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TRANSLATION'S COUNTER-VIOLENCE

ABSTRACT
My contribution deals with the relation between translation and violence taking up the concept of *de-violence* as found in Rada Iveković's work. The basis of the argument is the thesis that violence is not simply opposed to non-violence since both are interdependent. In order to discuss this, I will return to Walter Benjamin in a joint reading of his reflections on translatability and violence. The guiding questions will be the following: Do we need a critique of violence in order to produce an appropriate (political) concept of translation? If translation is not simply a non-violent communication, shall we then conceive it as a sort of counter-violence against a monolingual closure of meaning? By addressing these problems, I will try to outline the idea of "de-translation" as a true systematic violence that obstructs or annihilates the openness to the foreign. The task of translators today would be thus to be engaged in that politics of translation which counteracts the violence of systemic de-translation.

KEYWORDS
violence, de-translation, politics of translation, communication

What does translation have to do with violence?

The juxtaposition of translation and violence may seem contrary to our immediate expectations and may even provoke indignation. What could be less violent than the peaceful bridging of linguistic and cultural differences that we call "translation"? How can the activity of making the foreign understandable be associated with something violent? In these questions, however, a certain representation of translation is operative. The basis of my analysis is that it is precisely such a representation of translation that generates the apparent separation of translation from violence and which results in an impression of their irreconcilability. This means that every representation of translation contains its own notion of violence. Furthermore, it implies that any representation of translation cannot be free of its ideological conditioning. My aim is to tackle such a self-representation of translation as "non-violent", in order to show not only that violence cannot be excluded from any translational practice, but that it in some sense invites us to rethink it.

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In a certain sense, every translation is violent because it forces a separation between the signifier and the signified in order to find a new signifier for words that belong to another linguistic system. It is a violence of separation, detachment and disruption, but also the violence of a new connection, of a new incarnation in a different language. As Lawrence Venuti puts it: "Translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the translating-language reader" (Venuti 2008: 14). The intelligibility of a translation is the result of a violent modification of the original. Venuti defines this activity a "domesticating translation", and it involves nothing less than the "ethnocentric violence of domestication"[1]. For Venuti, this 'strategy' of translation, which corresponds to our common-sense notion, not only exerts violence on the foreignness and the unique properties of the original text, but enacts violence also by concealing this domestication, by creating the illusion of transparency and fluency in order to appear as if the translated text were written in the translating language. This 'second level' violence of concealing the true nature of the translational activity is an eminently ideological operation because what is masked is not only the foreignness of the text, but also its historical, social and political conditioning. In sum, we have here two levels of violence: the violence of the very act and the violence of presenting this act as 'natural' and transparent, as a simple act of communication.

An opposite translational strategy, however, might attempt to successfully recognize otherness and its specificity, such that there would not be any space for violence. This strategy – termed by Venuti as "foreignizing" – cannot however either be simply portrayed as "non-violent". Rather, in order to faithfully express the foreign, the foreignizing translation also enacts a violence on the translating language, which is forced to find a signifier and a new body for the foreign element. The foreignizing translation, therefore, in order to reduce and counteract the ethnocentric violence of domestication takes recourse to another violence, seeking to present the text and its language in its irreducible foreignness. The victim here is the receiving language and its cultural codes. As Venuti explains: "translation practice must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience" (Venuti 2008: 16). Even though this kind of translation practice does not conceal its violent nature, it does not mean that it is free of any ideological function (in *The Translator's Invisibility* Venuti shows in fact how foreignizing translation served to produce a national canon in literature and culture). However, this way of approaching the violence of translation may seem to be reducible to a quite banal claim: translation must either distort the source text or the translating language

1 Venuti describes this ethnocentric translation as inscription, taking inspiration from Derrida: "Translating between the two sets of contexts is violent in its impact on the source text and ethnocentric in its privileging of the receiving culture. The ethnocentric violence, far from arbitrary, coincides with an interpretive act that involves what Jacques Derrida calls an 'inscription'" (Venuti (2012: 496-97)).

