

Translating texts, translating readers: could Andy Warhol's writings be translated into Indian languages?

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I address this collection's thematic thread from the point of view of a translator of premodern Indian literature and as a student of theories on translation. The interrogative subtitle implies that Andy Warhol's writings have currently not been translated from American-English into *another* Indian language, English being firmly counted as an Indian language at this point in history. Unlike bringing Warhol's words to a Chinese setting, about which Reva Wolf and Kou Huaiyu have cogently written,¹ the challenges of translating them to Indian contexts are complicated by several facts of language and culture in Indian metropolises—dating as far back as the 1970s—where Indians could and can ably receive Warhol, more or less, through the original American idiom. However, even the experience of urban Indians four decades ago is a far cry from that of contemporary citizens in Western, Central, or Eastern Europe, where Warhol's writings were translated into a local language. In this regard, Wolf addresses the situation that explicitly marks the alterity of Chinese in Warhol translations: 'Translations of Warhol's writings appeared at an earlier date in countries where, due to historical circumstances, the cultural gaps with the U.S. are smaller than in China, and the language less radically distinct.'² The fact that English is more widely understood (if not with active competence, at least passively) in India obviates the need to 'translate' Warhol for cosmopolitan Indians who want to read his writings. However, from an 'intercultural communication' point of view, Warhol's reception in India four decades ago would certainly diverge from the one in Europe during the same era, where the culture of Pop, while not squarely consonant with America's, certainly resonates deeper than the experience of 1970s and 1980s India.

While Wolf and Kou's collaborative essay compellingly underlines the need for and the challenges of translating Warhol (himself) and writing about Warhol into Mandarin, what can be said for would-be translations into modern Indian languages for modern Indians who could respond to Warhol—however

¹ Reva Wolf and Kou Huaiyu, 'Cosmic Jokes and Tangerine Flake: Translating Andy Warhol's *POPism*', in *Complementary Modernisms in China and the United States: Art as Life/Art as Idea*, ed. Zhang Jian and Bruce Robertson, Goleta, CA: Punctum Books, 2020, 82-98; available open access at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv16zk03m>.

² Wolf and Kou, 'Cosmic Jokes', 96.

approximately—in the original American English itself? In beginning to reflect on how one might take on the formidable challenge of translating Andy Warhol's writings into an indigenous Indian language, I am reminded of an experience-laden adage of A.K. Ramanujan, a well-known scholar-translator of premodern Indian literature, who strategically explains that 'only a poem can translate a poem.'³ Ramanujan's point speaks to both theory and practice—as he simultaneously recognizes the incommensurability of translation *in theory* while actually composing numerous translations of Tamil and Kannada poems that can stand as English poems in their own right. In the context of translating Warhol's writings (or writings about Warhol) into an Indian language that is not English, however, one may unironically suggest that only an Andy Warhol can translate an Andy Warhol. While wholly conjectural, as no translation has been attempted to the best of my knowledge, one plausible reason to do a translation may lie in the fact that access or interest in American-English competency is not universal. A more persuasive argument for a translation would be that, as Wolf and Kou point out, the complications that Warhol translations manifest are themselves fascinating in their own right as they reveal the enormous cultural gaps that still need to be surmounted if global cultures are to translate themselves to each other.

Distilling the difficulties inherent in translating Warhol's *POPism* into Mandarin, Wolf writes:

Four types of language featured in this book caused some of the most fascinating translation difficulties and will be the focus of my discussion: a.) time-bound terms; b.) inventive uses of colloquialisms; c.) unusual names of places and people; and d.) historically specific descriptions and allusions.⁴

These four features that obstruct the translator's task are magnified by the cultural differences that need to be negotiated in order to bring the Pop modernist culture of 1960s New York to twenty-first century China. The examples Wolf gives from *POPism* to highlight Warhol's inflections on what are already knotty time-bound colloquialisms and idioms ('cosmic joke', 'tangerine flake', and 'wrong side of the limousine', for example) demonstrate the gulf that translators must cross to make it happen. Even when a translator finds a way to transmute Warhol's words on the most surface level, they still have to sensibly translate them for the target culture.⁵

³ A.K. Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War: From the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Long Poems of Classical Tamil*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, 296.

⁴ Wolf and Kou, 'Cosmic Jokes', 86.

