Introduction

Sandro Mezzadra and Naoki Sakai

University of Bologna, Italy
sandro.mezzadra@unibo.it

Cornell University, U.S.A.
naoki.sakai@cornell.edu

Over the last decades the encounter with cultural and postcolonial studies has deeply influenced the development of translation studies.[1] The study of the conditions of translation, and more radically of what Antonio Gramsci would call "translatability," has led to an emphasis on the issue of power and deep asymmetries between languages, and social and "cultural" groups. The "politics of translation" has emerged as a fundamental topic, even for the more technical debates within translation studies, while the concept of translation itself has been politicized and used as a theoretical tool in discussions of nationality, citizenship, multiculturalism, and globalization.

The relations between translation, violence, and war, to give just one example, have been productively at play in these theoretical developments (cf. Apter 2006; Rafael 2012). Translation can be productive or destructive, by inscribing, erasing or redrawing borders; it is a process, political *par excellence*, which creates social relations and establishes new modes of discrimination. Far from being conceived of as the "other" of violence, translation has emerged as a deeply ambivalent concept and practice. Put simply, translation always cuts both ways: at once a mechanism of domination and liberation, clarification and obfuscation, commerce and exploitation, opening up to the "other" and appropriation. Translation, to further explicate its constitutive relation with the concept and institute of the border, produces both bridges and walls (see Mezzadra & Neilson 2013). To insist on this requires, however, some critical remarks on the ways in which translation has been traditionally conceived of. This will clear the way for a better understanding of the stakes

[1] On "Translation and the Postcolonial," see the recent special issue of *Intrverntions. International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 15 (2013): 3, edited by Francesca Orsini and Neelam Srivastava. Among the founding postcolonial texts on translation, we limit ourselves to mentioning Spivak 1993, considered its importance for the topic of this issue of *Translation*.

of current discussions surrounding the politics of translation and the politicization of the concept of translation.

1. Translation beyond communication

Often, translation has been apprehended within an implicit framework of the communication model. Just as a verbal interaction between individuals is typically and schematically construed according to the model of communication in which a message supposedly travels from a speaker's consciousness to a listener's consciousness, the action of translation is represented in a similar schema of communication in which a message is transferred from one language to another. Whereas the verbal communication occurs between two individual minds through the common medium of the same language, presumably translation is distinct from verbal communication in general precisely because the common medium is absent in the case of translation. Instead, two languages are involved in translation so that a message cannot be deciphered in terms of a common code. It is expected that translation takes place where, due to language difference, there is no immediate comprehension. In this view of translation as a communication, the trope of border works powerfully to make and determine a particular incident of social and political transaction as translation. From the outset, whenever translation takes place, a border between one language and another is given as a gap or distance that separates one group of people from another and differentiates one language from another. Let us call this particular image or representation of translation according to the model of communication "the modern regime of translation." But, the status of discontinuity or incommensurability that prompts translation is far from self-evident in this representation of translation between the preestablished unities of languages. Accordingly, we are led to further investigate the workings of the communication model in our understanding of translation.

We are thus skeptical of the model of communication that underlies the view of translation readily accepted in some translation studies today. First of all, as the tropes of war, battle, or violence capture some aspects of translation very well, translation cannot be simply regarded as an act of overcoming a gap or of bridging a distance between languages. Neither can it be merely an operation of diplomacy and conciliation between national polities, distinct ethnic

groups, religious communities, or political orders. The relation between translation and borders is again crucial here. There is a need to repeat that translation can inscribe, erase, and distort borders; it may well give rise to a border where there has been none before; it may well multiply a border into many registers; it may erase some borders and institute new ones. Similar to the maneuver of occupation at war, translation deterritorializes and reterritorializes languages and probable sites of discommunication. It shows most persuasively the unstable, transformative, and political nature of border, of the differentiation of the inside from the outside, and of the multiplicity of belonging and nonbelonging.

In short, a border is not something already accomplished, something engraved in stone, so to say, but in constant motion and metamorphosis. It is rather in the register of action than of substance, rather a verb than a noun. It is a *poietic* act of inscribing continuity at the singular point of discontinuity. Viewed from the peculiar angle of this constitutive relation with processes of bordering, new and in a way unexpected political implications of translation come to light.