(or both), and the translator, put in a sort of Schleiermacherian dilemma, must decide or negotiate the direction and intensity of this violence. Nevertheless, the question of the violence of translation contains much more that needs to be discussed. If the discourse on domesticating and foreignizing translation shows us that violence in translation practice is unavoidable, then it is exactly this necessity that must be tackled: What does it mean that translation must enact some kind of violence? And finally, what do we learn about violence itself by unmasking translational practice in its deviating effects?

Translation and the critique of violence (Benjamin)

The true intrinsic connection between translation and violence can be reconstructed through Walter Benjamin's work. In his essay from 1916 *On Language as Such,* Benjamin already affirms that the concept of translation must be grounded in the deepest level of language theory, because "it is much too far reaching (*weittragend*) and powerful (*gewaltig*) to be treated in any way as an afterthought (*nachträglich*) as has happened occasionally" (Benjamin 1979: 117). The very concept of translation is *gewaltig*, because it possesses a certain force and imposes itself in *any* philosophical discourse on language. In his essay from 1921, *The Translator's Task*, we find further reflections on what is *gewaltig* with and in translation. In the same year when Benjamin starts to work on the Preface to his translations of Baudelaire (even though this text appears two years after in 1923 under the title *The Translator's Task*) Benjamin finished writing another text, *Toward the Critique of Violence* (Zur Kritik der Gewalt). Although these two texts do not refer to each other there are some resonances, as if one text is echoing the other[2]. What we will try to do here is a joint reading of these two texts, passing from one to the another. We will start with the text on violence with a passage where the problem of language is raised directly:

> What is expressed in this situation is the existence of a sphere of human accord that is nonviolent [*gewaltlose*] to such a degree that it is wholly inaccessible to violence: the proper sphere of 'coming- to- an- understanding', language [*die eigentliche Sphäre der 'Verständigung', die Sprache*]. (Benjamin 2021: 50)

This sentence incites a series of further questions: How is language completely inaccessible to violence? What kind of violence is being referring to here? Benjamin immediately adds that legal violence (*Rechtsgewalt*) has nonetheless penetrated the sphere of language by penalizing fraud. Benjamin's intention here is to elucidate the relationship between the violence of the law and the non-violence of the intersubjective coming-to-agreement as a historical relationship. But if we read this paragraph together with his essay on

2 The 'translational' aspect of Benjamin's critique of violence is underlined by Peter Fenves in his Introduction to the new English edition of Benjamin's text, cf. Fenves 2021. We could say that it is the very translation of the German term *Gewalt* which is the internal motion that constitutes the critique of violence.

the translator's task, we get caught in a contradictory conclusion: language as the proper sphere of understanding radically excludes any violence and, on the other hand, translation is a linguistic operation that somehow entails violence. The only way to resolve this knot is to assume that Benjamin does not operate with the same concept of language in both claims: when he deals with translation he does not consider language (only) as the sphere of agreement and understanding.

In the *The Translator's Task* we find a few characterizations of translation as violent (*gewaltig*)[3]. In the first one Benjamin explains the relation between the translating language and its content. By evoking the image of the royal mantle, Benjamin highlights the unnatural, inadequate character of the language of translation which is forced to express something that is alien to it. The language of translation cannot adequately embrace the alien content because the operation of translation opens language to something "higher" and "superior", something that is at the origin of the history of language and its development [*Sprachbewegung*]: "For translation indicates a higher language than its own and thereby remains inadequate, violent [*gewaltig*], and alien with respect to its content" (Benjamin 2012: 79).

