English translations of Indian literary texts published in India may not at first sight seem comparable to the Gateway of India, the monumental memento of the British Raj on Indian shores. The Gateway of India, as people familiar with India are aware, was built on the shores of Bombay—now translated, or rather back-translated, to Mumbai—to welcome British royalty. A symbol of conquest and colonization, the Gateway served to allow entry and access not just to the islands of Bombay, but more importantly to the jewel in the crown, India. Through the Gateway, the imperial traveller could perceive in his mind’s eye the vision of a subject-nation, a nation constructed and processed in and for his gaze. As Tejaswini Niranjana points out, one of the professed aims of English education was to give the colonized, “along with the English language, models of national culture” (1992, 107), the stated objective being to “give a liberal English education to the middle and upper classes, in order that we may furnish them with both the materials and models for the formation of a national literature” (Trevelyan 1838, 175). While various notions of India—indeed, various Indias—may have pre-existed British colonization, this one monolithic nation, India, was constructed only in English translation.

The Gateway of India looked outward, welcoming the colonizer, a symbol and facilitator of appropriation, but it also looked inward, bringing a people together (and driving them apart) as they dutifully defined their nation in the curiously perceived neutrality of the English language. As
Sujit Mukherjee points out in his foundational work *Translation as Discovery*, translation of literary texts from various Indian languages into English "offers the widest area of discovery" (1994, viii), promising that there may be an Indian literature after all, rather than various regional ones.

Aijaz Ahmad puts forward a similar argument when he admits that he "cannot confidently speak of an 'Indian' literature as a theoretically coherent category" (1995, 243). A united, theoretically coherent, national "Indian" literature cannot be posited through essentially discrete histories of Indian language-literatures: a "'national' literature has to be more than a sum of its regional constituent parts" (243-44). Though at some level, every literary work written by an Indian national can be considered part of "Indian literature," Ahmad believes that institutions that could produce a coherent and unified knowledge of the various language-literature clusters in India, within any theoretical framework, have been largely absent. There has been no encouragement for access to the various Indian language-literatures through translation into other Indian languages. This has resulted in a situation whereby "it is in English more than any other language that the largest archive of translations has been assembled so far, [and soon] English will become, in effect, the language in which the knowledge of 'Indian' literature is produced" (250). And this despite the fact that English is "the language least suited for this role ... because it is, among all Indian languages, the most removed, in its structure and ambience, from all the other Indian languages, hence least able to bridge the cultural gap between the original and the translated text" (250).

However, it seems that more and more educated Indians are able to read and write only in one language other than their mother tongue, and that language is English. What is even more worrisome is that the proportion of Indians living in metropolises who are competent only in English is growing steadily. Thus, Sujit Mukherjee’s comment, first voiced almost a decade ago, seems relevant even today: "The literary compartments in which we live in India—with windows wide open to non-Indian literatures, but doors closed to the work of neighbouring Indians—tend to grow rather than diminish" (1994, 15) despite various organizational attempts to bring together literary practitioners in the different Indian languages. The problem within India is that it is far easier to access developments and achievements in languages of contiguous regions, than to access those in languages of more distant regions. For example, a Tamil may be aware of, and up-to-date on, the latest trends in Kannada or Malayalam or Telugu literature, but have little or no idea of what is going on on the Gujarati or Punjabi literary scene. This awareness is not based on the existence or availability of translations, but merely on physical proximity and immediate cultural and political relevance. Hence it is that these factors, either together or individually, must
be in place for the literature of any specific region to have an impact on the public of another region of the subcontinent. As in the case of all news, literary achievement is processed and transmitted through the popular media; a recent case in point is the Bangladeshi—not Indian—writer Tasleema Nasreen’s novel Lajja. Accessing Indian literary works through translation into another Indian language is still a distant dream. In fact, even translations between adjacent regional languages are few and far between. Currently in India, the only way for a large number of readers across the subcontinent to have access to other regional language-literatures is through English translation. Knowing this, many writers seek to have their work translated into English.