2. Modernity in translation

The role of translation in the epistemic structure of modern colonialism and the formation of the modern state and national sovereignty, as well as in the operations of global capitalism, has therefore been underscored by several scholars, while often the same scholars have emphasized the need to rework the concept and practice of translation as a cornerstone of a new politics of liberation. The very unity of the concept and practice of translation has consequently been challenged and productively exploded. This is the very site where, as Gavin Walker insists, the politicality of translation ought to be explored. What we called above "the modern regime of translation" has been contested, and it has been acknowledged that different, even antagonistic, regimes of translation were prevalent in previous eras and in many regions in the world. What must be investigated is a specific structure of *homolingual address* that characterizes "the modern regime of translation"(see Sakai 1997).[2] The different regimes may also be "homolingual," but the

[2] The modern regime of translation does not immediately imply that it is "homolingual," as the opposition between "homolingual" and "heterolingual" is primarily concerned with the two contrasting attitudes of

modern regime of translation institutes a particular and strict economy of homogeneity and heterogeneity through translational transactions. It is important to note that the "identities" we take for granted in the world today—ethnic, national, cultural, and civilizational identities—are premised upon "homolingual" addresses in the modern regime of translation.

Some genealogical remarks are needed here. What must be emphasized with respect to the formation of the modern state and nationality is the particular role played by the modern regime of translation by means of which the unities of national languages were projected and manufactured. The so-called modern era, which witnessed the emergence of national languages—German, French, English, and so forth in Western Europe, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean in Northeastern Asia, and many others in other parts of the world—is fundamentally different from previous eras in the identification of language.[3]

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the interlocutors: the homolingual attitude assumes that, within the same language—the sameness of which is in dispute—transparent communication is somewhat guaranteed, whereas the heterolingual attitude sees the failure of communication in every utterance, so that every interlocutor is essentially and potentially a foreigner. See Sakai, 1997.

The "modern regime of translation" indicates a different classification of translational institutions. Historically there have been many modes of translation, some of which do not clearly distinguish one language to translate from and another to translate into. In the present-day world, "Spanglish" is a good example of such a mode, which is widely used in North America to link many different groups and individuals. "Spanglish" cannot be accommodated within the "modern regime of translation" precisely because it is neither English nor Spanish. Seen from a slightly different perspective, it is *both* English and Spanish. What is remarkable about this mode of translation is that, instead of clearly demarcating one language unity from another, it confuses the two, preventing one unity of language from becoming distinct from another. Precisely because it cannot be accommodated in the modern regime of translation it is not regarded as a "legitimate" form of language.

There used to be many modes of translation like "Spanglish" in Northeast Asia, and as a result it was extremely difficult to develop the sense of a distinct national language. Our suspicion is that, prior to the development of national languages, medieval Europe was not so different from Northeast Asia in this respect. In the eighteenth century, the Japanese established a new mode of translation, as a result of which they discovered the Japanese language for the first time. When it was discovered, however, the scholars of the Japanese classics did not say the Japanese language existed in the present. Instead, they said that there used to be a Japanese language in antiquity, but it became so contaminated by the Chinese that it was dead by the eighteenth century in their present world. Thus the Japanese language was discovered as stillborn. It is astonishing yet true that people in the Japanese archipelago did not know that the language they spoke in their everyday life had unique phonetics and syntax totally distinct from classical Chinese, the then universal language of Northeast Asia (Sakai, 1991).

[3] The terms "modernity" and "premodernity" are deployed in this article so as to demonstrate that social formations in many parts of the world have transformed in a remarkably uniform manner in the last several centuries. Even though the eras of premodernity and modernity are used to guide our explication concerning the particular values, methods, and procedures of translation—the modern regime of translation—it is not assumed that these eras can be determined with a strict chronology. Our presumption is that the contrast of premodernity and modernity clearly indicates the historical tendency from a wide variety of social for-

In the eras prior to the one we understand as modernity, there was no political entity—empire, kingdom, city–state—whose subject population was monolingually unified. In the premodern eras, there were only multilingual societies, where belonging to a polity was never equated to the possession of an ability to speak a single language. Of course, the multiplicity of languages did not mean an egalitarian recognition of different languages. Language use was always associated with social rank, so that different languages were hierarchically ordered and regarded as markers of the social station an individual speaker or interlocutor occupied, but in the eras of premodernity it was impossible to find the legitimacy of government based on an official monolingualism or of a nativist heritage by which the identity of the individual was determined in the last instance by whether or not he or she was a *native* speaker of the official language. The very idea of the native speaker, which plays the decisive role in the identity politics of national recognition in modern cultural politics, was invented in the transitional phases from the premodern eras to the modern era.