⁵ Wolf explicates the inherent difficulties in and strategies for translating Warhol's idioms: 'An idiomatic expression can have multiple meanings, as well may the altered idiom "wrong side of the limousine." To translate an idiom is hard; to translate one that has been transformed, as this one has, is that much more difficult. Translation theorists have proposed three principles for translating idioms: 1.) do not treat idioms too literally; 2.) look

From Andy Warhol's *Diaries*—a collaboration of Warhol and his assistant, diarist, and editor Pat Hackett—one identifies numerous examples where the prospect of rendering the literal, figurative, and even stylistic sense would make most translators throw up their hands in frustration. For instance, in an entry for Monday, January 16, 1978, Warhol writes: 'Went home, glued, and then walked over to Quo Vadis to meet...' ⁶ According to Hackett, 'glued' or 'gluing' was Warhol's term for 'washing his face, adjusting the silver "hair" that was his trademark, and maybe, *maybe*, changing his clothes.'⁷ For the translator, this neologism constitutes a.) and b.) of the above list given by Wolf: it is both time-bound and an inventive use of a colloquialism. As Hackett notes, the aim in the *Diaries* was not to 'translate' these kinds of words for the reader, nor to explain the names of places and people that ubiquitously pop up in its pages:

The Diary does not include a glossary because explanations of who people were in relation to Andy would go against—if not actually betray—the sensibility of what he was about and the unstructured world he generated around him. Andy was about not putting people into categories—he was about letting them cross in and out of categories. The people in his sixties 'underground' movies were called 'superstars', but what exactly did that mean? It could refer to the most beautiful model in New York or the delivery boy who brought her a pack of cigarettes during filming and wound up in front of the rolling camera.⁸

Peripheral to finding the rather easy equivalence for 'superstar' (perhaps by not translating it at all) is the requirement to somehow bring Warhol's inflection of this usage—which Hackett herself wonders about—into the translation. However, the lack of editorial explanation in the *Diaries*—philosophically, not practically, determined—makes the translator's job doubly arduous, especially if they strive to be faithful to the format and spirit of the work so that, as Hackett explains, 'the flow of Andy's own voice with its peculiar locations could be preserved uninterrupted... [to avoid] the jarring effect [annotations] would have on Andy's personal tone and the needlessly distancing effect they would have on the reader.'⁹

Naturally, this outlook clashes with the scholarly translator's impulses, which are to supplement an otherwise literal translation with prefaces, textual and interpretive notes and scholarly commentary to frame foreign elements. Hackett

for equivalencies in the target language that will convey the meaning to your audience; and 3.) maintain the "artistic" or "original rhetorical effect" as much as possible'; 'Cosmic Jokes', 91.

⁶ Pat Hackett, ed., *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, New York: Warner Books, 1989, 99.

⁷ Hackett, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, xvi.

⁸ Hackett, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, xviii.

⁹ Hackett, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, xix.

justifies the lack of annotation in the *Diaries* as follows: 'To Andy, putting things in a format that made sense was enough of a compromise.'¹⁰ Inverting this tactic, Ramanujan, as one scholar explains, conceived of translation 'as a multi-dimensional process in which the translator has to deal with his or her material, means, resources and objectives at several levels simultaneously.'¹¹ His translations accordingly demonstrate a sensitivity to balancing literal representations with transpositions of the source language's syntax, design, structure, shaping principle, poetic core, surface and deep structure of discourse. Reading Ramanujan's translations reveals that he was especially gifted with the ability to attentively reform the visual presentation of the original source text—usually linear in the manuscript—into a graphically shaped English translation, executing the act of translation as simultaneously a form of creative image-making. For example, here is the shape Ramanujan gives to a Tamil poem numbered 113 of the *Aiñkurunūru* collection and attributed to a poet named *Ammūvañār*:

Yesterday,
 some people of this town
 said about me,
 she is the woman
 of that man from the seashore

where great waves break
 on the white sands.

Mother heard it
 and asked me,
 "Is that true?"

I said, under my breath,
 "I'm burning."¹²

In translations such as these from the Tamil (or Kannada elsewhere), Ramanujan aptly negotiated the communicative intersection and tension between representing and appropriating the original source. The first- and second-level indentations invariably carry a hermeneutic logic to best facilitate appreciation for an English-language reader. As Ramanujan aims as close as he can toward a pure language that does not prioritize particular features of language or ideas but rather remains as

¹⁰ Hackett, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, xix.

