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## Transborder translating

Translation is a form of resistance, but also "the original mother tongue of humankind". With a broad interpretation of the concept of translation, Rada Ivekovic looks at the principles, concepts and symbolic values of borders and boundaries.

The following is not a historical approach, but rather starts from a more "abstract" cultural ("but not cultural studies") and philosophical perspective while not forgetting the physicality of partition, colonialism or war, dealing with principles, concepts, symbolic values of borders/boundaries; and suggesting "translation" as the way of dealing with it in a gender-democratic spirit. It is also not about concrete borders being drawn, though examples can be given from the Balkans or South Asia. Rather, it is a general philosophical or anthropological approach with only hints and references to localities with a possible comparison with other areas of the world, looking for the commonalities in the mechanism. The underlying idea is that these mechanisms of constructing borders as softer or harder are pretty much the same in principle, though the local conditions may be different. The idea of "translating between cultures" as an open-ended relational and reciprocal gesture of freedom putting into question the "translator" and the "original" itself will be opposed to the limiting and communalist arrogant idea of a "dialogue between cultures" (translation-as-violation), often proposed by a more or less benevolent multi-culturalist approach. The violence in redrawing boundaries comes from discontinuing communication and exchange and from giving up the constant relational dynamic tension maintained in the rapport of translating as an attitude. Such a premature shutting down of alternative histories, which is also a linguistic closure, means, at the level of languages, suppressing the diverse, constructing un-translatabilities and incomprehension, forcing separation between related idioms: constructing otherhood and striving to expulse it outside the "system", or outside the "good world".

### What is translation?

Translation is a theoretically problematic concept.<sup>1</sup> I oppose it to the concept of "dialogue" as it appears in some contexts where it forces an apparently symmetrical dichotomy, but really hides a hierarchy. I mean here the idea of a "dialogue between cultures" (implying closed communities with defined borders as agencies), as opposed to *contextual translation* among individuals and languages. Translation, as I see it here (not in the narrow sense), is a vital form of resistance (through the *differential* critical expression of differences) to the hegemonic lines of imposition of *the* meaning (of a meaning). In this sense, translation is transformation inherent in life as a whole and governing not only that part of it which is language. Translation is therefore also a possible vehicle of power (or of powerlessness). It disposes of a whole array of degrees, nuances, divergences; a range of (im)possibilities, of traversals of meaning.

Translation is the exchange between different forms of being or existing. Contrary to what we (wrongly) believe with regard to textual translation, rendition actually flows both ways, it is a reciprocity, even when not acknowledged. Paul Gilroy builds the concept of *Black Atlantic* upon the two-way translation of which one direction only – from North to South, from White to Black Atlantic – is recognised.<sup>2</sup> This is why every translation is imperfect and incomplete – but could the same thing not be said of every "original"? In other words, there always remains something untranslated. It is the price and the reserve of comprehension and translation, which is possible in theory but always more or less ruled out in practice. There is no such thing as exhaustive translation or word-to-word univocal translation.

But does "untranslated" necessarily imply "untranslatable"? What appears to me to be problematic is to claim that there is such a thing as a principled untranslatability, borders that cannot be crossed, like a fatality; or indeed that there should be thoroughly reliable translatability. The limits of the sayable can be modified. But, as we have learnt from Nagarjuna, the concept of "translatable" will come to us only in the binary with "untranslatable". And the fact of co-conceiving the translatable and the untranslatable, and indeed being unable to imagine either without the other, provides access to a "middle way", and also the possibility of getting beyond seeing dichotomy as an ultimate horizon or blockage. Between two terms, two languages or two cultures, there is always the possibility of a relatively successful mediation or translation – one that is insufficient but still offers hope by half-opening the door to a meaning. Meaning happens in-between, in relation, at least as translation of an inner sense to a communicable discursive sense. *Translation is no more than an opening-up of meaning*, crossing the line, and never a promise of exhaustiveness. But isn't life so too? And yet one cannot speak of identity between the two terms, languages or cultures in question, country-to and country-from, even in the case of successful translation. There is correspondence, approximation, comprehension even, resemblance but no identity. Difference is included or maintained in the translation. But perhaps this is the price of its success, imperfect (and thus still necessary) as it may be. The price of translation. In the best case, translation runs both ways, and crosses borders all the time: translation is necessarily transborder.