It is evident that what is crucial in this diagnosis of modernity and its politics of language is a presumption that language is *countable*—that is, that language is some being in the world which can be subsumed under the grammatical category of the countable.[4] Here the countability consists in separating one language from another (externality) on the one hand, and juxtaposing these separated units within a common genre (commensurability) on the other. The transition from the premodern eras to the modern era seems to have given rise to two essential conditions to render the monolingualism

mations in premodernity to a comparative uniformity of the modern international world. The chronological pattern of development in one area is so vastly different from that of another area that the historical development in Western Europe, for instance, cannot be said to replicate itself in East Asia and the rest of the world. In this respect, we believe that the developmentalist history of modernization, in which the modernity of Western Europe is expected to be reproduced in other, less developed areas in later eras, is incapable of apprehending the historical situation of the present, in which the stability of the West can no longer be taken for granted. Nevertheless, we also believe that there are a number of tendencies along which each area is transformed. What is suggested by the contrast between premodernity and modernity is this tendency or direction from one polarity (premodernity) to another polarity (modernity).

[4] To elucidate whether or not language is a being-in-the-world requires a lengthy discussion, which cannot be undertaken here. Tentatively, we must be satisfied to say that, as far as it is a representation, language is a being-in-the-world. It is well known that the grammatical category of the countable is limited to some linguistic formations. Many languages in Northeast Asia, for instance, do not have this category as an essential rule of syntax. Nevertheless, the concept of the countable is equally important to these Northeast Asian languages, roughly classified as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and so forth.

of national language available. To separate one language from another is to locate a language outside another and thereby establish an externality of one language to another.[5]

Of course, this process of separation is generally called "translation," which is again a process of inscribing a border. As one can see, the externality of one language and another is necessarily accompanied by a certain practice of "bordering" (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013).

The language unit thus separated, however, is not unique beyond comparison in each case—language A is separated from language B, and language B is separated from language C. Despite different operations of separation, the languages thus isolated—A, B, C, D, and so on—form one common genre; they are commensurate among themselves so that, from the outset, they are posited as *comparable* units in the common genre. In this respect, translation is also a procedure of comparison. To use the terminology of Aristotelian logic, each language is a species in the general class of languages, with the separation of one language from another, marking the instance of "species difference or specific difference (*diaphora*)"; this thus accommodates languages within the classical conceptual economy of *species* and *genus*. It goes without saying that the operation that measures this "species difference" is nothing but a historically specific form of translation, and this particular regime of translation conforms to the design of the modern international world. Translation may be carried out in many different forms, but modernity does not allow for forms of translation that do not accord with the modern international world. Let us call this particular assemblage of the methods, criteria, and protocols regulating the conduct of translation, as distinct from other forms, "the modern regime of translation."

It is important to note that the explication of modernity offered here is not descriptive of the empirically valid reality of the modern international world. It is essentially prescriptive. The regime of translation is said to project and produce the supposed

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[5] It is precisely because of its rejection of externality that "Spanglish," for instance, is not recognized as a proper and legitimate language (see note 3, above).
Here one must not confuse externality with the idiom of "exteriority" or "outside" referred to by Maurice Blanchot and Michel Foucault, since externality is nothing but an erasure and displacement of "exteriority."

unity of a national language, the externality of one language to another, and the idea of the international space in which ethnic and national languages supposedly coexist and are compared. The operation of national translation, of translation conducted in terms of the modern regime of translation, asserts and institutes these components—the unity of a national language, the external relationship of one language to another, and the presupposition of the international space—not on a descriptive but a prescriptive basis.

What this theoretical elucidation reveals is the prescriptive design of the international world. The unity of a national language, for example, is not an empirically ascertainable objectivity; rather it is what Immanuel Kant called "the regulative idea," which does not concern itself with the possibility of experience. It is no more than a rule according to which a search in the series of empirical data is prescribed. What it guarantees is not the empirically verifiable truth. Therefore, the regulative idea gives only an *object in idea*; it only means "a *schema* for which no object, not even a hypothetical one, is directly given" (Immanuel Kant 550 [A 670; B 698]). Therefore, what takes place performatively in accordance with the modern regime of translation might also be called "the schematism of cofiguration." Schematism means a working of schema, so, in this case, it represents a working of two schemata projecting two different language unities between which a message is transferred.

The unity of language cannot be given in experience because it is nothing but a regulative idea; it enables us to comprehend other related data about languages "in an indirect manner, in their systematic unity, by means of their relation to this idea" (Kant 550 [A 670; B 698]). It is not possible to know whether a particular language as a unity exists or not. The reverse is true: by subscribing to the idea of the unity of language, it becomes possible for us to systematically organize knowledge about languages in a modern, scientific manner. And the occasion on which the schemata of national languages are projected is the process of translation, prescribed by the protocols of the modern regime of translation.