This is not seen as a satisfactory situation by everybody. In a recent review of a collection of poems translated from Oriya into Bangla, Meenakshi Mukherjee laments that “[i]n much of the seminaring and workshopping on literary translation in recent years begin from the assumption that translation of literary texts in India necessarily means translation into English, ignoring the much richer and wider possibilities of intra-language transfers where the so called ‘problems’ turn into pleasure and profit” (1997, 45). Nonetheless, Mukherjee recognizes that intralanguage translation in India is far easier between contiguous language-regions: “There is so much cultural overlap between two geographically adjacent languages in India that the concept that each language has its own ethos—an idea that translation theorists thrive on—has to be revised in our situation” (45). Indeed, most Indian translators would agree with this point, for it is very often their aim, as well as that of various organizations and translation projects, to show the oneness of the Indian nation, even if this is possible only through English.

The focus of this paper is Macmillan India’s new series “Modern Indian Novels in English Translation,” the first of which were published in 1996. This series can be considered a modern-day gateway to India. As N.S. Jagannathan remarked in a seminar on translation, which focussed on the same series, “we are probably translating [into English] because we are in a situation within India, in which in order to [make available] a Tamil novel to somebody in Assam or Bengal or Punjab, the only way to do it today is to situate it in English” (Mar. 1997, 19). He considers this situation an “agony,” but an inevitable one at the moment. He remarked that while he could have read Bengali novels in Tamil translation in the 1930s and 1940s, today translation into Tamil is taboo in India. Translation into English has become, to borrow a phrase from Sujit Mukherjee, “a patriotic activity” (1994, 125). On the one hand, this may carry the same “ambassadorial considerations” as translations of French Quebec literature into English in Canada (Bednarski 1995, 122), in that English translation makes the literature of a region and a culture known to other regions of the country,
and serves to establish a certain credibility and a relationship of mutual regard as well. However, English is one of Canada’s two official languages; it is an inherent language there. In India, such ambassadorial considerations could be just as readily and successfully fulfilled by translation into and among the various Indian languages, rather than into English. On the other hand, translation into English does, at the moment, help to establish or construct the oneness, the nationness of India. With regard to the English translation of Quebec literature in Canada, Kathy Mezei remarks, “What and how certain texts are translated, what is omitted, what is altered, and what is foregrounded can give us a biased and modified impression of Quebec culture. Quebec becomes not what it is, but what we wish it to be” (1995, 142). A similar process is set in motion in translating Indian literary texts into English in India, but in this case, not to present a particular region as we wish it to be—that is, different—but to make the entire nation what we wish it to be—that is, unified.

In an essay dealing with anthologies of Indian English poetry, Suman Gupta argues that the real danger with “Indianness” is that the grammar of singularity is so pervasive,

that it seems almost natural that anthologists should try to find an adequate Indian experience in the selected texts, should identify with centrist definitions of Indianness at the expense of local realities, should think of the various literatures in Indian languages as a continuous Indian literature, should think of living and experiencing India as one continuous experience, and provide all this with the sonority of an assumed voice of the nation. (1996, 112)

Local realities from which the various Indian language-literatures arise—and to which they return—will, in anthologies of Indian literature, be “constantly made corollary to a larger homogenous Indian reality” (112). In Gupta’s opinion, this situation is almost inevitable because while there may be various Indian language-literatures, there is no Indian literature in Indian languages. What there may be is “a Bengali literature of India, a Tamil literature of India, a Marathi literature of India, and so on—i.e., indigenous literatures which acknowledge perspectives of the nation-people that are conditional upon their local realities” (111). Gupta does acknowledge the possibility of nationalist literatures in various Indian languages under certain political conditions, and constructed against the grain of local realities. But these are unique and discontinuous moments.

Meenakshi Mukherjee, in her review entitled “A Feast Cooked in Clarified Butter,” of Macmillan India’s new series, remarks that the project editor, Mini Krishnan, “surprises us ... by the unexpected solemnity of her homogenising rhetoric in the introductory note where she projects our ‘In-
dian tradition' as 'one of humankind's most enduring attempts to create an order of existence that would make life both tolerable and meaningful'" (1996, 15). Indeed, in the main Introduction, which is published in all the novels of the series, Krishnan remarks that "all Indians know that they have a complex, stable system of values, beliefs and practices which—though forged long ago—has never really been interrupted." The aim of the new Macmillan series is to explore this "stable system of values, beliefs and practices" that underlies the surface differences that seem to exist in India. Krishnan hopes that "these novels will express most of the ideas, customs, unquestioned assumptions and the persistent doubts that have characterised Indian life for at least a thousand years."