The attribute "violent" here accompanies two others, namely alien (*fremd*) and inadequate (*unangemessen*), and is actually conferred to the language of translation (*Sprache der* Übersetzung). But what seems violent or forced here is not only the fact that translation must express an original text with a certain tone of artificiality, but that its language indicates another, higher language. Translation is a violent transplantation, uprooting the text with all its 'natura' connections, its transposition not only to another soil, but to something that is without soil, without territory and roots, i.e., the realm of pure language, "more definitive linguistic domain"[4]. Translation, thus, does not only open the source text toward another language, nor does it simply expose the translating language to an alien element that needs to be rearticulated. It indicates rather a more radical openness that lies at the origin of every language and in a way constitutes the ground of linguisticality itself. It is at the site of this openness that we need to seek the character of being *gewaltig*. Acting violently means here to stir up a process of de-naturalization in the layers of language that tends towards an organic form (like a fruit and its peel, to use Benjamin's metaphor). It is an immanent resistance of language as such, which manifests itself in its 'purest' form in translation, or rather in certain translations – a resistance against the monolingual naturalization of languages. "In certain translations", because this aspect of language comes to the fore only when translation, according to

3 This characterization might come from Pannwitz, quoted in Benjamin's text, who claimed that language in translation must be put violently or powerfully in movement by the foreign language. See Benjamin (2012: 82).

4 "Thus translation transplants the original into an – ironically – more definitive linguistic domain, since it can no longer be removed from it by any transmission, but only re-elevated into it as well as to other entities". (Benjamin (2012: 79))

Benjamin, liberates the text from the pressure of transmittance of its meaning, when Übersetzung is free from the task of Übertragung.

In an important part of his essay, Benjamin addresses the violent ability of detaching or unbinding (*entbinden*) the language from meaning, because it is in this detachment that pure language presents itself, and it is in this capacity that language exhibits its essence.

> Translation alone possesses the mighty capacity to unbind it [pure language] from meaning, to turn the symbolizing element into the symbolized itself, to recuperate pure language shaped by linguistic development. (Benjamin 2012: 82)[5]

The English translator opted here for the term "mighty", but the original word is *gewaltig*: the power involved in this detachment from meaning is *violent*. The very appearance of pure language, in the form of the symbolized and no longer as symbolizing, is violent as well. This should not be understood as a mere violence toward the source text, but rather – as Benjamin himself writes – as a *Vermögen* (ability) that constitutes the movement of languages (*Sprachbewegung*), their transformations, described in other passages of Benjamin's text as one of the most violent and fruitful historical processes (*ein der gewaltigsten und fruchtbarsten historischen Prozesse*)[6]. When exhibited in translation, this ability realizes the condition of possibility of language, the pure linguistic essence which is free of any content. It is an exhibition of the pure linguistic relation, the signification of the act of signifying. This paragraph, which for Antoine Berman contains everything Benjamin is saying in his text (Berman 2018: 205), requires more detailed analysis which is not possible to carry out here. However, what is clear is that violence concerns the origin of language, and this origin appears, even though only in a fragmentary form according to Benjamin, in translation.

Nonviolence (Butler)

In "The Ethics and Politics of Nonviolence", the third chapter of *The Force of Nonviolence*, Judith Butler deals with the ethical and political problem of (non) violence, following Benjamin in his *Critique of Violence,* in which language, as the sphere of understanding[7], is associated with non-violence. Butler points out the link between Benjamin's essay on violence and his essay on translation, and raises an important question as to how the divine word is related to divine violence since both are conceived as 'nonviolent'. Butler writes: "Translation

5 Chantal Wright's translation is slightly different: "Detaching it from this meaning, making the symbolised from the symbolising, rediscovering structured pure language in the movement of languages, such is the unique and violent power of translation". (Berman (2018: 205))

6 See Benjamin (1972: 13)

7 For a more detailed analysis of Benjamin's theory of violence in Butler, see Butler 2012.

seeks to overcome the situation of 'non-communicability' imposed by distinct natural or sensuous languages" (Butler 2020: 126-7), so the task of translation is "furthering an understanding where there was once impasse or even conflict" (Butler 2020: 127). As we saw in the passages above, Benjamin's position is quite different, if not contrary: for Benjamin, translation rather overcomes the situation of communicability or rather translation exhibits the non-communicable kernel of language. This does not mean that translation should not communicate anything – translation as a form of linguistic expression clearly does communicate something; it rather means that there is a non-communicative kernel at the level of pure language that does not express or intend anything and underlies the very structure of any language, revealed only in a certain translational practice. And it is actually in this essential non-communicability which underlies and even furthers languages (as a condition of their history) that we need to seek the site of violence. Judith Butler sees language *exclusively* as the space of communicability and agreement, and presents translation as something that 'helps' or 'reactivates' communicability when foreign languages are put in contact and there is an 'natural' interlinguistic impasse.

