissiveness shown to the female characters in the epic? However, just because a woman has written a text does not entail it would implicitly or explicitly wave the flag for feminism. For centuries, women writers have produced texts that continue to uphold patriarchal norms, silencing women, casting them in narrow categories of either the Madonna or the whore.

4. Translating to unveil silences

When it comes to the translation of sacred Hindu texts, it needs to be pointed out that e women translators do exist. Of course, over the centuries translations of the *Mahabharata* have been largely done by men; the most popular English translation in recent years is *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata* by Devdutt Pattanaik, which came out in 2010. Female translators have been a rare few. Kamala Subramaniam's translation, first published in 1965 and now at its 18th edition, has been persistently popular because it is considered a faithful translation. Precisely for this reason, Subramaniam's remarkable translation or, for that matter, any other 'faithful' translations of the *Mahabharata* by women will not be the main subject of this study. Instead, I focus on Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The palace of illusions* (2008) that tells the story of the *Mahabharata* through the first person narrative voice of the main female character, Draupadi. While, traditionally, such retellings are not categorised as translations, I argue that every translator brings into the text, deliberately or not, his or her positionality. A translator is not and cannot be invisible. He or she might be the bridge between two languages but the nature, make and shape of this bridge is unique.

Although, as Shahane points out, translation is conventionally perceived as an "uni-directional process" wherein an "operation [is] performed on two languages: the source language (SL) and the target language (TL)", which leads to a "change from SL to TL", he argues that "translation is as much an act of creativity as the original writing in literature is acknowledged to be"

(Shahane, 1983 p. 5). It can further be argued that translation is a complex phenomenon that entails "rewriting, new writing, transcreation, recreation" operating all at once (Giovanni, 2013, p. 101). Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) moves away from contemporary translation practices, where proximity to the source text is traditionally a priority and turns towards the ancient translation practices in India that allowed for "creative reproduction of religious texts written in Sanskrit", such as the *Mahabharata* itself (Giovanni, 2013, pp. 102-103). This aspect reflects an approach to translation as 'transcreation', where "[f]idelity to the source was far less prominent than creativity" (Giovanni, 2013, pp. 102-103). Indeed, Divakaruni's feminist retelling of the *Mahabharata* encapsulates the notion of "translation as new writing" (Mukherjee quoted in Giovanni, 2013, p. 103) and "reinforces the view of written translational activity in India as highly dynamic and prolific" (Giovanni, 2013, p. 103). While writing in postcolonial India, Divakaruni turns to pre-colonial times when the "highly creative potential" of translation was not just accepted but appreciated (Giovanni, 2013, p. 103).

My own standpoint is that, in contemporary India, the act of translating must not simply involve an attempt to be 'faithful' to the original, but should be a way of reinterpreting texts. True, reinterpretation through translation can easily be dismissed if one considers that this is not the purpose of translation to do that, and that translators are not at liberty to (re)interpret. It is nevertheless my claim that, by building their bridge between languages, translators are forever interpreting. And yet translation is both necessary and impossible (Maini, 2018). Translations are necessary as they enable texts to reach a wider audience, overcoming language barriers. Translations are also impossible because a translation is not a straightforward transfer from one language to another but, rather, it involves complex processes aiming to make intelligible a particular historical, cultural, socio-political context embedded within the original work, which it also shapes. The fact that the bridge can be built in several different ways is certainly not a downside. On the contrary, the impossibility of a single 'perfect' translation allows for a plurality of meanings to emerge that challenges a hegemonic, monolithic notion of what is considered a good translation. Furthermore, translators are "active, creative agents" who engage in"a process which can upturn asymmetries" (Giovanni, 2013, p. 112). In Divakaruni's case, as I hope to reveal shortly, it is the asymmetries of gender in the *Mahabharata* which are getting upturned and dismantled. Clearly, the translator has the power to un-silence the voices on the periphery, to move them towards the centre. Indeed, according to Shahane, the most difficult problem of translation "is not to seek 'a true correspondence of words' but to find whether 'there can be a true redaction of silence' (1983, p. 17). A translator does not abuse his or her power when they reveal what is left unsaid between lines. Divakaruni's novel *The palace of illusions* is still the story of the *Mahabharata* as we know it, but it doesnot 'stay true' to Ved Vyasa's version. Instead, it illuminates those aspects and people who the original author had occluded. Effectively, I find that translating a text has the potential to let us "know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (Rich, 1972, p. 19).

Melissa Wallace talks of "translators as manipulators", as "active (not passive, not invisible) shapers of texts with the potential to catalyse literary and even social change" (2002, p. 66). Indeed, they have "the power to manipulate texts at more than one textual level, between linguistic, cultural and even political boundaries" (Wallace, 2002, p. 66). Feminist translators in particular "deliberately seek solutions to texts which speak against their code of values, against their political agendas, against the cultural constructs of their gender" (Wallace, 2002, p. 69). This "rejects submission to the original", thereby creating a "translator effect" that subverts "the stronghold of authorship" (Wallace, 2002, p. 69). Such an attempt is evident Divakaruni's rendition of the *Mahabharata*, where a female character becomes the primary voice of the

story. Divakaruni's attempt to see the *Mahabharata* from a feminist lens also opens spaces for challenging notions of Hindu womanhood that the epic legitimises and promotes in modern Hindu society.

5. The *re-visioning* power of narration

The action in the *Mahabharata* is arguably triggered by Draupadi, the common wife of the five legendary Pandava brothers. In the story, the scene where the eldest Pandava, Yudhisthir, gambles away Draupadi to his cousin Duryodhan (the oldest of the hundred Kaurava brothers), the latter commands Draupadi to be disrobed. Though she is saved by the divine intervention of Lord Krishna, this unsurmountable insult to her honour makes an enraged Draupadi instigate her husbands to wage war against the Kauravas. This war is the crux of the *Mahabharata*. Thus, Draupadi is a key element in the story because she functions as the trigger that sets the plot in motion, but in the original *Mahabharata* she is *not* a subject endowed with agency despite being the one who urges her husbands to war. Divakaruni's narration challenges this. She does so primarily by bestowing on Draupadi the immensely powerful position of the narrator. By changing *who is doing the telling*, Divakaruni shapes *what is told, how it is told, and why it is told.* With Draupadi as the first person narrator, the epic shifts from being a patriarchal grand narrative about powerful men and wars they bravely fight to save *their* women, to the autobiographic story of a thus far silenced and stupefied woman who has now, metaphorically, been handed over the microphone to expose the underpinnings of the original story and, more importantly, to narrate her story on her own terms. In Wallace's words, Divakaruni "re-work[s] language to restore women's dignity, creativity and equality" (2002, p. 70). She makes "the feminine visible in language", which implies "making women seen and heard in the real world" (von Flotow quoted in Wallace, 2002, p. 70).

In the "Author's Note" to *The Palace of Illusions*, Divakaruni explains:

> [L]istening to the stories of Mahabharat as a young girl [...] I was left unsatisfied with the portrayals of the women [...] [who] remained shadowy figures, their thoughts and motives mysterious, their emotions portrayed only when affected the lives of the male heroes, their roles ultimately subservient to those of their fathers or husbands, brothers or sons.

> If I ever wrote a book, I remember thinking [...] I would place the women in the forefront of the action. I would uncover the story that lay invisible between the lines of the men's exploits. Better still, I would have one of them tell it herself, with all her joys and doubts, her struggles and her triumphs, her heartbreaks, her achievements, the unique female way in which she sees her world and her place in it. (2008, p. xiv-xv)

Hence, by turning the epic into an autobiography by a woman, this form of translation can be seen as a response to the patriarchal dominance that subsumes the original work. In the *Mahabharata* narrated by Draupadi, the otherwise oppressed and marginalised woman offers resistance and fights her way into the centre of the text, demanding inclusivity. In doing so, Divakaruni's translation of the epic not only undertakes a revision of the text, but re-visions the story itself. As Adrienne Rich explains,

> [r]e-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for [woman] more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival [...] And this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. (1972, p. 18)

Therefore, by re-visioning the story, Divakaruni's Draupadi transforms from being the object which moves the plot into the subject who reframes the grand narrative of the *Mahabharata*, snatching the power away from the male narrator Ved Vyasa. Draupadi, in a sense, becomes the feminist translator of *Mahabharata*. She claims: "A story is a slippery thing […] perhaps that was why it changed with each telling" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 15). The translator-narrator not so much changes the story but gives us new lenses to read it with, lenses that scrutinise the traditional gaps, the absences of female voices. Right at the beginning, Draupadi declares that she intends to narrate "*what really happened* when I stepped from the fire[1]" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 6, my emphasis). A few pages later, she obstinately claims: "I'm taking back the story" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 16). Clearly, Draupadi is talking back to the male author of the original text.

