

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

TRANSLATION AND MONEY – A MEANINGFUL SYMBIOSIS

Translation and money are deeply imbricated in many different ways. From the financial underpinnings of translation practice, and the interlingual operations involved in the transmission of business information throughout the globalized economy, to the theoretical roots of the concept of “translation” in the notion of exchange and equivalence, it is difficult to completely dissociate the two. At both the material and the metaphoric levels, they remain deeply entwined, testimony to the human need to transact across linguistic, cultural and, of course, currency borders.

However, most of the discussions that have taken place till now in Translation Studies about monetary matters have been partial and circumscribed. We have books and special issues about financial and economic translation as a specialized field of practice;¹ manuals designed to help the professional translator negotiate the financial aspects of their profession;² case studies about the translations of classic works of economic theory;³ and also theoretical articles applying to translation ideas from the economic forum, such as risk theory and complexity thinking.⁴ But there have been few attempts to bring all of these aspects together in a more wide-ranging survey of the relationship, and this is the lacuna that this special issue seeks to fill.

When we put out the call for the special issue, we explicitly covered all of the above aspects and were gratified to receive a diverse range of articles in response. In fact, the diversity is such that the challenge has been discover links between them and to unite them all into a coherent whole.

Hence, the decision was taken to organize them in a broad spectrum running from theoretical to practical and back again, focusing in turn on the abstract and the concrete, the general and the particular, the historical and the contemporary. Following an Epigraph that sets the tone for the whole issue (**Philip Larkin's** famous poem “Money” translated into Portuguese by **Rui Carvalho Homem**), the article section opens with a theoretical reflection by **Karen Bennett** about the historical analogies between money and translation as parallel systems of equivalence. Building on earlier works by Robinson (1997) and Liu (1999), it traces the rise of the universal equivalent from its appearance in the Hellenistic Empire, and growing respectabilization in the mercantile climate of Early Modern Europe, to its apex in the age of the gold standard and the prescriptive dictionary tradition, before it finally gave way to the uncertainties of floating currencies and floating signifiers in the second part of the twentieth century. The article is particularly attentive to the moral alarm that universal equivalence provoked in philosophers like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas

¹ For example, Barbin and Monjean-Decaudin (2019), Biel and Sosoni (2017) and Gallego-Hernández (2015).

² For example, Durban (2010) and Gouadec (2010), reviewed here by Phillippa Bennett and Aloísio Ferreira respectively.

³ For example, Musto and Amini (2018) on the translation history of Marx's *Capital* or Tribe (2014) on Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

⁴ For example, Marais & Meylaerts (2018); Pym, (2017); Neves (2019).

and Karl Marx, as well as contemporary manifestations of the same concern in arguments about untranslatability (e.g. Apter, 2013) and “eco-translation” (e.g. Cronin, 2017). By highlighting the historical parallelisms between discourses about money and discourses about translation, the article seeks to demonstrate that the analogies between them run deeper than mere metaphors, telling us something important about the values that have governed Western culture at different points in time

The next article, by **Sabeur Mdallel**, continues the historical theme but shifts to the Middle East, with a study of the Arabic translation movement of the eighth to the tenth centuries. Based in Baghdad under the Abbasid caliphate, this was the largest translation effort ever in terms of its scope, yielding versions in Arabic of almost all the (non-religious) Greek and Hellenistic scholarship that was available in late antiquity, as well as works from other cultures such as Persia and India. Taking as a starting point the exceptional remuneration that the translators enjoyed (the Banū Mūsa brothers apparently paid an in-house translator 500 dīnārs a month, the equivalent of 132,000 USD in today's terms, while al-Ma'mūn, the seventh Caliph of the Abbasids, paid the weight of the book in gold), Mdallel explores the reasons for this remarkable added value, concentrating particularly on the motivations of the various patrons and sponsors and the material underpinnings of the endeavour. He concludes that, as the Arabic empire reached its territorial limits, translation was not only a response to specific (tangible and symbolic) needs, but also a new means of appropriating the other, a way of capturing the infidels' spirit and knowledge without actually taking their lives. However, it would not have been possible had there not been a material and institutional infrastructure that stimulated the acquisition of books and creation of libraries, generating an intellectual culture that valued and encouraged the pursuit of knowledge by all members of Abbasid society.

Abeer Khatoon's article remains in the Middle East but shifts the attention to the iconography of Syrian banknotes, understood as translations of a nation at war. Focusing on the issue of new 500-, 1000-, 2000- and 5000-pound notes in the context of the ongoing Syrian conflict, the article addresses the power of abstract icons to reinforce and/or deflate questions of power and representation, and offers insights into the (re)fashioning of national identity at a time of political crisis. We learn, for example, how images glorifying Syria's ancient history (like the city of Palmyra) and/or markers of modern development (like the oilfields of Deir ez-Zor or the Tabqa dam) had to be abandoned when those territories fell into the hands of enemy militias; how the pan-Arab narrative popularized under Hafez al-Assad was abandoned in favour of symbols of national unity under his son Bashar; and particularly how the new 2000- and 5000-pound notes, issued in response to the galloping inflation, provoked controversy with the political implications of the images chosen.