¹¹ Vinay Dharwadker, 'A.K. Ramanujan's Theory and Practice of Translation', in *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, London and New York: Routledge, 1999 (accessed online, Routledge/Taylor Francis Group), 115.

¹² Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 38.

transparent as possible, he explicates a higher logic that underwrites his translation procedure in the following manner:

The originals would not speak freely through the translations to present-day readers if the renderings were not in modern English, and if they were not poems themselves in some sense. By the same token, the translations had to be close, as close as my sense of English and Tamil would allow.¹³

As a translator drawing together the non-verbal systems implied in the Tamil with the given verbal system, Ramanujan strives to deliver connotations and culture-specific aesthetics and semiotics to the modern reader. Recognizing the ultimately unsatisfying results of cross-cultural translation, however, he also offers this world-weary realization: 'Translations are never finished, only abandoned.'¹⁴

The difficulties that Ramanujan faced to transparently translate premodern India to the American reader would only intensify were a would-be translator to follow Ramanujan's approach and attempt to translate Warhol's writings into an Indian language. A glaring reason for this lies in Warhol's own desire to *not* be transparent in his verbal expressions but rather to inflect the literal to such a degree as to necessitate the framing addenda, prefaces, footnotes, and paratextual commentary that Ramanujan also had to grudgingly include in order to make things sensible. For Warhol's *Diaries*, the 'what you see is what you get' effect, unmediated by context, was indispensable to its effectiveness. Ramanujan, on the other hand, despite his urge to give as little mediation as necessary and make the Indian poem an American one, was forced into scholarly commentary. Faced with the inability to transparently merge a premodern Indian language into an expressive American-English, his recourse is to translate both a text and a reader: 'A translator hopes not only to translate a text, but hopes (against all odds) to translate a non-native reader into a native one.'¹⁵ One presumes that translating Warhol in another language without profuse annotation would thrust a translator into a similar predicament, especially if even an editor-scribe like Hackett found it a subject worthy of serious debate.

A further complication arises when one considers the translation of Warhol's visual language and persona, absolutely necessary for any kind of cross-cultural communication of his writings.¹⁶ Here, it becomes not only about translating the

¹³ This passage occurs in Ramanujan's *The Interior Landscape* (1967), and is quoted in Dharwadker, 'A.K. Ramanujan's Theory and Practice of Translation', 119.

¹⁴ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, xv.

¹⁵ This passage occurs in Ramanujan's Translator Notes to *Samkskāra*, quoted in Dharwadker, 'A.K. Ramanujan's Theory and Practice of Translation', 121-22.

¹⁶ A recent essay on Warhol's persona makes this point explicitly: '[T]he intractable relation between the verbal and material aspects of Warhol's oeuvre are bound up in the artist's persona—it is as if, thanks to the Warhol persona, it were quite impossible or unthinkable to put Warhol's words aside, even just for a moment, so one could look first'; Carmen Merport

visual language into a verbal language but the visual language that reflects the artist as persona into a verbal language that is resisted at every turn by the discursive elusiveness of art, artist, artist's meta-reflection, and ultimately critical nourishment to that artist's meta-reflections. Beyond the words, connotations, and embedded historical contexts lie planted confusions, quasi-rational ambiguities, far-flung allusions, and, of course, Warhol's own iconicity. On the face of it, then, translating Warhol's writings into an Indian language feels like a ridiculously impossible (and unnecessary) task that, nevertheless, could potentially yield a rich field for understanding the possibilities for cross-cultural translation. Optimistically, however, if we return to Ramanujan's precept (only a poem can translate a poem), perhaps the case of Indian artists associated with Warhol's Pop art can offer insight to the translator.