I would like to mention at this point a specific chapter in the original *Mahabharata* titled "Stree Parva", which means "The Woman's Chapter". Interestingly, the focus is almost entirely on Arjun's dismay (Arjun is the third Pandava brother) when he sees the carnage of the war. This chapter makes the object of a potent critique by Jyotirmoyee Devi in the beginning of her novel *The River Churning* (1967). She writes: "In actual fact, even Ved [V]yasa could not bear to write the real [S]tree [P]arva […] The [S]tree [P]arva has not yet ended; the last word is not yet spoken" (Devi, 1967, p. xxviii). I would argue that "The Woman's Chapter" was not accurately recorded, or else any attempts to do so were thwarted by overarching powerful male voices like that of Ved Vyasa. After over forty years of Devi claiming that "the last word is not yet spoken" (1967, p. xxviii), Divakaruni's Draupadi undertakes the task of revealing 'her-story'. What is more, this Draupadi does not simply narrate "The Woman's Chapter" of the *Mahabharata* but tells the entire tale with the centrality of a female voice. The story of Draupadi in particular and of women in general is no longer (mis)construed in one mere chapter, but now becomes the focus point of the epic. This involves bringing tot he fore certain gender constructs and taboos that it departs from, thus mobilising a space for feminine perspective and sexuality. I elaborate on this in what follows.

6. Translating to break taboos

Draupadi's autobiographical tale deconstructs Ved Vyasa's narrative in several ways. First of all, the female character rejects her name, which is simply the feminised form of her father's name, Draupad (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 5). In this manner, she resists the anchoring of her identity to that of a man. Instead, she prefers her other name, Panchaali, which is derived from the name of the kingdom Panchal where she was born. More interestingly, the translator-*cum*-narrator Draupadi also brings into light certain topics that are considered taboo even today in India. For instance, she speaks of female sexuality and desire, which goes against the typical representation of a good Hindu woman as modest, chaste, and devoid of sexual needs. This demand for desexualisation of women by modern Hindu society has, arguably, more do to with gendered moral norms and the male desire to control a woman's body than with religious prescriptions. As a matter of fact, Hinduism is replete with polygamous and polyamorous gods and goddesses who oftentimes are gender fluid (e.g., Lord Vishnu) or bisexual (e.g., Lord Agni), and tales where women enjoy sexual intercourse as much as men. By speaking of her desires, Draupadi takes a step in the direction of normalising women's sexual activity which, although ever-present in Hinduism, was deliberately veiled in the original *Mahabharata*.

Divakaruni's Draupadi claims that she is a good wife. However, in the novel, she unapologetically and persistently articulates her attraction for the illegitimately born Karna. This attraction is very obscurely hinted at in the original *Mahabharata*. However, in *The Palace of Illusions*,

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[1] Draupadi and her twin brother Dhri were born out of a ceremonial fire.

Draupadi's desire for Karna despite being a married woman breaks away from the notion that women are bereft of or, rather, must not express their sexuality. In the final part of the story, Draupadi, along with the Pandavas, undertakes the journey to the Himalayas to be allowed into the abode of the Gods. It is an arduous journey and, towards the very end, Draupadi says:

> I am buoyant and expansive and uncontainable […] I am beyond name and gender and the imprisoning patterns of ego. And yet, for the first time, I'm truly Panchaali. I reach with my other hand for Karna – how surprisingly solid clasp! Above us our palace waits, the only one I've ever needed. Its walls are space, its floor is sky, its centre everywhere. We rise; the shapes cluster around us in welcome, dissolving and forming and dissolving again like fireflies in a summer evening. (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 360)

These lines are extremely impactful because they subvert the previously predominant, horrific Hindu custom of *Sati*, where a woman would be immolated on a pyre after the death of her husband. The idea behind *Sati* was that a woman's role is solely that of a faithful, serving wife. Hence, if her husband dies, she must continue her journey as a dutiful wife with her master-husband after his death as well. Draupadi subverts the *Sati* tradition in the sense that, in the afterlife, she does not seek her conjugal companions (in the plural, as she is married to all five Pandava brothers), but her unrequited love. Throughout the story, Draupadi never acts on her desire for Karna. However, it is him she ultimately wants. In Hinduism, human life is seen as temporary; it is only one's life in *Sarg* [heaven] that is of permanence. Draupadi finding the companionship of Karna for eternity is an act of self-assertion that can be seen as a response to her subjugation as the wife of the five Pandavas during a life in which she had no say.

Furthermore, Draupadi's desire for Karna challenges strict caste hierarchies. Karna was born to Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, when she was unmarried. Thus, Karna was unceremoniously dismissed as a bastard, while the Pandavas became the princes of Hastinapur (modern day Indian state of Haryana). Caste is patrilineal in India and, since Karna was born to an unwed mother, he was deemed casteless or, even worse, an outcaste, in other words beneath the lowest official caste. In falling for an outcaste, Draupadi, a Kshatriya princess belonging to the second highest caste in the Hindu caste hierarchy, rejects stringent caste norms. Indeed, in India, even today, inter-caste love is uncomfortably accepted at best when not rejected outright by families, with severe punishment meted out to defaulters. Draupadi, during her lifetime, remains trapped between the boundaries of caste where, as a Kshatriya, she marries within the Kshatriya community; in her afterlife, however, she untangles the shackles of caste, revealing that they are simply human tools of control that allow one section of society to marginalise the other.

In what follows, I discuss the episode of Karna's death in the battle of the *Mahabharata*. Although the battle forms a significant part of the original text, Draupadi deliberately refuses to go into details about the war, thereby signifying that wars are essentially fought to satiate men's bloodlust and ego, and are the consequence of male desire for power over territories, titles, and other people. Instead, Draupadi focusses on how Karna was killed in the war. Though she replicates Ved Vyasa's description of the death scene, she further adds: "But here's something Vyasa didn't put down in his *Mahabharat[a]*" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 298). In the original *Mahabharata*, Karna's demise is given relatively little attention, despite his portrayal as a great warrior throughout the epic. Draupadi undoes this caste-based discrimination in Ved Vyasa's story to dignify Karna's death, in her own narrative. This is a perfect example of how her re-vision of the *Mahabharata* unveils aspects previously dismissed due to the biases of the first author.

Another tabooed topic that Draupadi's autobiographical retelling of the *Mahabharata* brings forward is her candid opinion on female virginity. A woman's virginity is never spoken about but expected to be guarded until she is wedded. In fact, during a Hindu marriage, there is the tradition of *Kanyadaan,* which means "gift of the virgin", that the father of the bride makes to the groom. A woman is thus considered the property of the father, whose ownership is passed on to the husband as a gift which' must, moreover, be that of a virgin. Clearly, the worth of an unmarried woman lies in her virginity. Draupadi exposes this legitimised obsession with female virginity. In order to discuss this further, I would like to briefly refer to an episode in the original *Mahabharata* where Draupadi's father arranges a *Swayamvar*[2] for her to pick an appropriate husband. While the purpose of the event is for the princess to pick a husband, it is revealed that Draupadi's father had in fact asked her to choose a man with whose kingdom he can strengthen political ties, thereby making his own position as a king more powerful. Draupadi picks Arjun, partly because of her attraction to him and partly because of her father's instructions. When Arjun weds Draupadi and brings her home, he requests his mother, Kunti, to come and see what he has brought. Without looking at Draupadi, Kunti simply commands Arjun to share with all of his brothers whatever he has brought. Being the forever obedient sons, Arjun and the rest of the Pandavas do exactly that: they all marry Draupadi and, during the entire process, her opinion is not sought even once[3].

Occasionally, in popular imagination, Draupadi's polygamy is mistakenly seen as a sign of female empowerment (Kane, 2020; Das, 2014). Such interpretations miss the point that she did not actually choose to be polygamous. In *The Palace of Illusions*, she rightfully states: "My situation was very different from that of a man with several wives. Unlike him, I had no choice as to whom I slept with, and when. Like a communal drinking cup, I would be passed from hand to hand whether I wanted it or not" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 120). It was decided that she would spend a year with each brother and then, from the sixth year, the rotation would begin again. What Draupadi finds even more infuriating is the supposed boon given to her by the (male) Lord Shiva, i.e., that her virginity would be restored when she is passed on from one brother to another. Divakaruni's Draupadi bitterly says further: "Nor was I particularly delighted by the virginity boon, which seemed designed more for my husbands' benefit than mine" (2008, p. 120). Draupadi's words capture the rather simple truth that it is mainly men who seem to be obsessed with a woman's virginity[4]. Note how it was not a goddess who gave her this 'boon' but, rather, a male god. Draupadi indirectly lays bare that intercourse with a virgin might be pleasurable for a man, but not so much for the woman, and this ties back to the previous topic of female sexual desire. If Draupadi is to become a virgin by divine intervention every time she changes hands between one brother and another, men appear to be always and unconditionally entitled to a virgin to copulate with. Another implication is that it is only the

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[2] A ritual where several suitors of a highborn girl compete in certain tasks to show their physical or mental strength. The one who best completes the tasks wins the hand of the girl. If there are no clear rules to determine who the winner is, the girl decides, thereby choosing her husband.

[3] It is unclear whether Kunti was aware that Arjun had brought a wife home. If she was and intentionally instructed her son to share his wife, Kunti becomes one among many women who are responsible for other women's subjugation. Furthermore, even once she clearly has had the opportunity to discover that what Arjun has brought home is a human being, a wife, she does not revoke her orders, which begs the question, why should that be so? Here is a case of a woman unapologetically putting another in a precarious position. These questions remain unanswered in Divakaruni's text. Indeed, relationships between women are not explored, and this missed opportunity is perhaps one of the limitations of the text.

