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In the infinite labour of translation an impossible map emerges

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"Not being a scholar, only an observer of life… so this is a personal view."[1] I adopt these words by Nayantara Saghal just to be on the safe side, to indicate from the outset that this will be a highly subjective point of view, perhaps also to be pre-emptive in transgressing borders.

A premise

My work as a translator has accustomed me to existing on a subtle borderline, its precarious nature – fortunately for me – not due to the arbitrary and to violence, but rather to the peaceful coexistence of languages, to their mirroring role, as well as to the reciprocal addition or erosion of meaning. It is this – this disenchantment and, more generally, the fascinating democracy of languages, along with my assiduous interactions with the subcontinent – that to my mind gives rise to my need to look at maps with great caution.

"It isn't geography that counts, but how meaning maps have been overlapped to the territory. All the maps are flat, but not all

flatness is a map", a subtle comment made during a seminar in Paris VIII[2] by Sanjay Chaturvedi, lecturer and coordinator at the Centre for the Study of Geopolitics, Chandigarh University (located in the city with which Nehru wished to somehow compensate India for the loss of Lahore after Partition, commissioning Le Corbusier[3] to design the project). Chaturvedi's sentence has a curiously onomatopoeic ring to it in English: one has a sense of almost hearing the sound of large sheets of squared paper being set on the ground, the rustle of tracings with the black lines of the borders sketched in Chinese ink superimposed upon and dividing what was homogenous, united, shared. Only to once again lift up those fragile meaning maps, after some time has elapsed and move the borders, with their cruel burden of invented traditions, setting them down elsewhere.

"Cartography is a European science aimed at exercising control (*divide et impera*... and leave) and serving the interests of power. Ours is a symbolic geography in which proximity and distance are relative. But we do not lose our way", as Krishna Menon, co-founder and director of the TVB School of Habitat Studies, Delhi, commented to me. Smiling, he turned off one of the broad avenues in New Delhi, capital of the British Raj, into a narrower street that leads onto the maze of alleys in an ancient Muslim enclave, ending up on the flat expanse of ground around one of the city's most beautiful buildings, Khirki Masjid, the Mosque of the Windows (1380), condensed harmony, with its massive walls – closed yet opening up to the exterior on the second floor with an unusual, exquisite row of windows.

And Amitav Ghosh, in the introduction to the Italian edition of *Dancing in Cambodia and at Large in Burma (Estremi Orienti)*, writes: "The maps we have in our minds merely approximate to the atlases that we opened at our desks in school: they take shape in

the secrecy of our memory, following lines suggested by overheard conversations, old photographs and half-remembered books."[4] These are the identities I have to grapple with when I translate and read, with their conscious positioning of subjects that have been de-territorialised – sometimes due to coercion, sometimes due to choice. Identities that are opened up, superimposed, the fruit of a multiplicity of belonging derived from a complex and acknowledged historical stratification, with the colonial period rooted in that as a phase now left behind. Yet there is more. In this country where every step is a moral dilemma, there is a crucial piece of linguistic data, in as much as in India "language is naturally, necessarily, translation"[5].

"If the Bible had been written in India, it would have been a different story. Look at the three of us here in this house – each one with a different language! Yet there's no chaos, because we've neatly sidestepped problems by speaking in one language, English. [...] It avoids intimacy and confers a formal politeness on our relationship. She, however, breaks away often from English and moves into Kannada or Hindi, mixing up the languages, which adds a kind of effervescent excitement to any conversation with her. She's the bravest of the three of us, venturing into unfamiliar territory, uncaring of the hazards", writes Shashi Deshpande in one of her most recent novels. [6]

Almost as if echoing her, C.S. Lakshmi writes: "I write in Tamil, I live in Bombay, I grew up in Bangalore, I studied in Delhi and I am married with a Rajasthani. So I'm a true Indian. So, although I write in Tamil all other language-experiences enter my language". [7]

It is therefore not different languages that create chaos, chaos may also be born when identical words are used. It could not be any

other way in a country where the plurality of languages: a) does not coincide in historical terms with fault lines, but instead with a civilization that has settled like sediment over the course of millennia; b) contradicts the colonial system and also uses its language to express this, but having absorbed that language and made it its own, giving a virtuoso performance of it on a different score; c) produces shifts that tend to engulf every sphere of intellectual life and cultural production[8].

