Wim Verbaal

Latin, Medieval Cosmopolitism, and the Dynamics of Untranslatability

Introduction

Much has happened in recent years in Translation Studies, due to some general currents that influence both society and scholarly work,[1] and to some specific publications. Among the more important of the latter undoubtedly belong the two books by Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone* (2006) and, particularly, *Against World Literature* (2013). In this last book, Apter takes an even more radical position against the option of World Literature as it was advanced by David Damrosch in his very popular *What is World Literature?* (2003), which gave rise to the field of World Literature Studies.[2] His most recent book, the very readable *Around the World in 80 Books* (2021), may be considered both an apt illustration of the significance the field in the meantime got and of Damrosch's own complete disregard for the criticisms as formulated by Apter.

Damrosch's view of World Literature is entirely based upon works available in English and thus in translations. When considering the way translations are ruled and determined by economic market restrictions (as painfully illustrated by Nicholas Glastonbury in a contribution to the Los Angeles Review of Books, May 2021) and notably the forces operative within the international and Anglophone translation field – the almost negligible presence of translated works in the English book-market (as already laid bare by Gisèle Saphiro in 2010)[3] – it will be clear to everyone that, despite his best intentions, Damrosch's understanding of World Literature risks becoming a restricted field, limiting the aspect of "World" to "Anglo-translatable" or even "Anglo-translated".[4]

In protesting this new and unconscious form of imperialist or colonialist Americanization, Apter launched the concept of Untranslatability, actually more as a right

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1 I tried to pay attention to this topic in my paper "Decolonizing Latin: On Paradigms, Self-Evidences, and the Place of Latin in a Changing World" at the conference of *Medialatinitas IX: Nostalgia and/in the Latin Middle Ages.* Charles University, Prague: September 22–24, 2022. The paper was inspired by the issue of *postmedieval* 11 (2020) that appeared under the title *Medieval Studies: Stakes of the Field.* See moreover Albin, Erler, O'Donnell, Paul, and Rowe (2019).
2 See e.g., the publications by Theo D'haen as well as D'haen, Damrosch, and Kadir (2012) and Seigneurie (2020).
3 For more recent statistics (up to around 2012), see the *Index Translationum* by the Unesco: https://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsstatexp.aspx?crit1L=1&nTyp=min&topN=50 (accessed 28 October 2022).
4 This Anglocentrism forms the background to Mufti (2016).

Wim Verbaal, University of Ghent

that should be respected than as a workable tool.[5] Nonetheless, she encountered the fiercest opposition, inspiring, among others, a voluminous collection of essays from Routledge, entitled *Untranslatability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Large, Akashi, Józwikowska, and Rose 2019). In spite of the title, the publication aims to be an open manifest against any presumption that there might exist something like "untranslatability". On the first pages of the *Introduction*, "untranslatable" is characterized as "an exaggeration" for which "English (or whichever target language is intended) does not have a single-word equivalent" (note the self-evident primary position of English!) (Large, Akashi, Józwikowska, and Rose 2019, 2). It is clearly suggested that "untranslatability" is only due to the incapacities of the translator.

This is the background against which I hope to offer some ideas on the concept and the dynamics of untranslatability. These are the writings that made me ponder different ways of understanding the concept of translation and notably the difficulty of translators and translation scholars in aligning themselves with those who do not profess their own opinions or whose opinions they consider as one more attack against the value of translations.

As a scholar occupied with texts in the past, moreover as a specialist of what I prefer to call the forgotten literature of Western Europe – Latin remained the most important writing language until far into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but is never considered in any approach to modern literatures, be they World or nationalist – and as a translator myself of a small "peripheric" language with a strong tradition in translation, I think we can learn something by looking to the period that may be labelled as one of the most intensive translation periods in European history: the Western European Middle Ages. I hope my study of this period may offer other insights into what we understand as translation, as transfer, and also as untranslatability.

The ideal translator

Let me start with a quote that belongs to a well-known and often used text in literary scholarship.

> El texto de Cervantes y el de Menard son verbalmente idénticos, pero el segundo es casi infinitamente más rico. (Más ambiguo, dirán sus detractores; pero la ambigüedad es una riqueza.)