[4] Certainly, it can be argued that women also give importance to their virginity. I would, however, suggest that this is a consequence of male-defined expectations that women safeguard their virginity if they are to be valued and respected.

man's pleasure that matters (virginal vaginas are supposedly tighter and thus more enjoyable for men to penetrate[5]), while the woman's role is simply to satiate his desires and not her own. To sum up, the male obsession to control the female body, the naturalised patriarchal demand for a female virgin for intercourse, is shockingly legitimised by male gods who otherwise do not follow the same rules in their own sexual conduct[6].

7. Translating to challenge gender constructs and societal norms

In the original *Mahabharata*, when Draupadi was born out of the ceremonial fire[7] it was prophesied that she would change the course of history. The prophecy did come true as Draupadi was the key reason for the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. I argue, however, that Draupadi not only changed the history of the world in the *Mahabharata*, but has also been used as a trope by *Hindutva-wadis* (Hindu patriarchal zealots) to define what an ideal Hindu woman should be like, thereby imposing societal restriction on Hindu women and, generally, on all Indian women. Thus, when a woman deviates from these norms and expectations, she can be punished. For example, when an unmarried woman socialising with men in a pub is sexually harassed, the harassment is seen as punishment for her supposed transgression of mixing with men who are not related to her paternally or maritally. According to Uma Chakravarti, "[t]hat the punishment is regarded as justified is an index of how successfully the ideological premises of patriarchal violence have been incorporated into everyday life by the stereotypes of good and bad" (2006, p. 235). Though Chakravarti writes about the *Ramayana*, the same can be said for the *Mahabharata*.

According to Edward Said, "[f]acts do not at all speak for themselves, but require a socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustain and circulate them" (1984, p. 34). Ved Vyasa's *Mahabharata* can be seen as an immensely influential narrative that legitimises certain claims of how a Hindu woman should be and how she should behave as essential *facts*. Moreover, repetition over the centuries of the so-called teachings of the original *Mahabharata*, has led to a normalisation of these dictates which have become omnipresent. And, to quote Said further, repetition and accumulation "amount to a virtual orthodoxy, setting limits, defining areas, asserting pressures" (1984, p. 35). Supposed Hindu ideals have become rules over centuries that Hindu women must follow, and these rules perform the task of controlling and limiting their bodies, minds and actions, thus ensuring the perpetuation of a male-dominated society.

Texts like the *Mahabharata* hold power not "in its physical, tangible form" but "in the collective Indian consciousness" (Sharma, 2016, p. 292). Indeed,

> The 'originality' of these texts is authenticated not by the evidence of an old undiluted written script: they are rather patented in Indian psyche by their indispensability as a cultural experience. The storyline of the "original" – a fixed schema of characters, relations, values, and events – is so intricately embedded in the minds of Indian people, especially Hindus, that it becomes impossible to replace it, or to reweave a new one around their lives. (Sharma, 2016, p. 292)

Hans-Georg Erney aptly illustrates how Hindu epics are currently used to justify or explain instances in everyday life. He reveals that, after the Nirbhaya Delhi Rape Case in 2012, where a young female medical student was brutally gangraped in a moving bus, creating international

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[5] The act of penetration can also be conceptualised as a symbolic conquering (or even colonising) of the unspoiled virginal body.

[6] Hindu gods and other divine beings are largely polygamous and polyamorous.

[7] Draupadi's father performed a *Yagna* (a ceremonial fire ceremony) to pray for children. In response to his prayers, from the fire (a deity in itself in Hinduism) emerged baby Draupadi along with a baby boy.

outrage, politician Kailash Vijayvargiya claimed that the rape was justified because the woman had dared to cross the *Lakshman Rekha* (Erney, 2019, p. 486). This refers to the line of protection that Ram's brother draws for his sister-in-law Sita around their hut, as they go to hunt for a deer in the *Ramayana*. Sita was warned not to cross the line, and yet she does so and is abducted by Ravan. This then leads to Ram's journey to Ravan's kingdom to rescue her. Vijayvargiya's statement, therefore, suggests that a woman's place is within the house, presumably under the protection of a father, brother, husband or son. Any attempt to cross this threshold can lead to severe consequences for which the woman herself is to blame. Thus, effectively, a sacred text is used for victim blaming. Interestingly, though, the unjust treatment of Karna in Ved Vyasa's text, due to caste-based discrimination, is never used as evidence of how our sacred texts perpetuate the infernal hierarchies of caste. Similarly, despite staking his wife Draupadi in a game of dice and gambling her away as though she were just another piece of property, Yudhisthir still continues to be revered as the epitome of a just, virtuous Hindu man. Finally, the disrobing attempt made on Draupadi by the Kaurava brothers is never used to signify that male violence against women exists even in our glorified sacred texts. Indeed, these aspects are not spoken of, because how would the patriarchal Hindus justify the humiliation and harassment of Draupadi when she did not even cross any male-defined boundaries of conduct imposed on her? Draupadi was a virtuous, faithful wife, under the protection not of one but of five husbands. Perhaps the silence surrounding this episode is due to the fact that it shows the failure of men to protect their women. The Pandavas' manhood, bravery and machismo is completely undermined in this scene, and as this does not fit neatly into the vision of a male-dominated society Hindu zealots uphold.

To sum up, Divakaruni's novel exposes the selective amnesia at work when it comes to drawing lessons from the original *Mahabharata*. I have called *The Palace of Illusions* a translation because, in my opinion, Divakaruni does not modify the original tale but presents it in a manner that reveals its gender (and caste) biases, its deliberate silencing and controlling of certain voices and bodies. In Draupadi's words, stories are important and have to be "understood and preserved for the future, so that we didn't make the same mistakes over and over" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 270). The sanctity of texts that hold unquestionable authority over people must be challenged and scrutinised, so that we question the lessons and moral codes derived for them and pay attention at all times to questions such as *who* is deriving *what*, and *why*. This would thus lead to the realisation that, more often than not, sacred texts are instrumentalised as tools of control over women and lower castes by upper caste men (like the minister mentioned above). Hence, when we translate to re-vision, *we revolt from within the text* in order to demystify its prejudices, to make apparent the crevices that run through the seemingly perfect text.

8. Conclusion

As noted previously, the original *Mahabharata* includes the Hindu scripture of *Bhagavad Gita*. Divakaruni's retelling does not include the *Gita*, and this is because, in Ved Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, the *Gita* is in the form of a narration by Lord Krishna to Arjun. Since the scripture, considered a revelation of untold truths about the universe and the nature of human beings, was not narrated to Draupadi, she is unable to replicate it in her autobiography. She is filled with envy when the god narrates the *Gita* to her husband Arjun: "What crucial ingredient did I [Draupadi] lack that the mystery of the universe should forever elude me?" (Divakaruni, 2008, p. 265). This foregrounds how, despite Draupadi claiming power over the story through her first person narrative, some limitations remain. Draupadi might have fought her way into the centre of the story, but certain truths continue to elude her. The fact that she was deeemed unable to

hear the wisdom of the *Gita* mirrors the broader picture of how most women continue to be categorically denied access to Hindu scriptures, though at the same time they are expected to strictly adhere to moral Hindu codes. Only men can be Hindu priests, considered the true knowledge bearers and disseminators of Hinduism and of its practises. Hence, while *talking back* by means of translation is a crucial act, I see it as only one step taken forward among many more which are needed to lay bare, and thus challenge, how Hinduism – in its narratives, the way it is understood, practised, propagated – is largely (if not entirely) monopolised by men.

Sujit Mukherjee asks: "when is a translation over and done with?" and responds by claiming that "[t[he truly crafty translator will know why he translates, for whom he translates, what he should translate, how much to translate and, semi-finally, when to stop" (quoted in Giovanni, 2013, p. 113). Divakaruni certainly knows for whom, what she is translating, and how. More importantly, she knows when to stop; despite her central position in the novel, Draupadi still lacks certain knowledge, meaning that more barriers need to be broken. Perhaps the next translated Draupadi will speak more, know more, and enjoy even more agency. Thus, with every translation, one opens up spaces for the otherwise unheard. According to Spivak, "[o]ur obligation to translate should be recognized as, at the deepest level, determined by 'the idea of the untranslatable as not something that one cannot translate but something one never stops (not) translating'" (2010, p. 38). Translations are made and are embedded within socio-historical-political contexts that are also constantly in flux. As our society changes, and in order to promote societal change, the act of translating texts that otherwise legitimise (multiple forms of) inequalities becomes "an emancipatory practice" (Godard quoted in Wallace, 2002, p. 70).

No two translations of the same text can ever be the same, and it matters fundamentally who translates, and how. Divakaruni translated the *Mahabharata* to challenge its centuries-old, unyielding authority that continues to dominate Hinduism. The problem is not with its being popular but, rather, that it is used as a vehicle for legitimising systemic gender and caste-based oppression and violence. By translating Vyasa's story to reveal her own positionality, thoughts and opinions, Draupadi has begun to speak, and I would like to think many more translations will follow in a move towards not just comprehending and practising Hinduism without caste and gender discrimination, but also towards creating an egalitarian society as a whole.