An impossible map

I like to take as my starting point, when sketching an impossible map, the extraordinary research and documentation work on censorship and self-censorship by a group of female Indian academics and writers, as reflected in three valuable volumes: *The Guarded Tongue. Women's Writing & Censorship in India,* WORLD/Asmita Project 2001; *The Tongue Set Free*, *Women Writers Speak about Censorship*, WORLD/Asmita Project, 2002; *Speaking in Tongues. Gender, Censorship & Voice in Hindi,* WORLD/Asmita Project, 200*2*.

A work that took three years and involved academics and writers from every state in India. To describe the mood and the richness of these meetings, I shall hand over to them: "When an unusual conclave of women took place on the outskirts of Hyderabad, far from the madding crowds. The interactions at the meeting could have amounted to no more than Babel: the 65 women writers from different parts of India spoke in as many as 11 tongues. But they made eminent sense to each other and to everyone else who had the privilege of listening to them at this unique literary event, a National Colloquium of women writing in India [...]."[9]

This potential Babel, which proved instead to be highly rational, where every woman present managed to grant importance to the other women by listening to them, generated three volumes in English, which help to give a broader, more complete and, it's fair to say, a more evocative picture of literary production in the many languages of the subcontinent.

What is wonderful is that the traces of these initiatives did not vanish, did not undergo that process of dissolution akin to crumbling karst that we in Italy have so often pondered. I have the impression that feminism has put down roots in India that are very different to those in Italy, airy roots and roots penetrating into the ground in every direction, now going deep, now extending and snaking across the surface. They sprout in the villages, in the miserable ghettos of the metropolises, absorb air and water with no fear of grafts and hybridisation, just like languages. *And Who Will Make the Chapatis?*[10] Who will make that thin bread, the staple diet of an entire country? Some initial responses to this question – posed by the husband of a rural woman who wants to take a course and become involved in the village administration – emerge in the experiences of some village councils, or *panchayat*, made up entirely of peasant women, with (technical, administrative, health, etc.) training on offer. The training courses involve female doctors, engineers, architects, urban planners, economists, scientists, filmmakers, writers, in a dense mesh of political and cultural relations, which, by asking others to take on the responsibility for making the *chapati*, identify a lever to subvert productive roles, which opens up completely unprecedented avenues. Just think of how micro-credits now favour cooperatives and emerging female entrepreneurship, or indeed of the front line role played by women fighting GMOs.

“She had been planning a book about India in terms of the look and texture of earth and sky – and in between all the nuances of its seasons. People wrote historical romances but here was romantic geography, almost too much for one country’s share. In the far north the sixty-million-year-old Himalayas still growing, flung up from a vanished sea. Far south and three quarters of the way round, the immensity of the Indian Ocean. In between the rivers of history, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra travelling across a thousand mile plain; and then the plains themselves studded with contrasts: months of rains in tropical jungle along with sun-maddened desert. There was the way spring came to the hills [...]. Someone had to describe the rocky altitudes whose springs unfrozen by the thaw fell like streamers down steep slopes. It was a great objective inheritance, unbegun and unending with its cycles of steady passionless renewal. Culture came afterwards. This peninsula stretching endless miles was its source. *Someone* had to turn it in language.”[11]

Only in India have I experienced the sensation of pre-established schemata not being capable of containing the object of my observations, of my research, which is indubitably first and foremost literary, but forced gradually to move towards other settings, in an incessant back and forth between disciplines. The “incredible geography” of this country, which so often is simply not to be grasped and is not containable, leaves its mark on every single aspect of its life, and cultural production is no exception.

Anyone who has seen *Lagaan*, by Ashutosh Gowariker (2001), has certainly realised how a cricket match, conveyed via the bold and deft use of a hand-held camera – a hand with a pronounced historical and geographical awareness – can become not simply a metaphor, but a description of a historical process, an incisive Technicolor summary of the struggle for independence, and even

of the romance between Prime Minister Nehru and Lady Mountbatten. But I would assert that Gowariker goes still further: in the moment in which he visualises the delimitation of the improvised cricket pitch, he transforms this locus into a public space, in which the colonial subject becomes a social player, crafting his or her own history.