Benjamin in his essay on translation – and this is his truly radical point – understands language on the basis of translation, and not vice versa. Translation is not understood as secondary in relation to language. Language only appears as a realm of communication if it conceals its origin in the very condition of translatability[8]. Moreover, language as the proper sphere of agreement, understanding and non-violent communication is *already* a product of imposition and violence (in the same sense as there is a law-instituting violence in Benjamin, we can say by adopting his terminology that there is also a language-instituting violence[9]). Translation does not therefore represent a technique of conflict resolution, an "extra-juridical domain of non-violence" (Butler 2020: 127), but rather a practice that reveals the violent face of what was represented as non-violent.

Butler is however right when she says, interpreting Benjamin's text, that legal violence renames its own violent character as coercion or legitimate force; it justifies its own violence as a necessary force within a certain framework. The same can perhaps be said for the domain of linguistic communication which presents itself as nonviolent but requires translation insofar as this activity is justified as 'interlinguistic dialogue' or 'diplomatic negotiation', a coercion necessary for the reestablishment of communication. This analogy between law and language will be discussed further, since the legal order is actually posited in order to guarantee an uninterrupted flow of social communication.

8 On translatability as the essence of language and history, in a lucid interpretation of Benjamin, see Hamacher 2001.

9 In an analysis of the constitution of the modern French language, Derrida offers some interesting insights concerning the interrelatedness between the constitution of the legal (and philosophical) subject and the imposition of a state language. For Derrida there is no doubt that it is a process of a constitutive violence, the territorialization of linguistic sovereignty through abolishment of provincial dialects. Cf. Derrida 2004.

Benjamin's point lies precisely in seeing the establishment of the legal order as an act of violence. If we follow the same reasoning when speaking about language, then the conclusion is that communication also functions as a 'justificatory framework' that filters linguistic and social interactions, legitimizing some while excluding others as violent. On this point, Butler's interpretation is shown to be limited: in order to preserve the perspective of non-violence she misses the point which connects language and law precisely through the issue of violence.

De-violence (Iveković)

In her works, Rada Iveković outlines the notion of *déviolence* in an attempt to think beyond the dichotomy of violence and non-violence. In this way, the concept of translation is also conceived beyond such a dichotomy, since, as Iveković claims, translation helps to deactivate violence but is not able to provide nonviolence (Iveković 2019: 356, Iveković 2022: 281). The impossibility of guaranteeing non-violence is exactly the reason why we need a politics of translation. The role of the politics of translation is to determine the framework that defines the criteria of both violence and non-violence. However, translation is associated with de-violence, i.e. the de-activation of violence, which cannot itself immediately be considered non-violent. Violence is not opposed to non-violence[10]. Their formal and logical opposition neglects their structural inter-relatedness. Or rather, this formal opposition is a consequence of a certain framework that conceals its inter-relatedness. The very dichotomy between violence and non-violence is actually determined by the legal system of violence acting as a filter, making certain acts acceptable as non-violent while rendering other aspects of violence invisible. This mechanism is very similar to the one explained above where a domesticating translational strategy operates by hiding its modifying nature and presenting itself as transparent. The notion of *déviolence* actually serves to reassess the double face of translational practice (violent and nonviolent) against such a mechanism of concealment and assimilation.