Peter Sandrini's paper, which follows, is the first of three articles that look at the impact of financial and economic matters on translators' lives. It focuses particularly upon the economic impacts of translation technology, proposing a model to account for the depreciation of skills caused by such developments (the translators' “obsolescence cycle”),

and highlighting the need for translators to adapt and reconfigure their expertise by shifting towards more managerial (advisory, supervisory or planning) roles. It argues that more attention should be given to translation policy in areas such as ideology, organization, technology, quality and human resources, as a way of avoiding inefficient ad-hoc translation practices, and predicts that translator training programmes will be challenged to shift their emphasis from production-focused models towards the formation of translation policy experts capable of setting up a translation infrastructure within a company or an organisation. In this way, Sandrini concludes, translators will be better able to integrate into business processes, allowing the management of multilingual communication to fully take advantage of all forms of technological support.

Marco Neves's article explores the issue of double taxation, a problem that affects translators with clients in countries other than their country of residence, and translation companies that work with foreign suppliers. Beginning with a practical analysis of the difficulties caused by a particularly opaque document required by the Portuguese tax authorities to overcome the problem (the 21-RFI double taxation form), it goes on to examine the translational procedures required to make the form intelligible to those agents that require it, in doing so, contributing to the much-touted expansion of the traditional interlingual conceptualization of translation to include intralingual, inter-epistemic and even human-machine operations. The final part of the article uses complexity theory to connect these two aspects, demonstrating how even seemingly mundane documents such as a tax form can provide valuable insights into the complexity of translation processes.

Armando Magaia's article reports the results of an empirical study investigating the financial challenges affecting translators and interpreters in Mozambique. By means of a survey questionnaire, qualitative and quantitative data was collected with a view to building a profile of such professionals and gauging the levels of financial security they enjoyed. The results show that they are mostly young adults, who offer freelance services on a part-time basis while holding down a full-time job elsewhere, and that few of them have a pension scheme. The author concludes by suggesting that these insights might be used in the planning of translation and interpreting courses in order to equip students with skills beyond their immediate field of expertise and enhance their graduate employability.

The next article, by **Marie-France Guénette**, is concerned with training translators to work with economic and financial texts. Drawing on examples from the Canadian financial sector, it discusses the challenges raised for translators in four main areas: macroeconomics and regulation, accounting, banking and investments, and insurance. Each area is described in detail, with examples of text types, resources, and necessary skills, and once again, recommendations are made about the type of content that could be integrated into translator training with the goal of making this subspecialty accessible to those who do not qualify as subject matter experts.

The final article of the issue, by **Emily Duffy**, resonates with the very first one in its concern with translation as a form of (taboo) transaction. Taking as a starting-point Martha

Nussbaum's (1998) observations about the medieval objections to philosophizing for money ("it should be a pure spiritual gift, and it is degraded by the receipt of a wage") and its similarities with sex work, it explores the analogies between translation and erotic labor, suggesting that the marginal nature of both may have to do with a cultural aversion to alterity or otherness. After tracing the erotic dimensions of translation as depicted through theory and metaphor, it discusses the figure of the yoginī from Hindu Tantric religion, and the colonial construct of the "sleeping dictionary", before closing with examples from the contemporary intersections of translation, global commerce, and sex work. Sex workers, Duffy concludes, should not be framed as trafficking victims or dangers to society, but rather as agents of change, or indeed translators, who make meaningful contributions to the circulation of information and development of global thought.

All of these eight articles, together with the two book reviews that follow, illuminate different facets of the symbiosis that has always existed between translation and money, proving that their relationship is far complex than single-dimension analyses allow.

Karen Bennett

REFERENCES

- Apter, E. (2013) *Against world literature: on the politics of untranslatability*. London: Verso
- Barbin, F. and Monjean-Decaudin, S. (eds.) (2019) *La traduction juridique et économique. Aspects théoriques et pratiques*. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Biel, Ł. and Sosoni, V. (eds.) (2017) 'The translation of economics and the economics of translation', Special issue of *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 25(3).
- Durban, C. (ed.) (2010) *The prosperous translator: advice from fire ant and worker bee*. FA&WB press.
- Gallego-Hernández, D. (ed.) (2015) *Current approaches to business and institutional translation*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Gouadec, D. (2010) *Translation as a profession*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.
- Liu, L. (ed.) (1999) *Tokens of exchange: the problem of translation in global circulations*. Duke University Press.
- Marais, K. and Meylaerts, R. (eds.) (2018) *Complexity thinking in translation studies: methodological considerations*. London: Routledge.
- Musto, M. and Amini, B. (eds.) (2018) *Routledge handbook of Marx's capital: a global history of translation*. London: Routledge.
- Neves, M. (2019) 'Antifragile tactics for translators—a primer', *transLogos Translation Studies Journal*, 2(2), pp. 27–47.
- Nussbaum, M. (1998) "'Whether from reason or prejudice": taking money for bodily services', *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 27, pp. 693-724.
- Pym, A. (2017) 'Translation and economics: inclusive communication or language diversity?', *Perspectives - Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 25(3), pp. 362–377.
- Robinson, D. (1997) 'Translation and the repayment of debt', *Delos*, 7(1), pp. 10–22.
- Tribe, K. (2014) *A critical bibliography of Adam Smith*. London: Pickering and Chatto.