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When women and men collaborate to translate the Qur'an:
An 'interactive' approach

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Abstract

This article discusses the ways in which women-related Qur'anic verses have been dealt with in male-female collaborative translation. It specifically examines the role of Mohamed Ahmed and Samira Ahmed's 1994 *The Koran, complete dictionary and literal translation* as a social activity, offering a textual analysis on how the translators made sense of the most controversial gender-related verses in Islam, 4:34 and 2:282. It argues that their translation can be seen as a criticism of exclusive approaches to the Qur'an in general and, therefore, a defence of other ways of reading the holy text. Drawing on the works of Muslim feminists, it suggests that this translation offers a new way of looking into Qur'an translation, beyond the discourse of conformity or emancipation. Overall, Ahmed and Ahmed's translation is shown to favour a discourse of diversity, emphasising the plurality of meaning which is eminently compatible with the postmodern condition. The result of that influence of the postmodern condition is the introduction of a new and innovative strategy in Qur'an translation, called the 'interactive' (Hassen, 2012a, p. 70).

Keywords

Female-male collaborative translation, interactive approach, reader-oriented translation, Qur'an translation, women translators

1. Introduction

Women's contribution to Qur'an translation is not only unusual but largely uncharted. However, a tradition of Qur'an translation exists, and women have recently contributed to its development. Indeed, there are women translators who have practised what is usually considered a male craft. Like their male counterparts, they have produced a number of translations of lasting influence, but also translations which are mediocre and of little value to empowering women – see, for instance, Um Muhammed's Saheeh International (1997). Still, the sum of their endeavours is relevant to understanding the role of Qur'an translation in challenging essentialist approaches to translation. An analysis of their work will link them to the historic contribution of women in translation and connect their accomplishments to the objectives of the inquiry.

There is a large body of literature on Qur'an translation, but not on the topic of women translators of the Qur'an. Much of what has been written up to now can be found in Rim Hassen's work. Hassen has focused on gender awareness in Qur'an translations by women and has tackled women's concerns. She argues that no matter how often women translators have been involved in their translations, no matter what interests impelled them, they may have departed from conventional ways of reading the Qur'an but their contributions still remain marginal. Women translators' contributions refine our thinking about the role of Muslim women in Islam (Hassen, 2010, 2011, 2012b, 2012a, 2017; Hassen & Şerban, 2018).

Although women's contributions to Qur'an translation have received some attention recently, it is often studied in terms of a discourse of conformity or emancipation. Women translators are generally presented as rebelling against or conforming to conservative theological, political and social norms. For instance, in her translation of the Quran, Laleh Bakhtiar did not rely on *tafsir* (Islamic exegesis) or other conservative Islamic religious sources. Her choice could be viewed as a direct challenge to the authority of ulama, an elite class of learned Muslim scholars viewed as the custodians of Islamic tradition, and for whom the *tafsir* is a fundamental requirement in all Qur'an translations and interpretations.

The same holds for Camille Adams Helminski, who resisted cultural expectations about the male image of Allah by using the pronoun 'she' to refer to Allah. The implications of their translations are profound; as Hassen has observed, these were the stories that women wanted to share with the world. Um Muhammed, by contrast, occupied a conservative position, particularly susceptible to the mandates of patriarchy, understood here as "a politics of sexual differentiation that privileges males" by awarding them a higher degree of moral worth and control over females (Barlas, 2002, p. 12).

These stories of women translators are undoubtedly symptomatic of the broader social perspective on gender awareness. However, the exclusive emphasis on gender awareness only results in a mechanical labelling of translators as either 'feminists' or 'chauvinists' (Li cited in Hongyu, 2017, p. 138). This article therefore aims to contribute to ongoing discussion in several ways: (1) it suggests it is necessary to avoid labelling Qur'an translation as either 'feminist' or chauvinist' as its interpretation by readers is a never-ending process. (2) The dominance of patriarchal ideologies in Qur'an translation calls for a study of how various translators questioned, assessed, and, above all, challenged them. (3) The contribution of female translators, even when it takes the form of a collaboration with male translators, needs to be taken into account, evaluated, and, certainly, recognized.

The article engages with issues long identified in Translation Studies (TS): the role of translation in challenging essentialist pretentions. The aim is to demonstrate that: (1) translation does not necessarily oscillate between the ideological paradigms of conformity or emancipation;

(2) translation maintains a sceptical attitude to totalizing explanations. Some of the specific questions I raise are: in what ways has the difficulty of providing an inclusive translation of the Qur'an had an impact on the translators' translation approach or strategies? What are the implications of such an approach for their translation? The literature has already discussed various aspects concerning women translators, such as the challenges they face, and it did so from the different theoretical perspectives – e.g., gender as a socio-political category, gender issues as a site of political/literary engagement, theoretical questions about translation, etc. (von Flotow, 2010a, p. 129; cf. Chamberlain, 1988; Delisle, 2002; Dib, 2009, 2011; Flotow, 1991, 2000, 2004, 2009, 2010b, 2016; von Flotow & Farahzad, 2017; Godard, 1990; Korsak, 1992; Lotbinière-Harwood, 1991; Santaemilia & von Flotow, 2011; Stanton, 1985; Simon, 1996).

This study contributes to the current literature by focusing on female-male translators working collaboratively and on how they brought about new perspectives and approaches to Qur'an translation. The study is not concerned with how western or eastern representations of women have influenced translation, but with how collaborating together led to an interactive approach in Qur'an translation emphasising a discourse of diversity. Such a discourse underpinned by an anti-essentialist philosophy is a rich ground for exploring Qur'an translation practices.

Anti-essentialism is characterized by an attitude of suspicion of "master narratives" or "meta-narratives" and makes use of a deconstruction approach to destabilize and decentralize meaning (see Derrida, 1974, 1978, 1978; Lyotard, 1984). TS talks about this trend in the context of deconstructing established consciousness of centrality, totality and fidelity (see e.g., Bhabha, 1994; Gentzler, 2001; Spivak, 1974; Venuti, 1995). Translation is no longer thought of as a faithful rendition from language to language but one that involves a complex process of negotiation between cultures, and one that involves political and cultural implications. This line of thought emerged in the "cultural turn" and is indebted to Jacques Derrida. Derrida (1981, p. 20, cf. 1992, 2001) asserted that the relationship between the source and target texts is unstable, and accordingly translation becomes a transformation of something potential rather than a passive transfer of meaning.

Thinkers, like Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and Lyotard, tried to point to the irrationalism inherent in the search for the real meaning as well as the violence thereto involved. Essentialist, also known as master, narratives, Lyotard (1984) argued, revolve around the search for the rational and universal truth, inevitably disregarding and disfiguring the regional specific. As various trends of contemporary thought, such as deconstruction, tried to show, essentialist projects' desire for a particular reason may engulf all other "reasons" (Arrojo, 1995, 1998) . An essentialist philosophy is incipiently totalitarian (Arrojo, 1996, p. 99).

Anti-essentialist theories of knowledge do not alienate difference, however – in fact, they are solemnly concerned with every experience to de-homogenize differences (Arrojo, 1996, p. 99). These conclusions have direct implications for Qur'an translation. A Qur'an translation that is idealized by essentialism protects canonized meanings, stimulating a kind of logic that is violent towards women, as is the case in translations much influenced by patriarchal interpretations. Essentialist translations do not allow readers to explore and strengthen their perspectives but end up imposing an authoritarian reading of the Qur'an, a certain conception of looking at women, as well as a "correct" way of doing it.

In essentialist conceptions of reading and writing, the translator is linked with invisibility, whereas the reader is supposed to passively receive what the translator thinks is right (Arrojo, 1997b, p. 21), legitimized by a tafsir institution and supported by a system of countless agents. The implications of this hierarchical distinction between the translator and reader are clear and far-reaching, for it necessarily serves to "silence" readers, while also transforming them into subjects that blindly follow the established authorities of meaning. These implications are,

as will be shown below, challenged in Qur'an translation through the translator's collaborative approach.

2. Theoretical and methodological considerations

'Collaborative translation' in the broadest sense of the term refers to "two or more actors cooperating in some way to produce a translation" (O'Brien, 2011, p. 17). In the past, scholars considered teamwork in literary translation, for instance, as a sort of 'contaminated' type of work, and were mostly interested in identifying the "genuine, strong, or brilliant partner" when it came to collaborations: "It is as though, in every collaborative writing relationship, critics who adhere to a normative single-author paradigm must somehow undertake an archaeological dig to unearth the single author from the rubble of miscegenated, monstrous, messy collaboration" (York, 2002, p. 14).

Recent research, however, began to look at translation as primarily a collaborative process, demonstrating that the image of the solitary translator is socially defined (steeped in Renaissance translation theory; see, for instance, Bistué, 2011) and that the translation process is invariably mediated by multiple agents (Perteghella & Loffredo, 2006). Scholars have pointed to circumstances where collaborative practices prevail, such as *The Women's Bible* (1895) by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Rather than diminishing the value of the translation, collaboration forces us to reconsider questions about agency and creativity. Experimental, challenging, and exciting combinations might result from the interaction of multiple subjectivies: "the translation dialogue becomes an 'intercontextual' and 'intercreative' process, a meeting point not only of different or similar contexts, of skills, expertise, cultures, but also of perceptions and cognitions" (Perteghella & Loffredo, 2006, p. 8). This is supported by several cases, including those of Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield. Their work could be viewed as "aesthetically original" and as "creative involvements that influenced their own writings as well as widening the scope of modernist poetics as a whole" (see discussion in Davison 2014).

