

Commoning Translation: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons



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Abstract

This article introduces the notion of “commoning translation” as developed by the translation collective Coletivo Sycorax: Solo Comum, anchored to two pillars: (a) a decolonial feminist reinterpretation of Jennifer Hayashida’s notion of “commoning translation”, and (b) the collective praxis of anti-capitalist feminist translation adopted in translating Silvia Federici’s *Reenchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* into Brazilian Portuguese. Commoning translation conceptualizes collective translation practice as both potentially transformative and intrinsically political throughout, from text-selection, to the intellectual growth of translators, relationship-building among participants, and the circulation of the final product. In this approach, – which is particularly relevant because it aligns theory and practice to individual and collective feminist experiences of struggle –, translation agency transcends the textual dimension. Commoning translation, thus, widens translation agency by



expanding translators' spheres of action, while guided by an ethos of global justice through collective translation practices. Our praxis incorporates principles of the politics of the commons as examined by Federici and implemented in the translation process herein described, which in turn includes self-management, task rotation, horizontal decision-making, and labor directed toward producing common goods. As a mode of production that necessarily considers how, where, by whom, and for whom knowledge is produced, commoning translation is also structured through reflections on decolonial feminist translation practices, the coloniality of knowledge, and situated knowledges.

Keywords: commoning translation, feminist translation, collective translation, politics of translation, Sycorax Collective

Tradução comunizante: feminismo e política dos comuns

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta o conceito de “tradução comunizante”, elaborado pelo Coletivo Sycorax: Solo Comum, com base em dois pilares: 1) a leitura feminista decolonial do conceito de “commoning translation”, definida por Jeniffer Hayashida, e 2) a prática coletiva de tradução feminista anticapitalista de *Reencantando o mundo: feminismo e a política dos comuns*, de Silvia Federici. O conceito traz uma concepção da prática coletiva de tradução como potencialmente transformadora e inerentemente política de ponta a ponta: da escolha do texto, passando pela formação intelectual das tradutoras, pelas relações de produção estabelecidas entre todos os sujeitos envolvidos, até a circulação do produto final. Nessa abordagem — particularmente relevante por permitir alinhar teoria e prática a experiências individuais e coletivas sobre lutas políticas feministas —, a agência tradutória extrapola a dimensão textual e torna-se uma noção que amplia o terreno de ação das tradutoras, movida por um ethos de justiça global via práticas coletivas de tradução. A tradução comunizante, tal qual propomos, traz princípios da política dos comuns estudados por Federici e postos em prática durante a tradução coletiva realizada pelo coletivo em questão, como autogestão, rotatividade de tarefas, horizontalidade decisória e orientação do trabalho à produção do bem comum. Sendo um modo de produção que considera, necessariamente, como, onde, por quem e para quem o conhecimento é produzido, a tradução comunizante estrutura-se também em reflexões sobre práticas feministas decoloniais de tradução, colonialidade do saber e conhecimento situado.

Palavras-chave: tradução comunizante; tradução feminista; tradução coletiva; políticas da tradução; Coletivo Sycorax

Traducción comunizante: feminismo y política de lo común

Resumen

Este artículo presenta el concepto de “traducción comunizante”, elaborado por el Colectivo Sycorax: Solo Comum (suelo común), con base en dos pilares: 1) la lectura feminista decolonial del concepto de *commoning translation*, definida por Jeniffer Hayashida, y 2) la práctica colectiva de traducción feminista anticapitalista para el libro *Reencantando o mundo: feminismo e a política dos comuns*, de Silvia Federici. Estos fundamentos connotan una noción de práctica colectiva de la traducción como práctica con potencial transformador y acto político de principio a fin: desde la selección del texto, pasando por la formación intelectual de las tradutoras, por las relaciones de producción establecidas entre todos los participantes, hasta la circulación del producto final. En ese enfoque —de particular relevancia en cuanto permite alinear la teoría y la práctica con experiencias individuales y colectivas sobre luchas políticas—, la agencia traductiva extrapola la dimensión textual para convertirse en una

noción que amplía el campo de acción de las traductoras, movida por un ethos de justicia global mediante prácticas colectivas de traducción. La traducción comunizante, como la proponemos, aplica principios de política de lo común estudiados por Federici y puestos en práctica durante la traducción colectiva realizada por este colectivo, como autogestión, rotación de tareas, horizontalidad en la toma de decisiones y orientación del trabajo a la producción del bien común. Al ser un modo de producción que no puede desligarse del cómo, el dónde, el por quién y para quién se produce el conocimiento, la traducción comunizante se estructura también en reflexiones sobre prácticas feministas decoloniales de traducción, colonialidad del saber y conocimiento situado.