3. Bordering the international world

In this respect, the regime of translation, which helped to institute national languages and sustain the view of the international

world as a forum for a juxtaposition of distinct ethnic or national languages, is distinctly modern. In the premodern eras, as we contended above, the population was not unified through the common language imposed by the state; rather it was fragmented into many different kinship lineages, classes, ranks, and regions. Until the eighteenth century in Western Europe and until the nineteenth century in East and South Asia, Eastern and Northern Europe, and Russia, there hardly existed the idea of integrating the entire population under the norm of one ethnic or national language. Consequently some universal languages—Latin, Classical Chinese, Arabic, Sanskrit, Classical Greek, and so forth—prevailed across regions, kingdoms, fiefdoms, and various graduated zones of power and suzerainty. The elite minority was skilled at one of these universal languages while the vast majority of commoners lived in a multiplicity of local dialects and pidgins.

Two points must be noted with regard to the modernity of the *international* world. The first is the historical particularity of the concept of nationality. The word "nationality" signifies the relationship between an individual and a territorial national sovereign state. However, it is important to note that this relationship is mediated by the "nation." The institution of a territorial state sovereignty came into existence in the system of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the process of its "nationalization" took off quite later even in Western Europe.[6] As the relationship between an individual and a territorial national sovereign state, the concept of "nationality" means a formula of identification according to which a particular individual subjects him or herself to the sovereignty of the state. It is a specifically modern form of communal belonging for an individual and, to our knowledge, was not to be found anywhere in the world before the eighteenth century. Nationality connotes an individual's exclusive belonging to the state, but this feeling of belonging is primarily expressed in one's sympathy with other individuals belonging to the same state. And this community of shared sympathy is called a "nation." Even when the word is used in the sense of ethnicity or race, it necessarily implies an exclusivity of belonging. The concept

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[6] For a brilliant analysis and description of modern state sovereignty and the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*, see Schmitt, 2006.

of nationality is erected upon the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between an individual and a nation, and indirectly between an individual and a state sovereignty.

The second point that must be stressed is how the unity of language is appropriated into the assumption of one-to-one correspondence between an individual and a particular state sovereignty. It is through the concept of the *native* speaker that one-to-one correspondence between an individual and a particular nation is most unambiguously expressed. With the native speaker, the possession of a language is equated to the innate identity of the individual's destiny. It is a truism that a language is something one acquires after birth, but against all counterevidence, the concept of the native speaker reconstitutes an individual's belonging to the nation in terms of his or her innate and almost biological heritage. This is how the concept of nationality is most often asserted in ethnic terms, and the ethnic identity of an individual is recognized in reference to his or her *native* language.

In the new international configuration of modernity, there is no room for universal languages that transcend nationalities and ethnicities. It is no accident that all the universal languages—except perhaps for Arabic—gradually declined as national languages were established to symbolize the cultural homogeneity of the national community (while at the same time, due to colonialism, some languages were spread across continents, gaining a status that was nevertheless completely different from previous universal languages).[7] Regardless of whether or not a language is actually spoken by the vast majority of the nation in the territory of the national state, the national language is held as a norm with its use as a prescriptive marker of nationality. The institution of national language thereby acquired an incredible force of command with which to nationalize the population.

For a long time, however, as if to reiterate ultranationalist mythology, it has been assumed that national language is a transhis-

[7] It goes beyond the scope of this introduction to discuss the problems connected with this colonial spread of such languages as Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, Russian, and Japanese. Postcolonial scholars have long focused on such problems and on the related challenges for translators of literary works characterized by the presence of a multiplicity of languages. In the present global conjuncture further problems are posited by the status of English as the universal language of exchange and communication as well as by the emergence of competing universal languages (e.g., Spanish and Mandarin Chinese).

torical entity and can be traced back to the ancient origin of the nation. But as soon as the historical vicissitudes of national or ethnic languages are in question, one can no longer evade a series of problems—how the modern national language came into being in the first place, how a language could be conceived of as an internally coherent entity distinguished from other languages in an analogy to the territorial integrity of the modern territorial state, and ultimately in what modality the national language can be understood to be a unity unambiguously distinguished from other national languages. Once again we must go back to translation, a process of border—or *bordering*, to use the terminology of Mezzadra and Neilson once again—in which a distinction is inscribed and reinscribed between a language and another, a quite violent process of negotiation in which two figures of a language to translate from and another language to translate into (schemata of cofiguration) are projected to regulate the conduct of translation. Let us note that the distinction of one language from another is primordially figured out in this process of translation, without reference to which the very externality of one language to another could not be established.