Besides seeing it as resistance, I would like to suggest that *translation is the original mother tongue* of humankind, in the sense that there is no language that does not reach out to the other (self; person, or group) and intend meaning even when monologic, as well as meaning a technique of negotiation and a strategy of survival in common and in integration. The concept of translation as the mother tongue implies the *border as your country*. People can have borders for their countries for different reasons, willingly or compelled. Most have no choice and in that sense borders are not to be celebrated. It is an unstable and uncomfortable position, a tragic one, when not chosen. For most of the migrant and undocumented population today, the various refugees and exiles, it is far from being sexy. For the elites, including ourselves, but also for non nationalists or non fundamentalists in general, it may be an escape from nationalist or "cultural" ghettos. The relationship to transborder translation, as well as to borders *tout court*, then, is very ambiguous. You need to learn living at the border as in permanent challenge and insecurity. Is there anything else in Palestine/Israel *but* the border? The whole surface of the countries has become an all-encompassing border, a death trap. Borders are also states of exception. Through their extension to situations like the last mentioned, they tend to become *permanent exceptions*. This state of *exception*, becoming nowadays the *rule* and dangerously inverting the scheme of the saying that the exception

confirms the rule – now indicates that the *exception of the untenable has spread so as to become the rule*: as borders in Europe "disappear", some much more terrible borders appear elsewhere, everywhere and tend to generalise. Borders expand, extend with centres of detention, of retention, spaces retrieved from publicity, withdrawn from public space, as the space between them shrinks. This is a situation unknown before globalisation: fortress Europe, open camps for undocumented "aliens" in different European countries, boat-people crossing the Mediterranean to a well guarded southern border, internment and filing of foreigners, the Israeli wall against Palestine, the USA wall facing Mexico, torture, humiliation and ill-treatment of prisoners in Iraq by the US Army and coalition forces, Guantanamo (a space out of all legal and legitimate spaces) – all that is quite up to the level of the now almost "benign" Berlin Wall and various Gulags, because there is no more checking, no translation, and no double meaning, no reading between the lines in this new era of Newspeak. This is our situation today, which won't allow us to idealise borders.

Apart from that, translation is complicated by all sorts of circumstances, and in particular by the context. It is also thorny due to the relationship of the two things to be translated, which is necessarily a relationship of inequality in the sense that one of them is translated into the idiom of the other, thus creating a typical situation of *différend*.<sup>3</sup> There remains something *unsaid* in this situation, or again there is a "transborder" residue of what has no language; which is more or less the same thing as saying that there is something *unheard*, an inaccessible space – a *no-woman's land*. It is the body and the order of bodies. This basic inequality, which is already political (before there is any such thing as politics), can still be aggravated by historical circumstances that have made one of the two terms of the relationship – dominant. Since Foucault, at least, but also as a result of work done by anthropologists and psychoanalysts, we know that in the last analysis *it is a question of the body*. And there are other disciplinary, and undisciplined, approaches, such as feminist theory, post-colonial studies etc., which tell us that what cannot be articulated or understood in conventional language also comes from the other, from the "untranslatable" transborder side – for example the Black Atlantic, from the immediate experience of repression, the limit of which is also very much the body. It is the somehow *with* the body, or within the body, that there remains an inviolable space, the transborder body not exhausted in itself or by violence.

All of this boils down to the idea that translation involves bodies and movement; and this is the sense, both extended and restricted, in which I am using it here. An instance of organ-transplantation/intrusion-of-another-body would in this respect be no more than an extremely dramatic individual case in point. And it is in this "primary" sense that I will now take up the theme of the *politics of translation*, through our position as (female) mediators, both translators and translated. In this paradoxical position of holding both sides of the stick<sup>4</sup> it is however not easy (and traditionally, not allowed) to tackle the fundamental question of the more general political circumstances of translation/intrusion. I will also take the opportunity to project another exercise in intermediacy, above and beyond what has just been put forward, namely that which could take shape between "Western" philosophies and certain concepts to be found in "Indian" philosophies. What is to be translated is not texts, but contexts. And what encourages me to do so is the *crisis*, the critical situation in which the body finds itself; because the body (chronically always, but acutely – often), discovering itself called into question, heads towards translation, communication or transformation, as the only way out. It is the body, for its life, that grasps toward translation. It is apparently (above all) the crisis that

puts us in a condition of translation and opens us up to a new meaning. A border invites a transborder situation and lives by it, as well as vice-versa. The "identities", spread on both sides of the line of partition/division (*partage* in the French double sense) then.<sup>5</sup> On another level, Veena Das, talking about analogous situations, used the term "critical events"<sup>6</sup>.

