Translations and Ruptures

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Hegemonic Social and Literary Practices in 19th-Century Marathi Theatre

By

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Dedicated to the Emancipatory Intellectuals

Savitribai Phule, Mukta Salve, and Tarabai Shinde

and

In Memory of

All those whose stories are unheard and unread because they were killed in caste violence.

Let's do the inevitable initialization: Let us forget everything. The annihilation of past is necessary before the annihilation of caste can happen.

-Aniket Jaaware

Practicing Caste: On Touching and Not Touching

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FOREWORD

I am very grateful to Dr Kavita Patil for kindly inviting me to contribute a foreword to her absorbing new study of the remarkable new genres of Marathi performance culture that developed during the colonial nineteenth century.

Maharashtra has, of course, long drawn scholarly attention for its leading role across many fields of colonial political and cultural endeavour. It was from Maharashtra – "the crucible of Indian nationalism", as historian Christophe Jaffrelot described it – that India's most important political leaders emerged, as well as its most prominent Hindu nationalists. The region's upper-caste elites oversaw the creation of one of India's most dynamic vernacular print cultures, and a remarkably vibrant "public sphere" in which critical social issues of the day were debated. Brahman predominance within this leadership also helped spark the region's dynamic non-Brahman movements, as well as India's ground-breaking Dalit struggle under the historic leadership of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Maharashtra's performance genres, encompassing both high-brow vernacular theatre aimed at the educated, and traditions of popular performance redesigned for colonial audiences, were very much part of this robust vernacular public sphere. The history of Marathi theatre is now fairly well known. But is only in more recent years that historians have come to appreciate the close links that actually bound together the world of theatre, the "public sphere" of vernacular print, and the oral world of public meetings, political assemblies, street performances and boisterous gatherings intent on mocking political rivals.

It is at this all-important intersection between the oral and the written, and the worlds of elite and popular performance culture, that Dr Patil has situated her fascinating study. But it is also a study with a difference, with two major areas of focus. One of these lies in the scores of principally high-culture, English language plays that were translated into Marathi, very often with adaptations designed to appeal to Marathi audiences. Dr Patil explores

the way that the plays were translated and then performed, and the wider world of newspaper reviews, letter-writing, debate and discussion that surrounded the performances. She draws out the difficult social themes that emerged from these complex exchanges, particularly those concerning the status and rights of elite women.

Once translated and modified for local consumption, the plays thus provided an entry point, sanctioned by their association with the high literary cultures of Europe, for discussion of what would otherwise have been intractable social challenges of colonial modernity. Their translation by largely Brahman elites also had a further consequence, in serving to reinforce the cultural hegemony they already enjoyed as bilingual intellectuals able to command the vernacular as well as the Anglophone sphere.

Alongside these translations and associated performances, Dr Patil places a very different performance genre. This is the "counter-hegemonic" world of popular vernacular performances that aimed to challenge the social as well as the political dominance of Anglophone Brahman elites. Building on older religious and entertainment genres, the new skits and sketches parodied elite pretentions and urged their popular audiences to more critical examination of traditional social hierarchies and religious pretensions. Again, Dr Patil looks at the processes of "translation" and adaptation involved here, and follows the flows of discussion and critique of that linked the spheres of performance and vernacular print.

Dr Patil is also to be commended for the sheer mass of rare vernacular printed material that she has assembled as the basis for this original and imaginative study. It will certainly appeal to scholars of literature and performance cultures across colonial India. But the book will also be of great interest to all those looking to understand the reconfiguration of key forms of social power in the colonial milieu, as older hegemonies were reinforced and new ones brought into being which carried their own internal potential for counter-challenges. It has been a real pleasure to read this original and path-breaking work.

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INTRODUCTION

> *Untouchables, usually known by degrading names such as Chamar, Mahar, Mang, and Paraiyar, were dehumanized by the caste Hindu order. Caste subalterns' efforts to overturn prevailing relations of caste and community through the creative transformation of existing social categories and practices thus challenged caste Hinduism and the privileges that reproduced it. Dalit emancipation was predicated on the existential, political, and ethical ordering of Indian society, but it also presupposed the imagination of the Dalit as a specific kind of political subject.*
>
> —Anupama Rao,
> *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India* (2009)

Framing the Inquiry

The book aims to understand the workings of caste in nineteenth-century Marathi theatre. The study of Marathi theatre has a long tradition and is divisible into studies that examine the performance history and modernity in discourse and counter-discourse. I offer this study as an understanding of the significant role played by translations in caste operations, modernity, and the hegemony of culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Maharashtra (then known as Bombay Presidency or Western India) and the Marathi theatre space.

