

Cultural Translation and Gender: Performatory Ethics of a Translator

III Annual International Conference of the Caesurae Collective Society



(13 September - 15 September, 2019)

VENUE: LALLGARH PALACE, BIKANER, RAJASTHAN, INDIA

CONCEPT NOTE

Cultural Translation, as Bhabha defines it, is more of a process involving the movement of people (subjects and subjectivities) rather than the movement of texts (objects). The concept of cultural translation draws on several wide notions of translation in various fields such as social anthropology, “translation sociology”, and sociologies which study communication between groups most often shaped by the processes of migration and groups in complex, fragmented societies. So the broad concept of Cultural Translation addresses problems in postmodern sociology, cultural hybridity and helps us to think about a globalizing world in which there is no start text and usually no fixed target text. The idea of cultural translation by the Indian Cultural theorist, Homi K Bhabha in the chapter titled: “How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Time and Trials of Cultural Translation” (in *The Location of Culture*, 1994/2004) offers the idea of negotiation in the “third space”, which is the space for border crossing, hybridity, subversion, transgression, blasphemy, heresy and so on. According to Bhabha, the object of cultural translation is also “non-substantive translation” that comes from the position of a translator. The translator in question is an indeterminate cultural hybrid, being part of the ongoing cultural process. Bhabha also opines that translatorial movements traverse previously established borders and that the two-side borders figured by translators produce illusory oppositions. Moreover, translation has a performatory function to play in cultural communication, between and within cultures. The cultures in question could be minority cultures and border crossings in feminist, gay, lesbian and gendered communities. Bhabha’s “third space” thus opens up interesting avenues for the study of translation strategies used for gender which could be socio-cultural or interplay between biological and socio-cultural distinctions on the one hand and linguistic exponents of grammatical genders on the other. This notion of Cultural

Translation has been widely used in the last two decades to understand the process of change across cultures.

In agreement with Bhabha's focus on the cultural process rather than on the materiality of the cultural product, Sherry Simon's (*Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Translation* 1996) and Luise Von Flotow's (*Translation and Gender: Translation in the Era of Feminism* 1997) monographs proclaimed a "cultural turn", to shift the focus of translation studies from linguistic/ textual analysis to a broader ideological/ cultural context using gender as an entry point. Ideas related to cultural translation and gender have become more complex and nuanced, paying more attention to political, historical, social circumstances and inequalities, ideological values, identities and individual choices. Ethics of translation translates itself to identity formation and cultural translation.

Bella Brodzki (*Can These Bones Live? Translation, Survival and Cultural Memory*, Stanford University Press, 2007), in her attempt to liberate Translation Studies which was more or less a closed discipline, and in introducing Memory Studies into translation, raises the issue of "translation as survival". Translation according to her is "a kind of critical and dynamic displacement", which attempts to voice the hitherto "unvoiced", in the original text(s) and allows the "survival text(s) to live better. It is through translation, that "what is dead, disappeared, forgotten, buried or suppressed" takes place across time, space and geography. This brings us to the ideas of postmemory, ethical responsibility of the translator or his/her (in) visibility/ gendered identity, areas of untranslatability, - all leading to cultural translations as cultural reformulations of history. To cite an example from music, there have been attempts in the contemporary times, in India and across the world to revive Dhrupad which was an almost forgotten genre, through vocal and instrumental presentations. Such an attempt has led the contemporary exponents not only to experiment with their voice modulations and instrumental re-modelling, but cultural translations leading to reformulations of the art, for its survival. Such cultural translation sparks off issues such as who should translate and how, and in what cultural context(s), and whether that could lead to corrosion / erosion of text(s) in the process of its translation for reception in the contemporary times.

This Conference of the Caesurae Collective Society thus, intends to address how cultural translation defines gender or gets defined by gender, based on the performatory ethics of the translator in a given socio-political-historical time-frame. While the Conference besides other things, would invite presentations on postmemory of events in history, asking for a fresh analysis and fresh understanding of gender and culture through "texts", it would invite presentations on contemporary history as well, addressing the socio-political mind-frame of who translates what "text (s)" and why? What ethical codes framed by his/her socio-political context prompts the translator to such cultural translation, leading to a "cultural turn" in socio-cultural history of a nation? It would address issues of Cultural translation leading to the desirability of cultural reformulations, and question the translation of the translator, his/her visibility/invisibility and identity politics.

The broad sub-themes would include:

- Gender, Meaning and Cultural Negotiation
- Gendered Translation
- Translating Gender
- Migration, Gender and Cultural translation
- Indigenous communities in Translation and gender configurations
- Art and Gender
- Legal Verdicts and the Nation in performance
- Representation of Gender in Visuals and Multimedia
- Untranslatability of Gender
- The task of the Translator
- Linguistic Exponents of Gender
- Censorship and the Ethics of the Empowered
- Gender Representation and power politics
- Engendered Music and Language(s) in Cultural Translation
- Postmemory and Cultural Translation

Deadline:

- ✓ **Abstracts not exceeding 300 words should be sent to culturaltranslconf@gmail.com by 5th of June 2019.**
- ✓ **Acceptance of Abstracts: by 10th of June 2019.**
- ✓ **Early Bird Registration till 20th June: Rs 4000 + New Membership or Renewal of Annual Membership.**
(Note: Annual Membership expires on 1st of April and is Rs 500
Life Membership is Rs 5000)
- ✓ **Late Registration: Rs 4500 + Rs 500 as Membership Fees for Non-Life Members**
- ✓ **Local Participants (without accommodation)Rs. 2000+Rs. 500 as membership fees**

***The Registration Fees would cover food, lodging for two nights, Conference Kit and Participation Certificate. The Conference participation is for registered members of the Caesurae Collective Society**

Art Exhibition and a Music Workshop for local participants: Registration fees for these two events is Rs 500/- each. (details will be posted later)

Local Organizing Committee:

- Dr. Kiran Deep, Associate Professor of English, Ch. Balluram Godara Govt. Girls' College, Sriganganagar, Rajasthan
- Dr. Praveen Mirdha, Associate Professor of English, Govt. Girls College, Ajmer
- Purkaif Usta, Assistant Professor MITS, Bikaner and Usta artist.

Convener: Dr. Divya Joshi, Associate Professor of English, Govt. Dungar College, Bikaner, Rajasthan, Caesurae Life member.

Co-convener: Professor Jayita Sengupta, Chair, Dept. of English, Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University, W.B., Secretary, Caesurae Collective Society