This admirably patriotic sentiment raises as many doubts about the credibility of the venture as it seeks to answer, because the series brings together in English translation, as stated in the Introduction, "selections from the corpus of fiction Indians have created after their Independence (1947)." It seems therefore that the basic assumption is that there is an India which has existed continuously for at least a thousand years, and this India can be excavated, explored and expressed through the English translation of contemporary novels originally written in modern Indian languages. It must be assumed that this premise governed the choice of texts to be translated, and that novels which do not express this continuity of the Indian condition were rejected.

Mini Krishnan could not be unaware of her assumption or the choices it dictates. On the contrary, she is fully conscious of her politics. At the aforementioned translation seminar, which focussed on the series, Krishnan prefaced her intervention with the seemingly off-the-cuff, throw away remark that she "thought that Delhi was a foreign country to us southerners. Nothing we ever did for fourteen years [there] ever caught up here" (1997, 3), later adding that "there are lots of people who have yet to know something about the south, [and] southerners who know very little about the north... There is definitely a great ignorance within India itself" (3). Krishnan’s agenda as editor of the Macmillan series project, then, is to map an India where the North-South divide is shown to be superficial—the result of a layer of amnesia coupled with hegemonic tendencies of the Hindi belt, and resistant aspirations of the south—and which can be dusted away through translation into the neutral English language to reveal the fundamental and continuing unity underneath. This agenda parallels political developments in India—the south having contributed two prime ministers in the recent past—as well as developments in the powerful popular culture domain of the cinema.

Among the major film releases from the south, which have taken the rest of India by storm in the last few years, is Tamil director Mani Ratnam’s
patriotic film *Roja*. *Roja* deals with Kashmiri militancy—a subject that had not been tackled until then by Indian filmmakers. It argues and plays upon patriotic sentiments for a united India, stressing the continuities across the nation. The film’s importance lies in the fact that it is a Tamil film, from a region which saw and defined itself—and perhaps still does—in the realm of politics as different from the rest of India, a region which sought autonomy as a first step toward the redemption of Tamil honour. Sisir Kumar Das points to the growth of Dravidian chauvinism as an example of the rising sense of regionalism which “at its best, is rooted in certain cultural specifics lending literary creations concreteness, and at its worst, a false sense of superiority offending the other and eventually demeaning the self” (1995, 387). Tamil regionalism expressed in the “glorification of the Tamil language and culture was intensified by a continuous repudiation of Sanskrit culture, ‘the Aryans’ and ‘north India’” (387). Language became a new instrument of power politics and this linguistic patriotism is, in Das’s view, “a threat to the idea of nation constructed by the Indian elite” (389). *Roja* attacks such fissiparous tendencies and makes an emotional statement for unity among the people. It is important for Tamils to assert themselves as both Tamil and Indian, but this comes with an equally important political agenda: it is the Tamils who wish to define or restate Indianness. The Macmillan translation project that gave birth to the new series reflects this newly effervescent South Indian leadership in Indian politics and popular culture, and the South Indian’s desire to imagine an India in which she/he would have a crucial role to play.

Shobhana Bhattacharjee compares the Macmillan “Modern Indian Novels in English Translation” series to the Indian folktales series that became widely available in the first decade after Indian Independence. The folktales were published as the *Lok Kathayen* of various states: “The states were new, the stories were ancient, but by linking stories to states, these units of the new nation were given a legitimacy of tradition. More than that, we became aware of the states, and since the books’ covers were nearly identical, we slotted them away in our minds as parts of a whole” (1997, 4). Thus while giving traditional sanction to differences, the folktales also helped to reinforce the unity of the newly born nation: “that’s how they were bought for us—with pride in this new-born creature called Independent India, a unity constituted of different elements” (4). Bhattacharjee remembers liking the folktales series, and makes the following comment about the new Macmillan novel series: “my first old-fashioned reason for liking the Macmillan translations is that visually and physically the books are a unity, and whether it is intentional or not, this reminder of that early nation-building effort pleases me” (4). And she pointed out that novels originally written in Indian languages make available through English translation an India vastly different from that of contemporary Indian English novels, or more
specifically, Stephanian English novels. Usually the characters in Stephanian novels are cushioned by wealth and privilege, whereas the lives of the characters in the Macmillan novels "are decided for them by the poverty and systems of belief and law and justice that hedge them in" (4).