But what account of *déviolence* can we give here? In Iveković's view *déviolence* is understood as detachment, non-adhesion or suspension. It is a sort of non-participation in the violence of sovereignty, a (political) decision to restrain ourselves (by following ancient Indian philosophies, Iveković develops politically some ethical concepts such as *anupadalbdha*). This stance presupposes the ambiguity of violence: violence is constitutive for life but is also its enemy, at the same time generating and destroying life (Iveković 2019: 248, 285; Iveković 2022: 198, 224). Life – in its Benjaminian characterization – stands

10 We can say that the same reasoning is valid for the notion of the (un)translatable: the untranslatable is not simply a logical exclusion of the translatable, it is its negative that conditions translation. Angelica Nuzzo therefore envisages the untranslatable as an act, rather than as an un-translated thing. Nuzzo 2020.

for an attribute of history, because the sphere of life and what is living is defined on the basis of history and not nature (Cf. Benjamin 2012: 76). Violence is a constitutive part of the historical existence of languages and cultures. And maybe on a more fundamental level, violence belongs to that openness to otherness that is constitutive for both language and history. If everything comes from elsewhere, from the other, if one is produced through the other such that it contains it indelibly in oneself – the problem discussed in Iveković's book via Nancy's figure of the intruder – then this intrusion of otherness is never without conflict, force or violence. The idea of the intruder, and of us as intruders, entails an intrinsic violence, rupture, discontinuity. We are irremediably opened and exposed, and therefore invited to translate and be translated. This means a continuous process of transformations, i.e., discontinuities and ruptures, a process of becoming-other, of self-othering that accompanies the encounter with otherness. In other words, a constant discovery of our origin in otherness. The question thus becomes: Is the painful recognition of one's own origin in the other ("*reconnaissance douloureuse de l'origine propre dans l'autre*")[11] possible without violence? If violence is an act that is inseparable from the historical origin in otherness, from the situation of openness and exposure, what are the remedies for those forms of violence that become cruelty and aggression? If it is true that violence, as well as non-violence, are ambivalent and require a determination of the framework of their constituting conditions, it is this ambivalence that we have to tackle and to question politically[12]. The same ambivalence is found in de-violence.

However, *déviolence* also shows its ambiguity when it is associated with translation. It is true that translation is fundamentally a detachment, uprooting, de-identification, but it is also a process of a constant, and a constantly unsuccessful, attachment to other languages. It is also an attempt to 'take roots' in that aerial domain without soil that Benjamin names 'pure language'. In other words, translation does not overlap totally with *déviolence*, but the latter expresses one of its aspects. For this reason, we need another concept that takes into consideration the aspect of resistance to linguistic identification, resistance to transplantation and total semantization within another linguistic framework. But this resistance is perceivable only when there is an attempt at identification and re-semantization, that is, when there is a desire to translate that in this way encounters limitations and generates the untranslatable. This clash of translation with its own limits, the encounter with the materiality of language is what we can term translation's counter-violence. If de-violence 'civilizes' violence[13], by overcoming the dichotomy between violence

11 Iveković (2019: 243; 2022: 191).

12 This ambivalence is also expressed in Iveković's notion of *partage de la raison*, which plays with a double meaning of *partage*: sharing and dividing up. The splitting and dividing of the reason is entangled with its sharing, with the possibility of community.

13 See Balibar 2015. However, Balibar rather speaks about anti-violence, understood as politics of civility, in order to overcome the dichotomy of violence-counterviolence.

and non-violence, as Iveković claims (Iveković 2019: 285; Iveković 2022: 224), counter-violence fights for a new framework, a new relation between force and consent, violence and communication, which is nothing less than hegemony in Gramscian sense.

Divine violence through language[14]