> Cervantes' text and Menard's are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. (More ambiguous, his detractors will say, but ambiguity is richness.) (Borges, *Pierre Menard*, trans. Irby)

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5 See Apter (2013, 23): "With translation assumed to be a good thing en soi – under the assumption that it is a critical praxis enabling communication across languages, cultures, time periods and disciplines – the right to the Untranslatable was blindsided."

The short story by Borges, *Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote*, is well known. The narrator tells the story of his French friend Pierre Menard, who recently died and whose greatest achievement, according to the narrator, is the writing of several chapters of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. The narrator considers it a much greater achievement than Cervantes' own work.

What does this well-known surrealist text and its unlikely protagonist teach us about translation and (un)translatability? In my opinion, Pierre Menard might be considered the ideal translator in the traditional sense. As such, a translation tries to offer the best equivalent to its original.[6] What can be a better equivalent than a translation that is identical to the original? For Menard does not copy the Quixote. He *writes* it and does so in the identical language that, to him, is a foreign language. Ménard differs from traditional translators in the fact that the work of translation does not occur between two texts, but concerns rather the translator himself: Menard translates himself into a writer of the original Quixote. This does not imply that he puts himself in the guise of Cervantes.

> Ser, de alguna manera, Cervantes y llegar al Quijote le pareció menos arduo – por consiguiente, menos interesante – que seguir siendo Pierre Menard y llegar al Quijote, a través de las experiencias de Pierre Menard.

> To be, in some way, Cervantes and reach the Quixote seemed less arduous to him –and, consequently, less interesting – than to go on being Pierre Menard and reach the Quixote through the experiences of Pierre Menard. (Borges, *Pierre Menard,* trans. Irby)

Is this not exactly what one expects a traditional translator to do? Rewriting (or should we say writing) the source text as if it were written within and from the target culture. Yet, Menard wants to go even further. He translates the writer, Cervantes, into the target culture, into his own person. This, however, causes the differences.

> Es una revelación cotejar el don Quijote de Menard con el de Cervantes. Este, por ejemplo, escribió (Don Quijote, primera parte, noveno capítulo):
> *. . . la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir.*
> Redactada en el siglo diecisiete, redactada por el "ingenio lego" Cervantes, esa enumeración es un mero elogio retórico de la historia. Menard, en cambio, escribe:
> *. . . la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir.*
> La historia, madre de la verdad; la idea es asombrosa. Menard, contemporáneo de William James, no define la historia como una indagación de la realidad sino como su origen. La verdad histórica, para él, no es lo que sucedió; es lo que juzgamos que sucedió. Las cláusulas finales – ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir – son descaradamente pragmáticas.

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6 See on the difficult signification of "equivalence" Kenny (1998).

> También es vívido el contraste de los estilos. El estilo arcaizante de Menard – extranjero al fin – adolece de alguna afectación. No así el del precursor, que maneja con desenfado el español corriente de su época.

> It is a revelation to compare Menard's Don Quixote with Cervantes'. The latter, for example, wrote (part one, chapter nine): . . . *truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.* Written in the seventeenth century, written by the "lay genius" Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical praise of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes: . . . *truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.* History, the mother of truth: the idea is astounding. Menard, a contemporary of William James, does not define history as an inquiry into reality but as its origin. Historical truth, for him, is not what has happened; it is what we judge to have happened. The final phrases – exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor – are brazenly pragmatic. The contrast in style is also vivid. The archaic style of Menard – quite foreign, after all – suffers from a certain affectation. Not so that of his forerunner, who handles with ease the current Spanish of his time. (Borges, *Pierre Menard,* trans. Irby)

Indeed, saying exactly the same in exactly the same words but in different times as here, or in different cultures as is the case in most translation practices, means that you are not at all saying the same. Translation in this sense is thus indeed impossible as Emily Apter points out by way of Alain Badiou's translation of Plato's *Republic* (Apter 2013, 41–47). At least as long as one starts with the presumption that one is able to say the same and thus refuses to accept untranslatability as a given. I would rather hypothesize that untranslatability can to a certain extent be seen as the necessary precondition that makes possible any translation.

Translation universes

To clarify my meaning, I must explain the conceptual framework from which I depart and by which I want to highlight some concepts and frameworks in the background of many approaches to translation and translation studies.

