

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was inspired by many stimulating conversations and surprising encounters of minds over a period of four years. The idea of doing some research on global language justice began in a Sawyer Seminar initiative led by the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society (ICLS) at Columbia University. We are grateful to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its generous support from the fall of 2017 through the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, we organized numerous lectures, workshops, and symposia to which we invited colleagues, students, writers, poets, translators, and activists to speak to us about linguistic diversity and biodiversity with a view to approaching language justice as the humanistic equivalent of environmental justice.

Our discussions converged eventually around the limitations of the discourse of linguistic rights, the role of technology in the advancement or erasure of languages and scripts, and the tensions between respect for diversity and demands for equality in regard to Indigenous languages and social justice. Most of the contributors to this book were involved at one point or another in the discussions organized through the Sawyer Seminar. Isabelle Zaugg joined us as a Mellon postdoctoral fellow and played a leading role in the programming associated with the Sawyer Seminar; she also taught innovative courses that explored the role of linguistic diversity in digital technology. Her research on digitally disadvantaged languages

around the world and on Ethiopia's national language, Amharic, in particular, has been eye-opening. Just as important is Deborah Anderson's Script Encoding Initiative. Her work shows how the Unicode Standard—the protocol underlying the ability to access webpages, conduct internet searches, text on phones, send email, and post social media messages—has become such a central concern for linguistic diversity. Their contributions show that the issue of digital vitality is a cornerstone in the study of global language justice. L. Maria Bo was first involved in the Sawyer Seminar as a graduate fellow and then continued as a key interlocutor after she joined the faculty of ICLS as the director of undergraduate studies. Her chapter helps frame some of the fundamental questions of this volume through a philosophical critique of linguistic rights.

Suzanne Romaine has been one of the pioneers in the contemporary scholarship on biodiversity and linguistic diversity, and she has contributed a great deal to our discussions as well as a chapter in this book. Daniel Kaufman and Ross Perlin have done exemplary work at the Endangered Language Alliance in New York and regularly participated in the Sawyer Seminar. Their work, including the coauthored chapter in our volume, has taught us much about migration, survival, and linguistic diversity in metropolitan centers. Madeleine Dobie's new research on contemporary Algeria focuses on the meaning of democracy and political participation from the angle of linguistic polarization and its colonial past. Tommaso Manfredini shines a unique light on the questionable practices of translation and their legal ramifications for asylum seekers and refugees on the southern border of the European Union. We thank all the contributors for their participation in the Sawyer Seminar and their enormous patience with our editorial work.

We read Wesley Leonard's seminal work on Indigenous languages after the Sawyer Seminar, and we are honored to include it in this volume. As editors, we would like to extend our gratitude to Leonard and to the American Indian Studies Center, UCLA © 2011, Regents of the University of California, for permitting us to reprint his essay "Challenging 'Extinction' Through Modern Miami Language Practices," which originally appeared in the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (vol. 35, no. 2) in 2011.

We are also very much indebted to the other scholars and activists who contributed to and expanded the scope of our discussions as invited speakers and workshop participants. Special thanks go to Philippe Van Parijs,

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Moira Inghilleri, Mary Louise Pratt, Moira Paz, Maya Hess (and her amazing work at Red-T), Michele Moody-Adams, Simona Škrabec, Carol Benson, Elise Pestre, Sareeta Amrute, Anish Gawande, Jane Anderson, Marissa Johnson-Valenzuela, Anshuman Pandey, William R. Frey, and Daan van Esch. Their scholarship and theoretical reflections have been incredibly valuable as we consider global language justice. In 2017, Laura Kurgan and Lydia H. Liu created a seminar called “Conflict Urbanism: Language Justice” at Columbia University in an effort to involve undergraduate students in the development of research projects on global language justice.

Around 2018, our work began to intersect with the International Year of Indigenous Languages, declared for 2019 by the United Nations, and some members of our group attended the seventeenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Languages. Working with Elsa Stamatopoulou, director of the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Program at Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights, we decided to convene a symposium on Global Language Justice for Indigenous Languages jointly with UNESCO, the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations, New York. In April 2018, we hosted members of the First Nations; representatives of Indigenous peoples from New Zealand, Europe, and North America; linguistic rights activists; and UN officials. Those who spoke at our symposium were Chief Wilton Littlechild, Chief Clara Soaring Hawk, Tania Ka’ai, Miryam Yataco, Luis Males, Mariam Aboubakrine, Dmitrii Harakka-Zaitsev, Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, Billy Noseworthy, Aili Keskitalo, Kanerahtens Skidders, Angel Vicente-Ferrer, and Romina Quezada Morales. Isabelle Zaugg, Atefeh Akbari, Maria Bo, and Amanda Earl also made important contributions to these discussions. The success of the meeting was the result of Elsa Stamatopoulou’s tireless efforts devoted to the cause of Indigenous issues worldwide.

