Conclusion: Translation, Power and Social Justice

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This book aspires to achieve a balance across viewpoints on power and translation that focus on political, cultural and socio-economic dimensions. This volume has touched on a range of issues which include agency, media power, translation policy, and above all translation understood as a form of commodity exchange. The underlying premise of all papers is that relations of domination and hegemony in translation are channelled through embodied dispositions, the (re)production of social identities, techno-scientific rationality, and the political thrust of capital.

Domination involves the *more visible* aspects of the power struggle, with oppression functioning as social and exploitation as economic forms of domination, whereas hegemony constitutes a *less visible*, naturalised manifestation of power that is trickier to identify (cf. Gramsci, 1999: 306). Jean Baudrillard contends that the intensification of hegemonic power along the circuits of technology and finance capital 'relies on a symbolic liquidation of every possible value' (2010: 35; cf. Caimotto in this volume), but it is perhaps Edward Said who most fittingly circumscribes the nature and dynamics of hegemonic relations as a 'self-forgetting delight in the use of power' (1993: 158). A kind of "self-forgetting delight" is evident at every junction of the libidinal, digital and political economies of translation.

New media and technology are increasingly transforming social identities and relationships, thereby changing the way we perceive and process information. The exponential growth and therefore "cheapening" of information flow, multiplied by the use of automatic translation, has resulted in an unnavigable ocean of data which is too vast to be "translated" into knowledge. In an age dominated by algorithms and economic cost-benefit considerations, however, more information does not necessarily lead to more knowledge or better-informed decisions; rather, this

surplus can be theorised as ‘directly destructive of meaning and signification’ (Baudrillard, 1994: 79).

The information overload we are witnessing has compromised our sensitivities towards crucial ethical values such as truth and authenticity, granting higher degrees of tolerance towards misleading or inaccurate claims about the social and natural world. Traditional media, with their (comparatively) higher degree of pluralism, neutrality and ethical standards, find it difficult to compete with a decentralised cyberspace ruled by algorithms that generates information flows at vertiginous speeds. The information excess and growing massification of automated messages also threaten, to put it somewhat negatively, to purge communication and language off their quintessentially human potential. The virtual world has indeed more undesirable bearings on the environment than is often acknowledged, given that the energy and components required to support the continuous growth of cyberspace are anything but immaterial (Cronin, 2016, 96). The “ecosystem of information”, like that of translation, has been severely disrupted, and it will be necessary to develop strategies to ensure that old ways to manipulate information, and to control and justify inequality, do not continue or even multiply under new technological conditions. In order to fight this growing anarchic cacophony, Cronin proposes a low-tech approach to translation that places much more attention on the *whats* and *hows* of translation, an approach that emphasizes means and processes over calculated end results, therefore rejecting a purely instrumental, commodified view of translation (2016, 32). José Lambert, in this volume, examines the circulation of discourses on a global scale, and he not only warns us against the homogenization of messages across the international circuits of information, but also urges us to pay more attention to the strategies that are used to conceal the transparency of translated communication. Often, translation is rendered invisible in order to obscure the origins of a given discourse and to reinforce the myth of hermetically sealed and monolingual cultures.

Luc van Doorslaer, in his analysis of linguistic rights and territorial power relationships, similarly emphasises that the key role played by translation in complex multilingual societies remains unacknowledged. Language and translation policies tend to be subordinated to hegemonic nationalist and (increasingly) neoliberal discourses, and the topic of translation policy has surprisingly received very little attention (cf. Reine Meylaerts' investigations of translation policy and multilingualism). Language and translation policies have a tendency of disregarding linguistic, cultural and socio-economic imbalances, which has a negative impact on the communicative interaction between the authorities and their citizens. Hence, if *Linguistic Justice* (van Parijs, 2011) is to be attained, a more robust development and implementation of translation and linguistic policies will be needed.

Translation and interpreting are, in many ways, contributing to *Social Justice*, an ideal broadly applied to research and initiatives aiming to facilitate equality and diversity in order to promote social, economic and environmental sustainability (Freysinger, Shaw and Henderson, 2013). Such an ideal, to be sure, is unlikely to be met without free and equal access to knowledge and information (Jansen, Pooley and Taub-Pervizpour, 2011). The attainment of Social Justice will require, to phrase it in socio-economic nomenclature, a globally balanced libidinal, digital and political economy of translation that ensures equality in the production and sharing of information and thus contributes to sociocultural stability. Such a force field of interconnected translational economies needs cross-cultural mediators with an acute local and global awareness on the ways in which they participate in the creation and circulation of knowledge, it needs translators with the ability and nous for subtle reflection on the ways in which their practice might reinforce or challenge local and global inequalities.