One of the first theoretical approaches to deal with is Even-Zohar's poly-system theory. In the last version of his "Polysystem Theory revised" (2005, 38), he defines systems as "networks of relations that can be hypothesized for a certain set of assumed observables ('occurrences' / "phenomena')". This refined redefinition is an answer to the post-structuralist reproach that the concept of "system" is much too immobile, too static, and that it leaves no room for the dynamics that came to be stressed more during the 1990s and the beginning of the millennium.

One of the most important counter-conceptualizations is the idea of the "field", the *champ*, as introduced by Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, "les champs se présentent comme «des espaces structurés de positions», celles des agents qui œuvrent dans ces «champs de force», «dont les propriétés dépendent de leur position dans

ces espaces et qui peuvent être analysées indépendamment des caractéristiques de leurs occupants (en partie déterminées par elles).» La structure du champ correspond à un «état du rapport de force entre les agents ou les institutions engagés dans la lutte» pour la position hégémonique dans le champ . . ."[7] It is clear that Bourdieu puts a stronger emphasis on the dynamics to which a field is submitted and that the field thereby becomes a much more open and vibrant image than the closed and petrified image a "system" evokes.

In both cases, however, we are dealing with an approach that positions itself from the perspective of the observant outsider. Both presume the observational gap between the scholar and the observed ("assumed observables" in Even-Zohar, "des espaces structures de positions" in Bourdieu). Moreover, Even-Zohar does not question the separability of his "observables": they are assumed, not in the sense of invented but in that of adopted ones. Bourdieu, on the contrary, reduces all dynamics to power relations, thus tracing all back to Neo-Darwinist evolutionary principles.

As a medievalist I experience these critical points as true limitations. They do not function in the cultural sphere in which I have to take my position. I therefore prefer the concept of the universe as an image. It has the abstract connotation of Even-Zohar's system but is more dynamic. Moreover, it is constructed by forces, not merely containing them as Bourdieu's field. Most importantly, universes are not separable observables. They imply me as the observer, and they intrude into and infuse each other. This will prove of crucial importance when considering the medieval world and the part played by Latin.

Untranslatable universes

After this conceptual and theoretical interlude, I want to return to concrete examples to make things a bit more comprehensible. I could transfer Menard's challenge to my own situation. Comparable to what he did, I am supposed to transfer myself as a non-native speaker of English into the English-spoken universe. Native English-speakers immediately notice several consequences. I am not capable of reproducing Quixote in the original language. My English betrays my status as a non-native speaker. Words appear where they would never appear in a native context. Phrases sound un-English. And in case I am speaking to English-speakers, I need not mention the accent.

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7 Chauviré and Fontaine (2003, 16–17): "Fields are presented as 'structured spaces of positions', those of the agents operating in these 'force fields', 'whose properties' depend on their position in these spaces, and which can be analysed independently of the characteristics of those who possess them (in part determined by them). The structure of the field corresponds to a 'state of the balance of power' between the agents or institutions engaged in the struggle 'for the hegemonic position in the field'." (my translation).

Indeed, in my situation we might recognize Even-Zohar's view of a poly-system as the "system" of my local universe confronted with the "system" of an English-spoken universe as is the actual scholarly universe. Both universes do not coincide and have contact only through the language that functions somehow as the bridge over the gap – but that gap remains. As the "transferor", I remain locked within my own local universe, always feeling somehow colonized or hegemonized by the internationalized local universe of English with which I share the language but not the universe itself. If I wanted to achieve this, I ought to follow Menard as the ultimate model and work to transfer or translate myself into a member of the English universe. Yet, even then, what I would say will never sound as a native speaker of the English universe. The gap that separates me from the English-spoken universe will remain and thus always impose itself on my use of the language, making me a stumbler in comparison to native English speakers.

The Latin universe

Bringing myself onto the scene is a conscious move to demonstrate the difference with the medieval situation. The importance of English today is often compared to the situation of Latin in premodern times, mostly with its position in Antiquity, but that does not concern us now. We will limit ourselves to Latin as the language of the schools and of intellectual life, as it was installed in Carolingian times and continued until the twentieth century. The comparison and even the similarities with today's English seem evident.