Still considering high-budget cinematographic productions in the media gaze, I would say that *Monsoon Wedding*, by Mira Nair, also offers a glimpse of a much denser fabric of social and anthropological nuances between the folds of the musical.[12] However, venturing a little further, and moving beyond the works that large-scale distributors cautiously present on Western screens, we find extremely interesting independent productions (unfortunately shown only at festivals or on the anti-globalisation circuit) such as *War and Peace* (India 2002). The film has nothing to do with Tolstoy, but was made instead by Anand Patwardhan and Simantini Dhuru, filmmakers and activists in the civil rights movements, who shot and edited it in 2001/2002. It is a documentary, a historical essay, a reflection on pacifism, militarism, Hindu nationalism, on castes, on dalit. But also on the globalised world that was prefigured in Hiroshima and stopped off at Ground Zero.[13]

I am stressing this point because I am convinced that a map, albeit partial, of Indian cultural production cannot avoid reflecting on cinema (from the masterpieces of Satyajit Ray to contemporary cinema – Bengali, Tamil, Keralita – parallel to the Bollywood productions that have now gained such fame) and video, both from the historical perspective and in terms of how production is now articulated. This gives rise to something that already appeared obvious in the literary context, namely that research – anthropological, historical, social – and artistic experimentation

intersect and are interlaced, so that it becomes difficult, for example, not to consider how post-colonial studies and *subaltern studies* - with such significant contributions from the country's academics, both in India and throughout the diaspora - will filter through into this context. I am of course thinking of Gayatri C. Spivak, Arjun Appadurai, Dipesh Chakravarty, Homi Bhabha, Shaid Amin, Partha Chatterjee; of Meenakhsi Mukherjee's essays on literary criticism; but also of a publisher and intellectual such as the much-lamented Ravi Dayal – a representative of a species that is endangered in the West, dominated as it is by large publishing houses – who had the courage to set up and remain directly involved with crucial journals such as "Subaltern Studies" and "Civil Lines", which has a different intent and focuses on different topics.

And I am thinking of publishing houses with an explicit feminist agenda, such as Women Unlimited[14] and Zubaan[15] in Delhi, Stree & Samya[16] in Calcutta. I am thinking of Seagull[17], also in Calcutta, which is translating the complete works of Mahasveta Devi. I am thinking of magazines like "Gallerie"[18] and "The Little Magazine"[19]. I mention this to convey the methodical work of transmission, exchange, cultural synthesis underway on the subcontinent.

Probably linguistic pluralism, together with history, both ancient and recent, feed the cultural fervour of the sub-continent; these lead one to put one's own point of view into perspective at the very moment in which, having to present it, one has to translate it too. In order to be able to live together, communities united by belonging to the same ethnic and religious group, yet separated by language, have of necessity acquired a suppleness, which, while it does not succeed in eliminating the injustices of the caste system nor in resolving the dramas of conflicts between communities,

helps nonetheless to explore and understand, and contributes to creating a thick fabric of initiatives, a tightly knit interweaving of political activism and intellectual commitment.

From this perspective two works shown at documenta 11, Kassel 2002, which I would like to describe briefly, seem to be paradigmatic and perfectly coherent.

The first is a documentary by Amar Kanwar, *A Season Outside*. The director examines the way in which identities are stage-managed – and constructed – on the India-Pakistan border, in Wagha. Every day a sort of ceremony takes place there: gates are opened and closed, between these an "in-between" is created, which in reality is a no-man's-land divided in two by a thin white line on the ground. The two communities that have been turned into adversaries by history thus find themselves taking part in the ceremony "from outside", whilst in this no-man's-land the soldiers celebrate their twofold performance: on the one hand they endorse a border on behalf of their respective nations, on the other hand they stage the "masculine" that nation and family impose upon them. The same image of the male on both sides of the white line: but the redundant uniforms, the rigid theatricality of the movements the lens scrutinises from up-close and the movements of the camera seem almost to hound, deny a masculinity that strives to be martial, underling its transvestite nature and transforming it into a grotesque pantomime observed by a throng of eyes crowded meekly behind the gates, or rather "outside the stage-managed". Kanwar underlines the absurdity of the border with the absurdity of the masculinity appointed to mark it out and defend it. A little later, depositing us on another kind of border, namely within the largest Tibetan refugee camp in India, in Delhi, the director forces us to contend with another tradition, other behaviours, a masculinity that does not bow to violence but does not practice it.