Neither of the two extreme positions, i.e. to say that languages or cultures can be translated, or that they cannot, seems viable if it is to be the only one. Experience teaches us that translation always takes place, and is always unsatisfactory. The feeling of imperfection or incompleteness that results from every attempt at translation is not confined to this experience alone. More profoundly, it characterises the human condition, the existential paradox of being at once mortal and destined for immortality, at once *limited* and *unlimited*. No language, no translation, no "inter-pretation" can express this completely, because that process is never closed. Our condition, our origin, our final state is situated neither in the term to be translated nor in the result of the translation, but rather in this unbearable, intolerable *inter-*, *between-two* that we nonetheless tolerate: the border, the transborder situation. It is the paradox of having a body and not being reducible to it, but not being able to live or think without it either. It is true that this condition could change when we (but who is "we"?) get to the point of thinking without bodies,<sup>7</sup> and it may be that we (?) are approaching that point. But I will not speculate on this ideal identity between the self and (one)self, whose will and effects of violence I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Translation (and life itself) takes place in this un-conditional, this imperative of the *animated body*.<sup>9</sup> As such, translation is no more than a *relationship*, being nothing in itself and without its terms. It is thus the line between life and death that keeps life on, that allows for translation and movement. It is never "only" a question of the body, but also of the way in which the condition of the being is enfolded by it (*without*, but also *with*, organs; anatomy or not), and reciprocally, but not symmetrically, a certain "translation" lies in the way that the prism of the psychical, social and historical refracts the body. In this sense, we will always have been a graft of ourselves as other, overcoming our own bodily borders. And grafts can add onto others, thus complicating things, as Jean-Luc Nancy shows in *L'Intrus*.<sup>10</sup> Life grows out of life, however "imperfect". Not only is *animated corporality* the condition of translation, but it makes translation necessary: there is no situation other than translation; there is no pure "natural" state that is still untranslated or unreflected. Even total incomprehension demonstrates this. To imagine a state (of language, or civilisation) *before* all translation and transborder movement<sup>11</sup> would be like imagining a body without a "soul", a pure nature, or biological sex clearly distinct from gender, outside of all mediation. This would mean falling into the nature-culture, sex-gender, female-male, subject-object, interior-exterior dichotomy. It would also mean imagining that, in the dyad, the two terms could be equal, symmetrical, and without any implicit hierarchy. Culture is first and foremost a matter of translation, even within a given language. But language (re)produces – and thrives on – not only differences and borders, but also inequalities. Any border is indeed *ineffable*, because it is a crossing line, a vanishing meeting point and because it is nothing in itself, being all in a relationship of the twain that tries hard to build separate and autonomous identities.

Translation is preceded by many experiences of mediation, and many *intimidating* obstacles, attempts at establishing borders. Is the most difficult thing not to translate from the interior to the exterior, in other words to expose oneself to others – to go from the *intimate* dimension to the public dimension, to cross the line and overcome the inhibition? And is it not characteristic of a

hegemonic force to want to keep for itself the codes of exclusive translation, and of all interpretation, or to want to give a definitive connotation? One might give as an example the Western Universal will to power (more and more, nowadays, that of the United States), but also every other attempt to impose a single meaning by force (all totalitarianism, all fundamentalism); which would mean *putting a stop to* translation and displacement, and compressing time: and this is already violence.

