

TRANSLATING ODISHA. By Paul St-Pierre. Bhubaneswar: Dhauli Books, 2019. 398 p.

A compilation of papers delivered over his career, Paul St-Pierre's *Translating Odisha* spans a range of concerns from the ethics to the politics and practice of translation, localizing the inquiry in the context of translations into Odia. The first section of the book titled "A Personal History" talks of the author's own initiation into these problems in the light of changes taking place in terms of de-centering of the positivist approach towards the human sciences globally in the late 60s, one seminal consequence of which was the emergence of Translation Studies as a discipline itself.

Section II titled "Odisha in Translation" begins by addressing the plurilingual fabric in India that is even more complicated by the tiered education system. Such a diversity necessitates the presence of a filter language like English and/or Hindi, as many translation activities, especially such as those undertaken by National Book Trust, attest to. St. Pierre also points out the role of transcreation manifest in these attempts to ensure what Sujit Mukherjee has called 'maximum readability'. This is well exemplified by his analysis of the English translation of Gopinath Mohanty's novel *Paraja*, where the expository sections often end up reifying the local particularity with a subsuming mold of the general. The author hints that the alienation inherent in translation can offer us an opportunity to evaluate and examine the text, and alongside it, the community. A socio-historical survey is undertaken next, where looking at the choice of texts with respect to periodization reveals the former to be conditioned by the latter, thus revealing the activity of translation as a discourse of history.

The next paper devotes attention to the problematic notion of originality in translation. What should be considered a translation, and what not? Gideon Toury's retort that any text is a translation if it presents itself as one is used as a corroboration to justify Sarala Das' *Mahabharata* as a translated text even if it is not a copy. St-Pierre etymologically uncovers the linkages between *traduttore* and *tradittore* in Italian, that associates translator with traitor. In a later paper in the book, the author insists that translation inherently betrays, but that this betrayal has to be understood in the double sense of infidelity as well as revelation, for if translation involves differences with respect to the original, then these differences throw light on the very tensions of the engagement that the process has been subjected to. If translation indeed has a discursive function within the larger frameworks of history and culture, it is but evident that such negative connotations too are historical constructs in resonance with the exercises of culture formation and nation building. For example, the French designation of translated texts as 'les belle infidèles' during the reign of Louis XIV offers the paradoxical association of beautiful yet unfaithful. This was a period in the 17th century when the French language was standardized and hence a need to maintain sovereignty was paramount. Foreign idioms were domesticated, an example being the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays to suit the French temperament. St. Pierre also discusses Laurence Venuti's notions of 'foreignization' and 'domestication' in this vein, whereby cultures in certain stages take recourse to either of these tendencies to fashion translations according to the need of the hour. Each of these instances points out the fact that translation is never a neutral, isolated activity. Rather, who translates what, for whom and how are the questions that need be focused on. A couple of papers

undertake this effort to show how translation activities into Odia in the period 1807-1866 were mostly exogenous ones, aided by the colonial administration to foster English education and culture in the colony. Texts comprised mostly the *Bible* and other religious treatises. Most of Amos Sutton's translations during this phase were governed by purpose, a point St- Pierre highlights in conjunction with Christiane Nord's Skopos Theory. The Press and Registration of Books Act enacted in 1867 imposed a stricter surveillance and documentation of translated and printed books that has, in turn, aided by being a valuable source of information for the author. We find a stronger presence of Sanskrit texts being translated into Odia from 1867 till 1941 along with the setting up of presses at Cuttack and Balasore, events that the author equated with a brewing cultural nationalism in response to the hegemony of neighboring Bangla. The post political independence period after 1947 is characterized by the stage of what St- Pierre calls Indianization, when more regional texts from other languages were translated into Odia. During this phase, the National Book Trust and Sahitya Akademi played important roles in facilitating translations between different Indian languages. Also, to be noted in this context are the Russian books that were translated steadily till the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, another instance that highlights the socio-historically implicated status of the corpus of translation available in a culture.

One of the essays of the third section of the book titled "On Translation" elucidates the history of how incoherence in translation has been looked upon through ages. Whereas Dryden has advocated paraphrase above metaphrase and imitation, Cowley's translation of Pindar had involved erasure of the text's alterity to make the same comprehensible to the target mass. In contrast, Schleiermacher's approach had desisted from making the text coherent, which could also be read as a re-affirmation of the Romantic yearning for an untarnished, undomesticated foreign ethos. Maria Tymoczko's notion of translation being a metonymic activity is demonstrated through her experiences of re-telling the story of Hamlet to a West African audience where the tropes and fluidity of orature had blended into the main text.

Another essay focuses on the impact of globalization on reading, and translation in particular. In the words of Frederic Jameson, the becoming cultural of the economic and vice-versa has led to a weakening of the national state (though, this is contestable in light of recent events across the globe), rise of multinational corporations and a strengthening of regional ties. Internationalization with English as a benchmark has led to a marginalization of local languages and cultures, in turn effecting the alienation of people from their roots. This feature is reflected in the global translation scene where most texts are now translated into English from other languages, with short stories valorized with the maximum valency thanks to the shift from an oral society to a society of the marketplace.

The fourth section of the book comprises papers written on the different translations of Fakir Mohan Senapati's novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* into English, as well his autobiography *Atma-Carit*. Taking cue from his doctoral thesis on Beckett's self narration, St-Pierre shows how the process of translation involves choices that make it a uniquely original act of creation rather than a mere reproduction, a phenomenon that he in turn maps in the different translations available of Senapati's novel. The colloquial Odia poses a problem also among Odia people, many of whom purportedly accessed the work in English. Translation of words like 'kos' and 'ekadasi' as locally sedimented realities have often exchanged a plethora of gloss and expatiation. One peculiar case is that of C.V.N

Das' translation where these realities are explicated and expanded in terms of European markers, making the text a storehouse of continental jumble of references. In fact, language is by itself a very important thematic element in Senapati's novel (a fact that resurfaces in Senapati's attempt to cement the Odia language firmly against the scorn from Bengalis and English educated babus that we get to know from excerpts selected from his autobiography) that critiques the usurpation of Odia by Bangla, and Persian by English, linguistic hegemonies that go alongside disregarding local traditions. The hierarchies inherent in multilingualism that Senapati raised a voice against finds resonance in the author's treatment of the translations not as loss or failed exchange but as problematic interchange. St-Pierre's method is noteworthy, given that he diachronically contextualizes the problems that make up Senapati's novels in the reception of the same in translation.

The fifth section of the Book is dedicated to a collection of the author's introductions to books of poetry, short stories and a play by Jagannath Prasad Das. These writings illumine the contemporary developments of Odia Literature in the garb of Das' oeuvre. The tensions between illusion and reality that is accompanied by an onset of modernity in the age of technologization, and the conflict between the religious and the secular are some of the themes the author comments on in passing. His introduction to Das's *Dark Times* points out how gruesome events are represented in his art, and how that intentionally departs from the conventional modes of representation of 'objective reality' that we are wont to encounter in textbooks of history. This is followed by a short concluding section of the book where some of the introductions, forewords and prefaces written by St-Pierre find place.

In a nutshell, this book covers a spectrum of issues associated with translation in the global and local sense, the latter being the Odia literary space. They offer insights into how historically determined phenomena like colonization and globalization affect translation and its reception compounded by problems peculiar in a plurilingual society like that of India. Sensitive to poetry, and at the same time, not anaesthetized to the governing forces of changing times, St-Pierre's writings collected in this volume are a must-read for anyone attempting to seriously engage with the poetics and politics of translation that have been inherent and still inheres in the Odia language world.

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