Those exciting intellectual engagements would not have been possible without the active participation and contributions from our graduate fellows over the four-year period: Maria Bo, Alexandra V. Méndez, Atefeh Akbari, Chloe Estep, Amy Zhang, and Charlotte Silverman. Each of them was devoted to the project and played key roles in programming and assisting in hosting workshops and conferences. Bo founded the blogsite *Explorations in Global Language Justice* (<https://languagejustice.wordpress.com/>), which

has published numerous incisive observations, pieces, reports, and student essays, in addition to contributing to this volume. Charlotte Silverman has worked with us as an editorial assistant, and her intellectual acuity and careful editing have been crucial in every step of the manuscript preparation.

Sarah Monks, assistant director of ICLS, supported the Sawyer Seminar and our publication effort throughout. From budget planning to conference and workshop organization and publicity, the impact of the Sawyer Seminar and this ensuing volume are a testament to her meticulous attention to detail. We are very appreciative of her dedication to the project and the hard work of Kelly Lemons and other staff members at ICLS who provided assistance. Jim Cheng, Chengzhi Wang, and Ria Koopmans-de Bruijn of the C. V. Starr East Asian Library and Lauren E. DeVoe of the Butler Library at Columbia University provided their generous support and timely assistance. We are deeply indebted to them. We also thank Samantha Rose DeNinno and Adeline Chum for providing additional help at short notice.

Over the years, our collective project has received grants from partner institutes and centers as well as from the Arts and Sciences administration at Columbia University, including the Office of the Executive Vice-President, Dean of the Humanities, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, and Data Science Institute. We are grateful, in particular, to David Madigan, Sarah Cole, and Sharon Marcus for their support and encouragement. Apart from the Mellon grant, our project received an award from the Collaboratory Fellows Fund of the Data Science Institute to foster rigorous interdisciplinary exchange between the humanities and computer science. That award enabled Isabelle Zaugg and Smaranda Muresan, a computer scientist, to design and teach a new course titled “Multilingual Technologies and Language Diversity.” Students from their classes contributed essays to the *Explorations in Global Language Justice* blog and became participants in our project.

Our decision to include bilingual poems and artworks in the book came from the recognition that poetic voices and art embody our vision of global language justice in concrete form. As early as the inaugural event of the Sawyer Seminar, we were very fortunate to have some of the finest contemporary poets join us and engage with the wider multilingual communities in the city of New York. We thank all the poets, their translators, and the Poets House for taking part and inspiring us: in particular, Anne Waldman (United States), Raúl Zurita (Chile), Anna Deeny Morales

(United States), Sharmistha Mohanty (India), Bei Dao (China), Eliot Weinberger (United States), Orlando White (Diné, United States), Mohammed Bennis (Morocco), Zhai Yongming (China), Daouda Ndiaye (Senegal), and Nabaneeta Dev Sen (India).

We would like to acknowledge the generosity of poet Mohammed Bennis and his translator Camilo Gomez-Rivas, poet Ouyang Jianghe and his translator Austin Woerner, and poet Zhai Yongming and her translator Andrea Lingenfelter for giving us permission to reprint their poems here. Indigenous poet Orlando White's poem "Ats'ists'in" was previously published in *Bone Light* (Copyright © 2009 by Orlando White) and is reprinted here with the permission of The Permissions Company, LLC on behalf of Red Hen Press, redhen.org. Bei Dao's poem "February," translated by David Hinton with Yanbing Chen, appeared originally in *Landscape Over Zero* and is reprinted here by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp. (copyright © 1995, 1996 by Zhao Zhenkai; translation copyright © 1995, 1996 by David Hinton with Yanbing Chen). The Indigenous poet Abhay Xaxa, a member of the Kurukh tribe who was born and brought up in Chattisgarh, India, died tragically of a heart attack in March 2020. His poem "I Am Not Your Data" was published first by *Round Table India* and later by *Adivasi Resurgence* and is included here to convey Xaxa's distinctive critical voice, his unceasing commitment to Adivasi land reform, and his imagining of political solidarities through a radical utopianism. We are indebted to Manu V. Devadevan for his skillful translation of the Kannada vachanas. We thank the great artist Xu Bing and his studio for permission to reproduce a portion of his seminal creation, *Square Word Calligraphy*, and for permission to use his art work on our book cover, which teaches us how to think imaginatively about script, image, and difference.

At the culmination of the Sawyer Seminar, this book represents a collective endeavor that aims to transform ourselves even as we seek to transform society. It is our expectation that the book will help shape the thinking of those whom it has touched for years to come and will continue to catalyze conversations that bring us closer to a just world.



FIGURE 0.1. *EXIT* exhibition: An audience view. Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Mark Hansen, Laura Kurgan, and Ben Rubin, in collaboration with Robert Gerard Pietrusko and Stewart Smith, *EXIT*, 2008–2015. Immersive audiovisual installation based on an idea by Paul Virilio (45 min.). View of the installation at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2015. Collection Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris. Photo by Luc Boegley.



FIGURE 0.2. *EXIT* exhibition: Satellite images. Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Mark Hansen, Laura Kurgan, and Ben Rubin, in collaboration with Robert Gerard Pietrusko and Stewart Smith, *EXIT*, 2008–2015. Immersive audiovisual installation based on an idea by Paul Virilio (45 min.). View of the installation at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2015. Collection Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris. Photo by Luc Boegley.





## GLOBAL LANGUAGE JUSTICE