What is divine violence, according to Benjamin? It is identified as revolutionary violence and exemplified in a Sorelian general proletarian strike. Benjamin describes it as pure immediate violence (*reine unmittelbare Gewalt*) as opposed to mythical violence, which is *rechtsetzend* (law-positing), and which institutes the laws and juridical order. Once established, this requires another type of violence, i.e., *rechterhaltende*, law-preserving violence. Divine violence destroys the law-positing mythical violence (Cf. Benjamin 2021:57). Moreover, such annihilation is precisely the task (*Aufgabe*) of pure divine violence. Thus, if mythical violence is identified with the violence of law, divine violence represents a certain type of counter-violence: it does violence to legal violence and opens a space for different social relations. It is not only annihilating and destructive (*rechtsvernichtend*), it reveals the violent origin of every law. In this sense, divine violence is always revealing in Benjamin: it anticipates a new epoch, it is the seed or latent condition of a future and harbours the possibility of its opening. This could be taken as the first connection between divine violence and pure language. The perspective of divine violence is that of *Entsetzung des Rechts*, the de-posing of the law and its elimination, while the perspective of pure language is the reconciliation and integration of many languages in one language of truth, which is not simply a historical language. While divine violence establishes a new historical epoch (*ein neues geschichtliches Zeitalter*), pure language expresses the supra-historical kinship of languages (Cf. Benjamin 1972: 13), their historical end. In both cases they announce the future that is somehow already present in a hidden way. But if divine violence counter-acts the violence of law, dismantling legal order and opening up a possibility of historical transformation, can we then say for pure language as well that it is a form of counter-violence that neutralizes another source of violence, for example the violence contained in the establishment of a normative linguistic order and its borders? Is the translational practice that elicits pure language a violent act which not only reveals the violence at the origin of the constitution of historical languages, but also transgresses the borders of national languages and shows a different history of languages to be possible?

Benjamin affirms that the establishment of boundaries (*Grenzsetzung*) is the fundamental phenomenon of law-positing violence as such (Benjamin 2021: 56). The function of the boundary is ambiguous: boundaries separate and divide, but they also put in contact and make possible the passage from

14 Some parts of this chapter were already treated in Hrnjez 2024, although in another context.

one delimited zone to another. Out of this ambiguity, other functions of the boundary emerge: to control, to block, to filter, to omit and to pass through, to transform and to *translate*. In Benjaminian terms, the delimitation and establishment of boundaries, as a manifestation of mythical violence, is supposed to guarantee the power. The boundary is an ambiguous location of power.

If the modern political and historical order with plurality of nationally defined languages has been based upon the practice of bordering and partitioning individual languages into enclosed and clearly distinguished unities[15], then it can be said that the establishment of such a linguistico-political order was realized through violence (similar to mythical violence in Benjamin's terms). If we follow Naoki Sakai's considerations, then we should conclude that this practice of bordering already involves translation – or better to say, a certain regime of translation – as its essential element. In other words, the Benjaminian *Akt der Grenzsetzung,* as an operation of mythical violence, already functions as a translation. But what would be the counter-act of divine violence here? We tried to connect it with the element of 'pure language', as that ungraspable kernel of each language that appears in translation[16]. Divine violence annihilates boundaries, Benjamin claims, but pure language as well can be considered as *grenzenlos*. As we have seen in the essay on translation, pure language is recuperated in a violent unbinding of the translated text from its meaning, and of its language from the purpose to communicate something. In this sense, the coming to light of pure language is a result of a violent relation to language. But since pure language is a condition of possibility of every linguistic relation, it is also the condition of possibility of this very violence. As often happens in Benjamin, a sort of *circulus vitious* is formed: the result of translation appears as its ontological condition; pure language is the condition of translation but can only be realized through it.

The divine violence of pure language actually exposes each language to another dimension that cannot be reduced to the communicative function of language. What Benjamin in his essay on violence regards as "wholly inaccessible to violence", i.e., language, is actually the result of a certain violent establishment of the communicative order in languages. Contrary to Butler, who interprets such a linguistic order as the sphere of non-violence, we discern its violent constitution. The divine violence of pure language exhibited in translation reveals the violent, incommunicable kernel of communication. The communicative order of language with its demand for transparency and

15 This order is what Naoki Sakai names "homolingual address" that results in the schematism of the international world. See Sakai 1997.

16 It is interesting to note that it is Benjamin himself who in one fragment ("Fragments on World and Time") affirms that divine violence must ultimately be searched for in sacred language: "In this world, divine violence is higher than divine nonviolence; in the coming world, divine nonviolence is higher than divine violence.) Manifestation of this kind is not to be sought in the sphere of the social but rather in revelatory perception and ultimately and above all in language, first of all, in sacred language". (Benjamin (2021: 84)).