In Wales, translation played a central historical role in addressing cultural and political imbalances. Marion Löffler's analysis of translation into a colonised language reveals that

translators into Welsh have long used their craft to negotiate and contest colonial dominance, reassembling, rewriting and reconstructing texts in order to oppose source culture values. Their invisibility allowed them to safely express political views and produce resistant, subversive translations which counteracted English hegemony, and domestication strategies allowed them to erase traces of English values in the texts and contribute to their native textual tradition. It is well known by now that translational tendencies *into* English – such as keeping translators invisible and domesticating texts to adapt to an Anglophone target audience – increase the hegemonic power of Anglophone values (Venuti, 1998), yet in Löffler's analysis of political translation from English into Welsh these tendencies actually function as strategies that *resist* domination and hegemonic power.

Cristina Caimotto's paper equally, yet in even more subtle ways, underlines the transformative potential of translation, in fact its capacity to deconstruct underlying ideological discourses and to promote more transparent and equitable modes of communication. This transformative cross-cultural potential does not require translators to become conscious agents of resistance, because it is embedded in the very practice of translation: the unavoidable semiotic, structural and semantic differences between languages may bring to light discursive choices that were supposed to remain invisible and unquestioned in the preceding text. The construction of polarised us vs. them discourses, for instance, often loses its effectiveness when translated into another language, as logical and discursive contradictions embedded in the source text may, so to speak, "scramble" their way to the foreground. Caimotto's article downplays (but does not exclude) the role of agency, suggesting that, by the very nature of language, counterhegemonic and resistant strategies are already embedded and therefore at play in the very act of translating. As discussed by Agnieszka Pantuchowicz, the power of translation lies in the fact that the translational act makes it evident that meaning is always contingent and negotiable. Translation challenges the transparency and apparent internal consistency of the source text, putting into

question the concept of an apparently untainted original and revealing that ideological discourses and the structures of language are always part and parcel of any act of communication. It is for this reason that the idea of loss in translation should be rejected, because loss implies the possibility of having access to an unquestionable truth; instead, we should embrace the possibilities of gain, the ability of translation to estrange, defamiliarise and reveal new avenues for meaning making, interpretation and representation.

Translation's meaning-making potential is further highlighted by Karen Bennett, who contends that, since our perceptions are limited by categories present in our language and culture, translations have the ability to develop new layers of meaning not present in what is commonly dubbed as a source text. The case of the Bible demonstrates that translations are palimpsests formed by layer upon layer of superimposed discourses, that every translation is at the same time a source and a target text. And discourses, like translations, are negotiated on a regular basis, in a continuous power struggle for the imposition of meaning, in line with or in opposition to, changing sociocultural conditions and values. Since language has no direct access to any external reality, meaning is always mediated by the structures of language, ideological discourses, power flows and (hierarchical) networks consisting of a multitude of agents. Therefore, as Christina Schäffner argues, translation is a socially-situated practice embedded in specific institutional ideologies and values. The cultural turn placed the agendas of social and institutional powers at the centre of research in translation studies and highlighted the more committed and proactive role of translators, but Schäffner's paper also reminds us that translation products are subject to the intervention of institutions, power structures and other agents who are not always immediately perceptible.

Translation activist groups and individuals are certainly contributing to a more equitable distribution of information resources by, for instance, making available in other languages

alternative media accounts or other repressed voices. Social Justice however requires not just an increase in translation growth, but also in ethical sustainability. Translation technologies, in this sense, may have a significant liberating and democratizing potential, but in a neoliberal context where freedom and democracy tend to be equated to deregulation and privatization, the protection of desirable ethical values and core human rights cannot be taken for granted. On a primary level, “sustainable” translations contribute to achieve a form of Social Justice, and they should be accessible to everyone and therefore reside in the public domain. Unlike global corporate information flows which, as several contributions in this volume demonstrate, require anonymity and submission to corporate goals, a sustainable information flow would highlight the role of translators, who would be recognized for their expertise and adequately rewarded for their work. In contemporary society power has been gradually displaced from the political arena to the techno-capitalist marketplace, which is why far more research is needed on the practices of media control in the corporate world.