The contemporary Indian artist Durga Kainthola, whose 2005 exhibition entitled *The Art Factory 2* was a tribute to Andy Warhol, addressed a *Times of India* newspaper reporter's question about Warhol's inspiration to her work as follows: 'It was in 1982 that I first saw a Marilyn Monroe diptych by Warhol in a book at the JJ library. However, understanding the spirit of Warhol's work and letting it seep into my work was a 20-year journey. My present collection is a culmination of that journey.'¹⁷ A generation earlier, another artist named Bhupen Khakhar famously introduced (along with others) Pop to the then-Bombay art world. Khakhar's case is terrifically fecund for exploring cross-cultural translations of Warhol, and I draw upon the work of the curator and art historian Beth Citron on both artists to draw out some relevant observations about translation. Khakhar has been called India's first Pop artist, sharing with Warhol and other Pop artists explorations of mass reproduction as well as experimenting with live art and performance along with a carefully cultivated persona (fig. 1). According to Citron, Khakhar's sartorial choices in photographs, along with his performative poses and allusions, palpably educe Warhol's image:

Though Khakhar's conceptual and visual reference to Warhol is hardly altered, except for the clothing, the allusion went unspoken by Khakhar's peers and audience. He certainly would not have drawn attention to it himself, as the subtlety of his self-fashioning lay in his projection of simplicity belied by the casual ease with which he appropriated his sources...While these gestures may appear subtle and conservative in

Quiñones, 'Reading Color: Looking Through Language in Warhol', *Criticism*, 59: 4, Fall 2017, 513.

¹⁷ Quoted in Binal Zaveri, 'India's Answer to Warhol', *The Times of India*, 16 June 2005, A9.

comparison to many antics of Warhol and others, it must be reminded that they would have seemed forward in the Indian public context of the 1970s.¹⁸

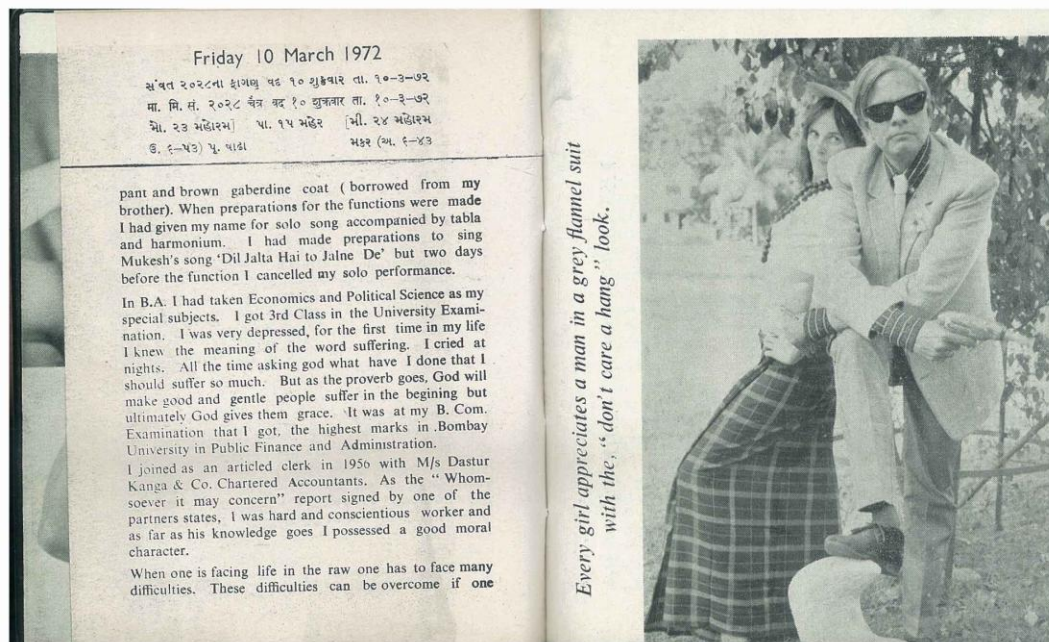


Figure 1 Bhupen Khakhar, *Truth Is Beauty and Beauty Is God*, exhibition catalogue/artist book, offset printing on paper, 1972, unpagd. Image courtesy: Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai, India.

While Khakhar's meta-performative mimicry of Warhol may suggest a layer of cross-cultural translational remove that, on the one hand, indicates an inability for Pop to be sensible in an Indian context, it may otherwise demonstrate the quality of reproducing celebrity in strikingly affecting ways that quintessentially characterizes a Warhol aesthetic. Khakhar's 'artistic quotation' of Warhol, as Citron aptly puts it, constitutes a translation of sorts. From a literary-critical and translational perspective, Citron's phrase invoking quotation reminds one of Ramanujan's 'long-lasting principles as a writer and scholar', as Vinay Dharwadker notes to explain Ramanujan's inheritance from Walter Benjamin: 'the idea that the ideal critical essay would consist entirely of quotations.'¹⁹ Perhaps Khakhar translates Warhol in the only possible way one can: not in a literary sense, where only a poem can translate

¹⁸ Beth Citron, 'Bhupen Khakhar's "Pop" in India, 1970-72', *Art Journal* 71: 2, Summer 2012, 53.