Yet, the most important is often forgotten. While the use of both languages as scholarly languages may seem comparable, the universes to which they belong have no intersection at all. The Latin universe was never local but shared, common to all users of its language. For almost two millennia there have been no native speakers of the Latin tongue. Everyone using Latin had to conquer it the way I must conquer English. Some of them did it better than others but all came to the Latin universe in the same way. The Latin universe demanded and still demands an initiation of all its speakers and they share this common conquest of a universe that is not bound to any localization: its loci of localization are school and church that may display local variance but that in themselves are not bound to any regional or local borders. Variance within the Latin universe is, for that reason, individually bound and not tied to the pre-existing local universe of a mother tongue.[8]

This, of course, has far-reaching consequences for any Latin scholar in the Middle Ages. A Latinate medieval scholar belongs automatically to more than one universe. He is part and parcel of his local universe that he shares with those speaking more or

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[8] This part summarizes the more developed argument in Verbaal (2019).

less the same mother tongue and who come from comparable local conditions. It is a local universe, regionally restricted, just as are my Dutch-spoken universe and the English-spoken universe to which a full entrance will always be denied to me. The Latinate medieval scholar, however, was also part and parcel of a cosmopolitan universe that he shared with all those using the Latin language because they were all initiated in the same way. They were all initiated to a universe that did not belong to any localized situation and thus could not exclude anyone who spoke its language. Language was not the bridge between both universes. The Latin language constituted one of these universes, not to the exclusion of the other but as a parallel universe that at the same time was inseparable from the other one.

Inter-universe translation

What does this mean when we then turn our attention to translation in the medieval world? As a starting point we must posit that translation rarely concerns the transfer between two "separatable observables", separated by an inter-universal gap. When talking about translation from Latin to the vernacular or the other way round, there is no inter-lingual gap that separates two distinct universes as was the case with me and the English-spoken universe. Translation for the medieval scholar, on the contrary, is all too often an intra-transfer between universes that belong inseparably to one and the same person: they cannot be separated as they are always present within each other. They overlap without being identical.

Even more, these universes are not only not identical while overlapping, they are also complementary. In this sense it is important to keep in mind Niels Bohr's principle of complementarity. I think it an important means by which we must learn to approach pre-modern texts and cultures. It helps to get a better grip on what happens in the medieval translators' mind. The basic idea behind the principle of complementarity explains why we as observers can only see one of two (or more) options. In quantum mechanics, with Niels Bohr as one of its founding fathers, light can behave as if consisting of particles, thus as matter, or as a wave, thus as immaterial. The point is that light behaves in the way we as observers approach it. When we measure its material aspects, it behaves as material, whereas when we look after its diffraction patterns it behaves as a wave. We as the observers determine how light reacts to our approaches. We are part and parcel of the observation, not outsiders, and, simultaneously, what we observe, in this case light, is not indifferent to our observing.[9]

Translation in the medieval mind thus is not even a transfer but rather a transformation, or, even better, it is like changing one's clothes when turning to a particular task, duty, or work. One knows that one should better not wear a suit when going

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9 For the importance of Niels Bohr for the humanities, see Barad (2007).

to dig in the garden, just as it is inappropriate to enter an official reception in Bermuda shorts and sneakers. In a similar way, the medieval mind adapted style, wording, phrasing, and meter when writing in the other language.

An illustrative example of a similar multilingual universe is offered by Dante who writes his more ego-inspired texts (his poetry, the Vita Nova, the commentary on his own poems) in Tuscan Italian with its own rules and poetics, his technical and scientific treatises in a scholastic Latin and his (ironic) response to the early humanist Giovanni del Virgilio in perfect classical Latin, both in wording and in pastoral stylistics. The three universes interfere with each other, they overlap and yet are not identical. Even more, they are complementary because none of them allows the other to be applied outside its proper scope.

Of course, this causes problems when applying systemic or field-theories in a similar situation. These suppose a movement from one separable domain into another. Yet, medieval translation, in the first place, is never a cross-systemic transfer. Rather it is a cross-universe turn: you go from one universe into the other without leaving the first because both overlap or infuse each other without ever suppressing the other.