To arrive at an understanding of caste hegemony operative in nineteenth-century Marathi theatre that is different from those already available in theatre and performance studies, one has to attempt to think slightly differently, and to do that, one has to think of new methodologies to study the material texts, ideas, and analyses already available.

I strive to study hegemonic social and literary practices in the discourse of nineteenth-century Marathi theatre through translations of European plays and modern ideas carried out by the upper-caste Marathi translators. Efforts have also been made to analyse counter-hegemonic social and literary practices in the counter-discourse of Marathi theatre through translation and

acquisition of modernity carried out by the *Satyashodhak Jalsa* (folk theatre) composers.

Conceptualising translation as metaphor becomes productive here, since the traditional definition of translation would have restricted me to studying these translations of plays and ideas only within the framework of the comparative study of source-language texts and target-language texts. The translations studied in this research serve as interesting occurrences of the translation of plays as well as modern ideas.

These curious instances of translations are noteworthy because they crossed the epistemological threshold and radically discontinued the earlier discourse, and also caused the play (in Derridean sense) of several discursive formations of modernity. These ruptures in the discourse and counter-discourse contributed to the dialogue on social reform. Michel Foucault, while positing the history of concept, in his book *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), expounds:

> At about the same time, in the disciplines that we call the history of ideas, the history of science, the history of philosophy, the history of thought, and the history of literature (we can ignore their specificity for the moment), in those disciplines which, despite their names, evade very largely the work and methods of the historian, attention has been turned, on the contrary, away from vast unities like 'periods' or 'centuries' to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity. Beneath the great continuities of thought, beneath the solid, homogeneous manifestations of a single mind or of a collective mentality, beneath the stubborn development of a science striving to exist and to reach completion at the very outset, beneath the persistence of a particular genre, form, discipline, or theoretical activity, one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions. Interruptions whose status and nature vary considerably. There are the epistemological acts and thresholds described by Bachelard: they suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and force it to enter a new time, cut it off from it empirical origin and its original motivations, cleanse it of its imaginary complicities; they direct historical analysis away from the search for silent beginnings, and the never-ending tracing-back to the original precursors, towards the search for a new type of rationality and its various effects. There are the displacements and transformations of concepts: the analyses of G. Canguilhem may serve as models; they show

> that the history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient, but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of the many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured. (4)

The book is an attempt to analyse ruptures in various social and literary practices of upper castes, especially Brahmins, and those of lower castes. In this study, the term "upper castes" refers to the castes, Brahmin and Maratha, that were positioned highest in the Hindu caste hierarchy and had hegemonic hold on the "lower castes", the communities that stood lower in the hierarchy and were historically denied access to education, upward mobility, and social privilege, including Dalits and other socially and economically marginalised groups.

Hegemony is a power of leadership gained by the dominant groups through the consent they gain from dominated social groups, and for its very existence and preservation, it needs to be exercised. It is of several types, including political, cultural, economic, and so on. Antonio Gramsci elucidates in his *Prison Notebooks*: *Volume I* (1996):

> The hegemony of a central leadership over the intellectuals has these two strategic lines: "a general conception of life," a philosophy (Gioberti), which gives its adherents a "dignity" to set against the dominant ideologies as a principle of struggle; a scholastic program which interests the fraction of the intellectuals that is the most homogeneous and the most numerous (teachers, from elementary school teachers to university professors) and provides them with an appropriate activity in their technical field. (153)

As Gramsci explains, the central leadership maintains its hegemony over intellectuals in two ways. First, it puts forward a "general conception of life" or a philosophy (as seen in Gioberti), which gives its followers a sense of dignity and purpose. This helps them challenge the dominant ideologies and gives them a basis for struggle. Second, it creates a scholastic programme that appeals to the largest and most united group of intellectuals, teachers, from primary schools to universities. This programme gives them meaningful work within their own field and links them to the larger ideological project.