¹⁹ See Dharwadker, 'A.K. Ramanujan's Theory and Practice of Translation', 126-27, where he enlarges the point that 'Ramanujan's major essays...are all structured explicitly as Benjaminian "anthologies of quotations"'.

another poem, but rather, in a multimodal sense, in which only a persona could translate another persona (fig. 2).²⁰

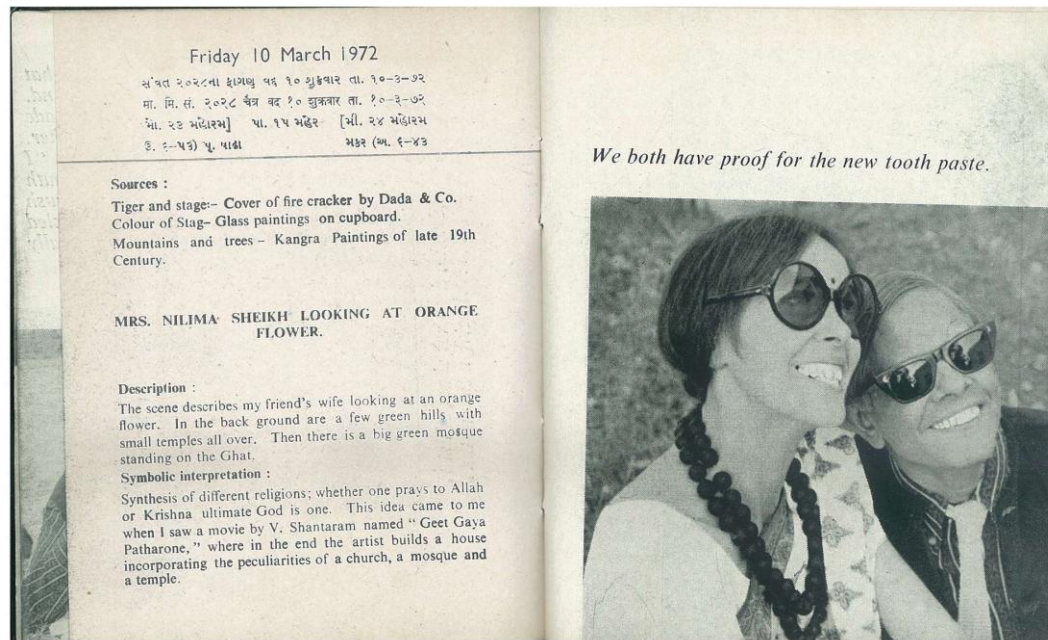


Figure 2 Bhupen Khakhar, *Truth Is Beauty and Beauty Is God*, exhibition catalogue/artist book, offset printing on paper, 1972, unpagged. Image courtesy: Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai, India.

The need to translate a persona only underscores the information that is drained from the transaction, in Khakhar's case articulated in the ironic reversal of actual circumstances while strategically maintaining the form. This is a constant struggle in the visual and linguistic forms of translation where contexts are never quite commensurable. Ostensibly, Khakhar's channelling of Warhol and other Pop artists signals a direct sort of explicit translation of the self-posturing manipulation of the sources, of the underlying politics of the act, and of the final product or

²⁰ Citron elaborates on this point as follows: 'As an exercise in artistic quotation, Khakhar's simulations of Warhol's self-portrayal, affect, and relationship with Sedgwick indicate control over the sources of his choosing. They showed that he could appropriate ideas from Pop just as casually as he could from Indian and historical sources. Yet his engagement with Warhol has a more pointed significance: Khakhar is not quoting Warhol's artwork, but Warhol's persona. In one sense, this directly follows the dictates of Pop: use of Warhol in these photos has a priori freed Khakhar from the constraints of originality. At the same time, paradoxically, Khakhar's gesture is wholly at odds with the pretense of one-dimensionality that Pop demanded. Unlike the quotation of an iconographic element or painting style, which could seem flat and superficial, Khakhar's mimicking of Warhol required his own—three-dimensional and unique—body and image, even though the product was a series of photos printed in a flat, mass-produced catalogue'; 'Bhupen Khakhar's "Pop" in India', 57.

reproduction of the image. In this regard, the surface itself gestures toward the depth of any implied message. Without the double work of a commentarial act whereby Warhol the artist is read into Warhol embodied in writing, the translation of the words probably remains without any semblance of translation with meaning.