fluency requires a certain normative framework of imposed rules which, while concealing its own violence, names as violent anything that endangers its foundation. From the point of view of communication, the incomprehensibility of the foreign and alien appears as violent – translation is thus demanded in order to neutralize this transformative power of the foreign. We can call this particular function of translation, which preserves the homolingual communicative normative order, a law-preserving translation. On the other hand, the translation that Benjamin focusses on, i.e., translation that opens up toward pure language, appears as a counter-violence that destroys the communicative functioning of language and puts language "powerfully" in movement, transforming it by means of another language. In this sense, from a radically Benjaminian stance, to understand translation as an attempt to re-establish non-violent communication would be mistaken in a double way: it misunderstands Benjamin's conception of violence and also his understanding of language and translation. It is translation that reveals communication itself to be violent. Acting as a counter-violence translation opens up languages toward new meanings and a new historical horizon.

De-translation

When we asserted that mythical violence has its own regime of translation – one that operates as *Grenzsetzung,* the establishment of a defined linguistic community that represents itself as clearly distinguished from other equally circumscribed linguistic communities – we had a certain process of de-translation in mind. In the same way that violence and non-violence should not be conceived as opposite terms de-translation is not simply an absence of translation; it is not non-translation, understood as a total exclusion of every translational practice. There is no zero point of translation, as there is no zero point of violence. De-translation is rather a suspension of translation *within* translation, a constant endeavour to de-activate translation, a production of semantic transparency and equivalence against the subversive potential of untranslatability. What does this process of deactivation, or rather, self-deactivation of translation consist in? It consists in a reduction of meaning to a homolingual message, in a semantic closure and exclusion of the foreign that obstructs the generation of sense. In the world of capitalist modes of production de-translation takes the form of reducing diversity to a homogeneous measure of value and entails a quantitative unification of semiotic richness. In other words, insofar as it is one form of translation, de-translation has its own dynamics of violence. In the contemporary capitalist social relations de-translation cannot but serve the mechanism of capitalist violence. However, it would be erroneous to consider de-translation as a process which belongs uniquely to capitalist commodification and the generation of social alienation. We could propose that de-translation is an aspect intrinsic to the very historization of the process of translation. It accompanies translation in all its historical forms and therefore calls for a sort of resistance within the same historical process of translating.

This resistance, which topples the established system of equivalences and offers alternative translations that produce new meanings, appears as a counter-violence. It is at this point that translation can be used as an opener of the shared-partible sense (*ouvreur de sens partagé*), as Iveković puts it (Iveković 2019: 356; Iveković 2022: 281). And it is only then that translation becomes the mechanism in the construction of a common language. Unlike Steiner's figure of the translator as the antitheos that "does violence to the divinely sanctioned division between languages" (Steiner 1998: 349), in a hubristic act of seizing the right to translate against the divine will (something that can be recognized as Benjaminian mythical violence), the truly "rebellious negation" of translators is their divine counter-violence that re-affirms the essentially historical character of languages and its transformational potential.

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Saša Hrnjez

Kontra-nasilje prevođenja

Apstrakt

Moj prilog bavi se odnosom između prevođenja i nasilja, polazeći od pojma raz-nasilja razvijenog u radu Rade Iveković. Polazna teza je da nasilje nije naprosto suprotstavljeno nenasilju, već da su oba međuzavisna. Kako bih ovo razmotrio, vraćam se Valteru Benjaminu kroz zajedničko čitanje njegovih razmišljanja o prevodivosti i nasilju. Vodeća pitanja biće sledeća: Da li nam je potrebna kritika nasilja da bismo oblikovali adekvatan (politički) pojam prevođenja? Ako prevođenje nije jednostavno nenasilna komunikacija, treba li ga onda razumeti kao neku vrstu kontra-nasilja spram jednostrano jezičkog zatvaranja značenja? Baveći se ovim problemima, pokušaću da naznačim ideju „raz-prevođenja" kao istinskog sistemskog nasilja koje ometa ili poništava otvorenost prema stranom. Zadatak prevodilaca danas bio bi, dakle, da se uključe u onu politiku prevođenja koja se suprotstavlja nasilju sistemskog raz-prevođenja.

Ključne reči: nasilje, raz-prevođenje, politika prevođenja, komunikacija