In the context of nineteenth-century Marathi theatre, these two strategies become visible in the way intellectuals, reformers, and theatre practitioners engaged with dominant ideas of caste, morality, modernity, and nation. The reformist project gave them a collective sense of purpose, while the theatre and media themselves acted as a cultural and educational tool. It helped spread modern ideas to a varied audience and also fashioned the tastes, values, and beliefs of society. Therefore, theatre became a space where hegemony was both strengthened (in discourse) and challenged (in counter-discourse) through performance, language, and representation. Gramsci (1996) contends:

> Bourgeois hegemony is very strong and has many reserves. The intellectuals are very concentrated (Academy, University, great Parisian newspapers and periodicals) and, although very numerous, they are very disciplined at the center of culture. (157)

Hegemony, in the nineteenth-century Marathi theatre, was also sustained through the discussions on the translations published in periodicals and newspapers, run by Brahmin participants, like *Vividhanyanavistar, Nibandhamala, Rangabhumi*, *Ratnakar*, *Induprakash, Nibandhachandrika, Kesari* and so on and challenged through periodicals and newspapers, run by non-Brahmin participants, like *Din Bandhu, Dinmitra, Rashtraveer, Vijayi Maratha* and so on.

Translating Reform

The analysis of any translation must take into account the socio-historical context in which it is produced, as this helps understand the translator's political position in selecting and shaping a particular text. In the case of these translations, the caste of the translators also demands attention. Most translators of European plays and ideas during this period belonged to the upper castes, either Brahmin or Maratha, in Maharashtra. However, only a handful of *jalsa* composers came from lower-caste backgrounds.

English education introduced modern ideas in India, such as gender equality, women's education, and the age of consent, which were discoursed and acted upon more conspicuously than other issues. Although the British Government had formulated a secular education policy that made

educational institutions accessible to all castes and classes, the actual enrolment of students from lower castes remained nominal. One key reason was the appointment of upper-caste, particularly Brahmin, teachers, many of whom discriminated against and exploited students from lower castes. Jotirao Phule, in his book *Slavery* (1873), draws attention to this problem (133).

The majority of graduates during this period belonged to the upper castes. Many among them perceived European ideas as modern and saw Hindu social practices as regressive. As a result, they began translating European plays and novels into Marathi in an attempt to bring these modern ideas into the Marathi social context. However, the ideas they chose to translate primarily served the interests of their own upper-castes, particularly women. This becomes evident from the selection of characters and the dialogues in these translations: all characters belong to the upper-caste society of nineteenth-century Maharashtra and reflect the concerns of their communities. These translations did not voice problems of lower castes, particularly Dalits, and issues such as caste discrimination and equality.

In contrast, the counter-discourse seen in *Satyashodhak Jalsa* attempted to address social issues such as caste hierarchy, the plight of peasants and discrimination against Dalits to some extent. However, even these performances failed to foreground the specific concerns of Dalits, such as the practices of untouchability and caste pollution among lower castes, even though Phule had envisioned the Satyashodhak Samaj as a platform to support all the oppressed.

This reveals the limitations of the ideas of "caste" and "reform." These two words are indeed so promiscuous that they cannot fully capture the complexity of the historical or social situations they are used to describe. What I mean by the phrase "promiscuous words" is that these terms are used too loosely or in too many different ways by other scholars, in various contexts, and mostly with conflicting meanings. Therefore, they become unreliable if employed without caution. I admit here that they cannot account for the lived realities and contradictions within the social and literary practices of the time, and their significance changes depending on who uses them and in what context.

The translations of European plays played a significant role in shaping the modern idea of individual agency. The characters in these translations, both male and female, assert their individuality and talk about the application of modern ideas, such as personal freedom and gender equality. The translators and critics of these plays constructed the discourse of Marathi mainstream theatre by looking down upon traditional theatre forms like *Lavani* and *Tamasha*, which were performed by lower-caste hereditary artists.

