

PALACE  
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CROATIA

# THE POLITICS OF TRANSLATION

TRANSLATION  
NATION AND  
GENDER

SEPTEMBER 1-2, 2022



Centre for Advanced Studies, University of Rijeka,  
with Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory,  
University of Belgrade



# The Politics of Translation: Translation, Nation and Gender

September 1–2, 2022

Palace Moise, Cres (Croatia)

## **Zoom link:**

UNIRI CAS SEE & IFDT – The Politics of Translation: Translation, nation and gender

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Translation is political because it is a relation, a context of negotiating power. It also dictates an epistemological approach, inviting a complex analysis of gender, class, race, or national and other hierarchies' relations and intersection. It is the opportunity for transformation, for becoming other (*devenir autre*, Deleuze and Guattari), although the political quality of that *devenir* is never guaranteed. As the occasion for a metamorphosis, translation is what Étienne Balibar now, since the conservative revolution that shattered (also) our knowledge system, calls communism. As a praxis of theory or political activism, translation may have to deal with violence when aiming at changes in society or the state.

The presupposition is that, within the plural and diverse knowledges, there is no definitive knowledge, but only temporary proposals of consecutive understandings. The concept of reciprocally incomplete knowledges (Boaventura de Sousa Santos) becomes useful here. Any war is a situation of the collapse of (peaceful and acceptable) translation. As far as Europe is concerned (but the same pattern appears elsewhere, too), the field of a most striking crisis in translation has recently been not only the current war in Ukraine but, above all, the previous systemic rejection of refugees and migrants.

Linking gender and nation is a necessary feature of translation studies. The vocabulary of nation and nationality is directly derived from gender stereotypes and the capacity of birth-giving of some humans. All language of inequality is embedded in basic gender discrimination, as the oldest and most consensual dogma of patriarchy and coloniality. Verónica Gago shows how the political space of struggles has spilt across borders and political issues through the green tide of feminist activism in Argentina and elsewhere, starting from the struggle for the right to abortion rendered political by the mass movement.

Our conceptual apparatus ordaining knowledge is isomorphic with our social organisation and hierarchies. The double front of gender is apparent. The universalisation of a nationalist paradigm is only its narcissistic over-inflation and provincialisation. Everything else is rendered illegitimate and erased from mainstream consensus. It becomes "useless history". Social and state inertia tend to include women as subordinate and to exclude or marginalize categories of "outsiders". There is an infinite variety of such patterns and the capacity of coloniality-patriarchy-capitalism, as a complex (Silvia Federici), to adapt and keep going, also with the help of nationalism.

Participants will reflect on these and other issues linked to the politics of translation.

Thursday, September 1

10–12:00

Session 1

In the guise of an introduction: Sanja Bojanić (University of Rijeka) **Making sense through translation** and Aleksandar Pavlović (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade)

**Presenters:**

**Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Learned ignorance: the gold method of intercultural translation**

I conceive intercultural translation from the perspective of the epistemologies of the south. From this perspective, intercultural translation is an artisanship of practices guided by the ideas of learned ignorance and ecology of knowledges.

**Boaventura de Sousa Santos**, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Coimbra (Portugal), Distinguished Legal Scholar, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Director Emeritus, Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra

**Étienne Balibar, Translation and Federation, a European problem**

This paper offers reflections prompted by the situation in Ukraine and Russia and the connections it has with, on the one side, the “precedent” of the Yugoslav federation and its collapse, on the other side, the incapacity of Europe (the EU) to construct itself as a genuine Federation (or invent its “model” of a federation) as a consequence – among other reasons of course, but they all overlap – of its incapacity to create a “cosmopolitical” regime of institutional and vernacular translations among its “languages” with various histories and statuses.

**Étienne Balibar**, born 1942, formerly professor at Université de Paris–Nanterre and Kingston University, London. Author of (most recently): *Cosmopolitique. Des frontières à l'espèce humaine*, Editions La Découverte, Paris 2022.