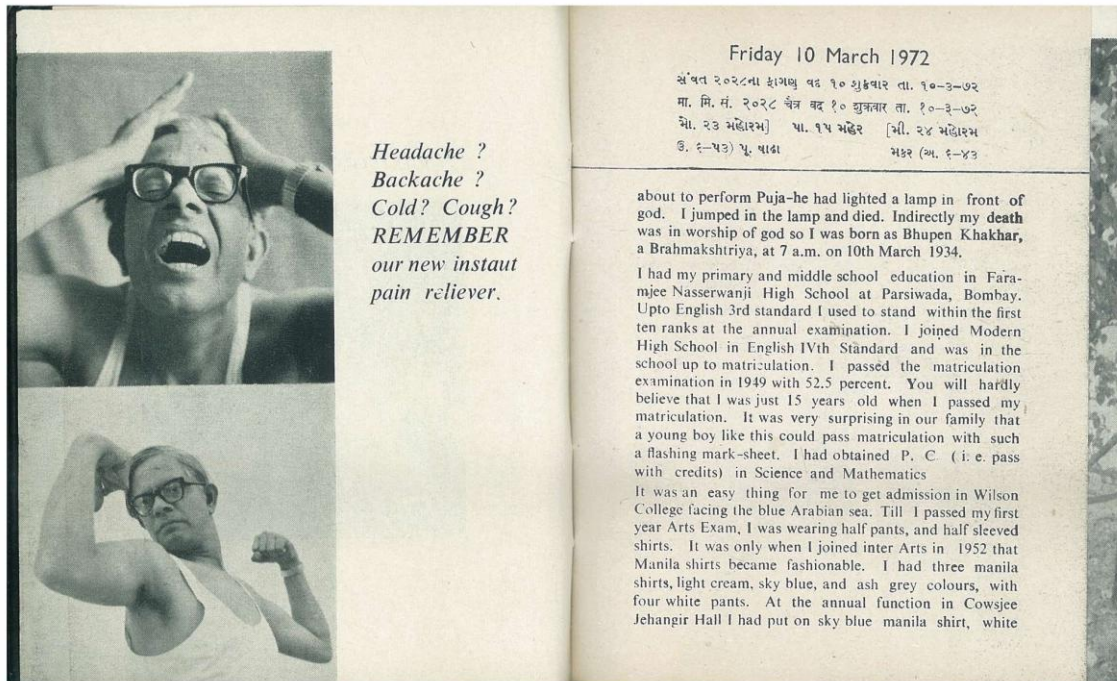


Figure 3 Bhupen Khakhar, *Truth Is Beauty and Beauty Is God*, exhibition catalogue/artist book, offset printing on paper, 1972, unpagged. Image courtesy: Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai, India.

The differences, however, between the conditions under which Warhol and Khakhar worked speaks to how context also disrupts or, at least, interrupts any translational process. Citron details how the two artists came from different backgrounds, worked in different circumstances, and shaped or responded to a different set of social and political conditions. For instance, in commenting on Khakhar's photography and comparing his openness about his sexuality (fig. 3) and the facts of his livelihood with Warhol's, Citron writes:

Revealing his homosexuality would have been even more fraught in the middle-class Gujarati society in which he also lived. In that sense, these photographs speak to Khakhar's desire to be like Warhol the person, more than just Warhol the artist. As Warhol had done, Khakhar manipulated the fact that he did not have a fine-art degree by posing in ways other than as a 'serious painter.' Within the art world, Warhol presented himself as a businessman who ran a factory with workers. This indicates another ironic dimension in Khakhar's simulation because, unlike Warhol, he actually

was involved in business through his accountancy. He considered issues of work and labor in his art, notably in the painting titled *Factory Strike*.²¹