The primary texts studied are seventy-three translations of various European plays, mainly by William Shakespeare, Molière, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Oliver Goldsmith. Plays like *Cymbeline* and *Othello* were more popular than *King Lear*. The following plays by Shakespeare were translated more than once before the year 1900: *Hamlet*- 4, *Macbeth*- 2, *King Lear*- 2, *Othello*- 2, *Romeo and Juliet*- 6, *The Merchant of Venice*- 3, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*- 3, *The Tempest*- 2, *The Taming of the Shrew*- 2. The Marathi translators who translated these plays are: Mahadevshastri Kolhatkar, Neelkanth Janardan Keertane, Shriram Bhikaji Jathar, Bajaba Ramchandra Pradhan, Vishnu Moreshwar Mahajani, Shankar Moro Ranade, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, V. B. Kelkar, G.V. Kanitkar, Aanandrao Sakharam Barve, Govind Ballal Deval, Shivram Mahadev Paranjape, Krishnaji Parshuram Gadgeel, Keshavrao Chapkhane, and so on. Thirty-four translations are not available to read, as none of the libraries contains copies of published texts of them, and the other three translations were unpublished. Therefore, I managed to obtain seventy-three translations and did not get hold of thirty-seven translations. However, these thirty-seven translations are examined through secondary sources, such as critical articles published in various periodicals and newspapers.

A total of one hundred and twenty-two *Satyashodhak Jalsas* have been studied. *Jalsa* literature is analysed through various books containing verses and dialogues prepared and published to guide composers, in addition to reports published in *Satyashodhak* periodicals. In this context, along with the translations and *jalsas* themselves, the available data and articles published in newspapers, magazines, and periodicals function as both primary texts and secondary sources. These documents offer extensive information and critical debate on the merits and limitations of the translations, as well as on the dramatic elements under consideration. None

of the reports on *jalsa* performances highlights the limitations of performances or the demerits of any particular *jalsa*. The writers, as it seems to me, were more concerned with the social message spread through performances rather than the performance criticism.

This study explores how nineteenth-century translations of Shakespeare's plays, and those of other European playwrights, into Marathi played a crucial role in shaping upper-caste and elite-class discourses on social change. These translations marked the emergence of a new trend in both drama criticism and the theory of translation. They contributed significantly to the formation of a public cultural discourse in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Maharashtra. The translations, along with articles and data published in periodicals and magazines of the time, actively participate in the "afterlife"[1] of the original plays. Even a brief comparison, such as that between the prologue and epilogue of Western drama with the *nandi* and *bharatvakya* from the *Natyashastra*, or between Bharatmuni's definition of drama and Arthur Schopenhauer's idea of drama as *manavi sansarache chitra* (a reflection of the human world), was enough to entice students and readers to engage with this evolving discourse.[2]

Reception and Afterlives

Plays and their translations in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constituted a significant aspect of the public culture of the Marathi-speaking community. The Marathi translations of English plays were particularly popular among the urban Marathi population during this period. It is important to note that the audience's reactions, along with readers' reviews published in contemporary Marathi newspapers, magazines, and periodicals, formed a vital part of this discourse. In many cases, the audience and readers effectively assumed the role of critics. This

[1] I have used the concept "afterlife" in the sense Walter Benjamin discusses and explains it in his essay, "The Task of the Translator," published in 1923.

[2] These comparisons between European concepts of drama criticism and Sanskrit concepts for the analysis of drama are discussed in "Natyavishayak Charcha: Vishwanath Anant Keskar Hyanche Bhashan." Published in *Rangabhumi* in 1908, and an essay, "Lekhanvyavsaya – 4 – Natak" by V. G. Apte, published in *Vividhadnyanavistar* in 1900, volume 31, book 6/7. p. 205-215.

kind of engagement can be seen as a manifestation of public culture. For instance, an article titled "Kulstriyanche Lekh" (Articles Written by Wellborn Women), published in *Rangabhumi*, Volume 1, Issue 9 (1908), reflects this tendency. In this piece, the writer Sarala critiques the costume choices in the play *Sangit Sharada* (first performed in 1899). She expresses her disapproval of the way the female characters are dressed, observing that the male actors playing female roles fail to drape the sari in the dignified manner associated with respectable women (1–5).

Writers contributing to newspapers, magazines, and periodicals, whether through reviews, critical essays, responses to editors' letters, or commentary on specific plays, created a space where personal views could enter the public domain. Readers' opinions appeared as letters exchanged between the editor and the reader, or between the playwright and the audience. For instance, debates emerged around whether women should portray female characters on stage. At the time, acting was not widely regarded as a prestigious profession, which made it difficult for drama companies or producers to recruit female actors. In this context, the translations and the instances of communication around translations participate in the afterlife of the original texts.