Roger Baines’ and Jonathan Ross’ papers open up space for new lines of research on corporate control, showing that translation plays a key role in market-driven power dynamics. The control over translation and interpreting in the English Premier League and over title choices by major American film corporations are instances of new and emergent regimes of power. Forged in the marketplace rather than in the traditional political sphere and grounded on the principles of economic growth and market deregulation, these neoliberal regimes transcend geographical and political boundaries. In a corporate context, translation and interpreting are overseen by company executives and marketing experts whose role it is to build and maintain the organisation’s reputation and thus to primarily serve economic interests. Meng Pei’s analysis of the crucial role of literary agents in the selection and production of translations also highlights the need to pay close attention to the networked and economic dimensions of the translation process. The task of

the literary agent is to identify potentially profitable books and oversee the translation and publication process, but key players in the areas of publicity, marketing and sales also participate in decision making processes. Ultimately, literary success is the result of efficient interaction between different actors. Beyond their symbolic and cultural capital, literary agents need to be familiar with commercial imperatives and the ideological discourses circulating within the publishing industry.

Social Justice in translation would imply a more democratic and thus dialogical relation between translator-translated to the benefit of the whole community, which takes precedence over the capitalist logic of commodity exchange. While Toury's idea to regard translation solely as a fact of the target culture helped to free translation and its study from narrow conceptions of equivalence across texts, emphasizing a dependence across an assumed "original" and its translation can have counterproductive effects as it justifies the appropriation of knowledge. As demonstrated by Löffler, this appropriation can work both ways, but translational relationships are in many cases clearly asymmetrical. They are not only rooted in socially grown and thus politically and ideologically charged hierarchies, but above all in the material and thus socio-economic conditions of everyday life. Cristina Gómez Castro offers an example of political enforcement on a massive scale, when during Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) Spanish society and culture was dominated by strict mechanisms of state control which had an enormous impact on translation practices. In order to ensure ideological uniformity, publishers were frequently forced to suppress certain elements from texts, a situation that was ultimately internalised by members of the corporate and cultural establishment and which led to the naturalisation of self-censorship.

If a more symmetrical, and thus hierarchically equal, relation between translator and translated is to be achieved, the former will have to be heard, they will have to become empowered to raise concerns regarding the shape and potential uses of the translated text. Such an empowerment must be driven by a thorough knowledge of historical, intercultural and economic conditions, so in their daily work translators will have to see through the faultlines of tradition, cultural memory and experience, they will need to thoroughly appreciate the contexts of the text, where it originated and where it is supposed to be transplanted. As discussed by Yajima and Toyosaki, such a perspective promotes true intercultural dialogue and will empower both the translator and the translated (2015: 110-115). Maria Sidiropoulou and Ozlem Berk Albachten offer a fitting example of such empowerment. They examine the ways in which a book focusing on the traumatic population exchange between Turkey and Greece was translated into Turkish and Greek. The fact that the preceding text was in English became irrelevant during the translation process: what mattered was how to approach the personal and collective memories that the book would elicit among the reading public in both countries. The experience of the population exchange, initially interpreted from an English-language perspective, was retranslated into the two languages and cultures, and this required the implementation of a number of discursive strategies to ensure that the text would not unnecessarily stir traumatic memories. Independently from each other, both translators adopted a strategy of reconciliation which, without downplaying human suffering, stressed intercultural affinities and acknowledged that pain was shared. This example shows that pursuing Social Justice may have a strong bearing on translation practices: since inequality is based on (socially constructed) differences such as gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, and also economic capital, avoiding such deeply ingrained biases will require translational approaches that establish new horizons of representation, new ways to represent individuals, communities and cultures.