Indeed the Macmillan novels portray an India different from that of the urban, upper-middle-class, westernized Indian. The crucial difference between the post-Independence folktales and the Macmillan novel series is that the folktales were published in Hindi, while the novels are in English translation. The Hindi (northern Indian) vision and appropriation of Indian literary culture is replaced by a contemporary novel production staking a claim to pan-Indianism in English—a language that is not inherent to any hegemonic region in India. The choice of language was deemed necessary not just because Macmillan is an English-language publisher, but because English is the language that South India uses to counter Hindi hegemony when attempting to address the whole of India. English is used as the vehicle of unity.

N.S. Jagannathan agrees with, and welcomes, the assertion of unity underlying the Macmillan series, calling it "the civilisational unity we have had in spite of everything else" (Apr. 1997, 5). He includes in his concept of unity the protest movements Manu and Ambedkar, which are part of Indian tradition. But he identifies another level of unity, one imposed by the "two hundred years' British rule in which we as colonials and post-colonials have shared a pan-Indian experience" (5), including the unification of the nation-state and the commonality imposed by English education. Jagannathan agrees that there must be a certain politics involved in choosing the novels, and offers some selection guidelines: the writers should be the best or, at least, near-best in their region; they should have a certain all-India visibility; the quality of the story should be high; and there should be a balance in approach and treatment. Jagannathan would like to see some comic fiction included, but fails to see that the guidelines he suggests will devalue differences and lead to the selection only of work which deals with what can be universalized as Indian. Paradoxically, he argues for the inclusion of a "quintessentially" Bengali novel, and for more women writers, because "we live in a society in which the male gets away with so much" (5). Jagannathan leaves us in some confusion as to what he means by "the best" or "all-India visibility," and how they square up with quintessentially regional novels and those written by women.

That these are problems the editors working on the Macmillan novel series faced is apparent when one peruses the final list, which helps to illustrate some of the points made in this paper so far. Eleven novels were selected to be translated: five are in South Indian languages—two in Tamil, two in Malayalam, one in Kannada; three novels are in East Indian
languages—two from the often-neglected Oriya, one in Bengali; and of the remaining three novels, one is in Gujarati from the West, the other two from North India—one in Punjabi, the other in Hindi. While it is true that this series is only the first in an ambitious translation project, its biases are worth noting: there are five novels from South India; there are only two novels by women writers, and both are in Tamil. Women are fairly well represented in the whole project: the project editor, Mini Krishnan, is a woman from South India; of the language editors, who must have had some influence on the choice of novels to be translated, two are women—Nabaneeta Dev Sen for Bengali and C.T. Indira for Tamil; and interestingly, but not surprisingly, most of the translators are women.

With regard to the novels: the Tamil novels, *Lamps in the Whirlpool* by Rajam Krishnan and *Yamini* by Chudamani Raghavan—the only novels by women writers in the series—are Brahminical in setting and question traditional Hindu values and beliefs, especially as they circumscribe the lives of women; the Malayalam novels, *Pandavapuram* by Sethu and *Outcaste* by Matampu Kunjukuttan, address the question of women’s sexuality and societal morality, respectively; the Kannada novel, *Bharathipura* by U.R. Ananta Murthy, centres on a foreign-educated Indian man who returns to his hometown, Bharathipura. It explores and interrogates various ideas and beliefs, from the traditional hierarchical and religious to the modern romantic and liberal. *The Song of the Loom* (Hindi) by Abdul Bismillah, which describes the lives of Benares weavers, was “widely acclaimed [in the original version] for its densely textured portrayal of a localized community from a discernibly progressive perspective” (Joshi 1996, 16). As Maya Joshi writes, this book also asserts “the need to interrogate the notion of an uncomplicated continuity as something to be particularly proud of” (16). *Face of the Morning* (Oriya) by Ganeswar Mishra is written from a child’s point of view, and is set in the temple town of Puri; *The Survivor* (Oriya) by Gopinath Mohanty is not set in a particularly characteristic geographic location, but, as has been noted, contextualization of Oriya life and culture compensates for its setting’s lack of specific character. The other novels are fairly specific as to their geographic and cultural locations.