Satyashodhak Jalsa, on the other hand, were a major part of public culture existing among the lower castes staying in villages. These performances created an alternative space countering the Brahminical modernity promoted by plays and translations. This alternative modernity was performed by and for non-Brahmins, particularly by *shudras*,[3] criticised Brahminical patriarchy, caste oppression and religious ritual hypocrisy through the use of folk theatre form, accessible language and humour rooted in oral tradition to convey radical social messages. This public culture challenged the hegemonic narratives of caste, upper-caste morality, and modernity upheld by colonial and Brahminical ideologies.

While mainstream theatre engagement with European texts was seen as a form of colonial modernity, rationalism, individualism, artistic refinement

[3] I use the words *shudra* and *atishudra* in the sense Jotirao Phule used them. By *shudra*, I mean lower castes other than Dalits, and by *atishudra,* I mean Dalit communities.

derived from the West, detached from social realities of colonial India, counter-modernity promoted by *jalsas* was rooted in social justice, collective identity, and anti-caste struggle. The performances negated the use of Sanskritised Marathi and favoured folk music and theatre. Mainstream theatre stayed in proscenium spaces and for ticketed elite and upper-caste audiences, whereas *Satyashodhak Jalsas* were open-air, mobile performances performed without charging tickets to their audience. *Jalsas* highlighted issues like widow remarriage, ritual hypocrisy, temple entry, and the education of *shudra-atishudras*. They were performing revolution through narrative and song and countered the hegemony of elite, colonial, and Brahminical cultural forms. It was an emancipatory vernacular, anti-caste modernity through performance, awakening resistance, and social commentary, along with entertainment. The prominent composers were Bhimrao Mahamuni, Khushalrao Shisode, Tatoba Yadav, Haribhau Khadse, Ramchandra Ghadge, Jyotajirao Phalke Patil, Bhaurao Patole, Ganpat Dada More Patil, Khanderao Patil (Jopulkar), Runjaji Patil, Shankarrao Kale, Bajaba Gaikwad, Sonopant Kulkarni, and so on.

Mapping the Field

The basic text for mapping the historiography of Marathi theatre is *Marathi Rangabhumicha Itihas: Khand Pahila* by Shrinivas Narayan Banhatti, published in 1957. This work offers a detailed historiographical account of Marathi theatre from 1843 to 1879, with several sections also exploring the pre-history of Marathi theatre. Banhatti's book has been instrumental in providing the historical background for the translations examined in this study.

Another important source that contributed to the formulation of the argument is *Marathi Natyasamiksha: 1865 te 1935* by Ramchandra Shankar Walimbe, published in 1966. This book presents a historiography of Marathi drama criticism and includes a separate section on translated plays, offering valuable insights into the critical reception and cultural context of translations during the period.

Dipesh Chakrabarty's "Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History", published in 2000, offered critical insights into the

notion of the Modern Ideal Bengali Woman of the nineteenth century. This notion was not only relevant in the case of Bengal but also in other states. He quotes nineteenth-century Bengali writers while discussing the modern ideal woman. It informed my reading of the female characters of Marathi translations of Shakespeare and European playwrights' plays. His book *Habitations of Modernity* (2002) provided an understanding of the complex nature of modernity in India and also the way modernity and modern ideas were perceived by leaders and people in nineteenth-century India.

Veena Naregal's *Language Politics, Elites and the Public Sphere: Western India Under Colonialism,* published in 2001, is about the politics of bilingualism that existed in the nineteenth-century Maharashtra. She provides a detailed account of education policy and its impact on vernacular languages, especially Marathi, and translations; deliberates on translations done in various subjects, including Mathematics, Science, and Literature and discusses the significant developments in the case of public opinions, which offered me a comprehensive understanding of the way people perceived modern ideas, women, and female characters in various plays.

Sudipta Kaviraj's essay "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity" (2005) contributed to my comprehension of the concept of modernity. He suggests that modernity has several dimensions and cannot be restricted to only one discipline. The disciplines like Economics, Sociology, Literature, Politics, and Science contributed to the formation of modernity. Several countries and regions had their own project of modernity, which can be distinguished from each other. Therefore, the project of modernity cannot be universalised or generalised. It produced different histories of different countries which adopted to be modern.