4. Citizenship and translation

By staging an encounter between scholars who work on the politics of translation and those involved in the politicization of the concept of translation, this special issue of *Translation* attempts to take stock of the theoretical developments and achievements in the field. At the same time, it aims to lay the basis for future conversations and new directions of research. It needs to be repeated that the politicization of the concept of translation in recent years has run parallel to the discovery of its deep *ambivalence*. As Rada Iveković writes in her contribution to this issue, "translation does not guarantee freedom of any kind, and […] it can be as much a politics of conquest, capture, exploration–and–exploitation and colonialism, whether inner or outer." "But politics of translation," she adds, "may be invented." It is in working through this deep ambivalence that some of the main concepts and topics at stake in contemporary political debates can be productively reframed. No doubt, what is unambiguously declared—and this is a guiding motto of this special issue of *Translation*—is that translation is not a matter confined solely to the domain of linguistics.

Take citizenship, for instance. There have been several attempts to rethink the concept of citizenship through translation in order to open it up and delink it from the national norm. Étienne Balibar comes to mind here, among others. In his contribution to this issue, Balibar dwells very effectively on the opposition as well as the tricky entanglement of the "paradigm of war" and the "paradigm of translation" in the construction of the "other" of the citizen, which means of the "foreigner" and the "stranger." At stake in his essay is the emergence of the very opposition (of the *borders*) between "us" and "them" upon which modern citizenship is predicated. While it is rather obvious to think of "war" as the most catastrophic modality of the relation between "us" and "them," the role of translation as a "transcendental" condition of possibility for the existence of reified political identities can easily pass unnoticed.

The essay by Boris Buden is particularly relevant here. It draws a convincing parallel between the scene of translation and the seminal scene of the "state of nature" in European modern political philosophy. Thinking of an original "state of language," within which the "first translation" produces the emergence of distinct languages and linguistic communities, works on both sides. On the one hand it sheds light once again on the deep political implications of the very concept and practice of translation—"All Contract," Thomas Hobbes symptomatically writes in *Leviathan* (1981, 194), "is mutuall translation, or change of Right." On the other hand, it opens up a peculiar angle on the development, and even on the technical apparatus, of the modern regime of translation we discussed above (starting with the important instance of the German Romantic tradition, emphasized by Buden). Simply put, this regime of translation does not merely reinforce the distinctiveness of national languages upon which the bordering of citizenship is predicated. Rather, it contributes to their production—as well as to the production of the "other" of citizenship.

A whole set of questions arises here—ranging from debates on multiculturalism (as well as on its multiple current crises) to the contemporary transformations of border and migration "management" regimes. When considering such issues, it is clear that the role of translation cannot be confined to the one we have just highlighted. It is clear, in other words, that here and now, not in some

remote future utopia, "vernacular" practices of translation are working the boundary between "distinct" and reified linguistic communities, building platforms that enable the daily crossing of fortified borders and are fostering new experiences of identity and "otherness."[8] It is definitely possible and productive to envisage a kind of clash between the ordered regime of translation staged by borders and the translational practices connected to the production of subjectivity, which meshes with migration as a social movement. What Naoki Sakai has called "heterolingual" address nicely captures these subversive aspects of practices of translation, which point to the emergence of a "multitude of foreigners" (Sakai–Solomon 2006). "There is no absolute translation," Rada Iveković writes in her contribution. This impossibility (notwithstanding the many attempts to deny it) opens up a wide and heterogeneous field of social conflict and political experimentation.

While what we can call "homolingual citizenship" oscillates between the extreme of war and a benevolent "integration" within an already constituted and bordered assemblage in dealing with the "other," the heterolingual practices of translation outside the modern regime of translation disrupt this very polarity and keep open both the space of citizenship and the production of subjectivity that inhabit it. This is the reason why a particularly important task today is an exploration of spaces of citizenship below and beyond the nation–state—from cities to regions.[9] As far as the production of subjectivity is concerned, the relevance of translation in the forging of the modern Western subject has often been highlighted in recent years. Both Rada Iveković and Jon Solomon refer to it in their contributions to this issue. It is therefore crucial to insist on the fact that to point to an opposition and a conflict between radically different regimes of translation is to open up a field of investigation

[8] For a rich discussion of these topics, and more generally of cultural translation, see the essays collected by Ghislaine Glasson-Deschaumes for the special issue of *Révue Transeuropéenne*, 22 (2002), entitled "Traduire entre les cultures."

[9] On "cities in translation" see, for instance, the fascinating book by Sherry Simon (2011). As far as "regions" are concerned, translation has, for instance, been key to the attempt to rethink the European space by Étienne Balibar (2009). But we may also recall Gayatri Spivak's reflections on a "critical regionalism," which led her to speak of a "practice of othering ourselves into many Asia-s," making Asia "a position without identity" (Spivak 2008, 235 and 240). Interestingly, she draws inspiration from José Martí's essay "Our America" and from W. E. B. Du Bois's *Pan-Africanism* (217–223), engaging in what could be termed an exercise in transregional translation.

where the very constitution of the subject, itself crisscrossed by lines of antagonism, is always at stake.