While Khakhar was able to translate into his own art world and cultural milieu some of the social and economic conditions that Pop artists in America operated under—breaking down ‘certain modernist barriers between the elite culture of high art and the democracy of the public arena’²²—the significant divergences in their social and material experiences essentially made even this kind of translation virtually untenable. Some have also observed differences in the manner in which Warhol and Khakhar wove political critiques into their work. Both were sometimes thought to be apolitical but, it seems, neither, in fact, were; how to account for their oblique political gestures becomes an obvious translational difficulty, especially when moving across languages and cultures. How to speak, for instance, of Warhol's undivulged opinion of George McGovern's candidacy (even though he made a poster for his campaign), which Hackett evokes in her preface to the *Diaries*,²³ and Khakhar's perspective on India's conflict with Pakistan over Bangladesh, about which Citron speculates, in her analysis of one of Khakhar's paintings?²⁴

According to Citron, Khakhar was part of a cultural milieu where artists were more ‘[c]ommitted to creating and representing collective cultural identities for their new nation’; this commitment then extends beyond a binary lens of high-brow and popular to include Indian ‘local imagery and ideas through the popular and everyday’.²⁵ The classical/vernacular tension—both creative and fracturing, at turns—runs deep in premodern and contemporary Indian society, driven by the linguistic reality of India's stunning variety of dialects and regionally inflected speech worlds. Ramanujan, for instance, learned in multiple Indian languages, struggles in his formulation of a translation strategy to account for this heterogeneity in translations of premodern cosmopolitan classical- and regional-language Indian texts into a modern American English, as each language *within* India also requires some measure of interlingual translation. Given the difficulties

²¹ Citron, ‘Bhupen Khakhar's “Pop” in India’, 57.

²² Citron elaborates on this point in the following way: ‘Through Pop, Khakhar was instrumental in creating a framework for artists in India to develop imagery and artistic languages from their local and everyday experiences, which could be contextualized and meaningful in Bombay's growing cosmopolitan art world.... Khakhar's experimentations between 1970 and 1972 also enabled him to examine the interface between the elite art world and popular lower-and-middle-class urban cultures, critically informing his “trade series” paintings begun in 1972’; ‘Bhupen Khakhar's “Pop” in India’, 61.

²³ Hackett, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, xii.

²⁴ For an analysis of Khakhar's *My Mother and Father Going to Yatra*, in which the action of the painting is interpreted in light of ‘the tumultuous national politics of the time’, see Citron, ‘Bhupen Khakhar's “Pop” in India’, 58.

²⁵ Citron, ‘Bhupen Khakhar's “Pop” in India’, 45.

of locating points of translational intersection between the Pop world of Warhol and the Indian art culture of the time, the prospects for linguistic translation remain even more uncertain. An obvious obstacle of linguistic translation between cultures lies in the lack of a critical language to conceptually draw or interpret the two together. For example, even though the Indian artist's Pop activities were occurring along the lines of Warhol's Factory activities,²⁶ there was little in the way of interpreting them as such outside of the 'art world', which Citron attributes 'partially to a lack of a critical language in India to interpret such interventions as art [as well as] little recognition of performance art (and the long traditions of street and other manner of popular performance informing it) in India's art discourses until recently.'²⁷ In light of specific Warhol language, such as a term like 'gluing', for instance, which would be very difficult to translate intralingually into English without elaborate annotation, much less in a foreign language, Citron explains the ways in which 'without critical definition, Khakhar's "interventions" continued sporadically to be labeled "happenings."'²⁸

Another set of decisions that a translator of Warhol must take, which Wolf highlights in her observations on delivering Warhol's writing in Mandarin, concerns 'unusual names of places and people' and 'historically specific descriptions and allusions.'²⁹ Once again, Warhol's *Diaries* is replete with these entities. In the course of scanning strategies in Chinese to translate proper names, Wolf offers an interesting historical perspective of how translators nearly 1500 years ago chose to transliterate, rather than translate, Indic names and places into Chinese: 'It is noteworthy that in China, there is a long and interesting history of transliteration, or what is called "not-translation" (*bùfān*), going back to sixth- and seventh-century translations of Buddhist scriptures.'³⁰ While a modern practice of translation into widely used Indian languages resembles what Wolf suggests about historically premodern translation practices in China, interestingly, the case in premodern India had been to transliterate *and* translate into Sanskrit (or other such 'classical' languages) people and places in culture-specific ways that retain phonetic and/or semantic properties of the original names being rendered. This habit also manifests in modern Sanskrit literary translations, many of which daringly attempt to modernize a premodern Sanskrit idiom. For example, the title of a 2009 Sanskrit translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (by Sukhmay Mukhopadhyaya) is given as *Dinārka-rājakumāra-hema-lekha*, which literally translates to *The Golden Ray (hemalekha) that is the Prince (rājakumāra) of the Day's Sun (dinārka)*. A closer look

