The Life of Tamil Literature in Translation:
Histories and Controversies

Sept. 15 10 am - 4:30 pm | Sept. 16 10 am - 4:30 pm; 6 - 7:30 pm reading
Meyerson Conference Room (WCH 4.118)

This two-day international conference will be devoted to the state and status of Tamil literature in translation. Translation in the academy in general occupies a very troubled category. Despite the emphasis that is placed on language acquisition across humanities and social science disciplines, translation is often viewed as second-level intellectual work; as more of a “craft” than as true intellectual activity. Yet, in area studies fields, translations of literary texts are crucial components of our curricula – we cannot teach without them, nor can many of us conduct fieldwork without thinking about “translation” and how it acts as a constant mediating device between “scholars” and their “subjects.” This conference will address issues of translation in terms of its historical specificity and its social ramifications. Participants in this conference will include scholars from the fields of philology and classics and who also write on issues of translation and its relationship to ethnography and the social sciences, and translators of emerging literatures, such as Dalit fiction and poetry, who often grapple with problems of genre, voice, and representation. A special roundtable discussion among several well-known Tamil authors and the translators of their works will be a key feature of this conference.

Digital resource guide: http://guides.lib.utexas.edu/c.php?g=723109

Sponsored by the South Asia Institute, the Department of Asian Studies, and the Office of the Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Image: The Androgynous Form of Shiva and Parvati (Ardhanarishvara) LACMA, with text from Perumal Murugan’s Maadhurubhaagan and Aniruddhan Vasudevan’s translation, One Part Woman

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Friday, September 15th

10-10:15 AM: Welcome and Introduction
Martha Ann Selby, The University of Texas at Austin

Session 1 - S. Radhakrishnan, UT-Austin, Chair

10:15-11 AM: “Translation Loss when Transcending Words and Grammar”
E. Annamalai, The University of Chicago

11-11:45 AM: “Voice, Dialect, Fidelity, and Ethics in Translation Work”
David Buck, Elizabethtown Community and Technical College

11:45-12:30 PM: “Different Strategies of Translation from Classical Indian Literature”
George Hart, The University of California, Berkeley

12:30-1:30 PM Lunch for participants

Session 2 - Donald Davis, UT-Austin, Chair

1:30-2:15 PM: “How Untranslatability Became a Cornerstone of Modernist Tamil Literature”
Preetha Mani, Rutgers University

2:15-3 PM: “World Literature in Tamil Translation: Notes Towards a History and Some Conceptual Observations”
Sascha Ebeling, The University of Chicago

3-3:15 PM: Tea break

3:15-4:30 PM Special Roundtable: “Translation and its Consequences”
Martha Ann Selby (UT-Austin), D. Dilip Kumar (Author, Translator, and Literary Critic, Chennai),
C. S. Lakshmi (Author and Director, SPARROW, Mumbai), Perumal Murugan (Author, Arinar Anna Government Arts College, Attur),
Aniruddhan Vasudevan (UT-Austin)

Saturday, September 16th

Session 3 Martha Ann Selby, UT-Austin, Chair

10-10:45 AM: Perumal Murugan, Author, Arinar Anna Government Arts College, Attur

10:45-11:30 AM: “Textual Strategies and ‘Translatorial Hexis’: Gendered Voices in Asokamittiran”
Perundevi Srinivasan, Siena College

11:30-12:30 PM: Break

12:30-1:30 PM: Lunch

Session 4: Elaine Craddock, Southwestern University, Chair

1:30-2:15 PM: “On Non-Brahmin vs. Gandhian Renderings of Self-Respect during the Interwar Years:
How Tamil Translation is not Prefatory to, but in Fact a Practice of, Political Theory”
Matthew Baxter, Harvard University

2:15-3 PM: “Attention in Tamil Dialect Writing: Translating Kanmani Gunasekaran’s Fiction”
Rebecca Whittington, University of California-Berkeley

3:00-3:15 PM: Tea break

3:15-4 PM: General discussion/Q&A

4:00-6:00 PM: Break

6:00-7:30 PM: Readings of translations by David Buck, Sascha Ebeling, George Hart, Perumal Murugan,
Martha Ann Selby, Aniruddhan Vasudevan, and Rebecca Whittington