Research on collaborative Qur'an translation is scarce, and the importance of collaboration for Muslim women has received little attention. Um Muhammed is an anomaly, as she collaborated with other women namely: Amatullah J. Bantley and Mary M. Kennedy. The Islamic feminist endeavour of reclaiming female voices in translation can therefore be linked to the need to recognise women as autonomous beings.

The discourse of Islamic feminism, as articulated within the boundaries of Islam and the Qur'an, is particularly relevant to Qur'an translation, for it seeks rights for marginalised women in Islamic discourse (Badran, 2009, p. 242). Islamic feminism is not, however, a coherent identity but a set of practices via which one seeks justice for Muslim women (Cooke, 2001, p. 59). The rise of Islamic feminism in the 1990s brought about a body of ideas related to the unpacking of patriarchal attitudes inherent in past exegetes' teachings of the Qur'an. These can be found most notably in the writings of Amina Wadud (1999), Asma Barlas (2002), Kecia Ali (2006), and Leila Ahmed (1992). Their work highlights the role of gender in understanding the structure of different societies and expresses in particular the need to seek equal opportunities for Muslim women in male-dominated countries.

The main argument of Islamic feminism is that the source of gender inequality in Islam stems from the patriarchal reading of the Qur'an, not the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an has for long been interpreted by men and, therefore, patriarchal voices can certainly be heard when reading *tafsir* (exegesis) (Barlas, 2002, p. 21; Wadud, 1999, p. 2). In this view, the Qur'an has an egalitarian discourse that has become virtually inaudible because of the clamour of patriarchal voices attributing different social roles to women and men (Barlas, 2002, pp. 21-22). The imposition of a gendered set of roles would inevitably transform the Qur'an from a sacred text to a culturally-

specific text. In fact, the Qur'an assigns no social roles to the sexes, though it recognises the anatomical distinction between them; social roles are the product of the cultural readings of the Qur'an (Wadud, 1999, pp. 8-9). For example, practices such as domestic violence and a misconception that women are inferior to men were read into the Qur'an, and are simply no more than essentialist readings of the sacred text (Wadud, 1999, p. 9).

Muslim feminists' critique of traditional modes of *tafsir* is useful for the deconstruction of rationalist pretensions in patriarchal translations. It defends the legitimacy of multiple, independent readings of the Qur'an through their claim to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) (Hidayatullah, 2014, p. 35). It also asks questions about the Qur'an as "a timeless text", but from the perspective of women's "experience, knowledge, and observation". Their interpretations shake the foundations of knowledge, of what constitutes 'truth' in Islam, giving rise to multiple interpretations, allowing readers to participate in the establishment of meanings.

This article does not talk about the process of collaborative translation per se, but about how the collaborative endeavour between the translators brought about an interactive translation. The term 'interactive', initially coined by Hassen (2012a, p. 70), is understood here as a reading that aims to unearth various meanings of the verse intratextually in order to allow readers to recognize difference and reach their own conclusions. This is akin to what Hidayatullah (2014) called an 'intratextual reading.' However, Ahmeds' translation, though inspired by an interest in the Qur'an's egalitarian message, it is not a work of exegesis with explicitly stated methods. Therefore, the word 'interactive' instead of 'intratextual' would work particularly well in the context of the Ahmeds' translation. I argue that much of their translation can be seen as a criticism of exclusive approaches to the Qur'an and, therefore, a defence of other ways of reading it.

This article focuses on *The Koran, complete dictionary and literal translation* (1994) by father and daughter Mohamed Ahmed and Samira Ahmed. Mohamed Ahmed was born in 1939 and raised in Egypt. At the age of 17 he left for Germany and subsequently settled in Canada. He had several professions, including filmmaking and piloting. Samira, currently a housewife in the US, was born in Germany and raised in Canada. She studied Arabic in Egypt for five years, where she also worked as a volunteer English teacher, before she moved back to Canada.

The article examines two verses related to marital relations in Islam – Q 4:34, known as the wife-beating verse and Q 2:282, known as the degree verse. The content of these verses highlights and presents some of the key and problematic issues of gender relations in Islam. While it would undoubtedly be interesting to examine more verses, an in-depth discussion of these two reveals how the Ahmeds' collaborative project contributed to the emergence of an inclusive rather than an exclusive translation. In what follows, I examine the translation strategy used, the translators' linguistic choices as well as their interpretation of the verses with a view to understanding their translation approach and its implications. To complement textual analyses, I was able to establish email and phone correspondence with the translators, who accepted to answer questions about their work.

3. Translation as a tool to challenge central narratives

3.1. The wife-beating verse, Q 4:34

The legitimation of traditional narratives (in this particular context, patriarchal) is quite prevalent in Qur'an translations by women. The translation into English commonly known as *Saheeh International*, by Um Muhammed, is a most telling example of how women use translation to legitimize a patriarchal ideology or narrative concerning Muslim women. The controversial Q 4:34 (a crucial verse on gender relations), known as 'the wife-beating verse',

contains several gender-related words, with *aḍribūhunna* as the most problematic of them all. The root of *aḍribūhunna* is *daraba*, whose meanings include 'travel', 'leave', but also 'strike', 'beat'. While domestic violence exists almost everywhere, within Muslim communities the problem is usually attributed to Q 4:34. Um Muhammed renders the verse as follows:

> Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [in the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard.* But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance – [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them (Saheeh International, 1997, p. 105; emphasis added).

Um Muhammed translates the controversial word *aḍribūhunna* as 'strike', thereby conforming to traditional readings. Indeed, classical exegetes often interpret Q 4:34 to mean that men, as financial providers, are superior to women and, as a result, they have the right to 'strike' their wives if they disobey them: "if they did not obey after being admonished and abandoned, you are justified to beat them, not severely" (see Ibn Kathīr, [1358] 2004, p. 290). It is undoubtedly difficult to escape these meanings, and nearly all translators and exegetes of the Qur'an reproduce them (see e.g., al-Zamakhsharī, [1134] 2009, p. 34; Ar-Rāzī, [1209] 1981, pp. 90-91; Turner, 1997, p. 46; Maududi, 2000, p. 333).

However, there are good reasons for challenging such a translation, for it undermines the legitimate role of women in Islam and confiscates their freedom. The Ahmeds set out to combat these dominant interpretations by choosing meanings excluded up to that point in time (as well as by indicating the feminine gender of Arabic words which are gender-neutral in English, using (F) where words refer to women in the Qur'an). This is how they render Q 4:34:

> The men (are) taking care of matters for livelihood* on (for) the women with what God preferred/favored some of them (men and women) on some, and with what they spent from their (M) properties/possession*, so the correct/righteous females are obeying humbly*, worshipping humbly, protecting/safekeeping* to the invisible* with what God protected; and those whom (F) you fear their (F) quarrel (disobedience), so advise/warn them (F) and desert/abandon them (F) in the place of lying down (beds), and *ignore/ disregard/push* them (F),*** so if they obeyed you, so do not oppress/transgress on them (F) a way/method, that God was/is high, mighty/great (Ahmed & Ahmed, 1994, p. 54; emphasis added).

The translators propose multiple meanings for the word *aḍribūhunna*, i.e., 'ignore', 'disregard' and 'push'. Based on our communications, they said that they engaged in a long process of brainstorming, giving a lot of thoughts to the verse. Their aim was just to avoid falling into binary male or female thinking, that is, to look at the verse not only from a male or a female perspective, but to generate as many possible ways of reading it. They decided not to use the word 'strike', though they also refer the reader to the dictionary, through the use of asterisk signs, attached to the translation, where further meanings of *aḍribūhunna* are given, including 'beat' and 'strike' ('ignore them/disregard them/push them/separate them/distance them/ *beat them/strike them*/migrate them/incline to them/reside them ...'; Ahmed & Ahmed, 1994; emphasis added). According to them, the fact that the verse can be read in multiple ways indicates that it is open to an array of interpretations. Therefore, translators should reconsider their commitment to its dominant exegesis that reads husband privilege and inequality into the Qur'an. Even if they disagree on the best meaning, they should be able to concede that viewing this verse as a licence to strike women or demand obedience from them is unacceptable since

it is not the best meaning that the Qur'an overall has to offer.

The Ahmeds's translation of this verse illustrates their innovative approach to translation, one that implicitly challenges master narratives. The result of their translation is an attitude of scepticism about the claims of any kind of overall, totalizing explanation, an attitude of 'resistance' even to 'consensus', which "has become an outmoded and suspect value" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 66). The translators simply wanted to give voice to those who did not 'fit' into master narratives – the oppressed and the marginalized – against the powerful who disseminate the master narratives. In so doing, they contest the idea that men are inherently superior to women and are allowed to commit aggression against their wives under certain circumstances. To be more accurate, they implicitly challenge essentialist approaches to Qur'an translation, which claim to have distilled the Qur'anic verse into the most accurate translation. They write:

> When it came to the word 'daraba' (4:34), sadly all translations (that we have seen to date) took only the meaning 'beat.' This is why we have made the extra effort to give Moslems a better understanding of the wide variety of meanings expressed throughout the Koran by God (M. Ahmed & Ahmed, 1994, p. 1).