Palabras clave: traducción comunizante, traducción feminista, traducción colectiva, política de la traducción, Colectivo Sycorax

Traduction communisante : féminisme et politique du commun

Résumé

Cet article présente le concept de « traduction communisante », élaboré par le collectif Sycorax : Solo Comum, qui repose sur deux piliers : 1) la lecture féministe décoloniale du concept de « commoning translation », défini par Jeniffer Hayashida, et 2) la pratique collective de la traduction féministe anti-capitaliste de *Reenchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (Réenchanter le monde : féminisme et politique des communs), by Silvia Federici. Ce concept présente la pratique collective de la traduction comme potentiellement transformatrice et intrinsèquement politique de bout en bout : du choix du texte à la formation intellectuelle des traductrices, en passant par les relations de production établies entre tous les sujets impliqués, jusqu'à la diffusion du produit final. Dans cette approche –particulièrement pertinente car elle permet d'aligner la théorie et la pratique sur les expériences individuelles et collectives des luttes politiques féministes–, l'agence de traduction dépasse la dimension textuelle et devient une notion qui élargit le champ d'action des traductrices, animée par une éthique de justice globale via des pratiques collectives de traduction. La traduction communisante, telle que nous la proposons, reprend les principes de la politique des communs étudiés par Federici et mis en pratique lors de la traduction collective réalisée par le collectif en question, tels que l'autogestion, la rotation des tâches, l'horizontalité décisionnelle et l'orientation du travail vers la production du bien commun. Étant un mode de production qui prend nécessairement en compte comment, où, par qui et pour qui la connaissance est produite, la traduction communisante s'structure aussi dans des réflexions sur des pratiques féministes décoloniales de la traduction, la colonialité du savoir, et la connaissance située.

Mots-clé : traduction communisante, traduction féministe, traduction collective, politique de la traduction, Collective Sycorax

Introduction

In “Poetry for social-political justice in Palestine”, Mahmoud Alhirhani reflects on the translations of the renowned Palestinian writer Mahmoud Darwish and states: “It is now common knowledge that translators may engage in social change” (2024, p. 18). In a collapsing world—of which the Palestinian situation is a material and symbolic example—the possibility of using translation in the struggle against the *continuum* of catastrophes is an ethical task. In response, translators around the planet have been articulating theoretical and practical proposals that inform translations, articles, books, journals, research groups, and special issues.

In line with this group of politically engaged translators and researchers, we have put forth the notion of “commoning translation”, developed by the Sycorax Collective: Solo Comum.¹ The Solo Comum makeup of the Sycorax² collective resulted from the translation process

of the group that came together to translate Silvia Federici’s (2022) *Reenchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (2022) into Brazilian Portuguese. The Sycorax: Solo Comum notion of commoning translation derived from a feminist and decolonial reading of the definition of “*commoning translation*” by Jeniffer Hayashida (2020), as well as from the collective practice of anti-capitalist feminist translation of the work in question. In this article, we will re-engage with the translation process described in “Sycorax Collective: developments of feminist translation practices” (Alvarenga *et al.*, 2022), in which we discussed its empirical aspects. Conversely, this paper adopts a theoretical perspective of the process.

After presenting our general theoretical assumption, based on the notions of decoloniality, situated knowledge, and feminist genealogy, we discuss the notions of translation agents and agency in translation and then the notion of collective translation. Since the category of collective translation can be politically emptied in organizational and ideological terms, we follow a path of theoretical and practical specification (based on scholarship and concrete experiences) leading to what we understand as “commoning translation”, thereby invoking an expanded notion of translation, which is inaugurated before the textual linguistic work and continues to operate beyond it. This framework is based on an ethos of global justice, geared toward politically transforming both the subjects involved in the translation process and the society to which the translated text is oriented, and toward creating alliances between subjects and communities in struggle across different contexts.

1. Basic Notions

Feminist translation studies lie at the intersection of translation studies and gender studies. Originating in the 1980s with the Canadian School, this field of study was consolidated through feminist translation practices, which initially stood out

1 The Solo Comum [Common Ground] makeup of the Sycorax collective consisted of the five authors of this article, along with Ana França Alvarenga, Ana Luísa Sertã, Ana Maria Pichini, Cecília Farias, Danieli Corrêa, Elisa Rosas, Joana Benetton, Joana Plaza, Leticia Bergamini, Máira Daher, Milena Durante, Odara G. de Andrade, Paula Dutra, Vanessa Dalcanal and Zenaide Monteiro. The list of members can be found on the technical sheet of the translation *Reencantando o mundo* (Federici, 2022).

2 Before *Reenchanting the World*, our collective translated *Caliban and the Witch* (2017) and *The Zero Point of Revolution*, both by Silvia Federici. The year after the end of the work with *Reenchanting the World*, this collective translated *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale: women in the international division of labor*, by Maria Mies (2022). The processes of translation of each book have already been shared in “Sycorax Collective: developments of feminist translation practices” (Alvarenga *et al.*, 2022).

as strategies adopted by feminist translators to question and circumvent sexism present in language (Flotow, 1991).