This is important for understanding what lies behind medieval translation. Often, in modern scholarship and translation studies, it is not even referred to as translation in our sense but rather as a kind of free adaptation or rewriting. Yet, what causes the difference is not so much a "freedom" or an actualisation but rather the conscience of a kind of untranslatability. Translation in the medieval sense does not happen across languages but across literary universes. You do not look for the equivalent form or expression as regards the original, the source text. Rather, inescapably the target universe imposes its own rules. This is not seen as some kind of break between source and target universe because the transferor belongs to both: they both belong to his own essence. In fact, he is the mutual infusion. Or better, he is a multiverse as a person. And for that reason, he is very well aware that the forces, as they dominate one universe, cannot work similarly in the other. He must transform them into new ones that build up the other universe.

Universe translation

Some examples can make this more concrete and visible. I start with two translation chains. The first departs from Virgil's *Aeneid.* In the scene of Pallas' death in the tenth book, Virgil allows himself one of those rare intrusions into his own story.

Vergilius, *Aeneis*	Roman *d'Eneas*
quem Turnus super adsistens:	Turnus le vit mort devant soy,
'Arcades, haec' inquit 'memores mea dicta referte	.l. anel choysy en son doy
Euandro: qualem meruit, Pallanta remitto.	que Eneas li ot douné;
quisquis honos tumuli, quidquid solamen humandi est,	moult par y estoit bien ouvré
largior. haud illi stabunt Aeneia paruo	.l. lÿoncel fait de jagonce,
hospitia.' et laeuo pressit pede talia fatus	d'or y avoit bien plus d'une once.
exanimem rapiens immania pondera baltei	Il s'abaissa, du doy li trait,
impressumque nefas: una sub nocte iugali	el suen l'a mis. Por fol le fait :
caesa manus iuuenum foede thalamique cruenti,	puis fu telle heure, s'il seüst,
quae Clonus Eurytides multo caelauerat auro;	que ja par lui bailliez ne fust,
quo nunc Turnus ouat spolio gaudetque potitus.	se s'il s'en peüst repentir
nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae	quant por l'anel l'estut morir.
et seruare modum rebus sublata secundis!	(ed. Petit 1997, 5836–5847)
Turno tempus erit magno cum optauerit emptum	
intactum Pallanta, et cum spolia ista diemque oderit.	
(ed. Hirtzel 1900, X. 490–505)	

In the 1150s Virgil's epic was transformed into a French *roman d'antiquité*, the *Roman d'Eneas*. The French version follows the Latin model faithfully in many places. Yet it dares take what we would call its freedom, as can be seen in this fragment. The French leaves out Turnus' insulting and raw address to Pallas' compatriots and soldiers. It also strikes out Turnus' crude treatment of the body, when he puts his feet on Pallas' trunk to rob the sword-belt. And of course, the belt itself changed into a ring with proper emotional value: it was a gift from Aeneas to Pallas.

Do we have to speak here of adaptation and actualisation? Yes, of course, as a technical description of what happened in the transition. But similar terms do not explain why these actions took place. Why was it felt necessary to adapt the model in these points while transforming it into a French response? This has all to do with the distinct universes that overlap in the transferor. What is allowed in the Latin universe, belonging to the universe of school, schoolbooks, teachers, and classics, cannot be valid anymore in the other universe to which the French language belongs. What can be expected from a Latin Turnus, is not allowed any longer in a French Turnus. While the Latin Turnus may behave as a barbarian, a French Turnus must bow to the rules of chivalrous behaviour.

Similarly, Matthew of Vendôme warns modern poets (in Latin) not to make abundant use of similitudes as did the ancients. They did so to fill the content of their verses because they did not have as much to say. The moderns cannot afford it any longer. They must know and do better![10] Matthew actually imposes the forces of the

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10 Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria* IV.5: *Antiquis siquidem incumbebat materiam protelare quibusdam diversiculis et collateralibus sententiis, ut materiae penuria poetico figmento plenius exuberans in artificiosum luxuriaret incrementum. Hoc autem modernis non licet.* (ed. Faral 1962, 181).

vernacular universe onto the contemporary Latin one that differs as much from the classical as the vernacular itself. I will return to this.