²⁶ Geeta Kapur has described how Khakhar posed for photographs in absurd roles, wrote mischievous texts, donned fancy dress, and held fake salon parties; see Citron, 'Bhupen Khakhar's "Pop" in India', 50.

²⁷ Citron, 'Bhupen Khakhar's "Pop" in India', 50.

²⁸ Citron, 'Bhupen Khakhar's "Pop" in India', 53.

²⁹ Wolf and Kou, 'Cosmic Jokes', 86.

³⁰ Wolf and Kou, 'Cosmic Jokes', 91.

reveals what the translator aims at: Hamlet (*hemalekha*), Prince (*rājakumāra*) of Denmark (*dinarka*). By consciously replicating, or at least subtly echoing, phonemes that reproduce "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark" in a syntactically and lexically syntonic form cognizable to the Sanskrit ear, the translator has both translated and not-translated, a sophisticated silliness that both Warhol and Khakhar might appreciate.

In addition to names, there is the problem of certain historically specific usages that are unstable even in the source language. For instance, in the preface to the *Diaries*, Hackett relates a peculiar anecdote about the use of the epithet 'drag queen' in Warhol's *inter/VIEW* magazine:

In the first issue, an interviewee had referred to a well-known movie critic who had just appeared in a Hollywood movie about a transsexual as a 'drag queen.' It was only after the issue was already off the presses that a lawyer advised that 'drag queen' was libelous but that just plain 'queen' would be fine. So ... [we] spent about six hours sitting in the front of the loft going through bundle after bundle of *inter/VIEW*s and crossing out the word 'drag' with black felt-tip pens.³¹

In self-editing the very source which they created, Hackett and Warhol's team debated the legal propriety of a particular designation that is largely sensible only in the source language. To translate the alteration 'drag queen' to 'queen' across cultural boundaries further exacerbates what is already a translational quandary were one or the other word being singularly employed. As vexed as the editors of the magazine were in late 1960s America, one can conjecture what the stakes for mislabelling sexual or gender identities would be in today's global society, especially when cross-cultural translations of concepts-in-motion intervene in the non-West.³²

It seems clear that translating Warhol into an Indian language other than English is—to a great extent—burdened by a host of tangled compromises and negotiations. When translating Warhol's implicit discourse or persona often overwhelms the translation of basic subjects, objects, and verbs of his writings, fluency of expression in the target language hangs by a thread. In recommending that a copy of the Mona Lisa be shown since it is as good as the original to those who lack the competency to recognize the original, or that his movies are 'better talked about than seen', Warhol plays with the concept that the idea is more important than the authentic object. Under such conditions, without the illusion of

³¹ Hackett, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, xii.

³² For a detailed treatment of translating queer terms into Indian languages and cultural contexts, see Shalmalee Palekar, 'Re-mapping Translation: Queering the Crossroads', in *Queer in Translation*, ed. B.J. Epstein and Robert Gillett, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017, 8-24 (accessed online, Routledge/Taylor Francis Group).

an original text, the translator assumes the mantle of an artist and remains visible throughout the process, unafraid of allegations of misrepresentation and appropriation. The translation itself inescapably becomes as much a work of art as the original. Not giving up the enterprise of translation, however alienating, Ramanujan heroically sought to translate the *experience* of the Indian text (with profuse notes) over and above the visible signs and structures of it, and thereby translate the reader rather than the text. Even then, he could hardly account for the vast information contained in the intonation or metrical flow of the original, at least partially sensible to a native reader. One suspects that translating Warhol's writings into an Indian language would require the same effort, even if the end result would helplessly fall short to capture anything substantial of the original energy. How would one capture, after all, Warhol's playful and half-serious intonation to his assistant, 'Sweetheart, you're fired!'³³ into an Indian language without losing almost all of it in translation?

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³³ Hackett, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, xvii.