Expanding on the role of translation in political action, more recent academic works, such as Olga Castro and María Laura Spoturno (2020), argue that feminist translation must move beyond Anglophone and European contexts, since feminisms “summon a critical and plural perspective to think, feel, be, and act in the world” and contribute to “all scientific disciplines and fields of knowledge” to transform the structure of society towards a more egalitarian structure “independent of their sexual and gender identities” (2020, p. 13). Castro and Spoturno (2020) also point out that traditional translation studies often reiterate power structures by erasing the agency of the translator and devaluing the cultural work carried out by women, in addition to rendering invisible epistemologies from geographies other than the Global North and/or not in English. From this critical perspective, the notions of ethical and political responsibility are crucial in both translation theory and practice.

These issues are not overlooked in our conceptualization of commoning translation, outlined herein. Moreover, because we are speaking from the Global South, neither could we overlook the contributions of decolonial thinkers, such as Aníbal Quijano (2000), Rita Segato (2013), Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2018). Their scholarship enables us to situate translation (as an act, process, and/or product) in the context of knowledge production that not only identifies and questions hegemonic forms of power, being, and knowing, but also seeks to delink from these forms by exercising a decolonial option (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

The notion of decoloniality, as framed in the work of these authors, refers to practices, strategies, and methodologies that promote the affirmation, humanization, and insurgency of subalternized subjects and their

onto-epistemologies. Decoloniality enables us to identify, interrogate, and interrupt (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) Eurocentric forms of power, being, and knowing, which in turn have led us to conceptualize commoning translation as a strategy to also identify/interrogate/interrupt, challenge, denounce, and reconfigure discourses, practices, and epistemologies that legitimize the various forms of domination and exploitation within the colonial matrix of power. In this sense, we seek to reiterate the decolonial perspectives that affirm the need to build another path of struggles to identify/interrogate/interrupt coloniality. The decolonial perspective is an invitation to change the way we look at things; thus, the main challenge is not to seek theory first (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 21) and the proposal is to think by doing (p. 21). Walsh speaks of a thinking-doing “that delinks, that undoes the unified – and universalizing – centrality of the West as the world and that begins to push other questions, other reflections, other considerations, and other understandings” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 21).

Commoning translation, as we conceive it, also relates to Pilar Godayol’s (2011) notion of feminist genealogy, which implies the work of recovering and constructing the history of women in the production of knowledge through translation. If decoloniality refutes canons imposed by colonial thought and situated knowledge questions hegemonic “objectivity”, feminist genealogy challenges the invisibilization of women in intellectual history. Since “we give birth to our own symbolic mothers” (Godayol, 2011, p. 111), feminist genealogy emphasizes the practice of building alliances and epistemological references as opposed to accepting imposed traditions. From this point of departure, we consider commoning translation as a way of contributing to an *anti-capitalist* feminist genealogy.

Commoning translation also evokes the notion of situated knowledge, proposed by Donna Haraway (1995), which also appears in

the work of Lélia Gonzalez as the notion of *place* (*lugar*). According to the latter: “The *place* in which we are located will determine our interpretation of the double phenomenon of racism and sexism” (2020, p. 76). Both Haraway and Gonzalez point out that situating knowledge means detaching oneself from the idea of a universal, definitive, or neutral knowledge. For both authors, all knowledge is historically, socially, and politically situated, organized by subjects marked by gender, race-ethnicity, class, and other identity traits. In this way, the critique of coloniality also applies, since academic and intellectual knowledge is no exception to partiality. In this way, there are various forms of knowledge produced in territories not sanctioned by hegemonic knowledge.

Thus, we seek to combine, on the theoretical level, different epistemological currents that point to a common political horizon, guided by the struggles against colonialism, coloniality, sexism, and racism, but also against the global political-economic system that is at the root of all these forms of oppression and exploitation. To this end, the notion of commoning translation also claims the epistemological tradition of the *commons*, which, as we will attempt to demonstrate below, can also be situated within the field of Marxisms.

2. Translation Agents

In translation studies, the sociological “agent”, according to Bandia and Milton (2009), designates any entity (persons, institutions, or material support) involved in a process of cultural exchange through translation. In this cultural exchange, “agency”, according to Hélène Buzelin (2011, p. 2), refers to the “ability to exert power consciously”.

Typically, the power to act on a translation process is not equally distributed among all the agents involved. In an editorial context, for example, it is usually an institution, namely, the publishing house (represented by its

executives), that tends to determine who and what is translated, as well as who undertakes the translation. According to Wolf (2007), agents representing an institution may also interfere in the translation strategies employed by the agents who linguistically, discursively, and aesthetically translate a certain text, therefore significantly impacting the circulation of the translated product.