Kanwar's work is highly educated, very coherent and subtle, with at its centre all the major themes on the agenda: borders, castes, the rights of tribal people and of the dalit, communitarian conflicts, destruction of the land: *The Many Faces of Madness* (1998). An extensively documented madness, not only in his oeuvre, but also in that of other militant filmmakers, such as Rakesh Sharma (*Aftershocks – The Rough Guide to Democracy* - 2002), Sanjay Kak (*Words on Water* – 2002), Aradhana Seth & Arundhati Roy (*Dam/Age* - 2002).[20]

28° 28' N / 77° 15' E: 2001-2001 (An installation on the Co-ordinates of Everyday Life in Delhi) is the title of the complex installation shown – also at Documenta 11 – by the RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, a group of multi-media artists based in Delhi. Their installation offers multiple possibilities to interpret the experience of urban space. It observes the creation and dissolution of urban territories. *Co-ordinates Delhi*, which can be viewed on the Internet, aims to offer an interactive opportunity, whereby individual citizens, shifting the point of view, a road sign, the time of observation, the mode of locomotion, modify the coordinates for using the city, "an urban connotated by countless environmental, social and political abuses".

Two examples, which bring me back to my reflections on the frailty of borders and their various symbolic and narrative uses:

- an interior wall of a demolished house that becomes an outside wall. Elements that on the interior could be ascribed to the decoration, become graffiti on the exterior, change significance, offer themselves as a space for a different kind of communication;

- terraces, private spaces, secret despite being in the open (a recurrent topos in Indian literature; you could devote an entire

essay to the life unfolding in these spaces, which are sometimes miniscule, makeshift, sometimes designed on a vast scale and redolent with privilege, but always lived in) are seen here shot from a high angle and thus unveiled. Explored illicitly by the camera's gaze, they become a public space and thus lose their function, becoming a place to flee in order to retire into the interior. This time as if in a trap. I believe that it is no coincidence that the figure we see - initially surprised and then frightened by this unexpected eye, which first of all spies from above and then moves in closer, observing, hounding - is that of a woman, who finds herself deprived of the only space not strictly codified by domestic uses. Internee 0° N / 0° E: outside of time?

Three diverse narratives (from Kanwar, RAQS and Patwardhan & Duhru), all told in images that raise crucial questions about our perceptions of territory and how the way in which it is sketched out and/or vanishes interferes with identity and narrative modes.

Persisting with this non-canonical itinerary, I would like to invite you to share the pleasure of two surprising lessons: a lesson on cinema from Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics; and a history lesson from P.K. Nair, a historian of silent cinema and former director of the film archive in Pune.

For film buffs like me, Amartya Sen offers an extraordinary lesson (and in this case the English term "lecture" conveys much better the notion of a reading communicated to others, an interpretation quasi out loud). The academic, the economist, looks at Calcutta, reads it in terms of how it appears in the films of Satyajit Ray, sums up, does not superimpose his own gaze on that of the great director, and narrates the city in which both were born and grew up, examines it in that black and white which, more than any other colour, belongs to Calcutta and returns it to us with a wealth of

meanings and allusions a purely cinematic analysis would not be able to give us. Sen takes on the role of an observer to piece back together again his own gaze, fragmented by approaches based on individual disciplines and rediscovers the city in its entirety as a geographical location and a historical and social entity, a cradle of culture and art. [21]

P.K. Nair, in his seminal work *The Caste Factor in Indian Cinema*, presents a reading I think is exemplary of the representations – sometimes realistic, sometimes metaphorical or symbolic – of the caste system in Indian cinema: "The religious roots of Indian cinema date back to its origins. Soon after the Lumière exposition of the new phenomenon of Cinematograph at Bombay's Watson Hotel on July 7th, 1886, several local entrepreneurs, who had access to the new gadget, took to recording the Indian reality around onto cinematograph film. Their perceptions were totally different from their foreign counterparts who were carried away with the exoticism and the mysticism of the land in their earlier film recordings (perhaps even later). It was but natural that Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, popularly known as Dadasaheb Phalke, the pioneer Indian film-maker, took the source material for the first Indian story film *Raja Harischandra* (King Harischandra, 1913), from the rich storehouse of Indian mythology, unlike his illustrious American contemporary D.W.Griffith, who looked to American history and the Civil War for his epoch-making *Birth of a Nation* (1914). [...] The "mythological" to Phalke was not a mere vehicle to transport his gullible audiences to a fantasy world of Gods, Goddesses, demons and heavenly damsels but a means to make them aware of the problems of everyday life and how to come to grips with them. In that sense, the mythological in the Indian context has the same relevance as perhaps the neorealist film of the West."[22]

Breaking away from the exoticism of the Western gaze, situating the castes in a precise historical, religious and socio-cultural context and opening up comparisons with the masters of American and European cinema, Nair presents us head-on with a question of methodology and forces us to take a stance on the interpretive border both of the forms and the contents of India's vast cinematographic production, which is now more than one hundred years old. This should lead us to take a more attentive look, exercising a degree of critical caution, at the films and documentaries, now finally arriving here in greater numbers from the sub-continent.

