

PREFACE

The present study is an attempt to evaluate the achievement of William Radice as a Tagore translator in the light of translation theories. A bilingual study of this nature involving the twin disciplines of Translation Studies and Tagore Studies requires, on the one hand, an acquaintance with the history of translation theories and the 'poetics' of translation studies. It also requires, on the other, a first-hand acquaintance with the original and the translated works of Rabindranath Tagore as well as the critical works on him. In order to preserve the bilingual nature of the present study I have followed the principle of bilingual documentation in the "Works Cited" section. Tagore formed his own concept of translation and its evaluation on the basis of his experience of translating *Gitanjali* poems. Surprisingly, his reflections on translations are, in many respects, similar to those of Western translation theorists; but they have not yet received the importance they deserve from the translation critics. While evaluating Radice's Tagore translations I have included in my discussion Tagore's translation thoughts alongside the views of the Western translation theorists.

The seminal idea of the title of this study comes firstly from Roman Jakobson's definition of translation as 'interpretation' (Kelly 1) and secondly from Axel Buhler's article "Translation as interpretation" included in *Translation Studies* (2002) edited by Alessandra Riccardi and published from Cambridge University Press. Translation, as understood by William Radice, is not the mere transfer of literal meanings of words or expressions from one language to another; it is an 'imaginative insight' into the life, the creative works and the thought processes of a writer one is translating. In "The Task of the Translator"(1923) Walter Benjamin identifies something 'unfathomable', 'imaginative', and 'poetic' about the creative works of a great writer and a literal or word-for-word translation is incapable of capturing the spirit and essence of their originals (Schultz and Biguenet 71). In the Introduction to his book *On Translation* (1959) Reuben Arthur Brower refers to the translator as a "creator" equating him with the "original author" (Brower 7). He also adds, "[...] in spite of the fact that the study of "the creative process" has been a matter of speculation since Plato, and has become increasingly fashionable since Coleridge, it is surprising how little attention has been given to

the obscure business of *re-enacting some one else's creation*" (emphasis added) (Ibid 4). According to Brower, the translation critic is theoretically concerned with the re-enactment of some one else's creation whereas the translator re-enacts it in another language performing a parallel act of creation (Arrowsmith and Shattuck 62). This seems to go against the basic task of a translator who sacrifices himself so completely to the work that his personality completely disappears. But translators and translation critics down the ages have glorified the subjective role of the translator in the act of translating a work from one language to another. In his epoch-making book *Toward A Science of Translating* (1964) Eugene A. Nida unequivocally says, "[...] *the human translator is not a machine, and he inevitably leaves the stamp of his personality on any translation he makes*" (emphasis added) (Nida 154). This 'stamp of personality' unconsciously colours the interpretation of a translator. Again, in the Preface to *The Translator's Art* (1987) William Radice and Barbara Reynolds rightly observe, "[...] however self-effacing the translator's art may be, *the translator's personality is never wholly suppressed, nor should it be*" (emphasis added) (Radice and Reynolds 7). In "Ten Rules for translating Tagore" (1986) Radice seems to have mentioned the interpretative role played by the translator in the act of translating: "*The personality of the translator always comes into play; a translation of a poem can never be like a photo or carbon copy of the original*" (emphasis added) (Rao 34). What Radice implies here is that the intrusion of the 'personality of the translator' into a translation makes it interpretative as well as creative.

According to Buddhadev Bose, Rabindranath Tagore is "one of the most elusive poets of the modern times" (Bose 411) and the rendering of such an 'elusive' poet undoubtedly presents formidable challenges for a translator. Literal or word-for-word translation, translation theorists opine, cannot capture the spirit of the creative works of such an 'elusive' and imaginative poet like Rabindranath Tagore. It is only the free and interpretative mode of rendering that is capable of exploring the spirit and essence of his creativity. In "The Challenge of Translating Tagore" (2012) Radice sums up the true nature of his Tagore translation: "But as a poet myself, and one for whom the sounds and rhythm of poetry have always been immensely important..., I found myself responding to the sounds of Rabindranath's poems in an instinctive and intuitive way. I cannot claim, even now, that I hear the poems in quite the same way as a native speaker would hear them, but they

immediately get 'translated', from the very first reading, into sounds and rhythms that are natural to me in my mother-tongue" (Chakravarty 445). It is now abundantly clear from the above observation that in his translations Radice makes the intuitive and imaginative interpretation of Tagore in English. In "Confessions of a Poet-Translator" (2003) he does not hesitate to describe his approach to Tagore translations as 'imaginative and intuitive' (Radice 139). I have therefore tried to highlight this aspect of Radice's translations in my dissertation.

I am extremely grateful to my friend-turned supervisor Dr. Chandanashis Laha, Associate Professor of English, of North Bengal University, who brought me back to the world of academic research at the fag end of my career. Aware of my interest in Tagore he suggested sometime in 2004 that I should work on William Radice's Tagore translations. I jumped at his suggestion and made up my mind to pursue the job. He made an arrangement for me to meet Mr. William Radice when he had come to Kolkata in 2008 at the invitation of Dr. Damayanti Basu Singh, Buddhadev Basu's youngest daughter, to deliver the Buddhadev Basu centenary lecture at Rotary Sadan, Kolkata. In this connection, I would like to express my gratitude to my revered teacher Dr. Basu Singh, ex-Reader in the Department of English of North Bengal University, for giving me the kind permission to attend the centenary lecture. I am also grateful to Dr. Radice who took time off his busy schedule to meet me and talk to me about his Tagore translations. Chandan also requested Dr. Basudev Chakravarty, Professor of English of Kalyani University and an authority on Tagore translation, to allow me to have photocopies of some of the rare books on translation that he had in his possession. I am thankful to Dr. Chakravarty for the help I received from him. Besides, Chandan made available to me for my use some of the important books on translation from his personal collection. I am also thankful to Prof. Mohit Kumar Roy of Burdwan University and Prof. Fakrul Alam of Jahangirnagore University, Dhaka, Bangladesh for their help.

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