In a recent publication examining translation and interpreting for social justice within institutions, Monzó-Nebot and Lomeña-Galiano (2024, pp. 253-258) address the role of translation and interpreting in influencing decision-making, division of labor, and cultural aspects within the institutions studied. The authors stress that the predominant ethics in said “institutions” is one of assumed “neutrality”, and that there is almost no room for translator and interpreter agency. Moreover, they note that translation and interpreting ultimately serve the same ends as those of the very institutions (patriarchal-capitalist-colonial) within which they are embedded. In other words, unless there is some previously allocated space for translators and interpreters to define and implement institutional (translation) policies (Monzó-Nebot & Lomeña-Galiano, 2024, p. 256), it is highly unlikely that translation and/or interpreting practices have a transformative social impact within such *masters’ tools* (Lorde, 2018), regardless of the political will of translators and interpreters (Fonseca, 2025, pp. 59-60).

In an atomized context, in which translators are isolated from one another, it is much more challenging to collectively organize in order to destabilize the forces governing their activity. As a result, they lack the opportunity to share their challenges, experiences and opinions about the decision-making that translation necessarily involves. In isolation, they will also find it hard to integrate into the social fabric the works and authors they translate or wish to translate into a target society.

Collective processes, on the other hand, can offer translation experiences that are politically different from those we experience individually. However, perhaps not every group that calls itself a “collective” is politically liberating for all translation agents involved, since collectives can also operate to reproduce hierarchies, divisions, and objectives of the modes and relations of capital production.

3. Collective Translation: What on Earth?

“Collective translation” can be understood in multiple ways. It can be the result of the work of individual translators working autonomously, whose translated texts are then assembled, as is the case of works that compile the output of research groups or are organized by one or more editors (usually the leader of the group). Collective translations can also receive markedly different editorial treatments regarding the linguistic-discursive components of their parts (translated texts).

However, the term “collective translation” can also be applied to the simultaneous and organized action of two or more subjects who undertake to translate the same text, or a certain compilation of texts, through practices of joint decision-making — either by splitting the text to be translated among participants, or by breaking down the work of translation and revision among them.

In both cases, the selection of texts and authors to be translated may emerge from the consensus of the individuals involved in the translation process, or from the decision of groups or individuals that will not necessarily engage in performing the linguistic translation. This workableness also applies to managing the translation process as a whole, so it takes into account the different possibilities the parties have of engaging with each other, in terms of the kind, strength, and even overlap of their relationships, which may be

described as institutional, academic, political, friendly, comradely, etc.

A collective translation may also result from a group of individuals, coming together for a specific purpose during a certain period, who would later disband or reconfigure into another collective. Alternatively, the translation can also be the endeavor of a more or less stable collectivity, set up specifically to translate collectively, in addition to being collectively organizing *around* collective translation, as is the case with the Sycorax Collective.³

A collectivity of subjects engaged with a translation project, whether temporary or permanent, may also adopt various organizational structures, ranging from highly hierarchical arrangements — where certain individuals hold greater decision-making authority concerning the selection of texts, the translation process, the final product, and its dissemination, etc.— to more egalitarian configurations — in which power is diffused. In the latter, for each project, tasks and authority are allocated differently across translation agents, leading not only to the collective translation per se but also to a wealth of processes and, consequently, to a wealth of socio-political experiences of translation.

To a greater or lesser extent and depending on the degree of influence exerted by the institutions (publishers), the spaces created through collective action and translation processes may be framed within what Hannah Arendt describes as “the political.” This term refers to the space created by the gathering of individuals—focused on action—with shared objectives, fostering conditions conducive to multiple possibilities and also to the unexpected (1958, p. 199). As a political event, collective translation corresponds to another way of opening the public sphere and realizing

3 On the forms of organization of the *Sycorax Collective*, cf. Alvarenga *et al.*, 2022, *Sycorax Collective*, 2017, 2019, 2022b; Rosas *et al.*, 2020.

political freedom. The necessary condition for such freedom, according to Arendt, is the possibility of speaking/being heard — a leeway often unavailable during most translation processes albeit termed collective.

4. Anti-Capitalist Feminist Collective Translation

Since translating *Caliban and the Witch*, by Silvia Federici (2017), the Coletivo Sycorax⁴ has integrated reflexivity as a crucial component of our translation activity. With time, we have developed a dialectical and dialogical approach to thinking and doing, where our practice and thinking have dynamically transformed each other. In previous publications, we have addressed our understanding of collective translation. Writing about the process of translating *Caliban and the Witch*, for example, we stated

[...] that *collective translation among women* can be understood as a *transnational feminist political strategy*, especially when situating the experience of translating texts of the Global North into the Global South and vice versa. Thus, we seek to highlight the processes that involve [activities that go] from the *choice of the title to be translated to collectively moving the text and paratexts* in addition to allowing *more equitable editorial processes and forms of circulation of the work*, which in turn challenge the current conditions of access to knowledge. (Rosas *et al.*, 2020, p. 119, emphasis added) (Translated from the Brazilian Portuguese)