The Ahmeds' observations are reminiscent of the work of Islamic feminists such as, for instance, Barlas and Hassan, though the Ahmeds can be considered as forerunners of these scholars since calls for an inclusive approach in the Qur'an can be traced out in their translation. Indeed, Barlas (2002, p. 189) claims that the literal translation of *ḍaraba* as 'beat' or 'strike' is not the only way to read the original: "it is questionable whether the term *ḍaraba* even refers to beating, hitting or striking a wife, even if symbolically". This is because wife-beating contradicts the totality of the Qur'an's teaching, which calls for love and harmony. Hassan (1999, p. 354) also argues that *ḍaraba* has a wide range of meanings and cannot be simply read as a sanction for wife-beating.

The Ahmeds reveal that previously trusted interpretations of the Qur'an can and should be questioned. It is misleading to try to impose one single way of reading the Qur'an, for it is logically obvious that the Qur'an's language (and any language) lends itself to multiple meanings/readings (M. Ahmed & Ahmed, 1994, p. 1). Therefore, there could be no single or simple meaning for this verse because there is no reliable centre of consciousness. The ambiguity of the verse and the multiplicity of meanings provided by exegetes could be confusing and challenging for translators. This shows that translation does not oscillate between one meaning or another (or one position or another – e.g., feminist/conformist), but is open to an array of meanings, thus maintaining a sceptical attitude toward homogeneity. Why, then, would the translators wish to show the multiplicity of meanings in the verse?

The Ahmeds' approach does not so much rely upon established meanings as upon the various potential meanings of the verse, aiming to escape the shackles of essentialist narratives (M. Ahmed & Ahmed, 1994). They perfectly demonstrate their point. They explain that the word *aḍribūhunna* has a range of meanings, from 'ignore' to 'strike'. All the terms have roots in a particular historical worldview. The translators emphasize how different terms can reasonably claim to convey *a* 'truth' about the meaning of the verse. Nor can they claim to encode finally *the* truth about the verse. For the translators, then, translation only seems to mark out clear differences between meanings; it actually only 'defers', as Derrida would have put it, as the meaning of the verse perpetually slips away within the linguistic chain.

The translators go on from such a form of relativism to suggest ways in which all ideological frameworks, thus viewed, can be questioned. This is their key contribution to translation, and it does not much depend on the 'correctness' of their ideological position, since ideologies are prone to a mystifying position.

3.2. The degree verse, Q 2:228

A second example of a passage where the Ahmeds endeavour to use as many meanings as possible to avoid providing an exclusive translation is Q 2:228 – a verse which has been debated for centuries. Often known as 'the degree verse', Q 2:228 also concerns marital relations. The controversy is generated by the end of the passage, where the Qur'an determines the functional distinctions between husbands and wives as regards their roles and responsibilities towards each other. The Ahmeds translated this verse as follows:

> And the divorced (F) wait with themselves (F) three menstrual cycles*, and (it is) not permitted/allowed to them (F) that they (F) hide/conceal* what God created in their (F) wombs/uteruses*, if they (F) were believing with God, and the Day the Last/Resurrection Day, and their husbands/spouses (are) more worthy/deserving* with returning them, in that if they wanted/intended a reconciliation*. And for them (F) similar/equal* what (is) on them (F) with the kindness/generosity*, and to the men a step/stage/grade on them (F), and God (is) glorious/mighty*, wise/judicious (M. Ahmed & Ahmed, 1994, p. 19).

The translation lays bare various meanings of the word *daraja*, step/stage/grade, in an attempt not to impose a single meaning. These three meanings are versions of the word 'degree' used to imply a male-female hierarchal relationship (Hassen, 2012a, p. 221). However, the translation also includes the traditional meaning as well. The translation of *lil-rijāl* as 'men' generalizes the verse's purport from husbands and wives to men and women. Furthermore, the expression 'on them' implies comparison and a superior position given to men over women.

The major thread running through the translation is about providing an unbiased approach. The idea is that a neutral way of looking into the Qur'an is inevitably caught in contradictions. It can never exist because meaning is generated by social discursive practices, and one way of looking into the Qur'an is just at base another more or less a socially acceptable or competing narrative; just another way of putting things right according to a set of socially constructed beliefs. By choosing not to select a specific meaning, the Ahmeds seem to liberally oppose all universal explanations (even if they sometimes readmitted meanings in sympathy with those of conformists), showing that choosing one or another meaning reproduces certain narratives.

What we also learn from the Ahmeds is that, in abandoning the notion of dominant or resistant ideology, they facilitated the promotion of a politics of difference. In postmodern culture, pluralistic identity politics plays an important role; it involves the self-conscious assertion of a marginalized identity against a dominant ideology (Evans, 1995, p. 22). An example of this, undoubtedly central to today's politics, is the relationship between women and Qur'an translation. For centuries, women have not only been excluded from activities related to translation and *tafsir*, but they have been defined as inferior and were assigned less important roles, by comparison with those associated with men (Bakhtiar, 2007, p. xxii).

This general move is a challenge to established dominant ideologies, and it points to the differences between people, differences that need to be recognised and appreciated rather than repressed. The Ahmeds's work, consequently, can be seen as going against stereotypical translations, defending difference; it incorporated all these separate meanings which could be useful to different groups of people to demand recognition away from the dominant conceptualizations of the verse. For once all these different meanings are established, they are cut off from any central totalizing ideology.

Indeed, the Ahmeds' emphasis on differences in meanings made an inevitable attack upon universalizing claims by traditional translations. Such differences manoeuvre the reader into a state of scepticism about the text: accessing/understanding the text depends on the reader's acceptance or resistance to its content. This produces what Barthes calls a "text of bliss":

the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point
of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, and psychological
assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation
with language (1975, p. 14).

This generously democratizing idea, offering the reader a plethora of meanings, was the
product of years of struggle of anti-essentialist critics. The imposition of meanings in translation
by the translator was out of question, while questions about giving the reader room to judge
meanings for themselves take centre stage (Barthes, 1977, p. 161).

4. Implications of an interactive approach to Qur'an translation

4.1. Recognizing the reader's agency

The revelation of the hidden meanings of the verse surely 'deconstructs' them. The strategy
the Ahmeds use in translation is fairly innovative, simply hinging less on the objective reading
than on how reading is a kind of misreading, for it is always a form of partial interpretation.
It is this central use of the strategy, dubbed as the 'interactive' (Hassen, 2012a, p. 70), to
subvert confidence in logical, ethical, and religious commonplaces that has proved most
innovative, profound, and, at times, revolutionary. By using this strategy, the translators call
for an 'irreducible pluralism', devoid of any unifying set of beliefs that are perpetually liable to
domination (cf. Arrojo, 1997a, 2005; Koskinen, 2000; Davis, 2001). Their call is the product of
their collaborative efforts to set the reader free, i.e., to let them judge for themselves. In my
conversation with Mohamed Ahmed, he said:

> At times, we stopped talking to each other because we had different opinions about the
> meaning of the verse. Then we realised that the best way is to put all these meanings
> together and allow readers to decide for themselves (personal communication with the
> translators, June 14, 2020).

The philosophy behind the use of this strategy is that it can give people the confidence to
select and choose, to break away from an allegiance to any 'given' translation, emphasizing
that the way Qur'an translation is often done can and should be changed. The translators
and readers can enter into an alliance, refuting any universalizing approach to translation, an
approach after asserting a particular 'truth'.

The translators suggest that the reader should be wary of particular assertions of meaning by
the translator, if viewed as a delimiting authority, because the meaning of a translated verse
privileges a particular narrative (personal communication with the translators, June 14, 2020);
this is reminiscent of Barthes's proclamation of 'the Death of the Author' (see Barthes, 1977).

In other words, what the translators try to tell is that the text, once interpreted by the reader,
becomes liberated to a certain extent from the translators' worldview. Meanings belong to the
reader, for it is both philosophically wrong and politically retrogressive to freeze the meaning
of the text to a specific end. The text is, in their work, now liberated to swim, with all its
linguistic companions, in a sea of ideological frameworks. Thus, the pursuit of certainties, the
translators demonstrate, is as reactionary in its implications as was the manufactured dominant
lines of thought of the established tradition. They open the text to multiple interpretations
to show what and whom previous translations exclude, and how. Exclusion fundamentally
occurs, for example, when the conformists define the role of women in a particular way and
close off all other possible meanings as unreasonable or outside the remit of Allah's laws (see
e.g., Um Muhammed's translation). In contrast, the Ahmeds seem to challenge such ideas by
opting for a diversity discourse and bringing into being the deviant or the other in translation.

Their discourse actually helps to give voice to those previously excluded from mainstream translations by providing multiple meanings so that readers choose what is best for them, or what best fits their personal narrative. They say:

> We looked for the multiplicity of meaning, so that we do not limit the understanding of the Qur'an. My daughter looked at the translation from a female perspective, whereas I had a tendency to look at things from a male perspective. That's why we had a lot of debates and brainstorming activities to come up with many meanings for a single word (personal communication with the translators, June 14, 2020).