I will conclude this subjective and indubitably incomplete mapping by addressing an argument that would actually require a whole separate article. In the fifty years after the second world war, a period which in Europe, before the conflicts in the Balkans during the 1990s, we were accustomed to considering as an era of "peace", terrifying wars unfolded on other continents, wars of national liberation fanned extremely violent ethnic and/or religious conflicts, which in many cases have become endemic, whilst coups d'état did the rest. Even a summary list of the horrors would be very long, with new horrors added every day: names, places, images bubbling up from every corner of my memory ...

An element common to all conflicts is the nationalist claim manifested via the body of women, in the name of an ethnic or religious group, or both. Every invented tradition extends its roots, throwing its weight about in two physical realms; the body of the Other, or more often of the female Others, whilst arbitrary borders are traced out on the ground.

For years now feminist academics in India and Pakistan have been devoting their attention to work on historical reconstruction, to

documenting and collecting testimonies from women who fell victim to communitarian violence[23] – but using the form of the historical past to refer to this is euphemistic after the massacres and violence in Gujarat in Spring 2002.[24] The aim of these studies is to bring to light a gender memory of Partition and the post-Partition period, a memory long unspoken, at risk of being obliterated and which now turns out to have extraordinary affinities with the memories of female victims of other wars, of more recent partitions[25]. That makes it doubly significant. Denied the status of historical subjects, the women who are the victims of that violence, both widows and orphans as well as abducted women (the English term "abducted" is once again more explicit than its Italian counterpart, the Latin etymology of the verb offers a good description of the act of "carrying away" female bodies with a view to removing them from their reproductive role in their own communities and compelling them to engage in reproduction of and in the enemy community), in the post-Partition era – both in India and in Pakistan - they become the object "social reconstruction" programmes, objects of the care of a state that appoints itself as guardian and paterfamilias.

"The recovery of "their" women, if not land, became a powerful assertion of Hindu manhood [...]. Nothing like this concern was evident with regard to the abduction of Hindu women by Hindu men, or Muslim women by Muslim men, leading one to conclude that this was so because in this case no offence against community or religion had been committed, nor anyone's "honor" compromised." [26]

Not citizens therefore, not individuals, only female bodies destined - once "redeemed" – to difficult survival. Refugees in their own country, often abducted twice and forced to undergo humiliating

conversions, these women have conserved memories that call for substantial historiographic revisions.

What I would like to underscore in this context is that a reflection on the relationship between territory and the definition of identity cannot ignore the gender order. Testimonies collected so far in India and in Pakistan (but some ongoing studies demonstrate that the same applies to the Balkans, Rwanda and Chechnya) make it imperative to tell a different hi/story, to evaluate the situation with the gaze of the subjects of rehabilitation programmes, considering how these were managed and the contradictions they open up: confirming that an exhaustive narrative of that Partition is only now beginning to be written.[27] Literature can help to shed light on that past. By narrating, as Bapsi Sidhwa does in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*[28], stories that shame had rendered unspeakable, literature can produce knowledge and a posteriori open up the historical discourse interrupted due to lack of sources, or which was never opened up in order not to call the patriarchal order into question. And anyone translating those voices, and the narratives born of them, must of necessity respect words and silences, murmurs and cries. How could it be otherwise, translation, a dwelling shared peacefully, a Berman-style "*auberge du lointain*"? And in so doing, narration and translation could also lead to a more peaceful geography.