**Françoise Vergès, On Speaking of State and Capitalist Violence**

In this contribution, I will address the question” of why decolonial antiracist and anti–capitalist feminism must re–appropriate the notion of “protection” which has been left to the State, the police and the armies. A decolonial feminism cannot conceivably separate “violence against women” or against “minorities” from a global state of violence: the children who commit suicide in refugee camps, the police and military’s massive recourse to rape in armed conflict, systemic racism, the exile of millions of people due to the multiplication of war zones and to economic and climatic conditions that have rendered zones of living uninhabitable, femicide, and the relentless increase in precarity.

**Françoise Vergès** is a Franco–Reunionesa decolonial antiracist feminist. Last publication: *A Feminist Theory of Violence*, 2022.

Discussant: Paul Stubbs

**Paul Stubbs** is a Liverpool born sociologist working as a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Economics, Zagreb since 2003 and editor of a new book coming out soon on *Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non–Aligned Movement: social, cultural, political, and economic imaginaries*.

Moderator: Sanja Bojanić

## Lunch break

Thursday, September 1

14–16.30

Session 2

**Presenters:****Verónica Gago, Translation of struggles: some feminist keywords**

The green tide demanding abortion rights has become an internationalist impulse mapping out struggles and legislation, bringing together a feminist agenda that goes well beyond a demand for an individual right. Understanding the relationship between unpaid and/or badly paid labour and expensive and unsafe abortions enabled a broader analysis of the forms of precarisation of our lives, modes of control in the name of the democracy of the labour market, and ecclesiastic tutelage over desire and autonomous decision-making. I will develop some notes to consider the entanglements and tensions between intersectionality, transversality and translation to analyze the possibilities and difficulties of feminist struggles in the South.

**Verónica Gago** is Professor at Universidad de Buenos Aires, Independent Researcher at National Scientific and Technical Research Council and feminist activist.

**Marinella Matejčić, Reframing and reshaping the feminist narrative: practice is the theory, the theory is practice**

Matejčić in her paper aims at expanding the field of practical translation from the domain of activism to theory and vice versa, through the lens of her own experiences and the catchphrase "nothing about us without us". In the context of the aforementioned translation, an "aha" moment of realization is necessary, a kind of dance between two oppositions, at the border between the theoretical and the practical. The acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge, as well as their mutual overflow and integration, is inherently feminist: theory must be anchored in practice and practice must be anchored in theory. If this is not the case, are we really talking about theory, are we talking about activism?

**Marinella Matejčić** is a culturologist and long-time feminist activist, currently working as a Program Lead for Women's Rights and Reproductive Justice in the Association for Human Rights and Civic Participation PaRiter from Rijeka, Croatia.

**Naoki Sakai, The International World: the Modern Regime of Translation**

In my presentation, the discussion will focus on the individuality of language. How can language be individuated, grasped as an indivisible unity, and compared with other languages that are also assumed to be individual unities? I will attempt a historical investigation concerning the individuality of language on the one hand and the formation of the modern individual world in which individuated languages are juxtaposed to one another. The translation is the instance in which languages are originally figured out as individuals; I will investigate how a new way of managing translation, the modern regime of translation, was introduced.

**Naoki Sakai** is a Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences in Asian Studies Emeritus at Cornell University. He has published in the fields of comparative literature, intellectual history, translation studies, the studies of racism and nationalism, and the histories of textuality. His most recent publications include *The End of Pax Americana – the Loss of Empire and Hikikomori Nationalism* (Duke University Press, 2022); *Nationalism of Hikikomori* (Iwanami Shoten, 2017).

Discussant: Manuel Rebón

**Manuel Rebón** is an essayist and editor at Ubu Ediciones in Argentina. He teaches at postgraduate studies at Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, Universidad de Buenos Aires and Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora. His main publications include *Las distancias del olvido* (2010) and *Traducir(se)* (2014).