In the excerpt above, when we used the expression “collective translation” followed by “among women”, we had already made the point that the phrase “collective translation” needed to be specified in order to accurately translate our practice. A practice — which is feminist and anti-capitalist, as stated in the excerpt above — fundamentally involves an

4 The collective owes its name to this work. Mother of Caliban, Sycorax is the name of the witch in *William Shakespeare's* play *The Tempest*.

expanded view of translation, which, in addition to linguistic and discursive work, also encompasses the politically active role of agents in selecting source text and the author, questioning editorial and market relations, and introducing the translation in Brazilian society. Thus, we have simultaneously challenged: a) the institutional (editorial) setting operating a correlation of forces that disfavor translators in terms of control and (social) use of the product of their work; b) the treatment of knowledge as a commodity, which hinders and even prevents access to it by a large share of the population; and c) the (institutional) decision-making behind which authors and works reach us through translation and, consequently, the authors and works that never do.

At the same time, we pointed to “collective translation among women” as an alternative mode of production according to which: a) the *use value*⁵ of translation is to be restored, at least in part, allowing it to circulate freely within society without the need for monetary mediation; this is why a core, non-negotiable principle guiding the collective’s efforts is free availability of the translation in digital format; and b) we, as translators, working together, *purposefully* not only actively select certain authors and texts, but also translate them, and circulate the output in spaces where the translation can actually reach the intended audience. This is why we ensure that launches, talks, courses, and workshops take place in diverse venues, prioritizing spaces where women struggle for life on a daily basis and fight against social injustice.

5 In Karl Marx’s *Capital* (1996), *exchange value* is defined as the quantitatively priced value of a product of human labor turned into a commodity and sold in a market; whereas *use value* refers to the qualitative value of a product of human labor for meeting the various kinds of needs of different individuals in a given society. The use value of a human product is therefore not mediated by money.

After translating some more, we continued to reflect in a subsequent paper where we revisited our understanding of “collective translation” and underscored its inherently political and pedagogical aspects:

[We understand] the practice of collective translation not only as producing a translated text but also as *intellectual and political education*; as a dialogue — with both text and with other participants — and as an experience of shared management. For us, a collective translation method is especially valuable when translating feminist works among women because it helps us combine theoretical and practical knowledge about feminism. (Alvarenga *et al.*, 2022, p. 3)

In the above quote, we used the phrase “collective translation method”, which, in the light of what we have pointed out so far, may not mean much as a standalone. However, in the context of our discussions, this “method” revealed itself through the collective’s horizontal management approach to the translation process (as described above), where tasks are shared based on each person’s capabilities, and decisions at all levels are made collectively; in this environment, members undertake a process of political formation in which they support each other, integrating their subjectivities and knowledge to the collectivity.⁶

Our “collective translation method” is openly *militant* and *politically engaged*, given that it consists of a translation project geared towards social justice (Boéri, 2023; Doerr, 2018) and

aims to support struggles and political agendas in this regard (Boéri & Delgado, 2021). Although we have employed the term “militant” to connect to a diverse and heterodox tradition where class struggles serve as the unifying element of various struggles against oppression and exploitation promoted by capital, the collective’s translation activity can also be defined as “activist”, that is as “practices that are intentionally and explicitly undertaken to promote social change and disrupt existing power structures” (Boéri & Delgado, 2021, p. 246), with the addendum that the social change to which we devote our translation work is also defined in anti-capitalist terms.

As stated in the introduction to the Brazilian translation of Maria Mies’ *Patriarcado e acumulação em escala mundial: mulheres da divisão internacional do trabalho* (Coletivo Sycorax, 2022a), the Sycorax Collective came together to translate authors who contributed to feminist reflection from anti-capitalist perspectives (2022a, p. iii), and with the understanding that translation is the gateway to the reception of feminisms. In this sense, the decision to undertake our first translation, *Calibã e a bruxa*, stemmed from the theoretical potential of the work provide a feminist and Marxist analysis of the origin of women’s oppression and exploitation in capitalism (Alvarenga *et al.*, 2022, p. 3), a potential we also acknowledged in Federici’s two other books: *Revolution at Point Zero* and *Reenchanting the World*. Shortly after, the decision to translate German Marxist sociologist Maria Mies (Mies, 2022), represented a genealogical development to Sycorax’s translation efforts. Mentioned in Federici’s three books, Mies, akin to the Italian thinker, belongs to the lineage of feminist scholars who have focused on primitive capital accumulation. Due to the lack of a Brazilian Portuguese translation, we also took on the task of integrating Mies into our local context of reception and, consequently, into the national debates where Federici’s works were already present.