"What is home? The place I was born? Where I grew up? Where I live and work as an adult? Where I locate my community... my people? Who are my people? Is home a geographical space, a historical space, an emotional, sensory space? Home is always crucial to immigrants and migrants [...] I'm convinced that this question – how one understands and defines home – is a profoundly political one. Political solidarity and a sense of family could to create a strategic space I could call 'home'."[29]

“The exile has the impression that the condition of exile has the structure of a dream. Suddenly, as if in a dream, faces appear that he had forgotten, that he had perhaps never met, some spaces seen certainly for the first time, but for some reason these seem familiar. Dream is a magnetic field that attracts images from the past, the present and the future. When the exile is awake, faces, events and images attracted by the oneiric field suddenly appear; out of the blue it seems that his biography was written long before it happened, that exile hence is neither the result of external circumstances nor his choice, but instead a coordinate that destiny has long traced out for him. Seized by this sweet and exciting thought, the exile begins to unravel these disconnected signals, crosses and knots, and suddenly it seems that in all this he can read a secret harmony, the circular logic of symbols. ”[30]

A mirroring of positions, between Chandra Mohanty and Dubravka Ugrešic, both poetic and political, which, as a translator, I wish to present to anyone reading this text, for in mirrors, by slightly turning one’s gaze, one attains an almost 360° view, a Dickinsonian circle, a vast horizon that dismantles clichés and compels us to know and make space for the Other, be they male or female, to create a shared space and thus recreate one’s own space. This is not merely the fleeting space of shadow. Anyone who translates thinks of necessity of the relationships between languages; translators cannot but think of the relationships between those who speak these languages, cannot fail to grasp the grafts, the fractures, the unexpected silences. It is impossible for the translator not to wonder about the reasons that provoked these, or to fail to hear the background noise. Explosions obliterate bodies and wipe out shadows. For “words can cost lives, and it is only appropriate that those who deal in them should pay scrupulous attention to what they say”[31].

This seems to me today to be the translator's main role. "Translation is not merely an opening-up of meaning, but a promise of exhaustiveness" as Rada Iveković wrote some time ago. [32] Anyone who translates writers from other lands across the seas and oceans as I do ends up lingering at length in language, between languages, searching for a connection, a link, which is not always linguistic or semantic. This relates instead precisely and legitimately to respect for a hi/story and the recreation of a different imaginary universe. However, tracing back the life of that miniscule word, "link" – Ariel of the Oxford Dictionary – and bringing together even just some of the meanings it has acquired over time, we obtain something worth narrating, as it could epitomise the translator's craft. Whilst in Old English a "link" was "a gently undulating sandy ground near a seashore", for more than two centuries (1500-1700) we find it used to mean "wick" and shortly after that to signify "ring, a part of a chain" and "a means of travel or transport between two places". And is it not perhaps precisely on a sandy and undulating ground close to a river that a translator ends up, finding his or her bearings with a wick's transient light, fully aware of being a link in a chain and a vehicle on which not only the reliability of a text may depend, - and hence reception of and pleasure in that text - but indeed life itself? Anyone who translates is a citizen of this world, obliged to move with an accuracy governed by the mild ethic of someone who not only connects but also consciously decides to leave a door ajar.

An earlier version of this essay was published - with the title "Fuori canone. Letterature, cinema, video nell'India contemporanea: una mappa impossibile" - in Emanuela Casti e Mario Corona (eds.), Luoghi e identità. Geografie e letterature a confronto*, Bergamo University Press, 2004.*

[1] Cf. Nayantara Saghal, “India as Fiction: a Personal View”, contribution by the writer at the conference, “India. Nationalism, Democracy, Development, Interculturalism”, Bologna University 27th-29th November 1997, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of India’s independence.

[2] I am referring to the “ Seminar on Partitions” organised by Rada Iveković, associate professor of philosophy, at the Paris VIII University during the 2001/2002 academic year.

[3] There is endless literature on the project and on the architecture of Chandigarh, but my reflection of the use and redefinition of internal and external spaces in a city that has become the contradictory symbol of modern India was particularly influenced by an exhibition of photographs I saw a few years ago. Cf. Piergiorgio Sclarandis, *Chandigarh. Le Corbusier in India*, Cartiere Miliani Fabriano 1993.

[4] Cf. Amitav Ghosh, *Estremi Orienti*, translated from English by Anna Nadotti, Einaudi, Turin 1997, p. 3 [*translation into English by H. F.*].

[5] From a conversation with Ritu Menon, academic and publisher. This position is borne out by a recent affirmation by Etienne Balibar with reference to the European context: “The true European language cannot identify itself with any particular language. The European language is translation, understood as a paradigm of the encounter between different languages and cultures, as actively practising multi-culturalism and inter-culturalism” (Scuola di Senigallia: inauguration of the “Cantieri della democrazia”).