Moderator: Sanja Bojanić

Friday, September 2

10–12:00

Session 3

**Presenters:****Nivedita Menon, Translation as a mode of self-making: Psychoanalysis from the global South**

The presentation will explore translation as a mode of self-making across multiple contexts in which we live. Focusing on location in the global South introduces the dimension of power and universalistic, hegemonic conceptions of the self that collide with other notions. I will look particularly at psychoanalysis located in the global South as having challenged such conceptions from the lifetime of Freud onwards.

**Nivedita Menon**, Professor at Centre for Comparative Politics and Political Theory, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, is the author of *Seeing like a Feminist* (2012), *Recovering Subversion: Feminist Politics Beyond the Law* (2004); and (co-written) *Power and Contestation: India after 1989* (2007/2014).

**Nadežda Čaćinović, Found in Translation. The Problem of Cultural Appropriation**

I propose to deal with an all too well-known problem using the insight of “a politics of translation”. Can we or should we condemn cultural appropriation? Hybridity is used as an argument against essentialism and fixed identity, so where is the step too far, and what remains inadmissible?

**Nadežda Čaćinović** is Professor Emeritus, Department of Philosophy, Chair for Aesthetics University of Zagreb, co-founder of the Center for Women's Studies, Zagreb and former president of PEN Croatia. Her books include: *An Intelligent Woman's Guide To World Literature*, Zagreb 2007; *Why Read Philosophers*, Zagreb 2010; *On Love, Books and Talking Things*, Zagreb 2012; *Culture and Civilization*, Zagreb 2012; *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Literature*, Zagreb 2017

**Boris Buden, The Janus Face of Translation: In the time of War and Dissolution**

There is nothing innocent about translation, which is what makes it ultimately political. It helps encounter and understand the other as much as it can make it into an enemy. The talk will address the Janus face of translation in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Caught in the toxic conjuncture of language, territory, culture and (sovereign) nation state translation becomes, itself, part of the problem rather than a solution. Even worse, in the violent dissolution of the existing order, of which it was a constitutive element, translation is used as a weapon, which is why it is of no help in restoring it. Moreover, it may be well advised not to try it. Translation can activate its emancipatory potential only beyond the political and normative framework of the sovereign nation-state and the international order based on it. It might be that the process of the re-vernacularization of national languages and cultures offers an opportunity to do so.

**Boris Buden** is a writer, cultural critic and translator. Among his recent books are “Zone des Übergangs” (Frankfurt/Main, 2009), “Findet Europa” (Wien, 2015), “Transition to Nowhere” (Berlin, 2018). Buden is permanent fellow at the European Institute of Progressive Cultural Policies, Vienna. He lives and works in Berlin.

Discussant: Saša Hrnjez

**Saša Hrnjez**, a Ph.D. in theoretical philosophy from the University of Turin, currently a postdoc researcher at the University of Padua, where he also worked as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow on the project on philosophy and translation. His research fields are German classical philosophy (Kant, Hegel), philosophy and theory of translation, contemporary Marxism. Recently he published “Translation as Concept. Universality, Negativity, Time” (Padova University Press, 2021, in Italian). Among his translations from Italian are works of Galileo, Vattimo, Gramsci.

Moderator: Aleksandar Pavlović

## Lunch break

Friday, September 2

14–16.30

Session 4

**Presenters:****Valeria Graziano, Deciphering noxiousness**

Struggles for the healthcare of the workers' movements in Italy in the '60s and '70s generated a range of radical imaginaries in which health, environmental and anti-work politics intertwined. To make their tacit knowledge explicit and find a common language to speak about health in all its complexity, activists, workers and medical professionals had to develop strategies for converting lived somatic experiences into political narratives, offering us an array of collective storytelling techniques that are still relevant for the contemporary context.