It is interesting to continue the chain and to see what happened with the *Roman d'Eneas* that itself became the source for transformations into other vernaculars. I took the earliest one, the transformation by the Limburg poet Heinrich van Veldeke, whose *Eneit* is transmitted in a German version, probably also by the poet.

Roman d'Eneas	Heinrich von Veldeke, *Eneit*
Turnus le vit mort devant soy,	Du Turnus gesach
.I. anel choysy en son doy	dat der helet Pallas lach
que Eneas li ot douné;	vore heme dot ane dat sant,
moult par y estoit bien ouvré	ein vingerin hadde'r ane der hant,
.I. lÿoncel fait de jagonce,	der junchere Pallas,
d'or y avoit bien plus d'une once.	dat heme gaf Eneas
Il s'abaissa, du doy li trait,	dore trouwe ende dore vruntscap,
el suen l'a mis. Por fol le fait :	dore minne ende dore gesellescap,
puis fu telle heure, s'il seüst,	dat was rot guldin,
que ja par lui bailliez ne fust,	dat't nit beter ne dorchte sin
se s'il s'en peüst repentir	ende ne was nit te cleine,
quant por l'anel l'estut morir.	bit einen duren steine,
(ed. Petit 1997, 5836–5847)	dat was ein smaragd grune.
	Turnus der helet kune
	vergat sich sere dar ane.
	ere'r kerde dane,
	ut den vingere he't heme nam,
	dat heme sint te unstaden quam.
	he dede ouch boslike,
	Turnus der rike,
	heme sine gewalt,
	des he sint sere entgalt,
	du der here Eneas
	sin so geweldech was
	dat'er wale genesen mochte sin,
	mare dore dat vingerin,
	dat'er heme drumbe te dode sluch.
	dar mede entgalt ouch he's genuch.
	(ed. Ettmüller 1852, 7599–7626)

While the French version compared to the Latin model appears to be much shorter, the German version is much longer than the French one. Yet, the amplification has nothing to do with a comparable change in content as we saw happening in the original transformation. The Limburg poet only elaborates on elements already present in the French version. The universes of German and French are thus much more akin than those of Latin and French. They overlap and are identical, even though they belong to different persons and different languages!

Another example can demonstrate this overlap in vernacular universes. One of the first purely inter-vernacular translations is the one Giacomo da Lentini made of an Occitan poem by Foulquet of Marseille. Giacomo da Lentini, known as *il notaio,* stands as one of the first and founding poets of the Sicilian school, the poetic movement peopled by writers assembled around Frederic II of Hohenstaufen. The opening strophes are:

Foulquet of Marseille	Giacomo da Lentini
A vos, midontç, voill retrair'en cantan	Madonna, dir vo voglio
cosi·m destreign Amor[s] e men'a fre	como l'amor m'à priso,
vas l'arguog*ll* gran, e no m'aguda re,	inver' lo grande orgoglio
qe·m mostras on plu merce vos deman;	che voi, bella, mostrate, e no m'aita.
mas tan mi son li consir e l'afan	Oi lasso, lo meo core,
qe viu qant m*er* per am*ar* finamen.	che 'n tante pene è miso
Donc mor e viu? non, mas mos cors cocios	che vive quando more
mor e reviu de cosir amoros	per bene amare, e teneselo a vita!
a vos, dompna, c[e] am tan coralmen;	Dunque mor'e viv'eo?
sufretç ab gioi sa vid'al mort cuisen,	No, ma lo core meo
per qe mal vi la gran beutat de vos.	more più spesso e forte
	che non faria di morte naturale,
Parer non pot per dic ni per senblan	per voi, donna, cui ama,
lo bens ce vos voigll ab † len carna fe †	più che se stesso brama,
mas nie[n]s es so ce vos dic: si·m te	e voi pur lo sdegnate:
al cor us fioc[s] qu*e* no·s † remuda o dan. †	Amor, vostr'amistate vidi male.
Per cals raisons no m'ausi consuman?	
Savi dion e l'autor veramen	Lo meo 'namoramento
qe long*incs* us, segon dreic et raiso[s],	non pò parire in detto,
si convertis e natura, don vos	ma sì com'eo lo sento
deves saber car e*u* n'ai eissamen	cor no lo penseria né diria lingua;
per long*inc* us en fioc d'amor plaisen	e zo ch'eo dico è nente
[. . .]	inver' ch'eo son distretto
(ed. Squillacioti 1999, 414)	tanto coralemente:
	foc'aio al cor non credo mai si stingua,
	anzi si pur alluma:
	perché non mi consuma?
	La salamandra audivi
	che 'nfra lo foco vivi stando sana;
	eo sì fo per long'uso,
	vivo 'n foc'amoroso
	e non saccio ch'eo dica:
	lo meo lavoro spica e non ingrana.
	[. . .]
	(ed. Antonelli 2009, 10–12)