While it is rooted, as we stressed above, within concrete practices of translation, our use of the "heterolingual" address here also works more broadly, shedding light on practices and dynamics well beyond the translational and even linguistic field. The concept of the institution itself deserves to be reassessed from this angle; it must open up towards the imagination of a continuous labor of translation between its stabilizing function and the multifarious social practices that the institution targets and that at the same time make its existence possible.

5. Translating capital

As Brett Neilson's contribution to this issue demonstrates in particular, one of the multifarious ways in which the concept of translation has been politicized in recent years lies in its use as a tool for the critique of political economy, or, in other words, for critical understanding of the operations of contemporary (global) capital. In highlighting the growing relevance of "machine translation" in our time, Neilson focuses on two crucial aspects of these operations: so-called "knowledge management," and logistics. More generally, Neilson is keen to register "the link between translation and the production of value," referring to the parallel drawn by Marx in the *Grundrisse* "between translation and the role of money in facilitating circulation and making possible the universal exchange of commodities." This is a crucially important point discussed by several scholars in recent years. By placing the problem of translation within the "political economy of the sign," several years ago Lydia Liu, for instance, mapped some intriguing connections "between the exchange of commodity and that of the sign in Marx" (Liu 2000, 23; see also Spivak 1985, 83).

The crucial point here, as both Neilson and Liu recognize, is the commensurability and *equivalence*—between languages, systems of signs, and values of commodities. From this point of view, it becomes possible to use what was previously discussed as the "homolingual" address to critically grasp the modalities with which capital translates the heterogeneous contexts, ways of human activity and life, modalities of labor it encounters in its "development" into the homogeneous language of value (Mezzadra 2010). How does

capitalism repeatedly sanction this specific regime of translation, according to which it is an act whereby to establish an equivalence between different languages on the one hand, and a linguistic difference represented as a gap to be bridged by translation on the other? The international space of commensurability on the one hand and the externality of one language to another on the other? How is the formula of *equivalence* prepared in the modern international world as a space of commensurability? We think these questions are becoming increasingly urgent today.

One of the ways in which they emerge, as Neilson shows, is the challenge of achieving "interoperability" between systems in the governance of supply chains through logistical protocols. Another way in which it surfaces is, as Gavin Walker succinctly observes in his contribution to this volume, the refusal of the political in translation, of the potentiality in translation of contestation, by the "flattening of the uneven and hazardous *practice* of translation" into simplistic forms of commensurability. Thus, the question of equivalence brings us back to the topic of the politics in and of translation. "To insist on the historical," Walker argues, "is also an insistence on the instability of this *two* [of the contrasting figures in the regime of translation], an emphasis on the point that this *two* is in no way a coherent or natural arrangement but rather itself a historical product of the encounter of translation." What Gavin Walker uncovers in this politics of translation is exactly what Marx called the historically practical character of relation "in which the very terms of its relation itself is subject to a fluid motion, a flux of radical singularity."

6. Framing the world

There is a need to emphasize this link between capital and translation within the more general discussion that surrounds the multiple roles played by translation in the historical and conceptual constitution of modernity. In particular, it is looking at the global scope that has characterized it since its inception, which means looking at colonialism and imperialism as constitutive aspects of modernity, that it "cannot be considered unless in reference to translation" (Sakai 2000, 797). In his contribution to this issue, Jon Solomon proposes to critically consider "the various forms of social domination and exploitation that have accompanied modernity"

from the triple perspective of *capitalist* accumulation (which produces "the subjects of political economy"), *translational* accumulation (which produces "the subjects of civilizational and anthropological difference"), and *erudite* accumulation (which produces "normalized bodies of knowledge"). Needless to say, what counts more is the interweaving between these three regimes of accumulation. Translation, in particular, is deeply implicated in capitalist accumulation, as just mentioned, and apparently it has prominent roles to play in the production of "normalized bodies of knowledge" through what Solomon calls "erudite accumulation."

The combination of these three angles allows light to be shed on the constitution of "the West" through the encounter with its multiple "others"; this necessarily required multiple exercises in translation, linguistic as well as conceptual. Both the spatial partitions that organized the global geography of modernity (from the "global lines" described by Carl Schmitt in *The Nomos of the Earth* to the "areas" of area studies) and the cognitive partitions, upon which modern knowledge and rationality are predicated, bear the traces of these translational exercises. While it is still necessary to investigate these traces and the reproduction of "Eurocentrism" in the present, there is also a need to carefully analyze current global developments and trends in order to grasp elements of continuity and discontinuity.