Their translation becomes more or less the voice of the repressed and a criticism of dominant approaches to translation. It seems to combine various thoughts and voices, old and new, all run together in a parallel, in what seems to be an attack on one-dimensional ideological interpretations. Qur'anic verses can be equally complex and multi-layered, which is why they are translated in a way which provides a compendium of various meanings. It could be said here that the translators tend to leave the job to the active readers who are willing to examine the differences between what is 'true' and 'false', or 'real' and 'unreal'.

4.2. Uncommitting to dominant narratives

Postmodernist writers are often criticised for their open approach to the text: they cannot make a significant moral, social, or even political commitment; they are just sceptics, tangling themselves up in a perpetual regress of meaning (see e.g., Norris, 1990, p. 44; Helvacioglu, 1992, p. 24; Wenger, 1994, p. 68). Can such frequently made accusations be equally applicable to the case of the translators? Can we really look at the translators' interactive approach as simply and ultimately uncommitted to anything that matters?

The above-mentioned examples of the interactive approach could be viewed as a challenge to dominant narratives and criticism of manipulative systems. It supports a general move toward relativist principles, not particularly interested in the confirmation of one or the other. In so doing, they abandon the belief in traditional ideologies under the influence of a postmodern culture that appreciates difference, becoming more and more the expositors of the workings of culture in the Qur'an.

Is it then possible to speak of the translators' unwanted commitment to any settled ideological position as a grave problem? Is it better to follow a rationalist project of emancipation or an anti-essentialist route, which often ends up in radical separatism? Although their approach to translation helps to define differences and give voices to marginalized meanings, effective ideological change in norms needs more than an appreciation of difference (Baker, 2009; Boéri, 2008; Lotbinière-Harwood, 1991; Tymoczko, 2000; Venuti, 1995; cf. Handler, 1992, p. 820; Helvacioglu, 1992, p. 31).

Recent translators already began to question the boundaries of social roles, and their contribution is extraordinarily effective in combating restrictive ideologies. Talal Itani, for example, does so by using an interactive, yet 'dynamic', strategy, where translation is "always changing" to "make the Quran more accessible to more people" (personal communication, May 06, 2020). He describes his translation as follows:

> This new translation never stands still, but it is always changing, adapting, improving. And it is a collective effort by translators, scholars, and whoever wills to send us suggestions (personal communication, May 06, 2020).

> Different individuals have different skills, talents, experiences. A non-scholar may see what a scholar does not see. Any individual who loves the Quran is capable of contributing (Itani, 2019).

In such a pluralistic translation, no framework is likely to gain assent. It is a translation free of any commitment and actuated not by a dominant ideology, but an insatiable love for diversity. In this way, the translator essentially makes a liberal demand for the recognition of difference, an acceptance of the 'other' in translation.

5. Concluding remarks

In light of the initial questions about the translators' strategy and its implications, the Ahmeds' endeavour to provide an inclusive translation both from male and female perspectives had a major influence on the strategies that they used in the translation. This surfaced in the call for plurality of meaning to include the reader in translation, in a sense that the reader is taken into consideration to judge for themselves. In their attempt to deconstruct dominant narratives, the translators challenge exclusive approaches to the Qur'an and, in effect, defend other ways of looking into it. This article has revealed that the translators use an 'interactive' strategy (Hassen, 2012a, p. 70) to unearth various meanings, allowing readers to recognize the fact that meanings are always local and unstable and that it is necessary to reach their own relative conclusions.

However, the translation does not automatically imply relativism whereby all linguistic choices are equally acceptable. The translators tell the reader of the tension in the Qur'an, tension expressed in the unstable relationship between commitment and contingency. They do not deny the fundamental impossibility of any commitment, but an impossibility of a certain kind of commitment, a commitment to essentialist narratives. Their 'interactive' strategy demonstrates the ultimate vulnerability of any commitment to one thing or the other, while also makes the reader aware of the dangers of commitment. What it offers instead is a commitment to radical plurality (much realigned in neo-hegemonic approach) because master narratives inevitably come with exclusion, repression, and injustice, though they also give coherence to disparate events and experiences. So, the translation has both a critical and emancipatory potential.

Though only two verses were examined, these are typical of Ahmed and Ahmed's overall approach, which was to stay away from assertions and bring the reader forward. Whether their translation engenders transformative effect for readers remains a point of further examination.

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Translation and the Gospel of Mark

Mary Phil Korsak

Retired scholar, Belgium

1. How I came to translate religious texts

When I arrived in Brussels equipped with language diplomas from Paris and Oxford Universities, I took up a post training translators and interpreters at the Institut Supérieur de l'État pour Traducteurs et Interprètes. After seventeen years of what proved to be a very positive experience, I decided to leave my job and turn to theological studies; first, at a distance, with London University, then at theological institutions in Brussels. These studies involved the acquirement of Hebrew and first century Greek. I was delighted with my studies, but where was this zigzag path leading me? One day the light dawned and I decided I would attempt to translate — re-translate, of course — that fascinating book commonly known as The Book of Genesis. After nine years of painstaking research, *At the start… Genesis made new. A translation of the Hebrew text* was published, first by a poetry centre in Louvain, Belgium, in 1992, and then by Doubleday, NY, in 1993.

Crazy, but it gets crazier. Instead of moving on to the second book of the Bible, I had an irresistible urge to tackle the Gospel of Mark. Of the four canonical gospels, this one is my favourite. During my studies, it had received special attention from Reverend Jean Mouson, a remarkable exegete, whose courses I had followed in Brussels. My Greek was judged worthy of an A+ by King's College, London. So, all in all, the green light was on and I decided to plunge ahead!

My version of Mark's Gospel is now published. I hope it will be welcomed as a new, dynamic, contemporary space that can inspire actors, artists, linguists, psycho-therapists, students of the Scriptures… as well as the general reader interested in those roots of our culture which are linked to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

To my great joy, the celebrated Russian artist Irina Zatulovskaya offered to join in on the project. Her images accompany the text in the published version. Her artistic work is another form of translation/interpretation. The turquoise of the cover expresses joy and hope. Inside the book, different shades of brown evoke the meetings, stories and works of Jeshua. Brown turns to black, expressing the betrayal of friendship, suffering and abandonment. The final image, in red, evokes the triumph of Life over Death.

2. The principles guiding my translation

There are many ways of translating a Bible text: the beautiful seventeenth century prose versions represent one way. Another way, in keeping with modern translational trends, seeks to convey a sense of authenticity to today's reader by capturing the peculiar characteristics of the original. Following the latter path, my purpose is to build a bridge between the old and the new, between past history and our fast-changing, modern world.

To achieve the above, I adopt a 'word for word' — some say a 'concordance' — method of translation. This means that each word of the source text is systematically translated by a corresponding word in the target language. One consequence of this method is that each word repeated in the source text is repeated in translation.

To ensure exactness, a great deal of spadework must be done at the semantic level to determine which English word can systematically correspond to a given Hebrew or Greek word. Lexicon, concordance, thesaurus and dictionary are helpful tools for semantic research. I scrutinise the solutions they propose. I also look at choices made by other Bible translators. Finally, I check all the biblical contexts in which a given word occurs before making a final choice. This research provides the raw material for my translation. The result may be considered poetic rather than didactic, yet it is also significant for exegetical studies.

Further decisions, which are not directly related to vocabulary, must also be taken. For instance, are proper names to be translated or transliterated? How are Greek tenses and aspects of the verbs best rendered in English? What is the most suitable lay-out for the translated text? How is it to be punctuated? Although my purpose is to narrow the gap between the Greek and English texts, I avoid Greek borrowings and also exclude the use of neologisms. The English I use is correct, if not exactly current. Moreover, inspired by the desire to modernise, the new version makes a deliberate attempt to update the vocabulary of the gospel. Here are a few examples with their current translations: 'riddle' for 'parable'; 'secret' for 'mystery'; 'trust' for 'faith'; 'change' for 'conversion'. I also prefer 'put him on the cross' to 'crucify': it has a beat that is easily picked up by a crowd….

3. The new translation

The new translation is based on the Novum Testamentum Graece, which is standard in academia. The texts of the New Testament have, of course, been translated and re-translated over the centuries. Can I still hope to do something different? One thing works in my favour: much loved translations such as The Revised Standard Version (RSV) have acquired a sacred character with the result that translators in this field tend to be conservative; they do not look for novelty.

I started out on my task by working on the vocabulary (see Word patterns below), while at the same time taking into account formal aspects of the text: a new format reflects the word order and rhythms of the Greek. When the body of the translation was ready, I felt able to take several bold decisions. The first innovation concerns the title. The source text, the Novum Testamentum Graece, proposes *Kata Markon*, literally 'According to Mark'. Here I follow traditional English versions but with a difference. The name 'Mark' distinguishes this gospel from the other three, so the title includes 'Mark' but not the usual 'gospel' or 'good news'. I take 'glad', as in 'glad tidings', and end up with *Glad News from Mark*. (For information, the names 'Matthew', 'Mark', 'Luke' and 'John' were attributed to the gospel texts as late as the second century C.E. They came to stay.)

Another important option concerns the name of the central figure. In English versions he is generally known as Jesus. 'Jesus' is a transcription of the Greek, whereas the original Hebrew name is Jeshua. 'Jeshua', meaning 'God will save', is the name his father gave him (Mt 1,25). In translation, I prefer to reject the over-burdened, not to say hackneyed, name 'Jesus', and write 'Jeshua' instead.