One of the most significant books to give an idea about the reception of Shakespeare in various Indian states, including Maharashtra, is *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, published in 2012, edited by Tom Bishop and Alexander C.Y. Huang, with a special issue edited by Sukanta Choudhary. This volume is dedicated to India. It gives a thorough idea of how Shakespeare was received in translations in various Indian regional languages, like Marathi and others. In all states, Shakespeare's plays were used to bring new ideas to the stage.

Gajanan Bhingardive's *Satyashodhak Jalse: Parampara, Swarup, ani Vatchal* is a recent book published in 2021 that not only maps the historiography of *jalsa* performances but also lists the titles of one hundred and twenty-one *jalsa* troupes and one hundred and twenty-four composers. He seems to have prepared this list with the help of news and articles published in various Satyashodhak newspapers and periodicals like *Din Bandhu, Dinmitra, Rashtraveer,* and *Vijayi Maratha.* This book helped me to get more information about the performance history and reception of various *jalsas*.

Archival Absences

The archival nature of the research occasioned its own set of situations. Some of the translations and the articles published in magazines were not and are still not in good shape. For example, *Himmatbahadar athwa Danav Khandacha Rajputra,* a translation of *Hamlet* first published serially in the monthly magazine *Vividhadnyanavistar* and then in a book format in 1896, needs digitisation as the physical copies are about to degrade soon. Some words on the pages are not visible, and some are blurred in the introduction due to the ageing of the pages. Some pages are torn off. *Bhramvilas*, a translation of *Twelfth Night,* first performed on the stage in 1910 and published in book format in 1913, also has some torn-off pages, and the page with bibliographical details is missing. The copy of the farce, *Sanshayi Jijabai,* is also in a bad condition. Some pages from the introduction of *Julius Caesar,* a translation of *Julius Caesar* published in 1912, are missing. The first two pages of the article "Macbeth Natakachi Don Bhashantare", published in the monthly magazine *Vividhadnyanavistar* in 1901, are missing.

I could not obtain thirty-seven translations due to their unavailability in any of the libraries and personal archives of scholars. To name a few translations which I could not access are, *Veersen athwa Vichitrapuricha Rajputra* (1883) a translation of *Hamlet* (Govind Vasudev Kanitakar), *Sudhanwa* (*Manipurcha Raja*) (1883) a translation of Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* by Krushnaji Vasudev Phadke, *Maharana Sangramsingh* (1909) a translation of Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Talisman* by Kashinath Narayan Patwardhan, *Kamla* (1911) a translation of Marie Corelli's novel *Thelma* by

Yashwant Narayan Tipnis, *Strinyaychaturya Natak* (1871) a translation of *The Merchant of Venice* by Aatmaram Vinayak Patkar, *Sangit Sanshaysambhram Natak* (1895) a translation of *Winter's Tale* by Gajanan Chintaman Dev, *Bhural athwa Ishwarikrut Chamatkar* (1876) a translation of *Comedy of Errors* by Aatmaram Vinayak Patkar. The reference section of Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya, Dadar, has a copy of the play *Vijayshing* (1872), a translation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* by Kashinath Govind Natu, but they have stopped lending it to the readers and readers cannot even access it in the reference section.[4] The material I could access from Marathi magazines and periodicals was patchy.

Similar is the case with *jalsas.* Most of the *jalsas* were orally transmitted or composed in the diaries of the composers, which were either never published or the copies of them are lost due to negligence. I had to read and analyse the content from a few primary sources consisting of *jalsa* literature, and the rest were secondary sources.

I had visited five libraries for this study. One of the most important libraries was Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalya, Dadar, Mumbai. The Reference section of this library has conserved many rare Marathi books published in the nineteenth century. I managed to access around fifty translations out of seventy-three and various volumes of the periodicals *Nibandhmala, Rangabhumi,* and *Ratnakar* in this library, which I read in the reading room of the Reference section. Jaykar Library of Savitribai Phule Pune University helped me with thirteen translations and the volumes of *Date Suchi* and a periodical *Vividhanyanvistar*. I could photocopy the translations. The third library I visited was Jawaharlal Nehru Library of the University of Mumbai. I could read seven translations in the reference section of this library. I also visited Urmila Bhirdikar's personal archive of books, where I got to read three translations and some other Marathi plays. The fourth library I visited was Barr. Balasaheb Khardekar Knowledge Resource Centre, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, where I could read the surviving volumes of Satyashodhak newspaper *Din Bandhu*. The fifth library that I visited was Dinmitrakar Mukundrao Patil Sanshodhan Granthalaya, Tarwadi, Dist.