7. Translation, universalism, and the common

Among other things, the financial crisis of 2007–2008 has exposed the shattering of old spatial hierarchies, the reshuffling of geographies of development, and the emergence of new regionalisms and patterns of multilateralism that are among the most important tendencies of contemporary capitalist globalization. For the first time since the beginning of "modernity," the hegemony of "the West" within the world system appears unstable and challenged. Constructed as "particular" and "ubiquitous" at the same time through the "homolingual address" (Sakai 1997, 154–155), "the West" can definitely reproduce itself, even in a situation in which Western hegemony destabilizes. But again, it is urgent to map the practices of translation emerging in the current geographical turmoil that point to different frames of encounter, transnational and transcontinental entanglement. In her contribution to this issue,

Lydia Liu's reconstruction of the development of "Afro-Asian" writers' solidarity after the 1955 Bandung conference is especially important from the point of view of the construction of the historical archives of such practices in the past. A new theory and practice of translation can help us to imagine new spatial and political constellations that emerge out of the current spatial turmoil, and also test and challenge the stability of the "international world," and the Eurocentricity upon which the internationality of the modern world was initially erected.

Considering the prominent role played by translation both in the production of national languages and in the "regulation" of the intercourses between them, it is not surprising that the modern regime of translation, as we insisted above, was also pivotal to the shaping of the modern world as an international world, i.e. as a world organized around the (legal and political) norm of the "nationality." The Chinese translation of Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law* (1836) by the American missionary W. A. P. Martin and his Mandarin collaborators, published in 1864, is a good case in point, and Lydia Liu discusses it in her essay (see also Liu 2006, chapter 4). Wang Hui also shows very effectively in his recent *The Politics of Imagining Asia* (2011, 233–242) the ways in which this particular translation traveled very quickly to Japan and became an important tool for the disruption of the "tribute system" that prevailed in the region of today's East Asia, particularly along China's borders.

The Japanese elite was already aware before the Meiji Restoration that the tribute system was incompatible with the international world. The Japanese takeover of the Ryukyu archipelago, with the establishment of the Okinawa prefecture in 1879, and the occupations of Taiwan and Korea are part and parcel of the process through which the national norm and the aesthetics of nationality—with its imperial implications—were imposed on the population of the regions. The "translation" of Western international law prompted this process, legitimizing it "on the basis of a new kind of knowledge and new rules of legitimacy" (Wang 2011, 241). It is important not to overlook that in the process of modernization, while the Japanese state effectively undermined the tribute system in East Asia and subsequently appropriated Okinawa, Taiwan, and Korea externally on the international stage, the Japanese national

language was formed internally or domestically. It goes without saying that the Japanese national language was invented through the regime of translation (Sakai 1991).

New borders were drawn in this process, both on maps and in minds. The role of translation in law deserves careful study both in past history (think for instance of the Japanese adoption of the French and, later, German model of civil law, and the British model of commercial law in the late nineteenth century through translation[10]) and in the present (think for instance of the global transfer of the American standard of "rule of law"[11]). In her contribution to this issue, Lydia Liu points to a rather different instance with her analysis of the drafting of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). In reconstructing the multilingual making of that historical document, Liu shows how the contribution of a multiplicity of languages, as well as the translations, clashes, and even misunderstandings between them, potentially opened the *Declaration* to "the radical multiplicity and translingual plurality of the philosophies and cultures of the world, first in its moment of genesis and

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[10] A massive importation of European institutions to Japan was already underway in the 1870s and ran parallel to the development of the study of foreign languages. In the first two decades after the Meiji Restoration, the most studied European languages were English, French, and some Russian. Initially, no one studied German. But in the late 1880s and 1890s Germany became an important country for the Japanese. The Japanese State began adopting German examples in such a variety of fields as constitutional, civil, and criminal law and jurisprudence, industrial engineering and natural sciences, medicine, and the army. It is important to note that the modern Japanese language itself was created in these processes of introducing and translating European institutions into Japan.