**Valeria Graziano** is a cultural theorist, educator and organiser currently based at the Centre for Advanced Studies, University of Rijeka. She is one of the convenors of the Pirate Care Syllabus project (<https://pirate.care>). Her latest publication is: Graziano V, Mars M, Medak T (2022). 'Local Maximum: On Popular Technical Pedagogy'. In: (Eds.) P. Martinez, E. Pethick, What, How & For Whom/WHW, Artistic Ecologies, New Compasses and Tools, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

**Felwine Sarr, Music as space of Knowledge**

In the context of the multiple crisis, we are facing (ecological, economic, political...) crises and the necessities production of new forms of life; the issue of knowledge production is crucial. In order to imagine and construct different futures, it's necessary to interrogate the enunciation of knowledge paradigms. The epistemological questions of What is knowledge? How is it produced? For which purposes? are therefore fundamentals. The Western epistemology is mainly a logocentric one. Since the Renaissance, the values of European civilization have been based on discursive reason, facts, logic and matter. The Western epistemology is mainly based on written text.

The questions I want to explore in this conversation are these ones: How to widen the notion of knowledge and to enlarge the geography of reason? What do non-discursive ways of thinking teach us about reality? Can we envisage an epistemology of the senses: a non-logocentric epistemology? Can we consider arts: music, dance, theater; but also orality, material production of societies and human bodies as sites of knowledge?

I will focus on music as a space of knowledge (as a powerful Knowledge). The question that I will explore is what music can teach us in our way of knowing the world? And how can the black box of music be opened up to produce specific forms of intelligibility?

**Felwine Sarr** is a Senegalese writer and Distinguished Professor of Romance Studies at Duke University. His most recent publications are *Restituer le patrimoine africain* (Philippe Rey/Seuil) with Benedicte Savoy and *Politique des temps* (co-edited with Achille Mbembé, Philippe Rey 2019), *La saveur des derniers mètres* (Philippe Rey 2021), *Traces* (Actes Sud, 2021), *L'Économie à venir* (Les liens qui Libèrent, 2021) with Gaël Giraud, and *Les lieux qu'habitent mes rêves* (Gallimard, 2022).

**Rada Iveković, Post-hegemonic conservative counter-translation**

Negotiated state hegemony seems to partly dissolve within a now accomplished globalisation. In political movements of a larger and international scope, hegemony may still be attempted, although this may now turn to war through sheer force. Locally, state hegemony is not tolerated anymore (but hegemony of the market continues), as the war seen from the Ukrainian perspective seems to indicate. There is, of course, immediately the counterpart: re-establishing the former hegemony with domination fails and becomes just domination (and destruction) when there is no other option left. All of this requires much political translation, some of which, concerning the preceding unwritten translation contract, I would call counter-translation. It strives to change codes. In language, it boils down to the hegemonic language, which is also the national language. The latter claims to be the mother tongue. Language needs to break free from the obstetric language of the nation.

**Rada Iveković** is a researcher of the Indian pluriverse and of philosophy. Her research and intellectual interests include Asian and comparative philosophies, political philosophy, and feminist theory. Her last book is *Migration, New Nationalisms and Populism: An Epistemological Perspective on the Closure of Rich Countries* (Birkbeck Law Press, Routledge, London 2022). Iveković's book *Politiques de la traduction. Exercices de partage*, with an introduction by Etienne Balibar (TERRA-HN, "SHS" Collection 2019, free e-book, <http://www.reseau-terra.eu/IMG/pdf/-5.pdf>), has been translated in Zagreb as *Politike prevođenja* tr. by Milena Ostojić (Fraktura) and in Buenos Aires as *Políticas de la traducción*, by Manuel Rebón (Ubu ediciones).

Discussant: Jon Solomon

**Jon Solomon** is a professor in Chinese studies at Université Jean Moulin and a researcher at Université Paris Nanterre. His recent publications include: a book in Chinese titled *A Genealogy of Defeat of the Left: Translation, Transition, and Bordering in Hong Kong*; an article in English titled "Wynter Outside: Black Communism, Translation, and Technics"; and the forthcoming book in English, *Spectral Transitions: The Taiwan Consensus and the Ethos of Area Studies*.

Moderator: Aleksandar Pavlović

14–16.30

**Closing panel**

Closing panel – all participants, with the possible interventions of Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes and Brett Neilson.

Moderator: Rada Iveković



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