## The Balkans<sup>12</sup>

While speaking of the Balkans, I mainly bear in mind the Yugoslav space because I am more familiar with it and because the logic of violence that has been animating it for over a decade in its action and state building now has rendered more explicit and maybe more readable the mechanisms of boundary–construction, but I think the same applies elsewhere too. I will take the "Balkans" to mean an *identity non–identical with itself*, in its turn full of multiple identities in the making. What is "identity" anyway? It is an excess of self, an appropriative positioning, and one that needs to construct alterity in order to build itself. The more shaky the identities, the more they are in the making, the more borders become insecure and a source of violence. As Maria Todorova shows in her book in the particular case of a would–be "Balkan identity", it is a particularly *unstable* one, one where de–identification is at work all the time through a complex process of *othering* – othering being curiously enough at the source of self and of identity. Any territorialisation takes that shape, and any territorialisation is made up of plentiful de–territorialisations of course (Deleuze) and the shifting borders. But where dramatic re–territorialisations take place, through cultural, political or other re–definitions or through and after wars – borders and boundaries are being produced in excess.<sup>13</sup> Borders and boundaries are produced with both the intent to separate and identify restrictively, as well as with the simultaneous claim to overcome and identify at a higher level or to reach out for some wider identity. Europe is being constructed in this way, through its outer border reproducing constantly inner though local and confined, bordering, fragmentation. It may be strange to discover that culture can be, in such a context, an instrument of aggression in the sense of identity–building: under this guise, culture becomes naturalised, essentialised, instrumental, and operates exactly as the concept of "nature" in the context of *reason split without sharing* (*podijeljeni um*). Bigger integration movements (the European Union, globalisation), produce at the other end corresponding fragmentation. These reciprocal processes contain attempts at translation too, and greater integrations necessarily have mediating processes of translation. A democratic culture would have more of it, a non–democratic one less. But we now see how translation as well as transbordering involves moving along the vertical of an already existing hierarchy.

In my terminology, culture becomes essentialised in cases when translation is not attempted, and it can prepare for war, though not all communities, not all states, will necessarily start from there. But within the general world–wide ethnicisation, it is true that "culture" is used more and more often to denote things like religion, nature, difference etc. It actually means a general distrust of the universal. The latter is rather a feature of the globalised post–modern and post–colonial world, whereby pockets of "pre–modernity", of "tradition" or of "under–development" as it once used to be called, coexist within the planet now identical to itself under the auspices of Coca–Cola.

The idea of "translating, between cultures" as an open-ended relational and reciprocal gesture of freedom putting into question the "translator" and the "original" itself can be opposed to the somewhat limiting and communitarian (communalist) arrogant idea of a "dialogue between cultures" (translation-as-violation), often proposed by a benevolent yet limited multi-culturalist approach. I see one such example in the French – limited – concept of Francophonie. Non-translation means the preclusion of *alternative history* or histories. Such a premature shutting down of *alternative histories*, which is also a linguistic closure, means, at the level of languages, pulling away from the diverse, it implies non-communication, constructing un-translatabilities and incomprehension, forcing separation between related idioms (Serbian and Croatian, or Hindi and Urdu): constructing otherhood and striving to expulse it outside the "system", or outside the "good world": outside "our" borders. It is with fear and apprehension, therefore, that I see Europe closing its borders to individual migrants from the South and the East, and to a country such as Turkey. Or integrating a partitioned Cyprus into Europe in 2004. Or erasing recent history at the historical event of the admission of 10 new countries, whereby it is taken for granted by everyone that the "Iron Curtain" used to pass between Yugoslavia (and on this occasion, Slovenia) and Western Europe. A TV programme ("Euro news") on the day of the celebration in May 2004 even "showed" its viewers the alleged spot in Gorizia/Nova Gorica where the "Iron Curtain" was supposed to have run through the central square.

Today we all suffer from a process of tremendous de-semantisation building a one-dimensional world of an Imperium without translation and "without borders" (for the elites), with a simplistic bipolar vocabulary as "the axis of evil" etc. The intended or obtained meaning, here, is totalitarian. This one-mindedness is such that no reading between the lines is possible any more, as it was in the case of some more complex or subtler cases of totalitarian patterns. Of course there is no translation at work in such cases, but no translation means – being at war. The Iraq war is a good example of that.

It is part and parcel in the making of any identity, and therefore of a national identity, to claim territory, *create borders* (pictured as female or "embodied" in women), and pretend to master time (the latter is the most powerful way of appropriation of the universal). Borders and limits are mere lines, they are an interface which intervenes in the process of appropriation of geographic and symbolic territories. Because they have no essence in themselves, they are impossible to locate without reference, by delimitation, to some possession of territory or of land. An identity is something that nests itself into an imaginary territory first, and real territory only thereafter. For this, it needs and uses a narration which brings about foundation myths, stories about the origin, images, representations and a fixed interpretation of history. Through stories and pictures, borders are drawn.