[4] The last time I accessed the Reference Section of Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya, Dadar, was in April 2018, and the texts were not digitised.

Ahmednagar (now known as Ahilyanagar), where I could obtain *jalsa* literature and read volumes of the newspaper *Dinmitra.*

Themes

The book is structured with descriptions and analysis of translations, *jalsas* and discourse participating in its afterlife. Thus, my analysis and views of the people writing in the newspapers, magazines, and periodicals in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, form an argumentative thread throughout this text.

The study of various objects, translations, *jalsas,* essays and responses to the editors required ideas from various thinkers and eras. Ideas from various thinkers are explicated and, with modifications and additions, are used for the analysis of translations and the articles published in the magazines. These thinkers and their ideas were chosen as they showed potential to discuss already studied translations, issues surrounding them and their afterlife. I have already discussed two recurring ideas, "rupture" and "hegemony", at the beginning of this introduction, that form the themes of my book. Some of the other ideas are, for instance, Walter Benjamin's idea of the afterlife from his essay "The Task of the Translator" (1923), which helps to situate the translations in the context of early Marathi theatre. Here, by the word "afterlife", Benjamin means that translation is a renewal of something living. For Benjamin, certain works (of literature) have the quality of translatability inbuilt. Translations are manifestations of the original works' translatability. There is always a temporal distance (spatial as well) between the original and the translation. Benjamin states that the translation of a work is a part of its afterlife (15-25). Thus, the translations and discussions surrounding them participated in the afterlife of the originals.

It has been argued that the afterlife exists in two modes: "angelic" or "demonic".[5] In addition to this, it is possible to extend the afterlife into one

[5] This has been discussed by Aniket Jaaware in his essay "Of demons and angels and historical humans: Some events and questions in translation and postcolonial theory", published in *The Indian Postcolonial: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Elleke Boehmer and Rosinka Chaudhuri. London and New York: Routledge, 2011.p. 177-190.

more mode: "in limbo" or "Trishanku's heaven". An angelic mode of afterlife is one in which the positive potentials of a work are revealed, and possible emancipatory social change begins to take place. In the demonic mode, the translator infuses his own meaning and interests with the original, and the negative potential may get posited. The term "limbo" is used by Christian theologians[6] to describe a state or place in the afterlife for souls in special categories who merited neither salvation nor damnation. The word comes from the Latin *limbus*, meaning "border" or "edge". Some souls are kept on the border of heaven and hell, where they are neither suffering through the torture of hell nor enjoying all the pleasures of heaven. Similarly, some texts and their translations neither become angelic nor demonic. They are situated in an in-between position of limbo. They have to be there permanently. The limbo of infants can be explained in the context of translations that were staged but were never printed or published. Some souls die before or without baptism; similarly, it can be said here that the translations that were staged but were not published were forgotten or ignored.

The translations were mostly carried out, performed, watched, and produced by upper-caste men and argued upon by upper-caste men as well as women, mainly Brahmins. These translations conferred only upper-caste issues and excluded the lower castes, whose population was indeed larger than the Brahmins. Thus, they can neither be angelic nor demonic. Not angelic because they excluded lower strata in their discussion, and not demonic because they addressed the problems and discrimination faced by upper-caste women at the hands of upper-caste men. Thus, the translations, although they seemed to take an angelic position in the nineteenth century, belong to an in-between position of limbo in the twenty-first century, from where they cannot become either angelic or demonic.

Jotirao Phule's play, *Tritiya Ratna*, written in 1855, presents his critical ideas, and *Satyashodhak Jalsa* performances play the role of counter-discourse to the hegemony of Brahminical discourse that comes forth

[6] Christopher J. Beiting in The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization discusses how Christian theology thinks about issues related to the afterlife in post 2000 era. It also notes recent developments in the way the "limbo of infants" has not been legitimised by certain Christian sects.