In the main Introduction, as previously noted, project editor Mini Krishnan states that these novels express and explore “a complex stable system of values and practices which—though forged long ago—has never really been interrupted.” Indeed, all the novels are written from within specific traditional Hindu societies, and all question various facets of these societies, the hierarchies and hegemonies that have always existed. But the India this series of novels actually maps is quite different from the India one would expect to encounter based on the project editor’s Introduction.
Examining how the project attempted to level out the local rootedness of each novel to form a unified corpus of modern Indian novels, I discovered that this was done through the introduction to each novel, which largely treats it as an individual free-floating text dealing with various Indian themes. There seems to be a certain haphazardness about the introductions, as if the decision to write one for each novel was a last-minute decision: five introductions are by the language editors, and the Hindi novel also has a preface by the translator; two introductions are written by the individual translators; and four were written by critics. Of these eleven introductions, only three attempt to place the novels concerned in their specific literary context, by highlighting their position in their regional literary histories; four introductions (including two which mention literary histories) discuss the authors’ other works; and all the introductions, except for the one accompanying the Hindi novel, offer a reading of the novel, often in terms of background, plot, characterization and style. The Hindi novel has an expressionist introduction by the language editor, who calls it the Prologue.

Most importantly, while the series consists of modern Indian novels in English translation, there are no annotations by the translators in any of the novels, even though at least one translator, Rana Nayar, claims having provided translator’s notes, but that it was the publishers’ decision not to incorporate them. In Nayar’s opinion, the translator’s notes would have been informative, and since the language editors make no mention of translation problems encountered by the translators, they should have been included in the final publication of the novels (1997, 8). Indeed, none of the language editors addresses the issue of translation problems, except in very general terms. Manoj Das’ introduction to the Oriya novel *Face of the Morning*, which was translated by Prafulla Mohanty and Jo Westbrook, mentions that “[c]ertain elements in this work, its lyrical and often colloquial narrative quality besides, cannot survive translation” (ix). Das cites the example of an Oriya simile in the original, whereby someone’s “cheeks are found to have swelled like Chitau Pitha” (ix). To fully appreciate the appropriateness of the simile in the text, one has to know what *Chitau Pitha* is, and to know that, one has to have direct knowledge of the culture. He also deemed it necessary to highlight the cultural importance of, and reverence for, the cow in Indian society. Das concludes that if despite such demands on the translation process, the novel has turned out well in English, it is because the novel displays such love and understanding of the characters that it can inspire empathy in readers from a different milieu. Even in the introduction to the Malayalam novel *Outcaste*, which is written by the translator, Vasanthi Shankaranarayanan, who mentions specific translation problems, the particular problems, as well as the strategies used to solve them, are stated in very general terms. In a paragraph on the language used in the novel—a mixture of Sanskritized Malayalam, and the colloquial
conversational dialect peculiar to the Namboodri community—and the particular features of the writer’s style, Shankaranarayanan merely mentions that “in order to overcome the difficulties presented by a combination of these factors, I have used approximations wherever possible and have changed the construction of the sentences so that they made sense in English” (xv). She also uses detailed footnotes in the translation, as do all of the other translators, and includes a name index at the end, an editorial strategy unique to her translation. An awareness of the cultural moorings of each novel comes through in this series, but there seems to be a reluctance to spell it out or even mention it in terms that would problematize the project’s agenda—the recovery of a united India.