[11] There is a growing literature on the role of translation in law, both with reference to specific historical instances and more generally within the framework of theoretical debates. From this latter point of view see, for instance, Hasegawa 2009 and Ost 2009. For a critical analysis of the global transfer of the American standard of "rule of law," see Mattei and Nader 2009. To follow up on the Japanese example, in the first few years of the Meiji period (1868–1910) many Euro-American legal and political texts were translated into Japanese because a knowledge of European institutions was absolutely necessary for the new Japanese State administrators to ensure the Japanese State be recognized as a legitimate sovereignty in the international world. For them international recognition was absolutely necessary, for this was the only way to escape colonization. It was during this period that the Napoleonic civil code was first introduced to Japan, and a radically different institution of family—the modern family—was introduced to replace the previous institution of family. "Translate the Napoleonic Civil Code as soon as possible!" was the order Etô Shimpei, the first Minister of Justice, issued to his staff at the new Meiji Government in 1871. But there was no systematic civil code in the first few decades of Meiji. Many ordinances were sporadically issued by the state so as to establish new civil rules and procedures, but there was no systematic civil law until 1898, when the systematic civil code, modeled after German civil law (which is to say after the circulating drafts of what would become the German Civil Law Code of 1900), was first legislated. German civil law theory was particularly influential in Japan until the First World War and shaped the interpretation of the civil code in its first two decades. After the war the main trend was toward a "re-Japanization" of civil law, balanced by the need to accommodate international—i.e., Western—standards. US influences became particularly important at that time (see Schröder and Morinaga 2005).

then in subsequent translations." It is necessary to keep in mind, as Liu herself does, that this moment of "openness" was foreclosed by the hegemony of the United States of America, which largely monopolized the interpretations and uses of the document. Nevertheless the multiple temporalities and the dense fabric of cultural and political encounters hidden behind the text of the *Declaration* point to a conflict between different regimes of translation which deserves further investigation.

It is important to remember in this regard that African American leaders like W. E. B. Du Bois played an important role in the process that led to the constitution of the UN and to the drafting of the *Declaration* (see Anderson 2003). More generally, Du Bois (as well as the late Malcolm X) interpreted "human rights" in a particularly radical way. One of the earliest African American political texts, David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1830), may be quoted here in order to highlight the background of this peculiar interpretation. "There is a great work for you to do," Walker wrote to his "coloured" fellows, "as trifling as some of you may think of it. You have to prove to the Americans and the world, that we are MEN, and not *brutes,* as we have been represented, and by millions treated" (Walker 2003, 32). Put simply, it was this experience of a "failed recognition," this violent negation of humanity, common to colonized and enslaved peoples (men *and women*, of course), that allowed Du Bois to see in the claim for *human* rights something more than a merely juridical or political device. The "human" itself could not be taken for granted; rather, it was something to be (re)constructed as a fundamental "ontological" stake in politics.

Once we consider it from this standpoint, Lydia Liu's discussion of the roles played by translation in the multilingual making of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* acquires new, and more general, meanings. It effectively points to the potentialities of the very concept of translation in the contemporary discussions surrounding the topics of universalism, universality, and the common. In brief, we think there is a need to even go beyond the notion of alternative and competing universalisms, which risks ending up reproducing the familiar picture of "equivalent" (universal) languages, with translation playing the role of arbitrator and mediator among them, thereby restoring the modern regime of translation for

national translation rather than undermining it. The point is, instead, to insist that the universal itself (as the example of the "human" in the African American experience shows) has to be produced, and to focus on the necessary roles of translation in this aleatory process of production. These roles cannot but be profoundly ambivalent, and this ambivalence (discussed in this introduction from the point of view provided by the distinction between "homolingual" and "heterolingual" addresses) shapes universalism as such. Keeping universalism open (open in translation to multiplicity and heterogeneity) means keeping it accessible to the common process of its production, as a basis for the invention of new processes of liberation. It is here that the "hazardous and contingent possibility of the common," to quote once more from Gavin Walker's contribution to this issue of *translation*, emerges as a fragile but necessary key to the collective invention of "a new mode of life desperately needed in the global present."

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Sandro Mezzadra teaches political theory at the University of Bologna and is adjunct fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society of the University of Western Sydney. In the last decade his work has particularly centered on the relations between globalization, migration, and citizenship as well as on postcolonial theory and criticism. He is an active participant in the "post-workerist" debate. Among his works: *Diritto di fuga. Migrazioni, cittadinanza, globalizzazione* (2006) and *La condizione postcoloniale* (2008). With Brett Neilson he is the author of *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (2013).

Naoki Sakai teaches in the departments of Comparative Literature and Asian Studies and is a member of the graduate field of History at Cornell University. He has published in a number of languages in the fields of comparative literature, intellectual history, translation studies, the studies of racism and nationalism, and the histories of semiotic and literary multitude—speech, writing, corporeal expressions, calligraphic regimes, and phonographic traditions. His publications include: *Translation and Subjectivity*; *Voices of the Past*. He has edited a number of volumes including: *The Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference* (with Jon Solomon) Vol. 4, *Traces: A Multilingual Series of Cultural Theory and Translation* (2006).