6 Translator and interpreter communities such as Babels (Boéri, 2009, 2023; Buts, 2023), recognized as one of the most politicized communities of translators and interpreters, and ECOS (Baker, 2010; Talens, 2010) were also established based on principles of horizontality, deliberation, participation and prefiguration, with the aim of promoting the engagement of translators and interpreters in relation to their role in an increasingly competitive, polarized and violent society.

Without an instruction manual and with absolutely no intention of being prescriptive, our translation method remains under development and is continuously reorganized at each new decision about choice of text and author, at each new temporary makeup of the collective, and at each new project. It was during one of these projects, the translation of *Re-enchanting the World*, that we came across new vocabulary that enabled us to translate the reflections concerning our practice: this lexicon resided in the semantics of the book's subtitle: "Feminism and the Politics of the Commons".

5. *Re-Enchanting the World: Translation as a Common Good*

Reenchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons was translated during the COVID-19 pandemic by twenty women from different regions of Brazil, who met online and named themselves "Sycorax Collective: Solo Comum," in reference to the Federici's theoretical framework. In the translators' note we wrote (Coletivo Sycorax, 2022b), we recounted how we collaborated during the greatest health crisis of our time. A crisis which deepened social wounds caused by four decades of neoliberalism, leading to, among other effects, widespread poverty, disinvestment in social services, expropriation of families and communities, and daily attacks on the commons, from health and education to housing, transportation, water, land, and air. The pandemic also exposed the increased vulnerability of women: they were the ones who suffered the highest layoff rates and also made up the majority of frontline health workers and workers of the so-called "essential services".

In the context of extreme *disenchantment*, Silvia Federici's book shed light on the numerous social movements led by women worldwide and engaged in the fighting for life. Collectively translating *Re-enchanting the World* revealed that an increasing number of people felt

the urgent need [...] to found a new form of life based on precisely what has been taken from

us: a healthy planet that belongs to all beings and social relations based on solidarity, and not on private property, accumulation, and exploitation. (Sycorax Collective, 2022b, p. 9)

In our periodic online meetings, which allowed us to strengthen and create bonds despite physical distance, we collectively reflected on the main notion addressed by Federici — *the commons* —from different feminist perspectives. According to the author, the notion simultaneously designates the set of natural and cultural commons shared by human societies across various temporal and geographical settings. It also applies to different forms of "communal relations," both past and present, which inherently carry the potential for an alternative future, one not governed by capitalist relations of production. Federici explains her goal in bringing together the texts that shaped the book *Reenchanting the World* as follows:

My objective is primarily to demonstrate the potential of communal relations, not only as a guarantee of survival and an increased capacity for resistance but also, above all, as a path to transform our subjectivity and gain the capacity to recognize the world around us—nature, other people, the animal world—as a source of wealth and knowledge and not as a danger. (Federici, 2018, p. 77)⁷

By addressing the "commons," in its plural form, Federici repositions the notion of "the common," in the singular, as conceived by Antonio Negri and other Italian autonomists. According to Negri (2016), "the common" is the outcome of a specific (pre-Fordist) phase in the development of the modern capitalist mode of production, and thus results from the relations of work and production among workers. In other words, Negri understands that the capitalist mode of production, by

7 Citation from the publication in English, referenced as: Federici, S. (2018). *Re-enchanting the world: Feminism and the politics of the commons*. PM Press.

bringing subjects through labor, was able to provide the notion of the “commons” or, as one might prefer, of “common goods”. As a result, it should be stressed that the material or immaterial aspects of the “common” as it is socially understood are historically defined: “[...] Both public and natural goods are inseparable from the historical conditions and forms of life that configure them and by which they are configured. There is a “common” determination, historically consistent, that could not be eliminated” (Negri, 2016, p. 2)⁸.

The post-Fordist, neoliberal phase of capitalism, in turn, would, over time, legally establish—through the apparatus of the “right to property”—the conditions for the private appropriation of goods considered and/or made common, with or without the backing of the law. Thus, water, land, air, health, education, or transport systems, public or natural goods, everything becomes subject to “capital appropriation in general.” (Negri, 2016, p. 2).

For Negri, the transformative potential that resides in the common is evident when it is “subtracted from capitalist accumulation/valorization”, because then it can finally be “entrusted to a democratic and participatory administrative regulation” (2016, p. 8). In any case, the philosopher states that: “The important thing is to recognize the common as a mode of production in our society and as a fundamental product of everyone’s work. The private appropriation of the common is not, at this moment, desirable by the commune of citizen-workers” (Negri, 2016, p. 8).