Consequently, the “free-floating” texts are not free-floating after all, but are treated as such to fit in the agenda established by the project editor. This seems somewhat paradoxical, given the editorial practice of detailed footnotes generalized throughout the series. In her Introduction to the series, Krishnan explains that the footnotes in the texts are not intended for the Indian reader and are not intended to explain regional specificities, but rather to explicate Indian expressions and Indian cultural practices to the foreign English-language reader: “Some of the footnotes may seem excessive but they have been prepared with non-Indian readers in mind” (v). That she had non-Indian readers in mind is apparent from her parenthetic glossing of the year of India’s independence from the British, a date all Indians are expected to know, and the curious use of the possessive in the same sentence in her Introduction: “The method we have adopted is to translate selections from the corpus of fiction Indians have created after their independence (1947)” (my emphasis). And those Indians have strange pilgrim towns, like Rishikesh1 and Badri,2 and many tiny waterways, like the Alakananda,3 which the project editor felt were necessary to explain in footnotes for their readers. Thus, three footnotes appear on the very first page of Chudamani Raghavan’s Yamini:

2. Shrine of Lord Badrinath (Vishnu) in the Himalayas, the tallest mountain range in the world, sacred to the Hindus, who believe that the gods live there.
3. A tributary of the Ganga, it meets the Bhagirathi and both together form the Ganga.

In fact, there are so many footnotes in the translations that Meenakshi Mukherjee reacted thus: “[T]he inane footnotes first irritated and then infuriated me so much that with a masochistic compulsion I kept looking at the bottom before reading the page” (1996, 15). Mukherjee fails to understand why terms like sari, dhoti and Brahmin need to be explained or defined in a
footnote or how the footnote imparts new knowledge to the reader, for sari is described as “a five-metre length of material which Indian women wrap around themselves”; dhari is defined as “a sarong-like piece of cloth” (shouldn’t “sarong” be explained as well?); and a Brahmin is “the highest caste among Hindus.” Even more interesting is the need for a footnote—and the footnote itself—accompanying the word “coconut,” which is described as “a fruit like the breadfruit.” Mukherjee castigates the project editor for “justifying their presence in the name of some mythical non-Indian reader, presumably retarded” (15).

In defence of the need for footnotes, Mini Krishnan stated, at the translation seminar in New Delhi in 1997, that she saw these novels as textbooks to be used in various universities across India itself, and that she considered the notes necessary for Indian students also, as there is such a great divide within the country: “There is definitely a great ignorance within India itself” (1997, 3). She claimed that the footnotes were prepared keeping in mind the Indian teachers who “need a lot of help,” but also the foreign reader who is not at all mythical: she knew for a fact that many tourists and other foreigners had read the novels and had greatly appreciated the footnotes. Krishnan’s defence of her decisions is quite significant in what it reveals: on the one hand, the project wishes to project the image of a unified India, an India of unbroken continuities, to Indian readers—in which case, there should be no need for these kinds of footnotes; and on the other hand, the project wishes to export this India overseas, even if at the moment it caters only to tourists and foreigners in India. Thus, the footnotes, which, to all intents and purposes, are for the benefit of the foreign reader, actually camouflage the project editor’s belief that the Indian reader also needs footnotes, and contradict her assertion of “unbroken continuities” or a homogeneous Indian culture despite the many regional languages and traditions. Krishnan admits that there is a “schizophrenic impulse” behind her having these novels published for two very different markets: the Indian textbook market and the English-speaking world market. This schizophrenia also seems to influence her ambivalence between homogeneity and difference among the various regions and language-cultures in India.

I think the problem lies in that Krishnan and the Macmillan series team sought to kill too many birds with one stone. At the seminar, she claimed that the terminological footnotes were necessary because “I definitely want people who don’t know our language to understand them ... they haven’t had our language for two hundred years, the way we have had theirs” (1997, 3). (Note her use of “language” in the singular—a slip of the tongue perhaps, but a revealing one.) For, she says, it is easier for Indians “to slip between East and West than it is for [foreigners] to open the gate and get into our diverse culture” (4). (Note her use of “culture,” again in the singu-
lar.) The project’s agenda is thus made clear: to construct a culture that accommodates diversity in one chosen language—English.