4. The format of the new version

The translation entitled *Glad News from Mark: A translation of the Greek text* intends to be as close to the original Greek as correct modern English allows. It brings out the remoteness of the ethos of first-century Palestine for contemporary readership. The translated text is presented with a new layout. A free verse form reflects the spoken rhythms of the source text, which was initially recited, read aloud, listened to. The line division corresponds to consecutive units of meaning and, by the way, does away with the need to translate the often repeated *kai* [and],

which is current in the source text and is even found at the beginning of new sentences. The free verse form and the sparing use of *kai* lighten the text and make for an easy read as the eye travels down the page.

Following some modern writers, I also sometimes drop the subject pronoun and write 'said', for instance, rather than 'he said'. One word in place of two speeds up the read and underscores the lively style of the original. It also corresponds to the Greek, where pronoun and verb form a single word.

Punctuation is generally omitted. The absence of punctuation links up with the old and the new: punctuation as we know it was unknown to the ancients. In the present version, however, I take the liberty of inserting exclamation marks for purposes of clarification or to enhance dramatic effect.

Finally, to allow the reader to perceive the gospel as a complete work of dramatic intensity, the translation is presented without those titles, subtitles or footnotes which have been added with time for the reader's guidance but which are not found in the original text. However, divisions into chapter and verse, which are also subsequent additions, are maintained to facilitate consultation or comparison with other versions.

5. Word patterns

A basic aspect of the new version concerns the rendering of Greek vocabulary in English. With the help of A Concordance to the Greek Testament (1989), it is possible to study a particular Greek word in all its contexts and choose what appears to be the best possible rendering in English. This research provides the raw material for my translation. To illustrate, in chapter six, seven Greek words are used of John the dipper. They appear in the English text as follows: 'he is awakened' (Mark 6,16); 'take hold' (6,17); 'bound' (6,17); 'kill' (6,19); 'opportunity' (6,21); 'corpse' (6,29); 'a grave' (6,29). In later chapters, the same Greek words re-occur with reference to Jeshua, and exactly the same English words are chosen to translate them: 'he is awakened' (16, 6); 'take hold' (14, 44); 'bound' (15,1); 'kill' (14,1); 'opportunity' (14,11); 'corpse' (15,45); 'a grave' (15,46). It is suggested that the repetition of words here represents a gain: it underscores what is common to John and Jeshua, pointing, at a semantic level, to Mark's presentation of John as Jeshua's precursor.

By way of comparison, the RSV reads 'he has been raised' (6,16) and 'he has risen' (16,6). Two verbs, 'raise' and 'rise', and two moods, the passive and the active, establish a difference between John and Jeshua which I do not find in the source text.

6. The young man (14,51-52) and the linen cloth

I would now like to focus on a particular passage in the Gospel of Mark: chapter 14,51-52, which tells of the mysterious appearance of a young man on the plot of land known as Gethsemane. The word *neaniskos* [the young man] occurs only twice in the Gospel of Mark, in the passage just quoted and again in 16,5.

Scholars have long puzzled over the identity of this young man. In his analysis of the last chapters of Mark's gospel (14,15 to 15,46), Rowan Williams (Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, UK), however, simply chooses to ignore him, feeling perhaps that he does not fit in the movement of pilgrims that Williams so brilliantly evokes in his book *Meeting God in Mark*. Another Bible commentator, John S. McKinnon, in *Together in Galilee: a pastoral commentary on the Gospel according to Mark*, writes that some scholars assume the young man to be "a personal reference to Mark himself (making a personal appearance, as it were, in his narrative)", or that this is possibly an evocation of "a young man at the time, curious to

follow a posse of temple troops [...] marching through the city". McKinnon further links this young man with another young man who appears in the empty tomb (see below). The French Traduction œcuménique de la Bible notes that he is perhaps the image of the faithful disciple who tries to follow his Master. More interestingly, the Belgian exegete and contemporary lecturer Jean Radermakers S.J. proposes different hypotheses (see his publication "La Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus selon saint Marc"). As does McKinnon, Radermakers suggests a possible link between this young man and the young man who, we are told, is present in the tomb. This hypothesis is pursued below.

The Greek word *sindon* [a linen cloth] occurs four times in the Gospel of Mark, twice in verses 14,51-52 and twice again in verse 15,46:

> A young man followed him
> wrapped in a linen cloth over his naked body
> They took hold of him
> But he left the linen cloth behind
> and naked fled (MPK 14,51-52)

> He (Joseph) bought a linen cloth
> lifted him (Jeshua) down
> swathed him in the linen cloth
> and put him in a tomb hewn out of the rock
> Then he rolled a stone up against the door of the grave (15,46)

As there is no mention of a 'linen cloth' elsewhere in the gospel, the double mention in each of these two passages creates a striking cross-connection between the episode of the young man and the burial of Jeshua. The episode of the young man is indeed puzzling. Who is he? Why, in two brief verses, is attention drawn to his unconventional attire, to his naked body and the 'linen cloth' that covers it? As suggested above, this passage has long remained an enigma. When connected with verse 15,46, however, the 'linen cloth' acquires special significance. Following in the direction pointed out by Radermakers and McKinnon in their respective studies (see works quoted above), in verse 15,46 the 'linen cloth' is used to swathe Jeshua's corpse: it suggests preparation for burial. A major point: in the light of the link established between the young man and Jeshua, the young man's abandonment of the 'linen cloth' and his flight foreshadow Jeshua's ultimate escape from the grave. In summary, thanks to a word link, the episode of the young man and the story of Jeshua are seen to be mutually enlightening. Remembering that no manifestations of a risen Christ are recorded in Mark's gospel (appendix excluded), I suggest that this esoteric evocation is particularly significant.

I note, in passing, that the RSV and The New English Bible (NEB) do not transmit the repetition of the same Greek word in the two verses quoted. Here are the two verses, as rendered in the RSV:

> And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body; and they seized him but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked (RSV 14,51-52)

> And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb (RSV 15,46)

The RSV translators devote their attention to what the text means rather than to what the text literally says. The 'linen cloth' of the young man in the Garden of Gethsemane becomes

a 'linen shroud' when associated with burial. The same can be said of the NEB translation. I quote:

> Among those following was a young man with nothing on but a linen cloth. They tried to seize him; but he slipped out of the linen cloth and ran away naked (NEB 14,51-52)

> So Joseph bought a linen sheet, took him down from the cross, and wrapped him in the sheet, Then he laid him in a tomb cut out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the entrance (15,46)

In the NEB translation, the 'linen cloth' of the first verse becomes a 'linen sheet', and then a 'sheet' in the second verse. In both cases, the word link is lost in translation.

We return to *neaniskos* [the young man]. This word is found the second time in verse 16,5:

> The sabbath over
> Mary the Magdalene, Mary mother of James
> and Salome
> buy spices
> to come and anoint him
> Very early in the morning
> on the one of the week
> they come to the grave
> as the sun springs up
> They were saying to one another
> Who will roll away the stone for us
> from the door of the grave?
> They look up
> and perceive that the stone has been rolled aside
> Yes, it was very great!
> They go into the grave
> They see a young man sitting on the right,
> wrapped in a white robe (MPK 16,1-5)

The identity of this young man is as mysterious as that of the young man in the Garden of Gethsemane. Who is he? His "white robe" suggests a celestial figure. Further, one is tempted to ask, why is the position of the young man referred to? He is said to be "sitting on the right". It is significant to note that this latter phrase is found again in verse 14,62. I quote:

> Jeshua says, I AM
> And you will see the son-of-mankind
> sitting on the right of the power
> and coming with the clouds of the sky (MPK 14,62)

With the expression "sitting on the right of the power (of God)" Jeshua asserts his divine nature. Not only is he sitting on God's right, but he also uses the phrase I AM. Now, in Exodus 3,14, the divine name is revealed to Moses as I AM. Jeshua's double claim to divinity is clear to the High Priest, who reacts by tearing his garments, a traditional way of expressing horror. For this 'blasphemy' Jeshua is condemned to death.

By way of comparison, for an identical phrase in Greek the RSV has two different phrases: "on the right side" (RSV, 16,5) and "at the right hand" (14,62). The NEB also has two different phrases: "on the right-hand side" (NEB 16, 5) and "at the right hand" (14,62). Furthermore,

both the RSV and the NEB simply translate "I am". In this way, Jeshua is understood to answer the query of the High Priest "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" without claiming the divine name, I AM. Different translators, different choices!

I do not wish to end this article without a special mention of Sœur Jeanne d'Arc, O.P. (Order of Preachers), another woman translator. In 1971, Sœur Jeanne d'Arc personally presented her Concordance du Nouveau Testament to the then pope, Paul VI. Her translation of the four Greek gospels into French was completed in 1991. I was privileged to meet her when, towards the end of a full, rich life, she lay paralysed in her bed. Below is her translation of Mark 14,62:

> Jésus dit :
> « Je suis.
> Et vous verrez le fils de l'homme
> assis à droite de la Puissance,
> venir avec les nuées du ciel ! » (Sr Jeanne d'Arc Mark 14, 62)

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