In *Re-Enchanting the World*, Silvia Federici does not seem to disagree with this view. However, when discussing the commons, she aims to broaden its meaning in the singular,

emphasizing the communal activities and relationships women have built in various contexts as a sign indicating an alternative future. Unlike Negri, Federici will then go on to address the experience of pre-capitalist communities in the American and African continents, as well as the experience of contemporary women around the world, providing concrete examples of the creation and defense of the commons. She sees these as ongoing struggles against capital: sharing collectively produced wealth, preserving or rebuilding ways of life based on reciprocal care, and therefore radically redefining property relations and reconstructing social ties with both each other and nature. According to her, “the first lesson these struggles” give is that

The “commoning” of the material means of reproduction is the main mechanism through which collective interest and mutual bonds are created. It is also the front of resistance to a life of slavery, and a condition for the construction of autonomous spaces that undermine capitalism’s grip on our lives from within. (Federici, 2018, n. p.)⁹

We recognized, therefore, that our collective translation project, which is feminist and anti-capitalist in nature, can also be interpreted as an experiment in the *production of the commons*. In practice, not only did we ensure that the product of our work challenged the hegemonic forms of knowledge production and circulation, but also, that it was organized around the premise of self-management, task rotation, decision-making horizontality, reciprocity of care, and the creation of the common good, as previously mentioned. This was always based on the principle that translating *together* is an opportunity to share different forms of knowledge, trajectories, repertoires, and perspectives of each translator. This exchange enriches not only the translation process, but

8 Translated into English from Brazilian Portuguese. The same applies to other quotes by the same author.

9 This and all Sycorax quotes have been translated from Brazilian Portuguese.

also the translated text itself, consolidating and strengthening translation decisions.¹⁰

The notion and our translation practice thus enabled us to acknowledge that the way we conceptualized collective translation (as a category somewhat imprecise in political terms) could also be articulated through alternative terminology. This terminology should belong to a lexicon that is *common* to us and, in this capacity, capable of framing translation as a process of solidary production and reproduction of knowledge, as well as of intellectual and political development. A translation process committed to anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, anti-racist, feminist, and ecological struggles worldwide.

5.1. Commoning Translation

We were thinking about and discussing these issues almost simultaneously with Jennifer Hayashida, a Canadian writer and artist, who, from the global North, had just added the term “*commoning translation*” to the *Glossary of Common Knowledge* (Hayashida, 2020). Here in the South, however, we were not familiar with the glossary, nor with the entry that had been recently included by Hayashida. The “*Translation*” entry reads:

Solidarity in Translation — Translation in Solidarity

Commoning translation renders translation an act of solidarity, not fidelity or loyalty.

¹⁰ The women who were part of the translation group were not required to have any specific knowledge or training – not even knowledge of the English language, from which we translated. Thus, to mention one circumstance among many, a person who understands less English was able to collaborate in several other ways, such as reviewing, searching for terms, organizing schedules and agendas, dissemination activities such as workshops and podcasts. Cf. Sycorax Collective, 2022b.

Commoning translation is to insist that translation is practiced by many and not by a few.

Commoning translation reminds us that translation is an act of contingency, not certainty.

Commoning translation reskills the task of the translator who is already precarious, already uprooted.

Commoning translation rejects translation as fluency.

Commoning translation mobilises stuttering translators who speak in whole fragments.

Commoning translation asserts the right to translate out of a sense of solidarity with the text.

Commoning translation, translating in solidarity, is not colonial translation, which seeks to uplift or reveal, civilise and sell.

Commoning translation has as its errand to mobilise against white privilege and power, to bring side-lined histories into view.. (Hayashida, 2020)¹¹

In every line of the entry, there are affinities with the discussions we were engaged in during that period, and which we have described above. These discussions supported our choice to translate “*commoning*” as “*comunizante*”, which stresses *common collective action* aspect of our translation process, one capable of driving transformation in the structures and superstructures that sustain the current global system of oppression and exploitation.

Once we encountered the definition of *commoning translation*, we decided to translate the entry, adding our own contours to it at the same we reworked our translation experience.

6. Commoning Translation

Commoning translation, as we propose, presupposes an expanded conception of the translation process from the outset. In commoning

¹¹ The translation of the entry into Brazilian Portuguese was first published in the “*Translators’ Note*” written for the translation of the book *Re-enchanting the world* (2022b).

translation, the translation process is considered to be underway as soon as we start working on selecting the text and the author. It continues throughout the linguistic-discursive phase and carries on during the dissemination of the final product.

Epistemologically connected to the politics of the commons, as understood by Federici (2022), commoning translation is translating conducted collectively from start to finish. Unlike the politically neutral connotation of “collective translation”, in commoning translation, collectivity is made up of subjects in solidarity with each other, united by political and ideological affinities. Solidarity around a common task, shared ideas, and a practice of political growth is also intertwined with the fostering of bonds of affection (Alvarenga *et al.*, 2022). According to Michela Baldo, “translation/interpreting is affective, since, like affect, it is relational; it is situated in this emotional encounter between bodies in movement” (2019, p. 10).