This attempt to drown out differences could not succeed in any case, for even apart from the problems a foreigner would have understanding local cultural details, as well as the religious and caste configurations that exist in India, how would a translator deal with a novel like Abdul Bismillah’s *The Song of the Loom*, which is heavily footnoted in the Hindi original itself, because of “the almost ghettoized specificity of the novel, and the author’s avowedly documentary intentions” (Mukherjee 1996, 16). This novel believes in the difference of the people it portrays, a different community, a different world from that of other Hindi speakers in India. Such an authorial intent to explore a world that is so different from the mainstream regional language-culture characterizes many other contemporary Indian novels, including those in this series. According to translator Rana Nayar, the major problem encountered in translating Gurdial Singh’s *Night of the Half Moon* was that it isn’t in standard Punjabi, but rather in the Malwayee dialect (1997, 8). In fact, Punjabi words are often in quotation marks to emphasize the difference between the Punjabi reader’s and the Malwayee character’s worlds. Such nuances and intentions in the originals have been flattened out in the English translation of most of the novels. It is obvious that the Macmillan translation project was not concerned with maintaining or highlighting differences or discussing translation problems. This is probably due to the notion that translating into English is considered an almost “natural” activity in India, and any difficulties encountered in transposing meaning from an Indian language into English are simply seen as inherent to all translation activity.

However, upon closer examination, this is not the case. Not only is there an asymmetrical power relationship between English and Indian languages in terms of global politics, but there is also an asymmetrical power relationship between English and Indian languages within India itself—English being the language of the urban elite. For this reason, Shobhana Bhattacharjee has a problem with the Benarsi weaver (in *The Song of the Loom*) swearing in English (e.g., “arsehole”), for it brings to mind urban Westernized youths, and not Benarsi weavers at all; the weaver in question would sound more authentic to her if the equivalent in his Hindi dialect was used in the English translation (1997). Awareness of this power relationship also prompted Tamil writer C.S. Lakshmi (Ambai) to comment that “being translated into English was a kind of promotion” (1997, 23). She says that it was only after her work had been translated into English that she was invited to various forums, “because when you write in Tamizh [Tamil] only, they assume that you don’t have anything to state.” More interestingly, however, she warned that translation into English could start a trend whereby
writers write to be translated, and exoticize their realities for an audience in translation: "there is this danger of looking at your own culture in a much exaggerated self-conscious way and detailing realities the way you have never done before, because you feel these details will be important for somebody else" (23).

Many writers will participate willy-nilly in an unarticulated agenda to provide foreign readership with an ethnic third-world India, to such an extent that while, as Harish Trivedi puts it, the numerous footnotes that translators of these books see fit to include indicate "a desire to act as native informants for these texts," they end up constituting a sort of "colonial cringe," more like "falling-at-the-feet notes" (1997, 27). But the question is, Whose feet are they falling at? British royalty no longer lands at the Gateway of India, nor does the American plutocracy drop anchor there. Today the Gateway of India stands as a firm reminder of British colonialism in the cosmopolitan city of Mumbai, which the British called Bombay. It attracts Indian tourists from other parts of the subcontinent, who take ferry rides to and from the monument. It is now Indian tourists who leave and enter the Gateway, who contemplate an India keen to reassert its regional identities. This is the audience that English translations in India should address first and foremost: an Indian English-speaking audience whose vision of the world is seen through the Gateway of India, but whose vision of India as a unified nation is also seen through this same Gateway. Sujit Mukherjee opines that it is this audience that publishers of English translations in India should be targeting, before even thinking about the unknown international market. Indo-English literature (as Mukherjee calls Indian language-literature in English translation) commands "a national market" consisting of Indians "who read books for pleasure," who "do not read any Indian writing, either because they receive greater satisfaction from reading foreign authors, or because they cannot read any Indian language well enough to be able to respond to literature composed in that language" (1994, 132).

The most appropriate audience for Indo-English literature in India is therefore the general Indian reading public who read in English for the pleasure of rediscovering their cultural heritage or to place a particular work in the context of other Indian language-literatures. Thus English as the Gateway of India at the turn of the millennium should serve and address, mainly and squarely, an Indian public. The Indian reading public constitutes a large and important market for Indian language-literatures in English translation. Future translation projects should focus on that public, and assume that foreigners entering the Gateway have sufficient knowledge of Indian culture(s) to navigate through Indo-English literary waters. It is perhaps time for India to take a leaf from Canada's book and refocus its literary translation activity as an "intra-national," rather than an "inter-national"
affair, thereby providing Indian translators with a precise target-audience, with a “precise collective destination” (Simon 1995, 8).

Works Cited

**Theory and Criticism**


Novels


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