Colonial expansion is actually a historic process characteristic of any state – and it is a matter of degrees. The national state in Europe has been colonial in reality and/or vocation, and it is becoming securitarian. Colonialism, and later nationalism, imagined the "discovered" territories they proposed to civilise as empty territories, nobody's land. Territories, geography, countries, borders, for them, were virtually created *ex nihilo*. In North and in Latin America, where nations are created without the local population or in disregard of it, underscored by an elitist dream about an imported population, about a ready-made people coming from Europe and already in itself a political subject, the indigenous population could never be considered as a political subject, as

citizens, much the same as women in general. Parallel to such "external" geographical colonisation, the constitution of a nation–state, involves a process of "internal colonisation" which is, among other things, inscribed on the bodies of individual women (the way they are fashioned) as well as on the body of a collective imaginary "womanhood". Those are borders too. In the latter, female autonomy, the citizenship of women and their human rights are made subordinate to the interests of the community (religious or national) and of the state, under the ruling "gender regime".

The year 1989 is usually the demarcation line of the end of socialism, and the date of embarkation for the post–socialist "transition" which was never clearly defined, but is clearly neo–liberal under the auspices of one power.<sup>14</sup> The general loss of universal, or its corruption since 1989, seems to point to some search for a new totality through such attempts as the enlargement of Europe and also the constitution of new mini–national–states etc. Such a configuration sprang to the fore in the events of the last decade of the 20 century in the Balkans (and it is not over yet), where the partitioning of Yugoslavia was a constitutive part of the integration of Europe (appearing as its flipside) being constructed complete with its colonial heritage unquestioned: the micro–national projects were not only gendered (as any national project is), but were carried out through an extremely forceful process of reconfiguration and re–negotiation of the ruling gender hegemony. Women are made to incarnate the nation and national (male) honour, they are constructed as borders with the enemy and treated as such (when they are not the enemy themselves; it comes very close to that because of the status of boundaries: the latter are fundamental in establishing identities, but are nothing tangible in themselves and can be remoulded when needed). The process of partition<sup>15</sup> and "nation building" is not intended to allow women to be subjects or agents of change, but to confine them to the position of an instrument for the transmission of messages from one community to the other (a double–bind situation, which amounts to submission). Women are the majority of the transborder population worldwide<sup>16</sup> and the translating link. Generally, women are the most frequent translation mediators too.<sup>17</sup>

The ongoing process of European integration,<sup>18</sup> as well as the whole process of globalisation of which it is a segment, implies at the other end, at the micro–level, processes of forceful ethnicisation. To encourage ethnicisation – as Europe has done in the Balkans over the last decade and since war – means encouraging disintegration. This means crisis, shattering of a system, changing a paradigm which dictate, among other negotiations, the renegotiation of the tacit patriarchal contract.<sup>19</sup> One of the ways through which such renegotiations are achieved, is war. The assessment of borders and boundaries in the Balkans and their gendered dynamics are neither unique nor specific to a particular ("Balkan") culture. If they have to be granted a special attention, it is because they offer acute or aggravated forms of problems which can be found in similar processes elsewhere. In this sense their analysis and comprehension do not need other theoretical tools than those we use to study similar phenomena within and outside Europe. This is why a comparative approach is useful.

The nation itself is first of all a community yet to be made into a society, and further, a state.<sup>20</sup> The individual takes refuge within the group (the community), which makes him/her feel secure at the cost of his/her individuality and possibly even of his/her individual citizenship. This "maternal" metaphor discloses evidently an unquestioned hierarchy, expressed as the hierarchy of the fraternity, of the community, or of a vertical hierarchy. Borders are both horizontal and vertical. The maternal body to which the

gregarious individuals or the member of some intolerant group surrenders (say, the violent fan of a football club, or the fanatical member of a party) is like the army, the unit, the organization, like a machine within which he is just a replaceable part like any other (Theweleit). Each of those members identifies with, and interiorise, the vertical principle and the "father-figure" (the Founding Fathers of the Nation, for example) in order to be able to communicate with the others over that higher office, and to belong to them. Such a symbiotically integrated group, as a figuration of the Whole, is directly fastened to the larger group, nation (the ethnic group, the religion, the community, depending on circumstances), which, although an empty concept in itself, is in its turn an efficient machine for the production of the energy necessary for violence and conquest.

