The present study is an attempt to evaluate the achievement of William Radice as a Tagore translator in the light of translation theories. A bilingual study of this nature involving the twin disciplines of Translation Studies and Tagore Studies requires, on the one hand, an acquaintance with the history of translation theories and the ‘poetics’ of translation studies. It also requires, on the other, a first-hand acquaintance with the original and the translated works of Rabindranath Tagore as well as the critical works on him. In order to preserve the bilingual nature of the present study I have followed the principle of bilingual documentation in the “Works Cited” section. Tagore formed his own concept of translation and its evaluation on the basis of his experience of translating Gitanjali poems. Surprisingly, his reflections on translations are, in many respects, similar to those of Western translation theorists; but they have not yet received the importance they deserve from the translation critics. While evaluating Radice’s Tagore translations I have included in my discussion Tagore’s translation thoughts alongside the views of the Western translation theorists.

The seminal idea of the title of this study comes firstly from Roman Jacobson’s definition of translation as ‘interpretation’ (Kelly 1) and secondly from Axel Buhler’s article “Translation as interpretation” included in Translation Studies (2002) edited by Alessandra Riccardi and published from Cambridge University Press. Translation, as understood by William Radice, is not the mere transfer of literal meanings of words or expressions from one language to another; it is an ‘imaginative insight’ into the life, the creative works and the thought processes of a writer one is translating. In “The Task of the Translator”(1923) Walter Benazmin identifies something ‘unfathomable’, ‘imaginative’, and ‘poetic’ about the creative works of a great writer and a literal or word-for-word translation is incapable of capturing the spirit and essence of their originals (Schultz and Biguenet 71). In the Introduction to his book On Translation (1959) Reuben Arthur Brower refers to the translator as a “creator” equating him with the “original author” (Brower 7). He also adds, “[...] in spite of the fact that the study of “the creative process” has been a matter of speculation since Plato, and has become increasingly fashionable since Coleridge, it is surprising how little attention has been given to
the obscure business of re-enacting some one else’s creation” (emphasis added) (Ibid 4). According to Brower, the translation critic is theoretically concerned with the re-enactment of some one else’s creation whereas the translator re-enacts it in another language performing a parallel act of creation (Arrowsmith and Shattuck 62). This seems to go against the basic task of a translator who sacrifices himself so completely to the work that his personality completely disappears. But translators and translation critics down the ages have glorified the subjective role of the translator in the act of translating a work from one language to another. In his epoch-making book Toward A Science of Translating (1964) Eugene A. Nida unequivocally says, “[...] the human translator is not a machine, and he inevitably leaves the stamp of his personality on any translation he makes” (emphasis added) (Nida 154). This ‘stamp of personality’ unconsciously colours the interpretation of a translator. Again, in the Preface to The Translator’s Art (1987) William Radice and Barbara Reynolds rightly observe, “[...] however self-effacing the translator’s art may be, the translator’s personality is never wholly suppressed, nor should it be” (emphasis added) (Radice and Reynolds 7). In “Ten Rules for translating Tagore” (1986) Radice seems to have mentioned the interpretative role played by the translator in the act of translating: “The personality of the translator always comes into play; a translation of a poem can never be like a photo or carbon copy of the original” (emphasis added) (Rao 34). What Radice implies here is that the intrusion of the ‘personality of the translator’ into a translation makes it interpretative as well as creative.

According to Buddhadev Bose, Rabindranath Tagore is “one of the most elusive poets of the modern times” (Bose 411) and the rendering of such an ‘elusive’ poet undoubtedly presents formidable challenges for a translator. Literal or word-for-word translation, translation theorists opine, cannot capture the spirit of the creative works of such an ‘elusive’ and imaginative poet like Rabindranath Tagore. It is only the free and interpretative mode of rendering that is capable of exploring the spirit and essence of his creativity. In “The Challenge of Translating Tagore” (2012) Radice sums up the true nature of his Tagore translation: “But as a poet myself, and one for whom the sounds and rhythm of poetry have always been immensely important..., I found myself responding to the sounds of Rabindranath’s poems in an instinctive and intuitive way. I cannot claim, even now, that I hear the poems in quite the same way as a native speaker would hear them, but they
immediately get 'translated', from the very first reading, into sounds and rhythms that are
natural to me in my mother-tongue” (Chakravarty 445). It is now abundantly clear from the
above observation that in his translations Radice makes the intuitive and imaginative
interpretation of Tagore in English. In “Confessions of a Poet-Translator” (2003) he does not
hesitate to describe his approach to Tagore translations as ‘imaginative and intuitive’ (Radice
139). I have therefore tried to highlight this aspect of Radice’s translations in my dissertation.

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Although translation and interpretation have much in common, the practice of each profession requires different skill sets. A translator renders the written word from one language to another. An interpreter renders the spoken word from one language to another. Some employers expect you to be able to perform both tasks and many students find that they greatly enjoy the balance of both. These students have typically earned a master’s degree from a recognized translation and interpretation program or have at least two years of relevant full-time professional experience. Advanced Entry students test out of the first year of courses by passing a rigorous exam offered at a variety of test locations in China or on campus at the Institute. Among the problematic factors involved in translation such as form, meaning, style, proverbs, idioms, etc., the present paper is going to concentrate mainly on the procedures of translating CSCs in general and on the strategies of rendering allusions in particular. 2. Translation procedures, strategies and methods. The translating procedures, as depicted by Nida (1964) are as follow: Technical procedures: analysis of the source and target languages; a through study of the source language text before making attempts translate it; Making judgments of the semantic and syntactic approximations. p 2. Interlingual translation or translation proper: It is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. 3. Intersemiotic translation or transmutation: It is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign system. The first type is exemplified by synonyms in the same linguistic code or language, paraphrase or replacing an idiom such as ‘pass away’ by ‘die’ and communication theory into the study of translation. It comprises two eras: first the pioneering era (1949)(1950)(1951)(1952)(1953)(1954); the second the invention of the first generation of machine translation. Any theory should also be concerned with translation strategies adopted to address difficulties and problems in certain complicated texts. Frawley, William, ed. Translation: literary, linguistic, and philosophical perspectives. Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1984. Sánchez, María T. The Problems of Literary Translation: A Study of the Theory and Practice of Translation from English into Spanish. Bern: Peter Lang, 2009. Simon, Sherry. Sengupta, Mahasweta. “Translation, Colonialism and Poetics: Rabindranath Tagore in Two Worlds.” Translation, History and Culture. Eds. Thus, translation follows the same process as the initial creation of a work, defining the initial concepts in a different set of symbols, the words of the language that the text is translated into. Any translation is a work of art. Copyright © ProZ.com, 1999-2021. All rights reserved. Comments on this article. Knowledgebase Contributions Related to this Article. No contributions found.