[6] Cf. Shashi Deshpande, *Small Remedies*, Penguin, Delhi 2000.

[7] Cf. *The Tongue Set Free*, *Women Writers Speak about Censorship*, WORLD/Asmita Project, 2002.

[8] On the question of the relationship between English and Indian languages during the colonial period (when the growth of the nationalist movement unfolded in tandem with the development of the novel in local languages) and in the post-colonial period (which in contrast saw the development of novels in English), see the essay by M. Mukherjee, *La narrativa indiana*, in *Il romanzo*, vol. II° (ed. Franco Moretti), Einaudi, Turin 2002, pp. 502-503.

[9] Cf. the introduction to the first of the three aforementioned volumes.

[10] Cf. Bishakha Datta (ed.), *And Who Will Make the Chapatis?*, Stree, Calcutta, 1998; and Anita Agnihotri, *Forest Interludes. A Collection of Journals & Fiction*, translated from Bengali by Kalpana Bardhan, Kali for Women, Delhi 2001.

[11] Cf. Nayantara Sahgal, *A Day in Shadow*, 1971, pp. 35-36.

[12] *Lagaan* won the audience award at the Locarno Festival in 2001, and was nominated for the Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 2002. *Monsoon Wedding* won the Golden Lion at the 2001 Venice Film Festival.

[13] *War and Peace* won the Special Jury Award at the Cinemambiente Festival, Turin 2002 (www.cinemambiente.it).

[14] www.womenunltd.net

[15] www.zubaanbooks.com

[16] www.streebooks.com

[17] Seagull Books, 26 Circus Avenue, Calcutta. <seagullfoundation@vsnl.com>

[18] www.gallerie.net

[19] www.littlemag.com

[20] These documentary films were screened in the "Global Vision" series, Cinemambiente Festival, Turin 2002, attended by the directors and the writer Arundhati Roy, all activists in Narmada Bachao Andolan, the movement to protect the Narmada river.

[21] Cf. Amartya Sen, *Our Culture, Their Culture. Satyajit Ray and the Art of Universalism*, in Italo Spinelli (ed.), *Indian Summer*, 56. Festival Internazionale di Locarno - Olivares, Milan 2002, pp. 15-23.

[22] Cf. P.K. Nair, *The Caste Factor in Indian Cinema*, in Italo Spinelli, ibid., p. 54.

[23] In this context the term communitarian refers to the political use of belonging to a community – ethnic, religious or caste-based. The grave consequences of this kind of extremist manipulation were manifested above all in the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque, in December 1992, which provoked a flood of inter-religious violence and the dramatic consolidation of the *hindutva* movement (promoting the supremacy of Hindu culture).

[24] Cf. Amrita Kumar and Prashun Bhaumik (eds.), *Lest We Forget: Gujarat 2002*, World Report in association with Rupa, Delhi 2002. See also, in the monthly review "Biblio", n. 7-8, 2002, the reports on the massacres in Gujarat (www.biblio-india.com).

[25] Cf. Rada Iveković and Julie Mostov (eds.), *From Gender To Nation*, Longo Editore, Ravenna 2002.

[26] Ritu Menon, *Do Women Have a Country?*, in ibid., p. 51.

[27] Cf. Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries. Women in India's Partition*, Kali for Women, Delhi 1998; Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*, Penguin India 1998; Sudhir Kakar, *The Colours of Violence*, Penguin India 1996. See also: "Transeuropeennes" n.° 19/20 winter 2000/2001, dossier "Divided Countries, Separated Cities", essential reading for anyone who wishes to reflect on this topic (www.transeuropeennes.org); "Leggendaria" n.° 26, 2001, dossier "Confini" (www.leggendaria.it).

[28] Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice-Candy-Man*, Penguin, 1988.

[29] Chandra Mohanty, *Defining Genealogies. Feminist Reflections on Being South Asian in North America*, in AA. VV. *Our Feet Walk the Sky: Women of the South Asian Diaspora*, Aunt Lute Books, 1993.

[30] Dubravka Ugrešić, *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* 1998.

[31] Amitav Ghosh, "Preface" to *Incendiary Circumstances*, Houghton Mifflin, New York 2005.

[32] Rada Iveković, "La Traduction permanente", in Transeuropéenes, n° 22, p. 121-145, and *transversal 06 06*, http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0606/ivekovic/en.