"Culture" as an instrument of differentiation, of border building and as a weapon is often used by defensive and separatist units, but outright by conquering ones, which usually prefer the euphemism of civilisation in such cases, it refers rather to colonies (see the colonial system, and also the present "civilising mission" of colonialism or of the American way of life). An interesting comparative study could be made about the differential usage of the concept "culture", or about how "culture" and "civilisation" compare within the appropriative logic of imposing not only hegemony but also domination.

There is a privileged relation between "culture" (naturalised and instrumental) and borders. In the case of the conflict and war in the former Yugoslavia, not all parties claimed culture as their focus, and not all made it their instrument, but all ended up *claiming differential cultures* excluding the neighbour yet reaching to the broader or higher office of Europe. So new borders were erected in order to dissolve other ones. Croatia rather than Serbia had a tradition of using culture as its emblem, and starting conflicts from language, from identifying the literary Canon, differentiating itself from the others. Slovenian separatists, although using it to a lesser degree than the Croatian ones in the past conflict, do come from a longer history of common survival around protective measures and archaic and isolationist postures about their language and culture. But all now separate states and nations engaged in an intense construction of their separate cultural identities. This was traumatic inasmuch as for generations (Yugoslavia had been one state on the same territory since 1918 and a project much longer) this meant separating from, and cutting away, parts of their culture formerly designed in a different and much larger way so as to cover the whole space of the former state in their imaginary.

Partitions of states, whether started or accomplished, produce apatrids, non-documented persons, people without right to the law (Hannah Arendt), forced migrants, deported and refugees, both internal and external, that largely outgrow, nowadays, the definition of the *Geneva Convention* of 1951 (UN): on political refugees rights, on their right to *non-refoulement* (if not on more), the Convention is today outdated,<sup>21</sup> while the distinction between political and economic emigration becomes undecidable. Europe under construction has produced its various "nostalgic" of partitioned countries such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Cyprus, sometimes even the Soviet Union (incomparable cases, it is true). The pretended "nostalgia" of these anti-partitionists has often been an unrecognised *opposition* to new nationalisms and ethnocentrisms as well as to violence, rather than a lamentation on the disappearance of the anciens régimes (some of which socialist), and rather than romanticism. Their position resembles or reproduces, but at the next and higher level, the phenomenon of the depoliticised, non engaged, populations of countries with

poor political and social citizenship and democratic traditions, individual or collective. The idea was to spare generations whole populations, within "socialism" or over the Third World, but also elsewhere, having to stand out as political subject(s). It was to make them rather into the "raw material" of their "model" states and societies, while moulding a "sovereign people (*suvereni narod*)" proclaimed of age, but in whose name the official discourse nevertheless used its official *newspeak* (the situation of a *palanka* in an indigestion of Modernity). The apparent nostalgia for that period is only a regret for peace lost since and for a mixed society, and not an aspiration for the dictatorial régime. Once the legitimating of independence of the latter exhausted, the equilibrium of peace crumbled. The "nostalgia" in question, denounced by various ethnocrats or more or less single parties seated back in power, had also been a resistance condemned by them. But the *processes nowadays under way*, that the "nostalgic" themselves are not always able to grasp because sometimes their own lives are at stake, are not those same nationalisms, fundamentalisms, ethnocracies being established, but rather the *becoming of Europe itself and the new configuration of the planet* (globalisation) of which they are a portion.

The intermediary ethnocracies that ruined our lives may well have been just secondary historic occurrences. Nationalism etc. will after all have been only episodes, certainly bloody and obnubilating our lives and views, but finally incidents of transition – towards new integrations and the new liberal world order. These new nationalisms and fundamentalisms, communalisms, while bringing violence – also *homogenise* – and seem in that sense modern: yet they are far from being it from the point of view of their social function, where they are disclosed as traditionalist and conservative in the best of cases, and more often worse in the international context.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The following paper is to a large extent adapted from my "On permanent translation (We are in translation)", in: *Transeuropéennes* No 22, 2001–2002, pp. 121 ff. The wording of that part is by John Doherty, who kindly translated that article from the French. Another version or parts of the present paper was given at the Academy of European History, the European University Institute, Florence, on July 10, 2003; and at the Inter–University Centre Dubrovnik, May 24–29, 2004 (Postgraduate course "Feminist Critical Analysis: Boundaries, Borders, and Borderlands").