Social Justice is linked to a notion which has already gained much credit in translation studies, that of ethics (Pym, 2001; Bermann and Wood, 2005; Baker and Maier, 2011; Kenny, 2011; McDonough-Dolmaya, 2011; Drugan and Tipton, 2017). There is however a fundamental difference between both concepts. Ethical concerns tend to be subjugated to private property rights which do not guarantee and take precedence over justice or ecological sustainability, and ethical compliance seems to demand acquiescent and complicit translators who reproduce a text according to Western standards. As pointed out by McMurtry, ethical requirements tend to be linked to the rights that rule economic and political institutions, which is why they appear disconnected from the life requirements of human beings or ecosystems: 'The rules and rights by which we live are ungrounded in life and life value and the slow-motion collapse of planetary life infrastructures signals this across domains' (2011: 14). The ecosystem is at risk and, as Cronin argues, it is important to discuss how translation can be re-conceptualised (2016: 10) in order to promote and develop ecological ideologies which contribute to the protection of biocultural diversity. In the face of an impending ecological catastrophe, both Social Justice and translation must inevitably include an ecological dimension. Translators and texts are part of larger networks of relations which include other living organisms and the physical environment. The ecological viewpoint stresses that languages, cultures and the economic arena are not isolated, self-contained entities, because the relations between them are flexible, dynamic and constantly subject to change. The aims of this emerging paradigm are varied, they can be as diverse as translating ecological texts overlooked in the past, retranslating works where nature had been misrepresented or, even, modifying and appropriating texts that originally did not include an ecological dimension (Badenes and Coisson, 2015: 360). An additional objective is to analyse the ways in which nature has been represented in translation and how this has affected our perception of our relationship with the environment.

The ethics of difference propounded by resistant and activist translators and scholars, influenced by postcolonial thinking, addresses issues at the core of Social Justice. Scholars such as Spivak (1992) and Venuti (1998) have rightly emphasized the ethnocentrism of the Western conception of ethics, which reflects deeply ingrained Western values that, intentionally or not, often exert violence on the translated text by erasing otherness and imprinting extraneous values on them. What is more, translation ethics as generally understood by professional associations, companies and scholars tends to be a concept primarily subordinated to the economics of property rights, which engenders the commodification of cultural resources and which maintains perceptible structures of social and economic domination. Against this background, it is difficult to consider ethics as a straightforward tool for social change and liberation, because it simply reproduces and reinforces the current libidinal, digital and political order. While traditional ethical concerns based on the notion of fidelity have been challenged, the guides and codes of practice of professional associations and the contracts issued by translation companies still present faithfulness and impartiality as the benchmark against which ethical compliance is measured (Inghilleri and Maier, 2009, 102; van Wyke, 2016: 549). The key difference between the concepts of ethics and Social Justice is that the latter is not only relevant to the final translated product, but also to its effects, invoking in this way the responsibility of the translator towards society as a whole. To make it easier to share information and build on previous knowledge, translators promoting Social Justice have adopted copyright systems outside the realms of the capitalist logic, such as Creative Commons, which operates through an alternative logic of exchange that resists the commodification of life.

Baker (2006) and Tymoczko (2010), by taking an activist perspective, have highlighted the responsibility on the part of translators in the face of conflict and injustice and the need to consider their own social and political agendas. The activist perspective has attracted a fair amount of

criticism: who is to decide what constitutes a resistant translation and what has to be resisted? Equally important, how can the results of such a resistant translation be measured? These are valid points, but they do not invalidate the premise upon which the idea of resistance in translation is based: the fact that power dynamics are always at play in linguistic usage and that the idea of neutrality in communication is an ideological construct that responds to vested hegemonic interests. This is a complex issue that cannot be established in absolute terms but only on a case by case basis: as discussed by Yajima and Toyosaki (2015: 99), translation may have positive economic effects and therefore improve distributive justice; at the same time, however, the reliance on translated information may establish strong relations of dependency between societies that actually reinforce asymmetrical relations of power. Problematic as the idea of activist or resistant translation may be, we cannot simply return to the notion of equivalence, nor ignore the fact that translation agents are not neutral mediators who work in a vacuum, but active social agents with their own value systems who participate in the creation of meaning and whose actions are embedded in constantly fluctuating power dynamics.

Ultimately, what is needed is a critical perspective which explores how the power relationships established between science, technology, culture, society and the economy determine the ways in which translated communication is produced, disseminated and consumed across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Since these relationships, at least in the current neoliberal socio-economic order, accentuate inequalities and promote unsustainable development – and thus seriously hamper Social Justice – it is also paramount to explore how translation can contribute to a new libidinal, digital and political economy which is not at the service of hegemonic values, but of knowledge understood as a co-operative effort for the benefit of the whole of humanity.

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