Rooted in the ethical principles upheld by the translators, oriented towards anti-capitalist, feminist, anti-racist, ecological, and anti-LGBT-transphobic struggles, commoning translation is laden with the political dimension of every stage of the translation process, as well as with the political role of every agent involved in it.

Questioning the theoretical notions of translation agency that overlook the power unevenness of the hegemonic mode of production, the practice of commoning translation reaffirms the possibility of viewing this agency as a decentralized collective effort, where all subjects (or agents) act politically from start to finish with equal decision-making power. From this perspective, the formative role of translation for translators in intellectual and political terms is fundamental. An egalitarian distribution of power is aimed at since the spark of the discussions concerning the selection of the

text to be translated. In the context of commoning translation, the social integration of the translated text, as well as that of its author, must enable the promotion of debates and social practices oriented to transforming reality. This is because the knowledge generated by humanity over time and across space is not the result of a neutral process of discovery or simple observation but is produced by subjects immersed in a culture that is shaped, reproduced, or challenged by them.

We also propose that commoning translation thrives in the form of an organization that implements self-management and task rotation among participants. Decentralization and horizontality in decision-making are therefore essential principles guiding and structuring the group.

As a practical-critical activity, commoning translation constitutes a reflexive practice that feeds a specific praxis that has to adapt to the historical context in which it is taking place. In this manner, commoning translation is not a static, inflexible entity; rather, it is imbued with the historical, political, and social needs of its time — thereby it is an instrument of activism.

Concerning the product resulting from this collective experience, commoning translation imprints not the abstract (and sexist) notions of fidelity or of mere reproduction of the original text (Chamberlain, 1998), but the elements of commonality, feminism, anti-racism, and anti-capitalism in the language and wording it employs, which are in turn based on conscious and political translation choices. The diversity of viewpoints plays an important role in the translation process’ decision-making dynamics.

Regarding the circulation of the product, commoning translation ensures mechanisms for distributing translated works that challenge the capitalist logic of intellectual property.¹²

12 As mentioned earlier, for the Sycorax Collective, the free availability of the books it

Modes of circulation that allow free access to the translation, whether in print or digital format, are crucial, as are the activities related to the social integration of the discussions introduced by the novel text.

Thus, we stand for a notion of commoning translation as a political practice characterized by solidarity, integral to the struggles for social justice, and directed towards the production of the common good. Its space, therefore, as well as that of social and epistemic struggles (Icaza & Vazquez, 2013), is not only the space of a force opposing or delinking from dominant power, but also a site for creativity.

7. Conclusion

As shown, the notion of commoning translation is grounded on our practical experience in translation—specifically the experience of the Sycorax Collective in its Solo Comum makeup—and on our reflexivity in dialogue with activists, academics, and artists who address analogous concerns. Given that it is always situated within a particular context, the translation methodology we adopt, as well as the conceptual framework we present, are not intended to be final. Instead, they allow reconfigurations based on the participants, the text to be translated, the demands of the political moment, among others.

Through commoning translation, we aim to position political subjects, destabilize the power relations that uphold the hegemonic production of knowledge, and trace our anti-capitalist feminist genealogies, thereby localizing our own political practice and those of our predecessors. Supported by notions such

translates is a basic condition for translation. Therefore, in the case of *Re-enchanting the World*, as in all others, the release of the ebook for free download was agreed with the Publisher. The book can be downloaded from the website of the publisher Elefante and also from the collective itself at: www.coletivosycorax.org).

as translation agency, we have also attempted to reexamine the power relations that permeate the production of translation and publishing, with the goal of developing practices that adopt alternative approaches. These approaches, however, are not always straightforward. It is essential to consider, for example, that market benchmarks, such as the time allocated for translation, remuneration per word, and tight deadlines, tend to undermine or even render infeasible the process of collaborative political formation. Furthermore, the anti-capitalist feminist collective translation conducted within the framework of commoning translation, presupposes decision-making processes that are decentralized and protracted. These processes frequently conflict with the mechanisms of industrial production that govern the institutions associated with translation.

Having reflected on these considerations over the course of several years and beginning with the discussions during the translation of *Re-enchanting the World*, we arrive at the conceptualization of translation as a communal practice committed to the production of a common good. This approach constitutes a translation policy whose guiding principles rearticulate the notion of translation agency and encompass all stages of the process, including selecting the text, engaging in extensive negotiations and re-elaborations throughout the linguistic work, and culminating in the final product and its circulation – on which the potential for change to the target society brought about by the translated ideas fundamentally depends. (Bianchi, 2016).

Thus, we propose a notion of commoning translation that operates with an overarching understanding of translation, wherein translators participate politically in the process of text production and assume roles that are typically beyond the traditional scope of a translator's tasks. By emphasizing its politically formative and creative potential, we have attempted to demonstrate how commoning translation

intrinsically nurtures communal bonds, widens our views on struggle, and instills hope.

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