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, Verso, London – New York 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Jean–François Lyotard, *Le Différend*, Minuit, Paris, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Language and "ready–made thought" offers this cliché of "both ends of the stick" which inadequately for our quest suggests a symmetrical and equal relationship. But the "mirror" is a better metaphor, since its "both sides" are far from equivalent in terms of existential stakes, as Luce Irigaray has demonstrated in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, Minuit, Paris 1977, and other writings.

<sup>5</sup> Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *The Marginal Nation: Transborder Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal*, Sage Publications 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Veena Das, *Critical Events. An Anthropological Perspective in Contemporary India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> See Jean–François Lyotard, *L'Inhumain. Causeries sur le temps*, Galilée, Paris, 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Ivekovic, *Le Sexe de la nation*, Léo Scheer, Paris 2003.

- <sup>9</sup> I would like to thank Veena Das for having directed my mind back to this subject, which we have talked about informally over the years. See Veena Das, "Violence and Translation", and "The practice of organ transplants: networks, documents, translations" in Margaret Lock, Alan Young, Alberto Cambrosio (eds.), *Living and Working with the New Medical Technologies. Intersections of Inquiry*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 263–287. The text published here is in part a reaction to her ideas and our discussions.
- <sup>10</sup> Nancy, *L'Intrus*, Paris, Galilée 2000; see also the movie *21 Grams*, by Alejandro González Inárritu, 2002, as well as *Lost in Translation* by Sofia Coppola, 2003.
- <sup>11</sup> I am aware that a border is a concept related to the establishment of the modern state: that border is much harder. I have enlarged the concept here in order to investigate the limits of other types of borders which I see as different *degrees* of the same life–and–death process. Within the Western context, "life–and–death" (*punar–bhava, punar mrtyu; samsara*) are understood as merely "life", whereby an additional hardening function of the concept of "border" is unnecessarily introduced. Any border is really *ineffable*.
- <sup>12</sup> From here on, the text departs from *Transeuropéennes* 22, 2001–2002.
- <sup>13</sup> Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence. Voices from the Partition of India*, Viking, New Delhi 1998; Radha Kumar, *Divide and Fall? Bosnia in the Annals of Partition*, Verso, London 1998; *Interventions. International Journal of Post–Colonial Studies*, Special Topic: "The Partition of the Indian Sub–Continent", edited by Ritu Menon, Vol. 1, no. 2, 1999; Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders & Boundaries. Women in India' Partition*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1998. *Transeuropéennes* 19/20, 2001, "Divided Countries, Separated Cities".
- <sup>14</sup> Some of the following is adapted from my presentation "Gender and national borders and boundaries. European integration and the ethnicization of the Balkans" at a European University Institute women's studies course in history, in the summer of 2001.
- <sup>15</sup> See *Transeuropéennes* 9/20, 2001, special cluster on "Divided Countries, Separated Cities".
- <sup>16</sup> Goran Fejic, Rada Ivekovic, "Women and Armed Conflicts" paper for the UNSRID project "Gender and Conflict", March 2004 (manuscript).
- <sup>17</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, Giulia Sissa, Françoise Balibar, Jacqueline Rousseau–Dujardin, Alain Badiou, Monique David–Ménard, Michel Tort, *L'exercice du savoir et la différence des sexes*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1991.
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- <sup>19</sup> Colette Guillaumin, *Sexe, Race et Pratique du pouvoir. L'idée de Nature*, Côté–femmes, Paris 1992.
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- <sup>21</sup> Samaddar, Ranabir, *Those Accords. A Bunch of Documents*, Kathmandu, South Asia Forum for Human Rights, Paper Series 4, 2000.
- <sup>22</sup> See Malcolm Spencer, "Kulturelle Differenzierung in Musils Roman *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. Die Stadt B.*", whose presentation at the conference "Postkoloniale" Konflikte im europäischen Kontext (Vienna University, April

14–15, 2004), pushed my reflexion in this direction. The same ideas are confirmed, concerning another example, by the paper by José M. Portillo Valdés, "How Can a Modern History of the Basque Country Make Sense? On Nation, Identity, and Territories in the Making of Spain" (manuscript).

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