The translation seems almost verbally done but what is essential here is that exactly the same happens as we saw between the *roman de Enéas* and Heinrich van Veldeke: Giacomo belongs to the same universe as Foulquet, a universe constituted by the Occi-

tan *fin'amor*, that came to be built alongside the French chivalrous code consisting largely of similar concepts and ideas though expressed in lyrical vernacular. Among Giacomo's contemporary poets we find for example Sordello, the Italian poet from the northern region, who wrote in Occitan. Giacomo thus did not first translate a poem from one vernacular into another but rather re-wrote the poem as part of a shared universe across the vernaculars.

For a final example that will show more clearly the relation between the universes of the vernacular and the Latin, I turn to the story of Troy that became very popular during the twelfth century, notably in the version of Dares the Phrygian, who was considered an eyewitness. This rather dry Latin prose text became one of the subtexts for Benoît de Ste-Maure's voluminous *Roman de Troie*, the third *roman d'antiquité*, written in the same 1150s as the *Roman d'Enéas*. They were clearly part of a literary project with political aims (Verbaal 2011).

I took the scene of Troilus' death, Troilus being the youngest son of the Trojan king who becomes in Dares' story a true hero of the status of Hector.

Dares, *De excidio*	Benoît de Ste-Maure, *Roman de Troie*
postquam maior pars diei transiit, prodit Troilus ex equo laetus. Argivi maximo clamore fugam faciunt, Myrmidones supervenerunt, inpressionem in Troilum faciunt, de quorum numero multi a Troilo occiduntur: dum acriter proeliantur, equus vulneratus corruit, Troilum inplicitum excutit. Eum cito Achilles adveniens occidit, ex proelio trahere coepit, quod Achilles interventu Memnonis complere non potuit, adveniens enim Memnon et Troili corpus eripuit et Achillem vulnere sauciavit. (ed. Meister 1875, 33)	A la veie les aveit mis, Quant ses chevaus li fu ocis. Feruz esteit de dous espiez, Ne poët mais ester sor piez : En mi la place s'estendi, E Troïlus sor lui chaï. N'ot o lui compaignon ne per: Ainz qu'il s'en poùst relever, Fu Achillès sor lui venuz. Ha ! Las, tanz cous i ot feruz Sor lui d'espees maintenant ! E Achillès se mist en tant Qu'il ot la teste désarmée. Grant défense, dure meslee Lor a rendu : mais ço que chaut ? Rien ne li monte ne ne vaut, Quar Achillès, le reneié, Li a anceis le chief trenchié Qu'il puisse aveir socors n'aïe. Grant cruëuté, grant felenie A fait : bien s'en poüst sofrir ; Ancor s'en puisse il repentir ! A la coë de son cheval Atache le cors del vassal; Adonc le traîne après sei, Si quel virent cil del tornei. (ed. Constans 1904, 21425–21450)

Here we see the opposite movement as we saw happening in the transferal of the Aeneis into the Roman d'Eneas: Benoît expands the scene and gives it a much cruder image than it has in the extremely sober narration by Dares. Achilles is portrayed as a true villain and Troïlus' body undergoes the treatment that in the Homeric epic was reserved for Hector. Clearly, Achilles does not fall under the chivalrous code that applied to Turnus. He is called the *renié*, the renegade, and thus belongs to the category of the epic traitors, the Ganelons, the Hardrés, who are not to be trusted. Once again, the French text is less translating than transforming the Latin model into the French universe.

This becomes even clearer when comparing Benoît's text with Guido delle Colonne's Latin transformation in the second half of the thirteenth century.

Benoît de Ste-Maure, *Roman de Troie*	**Guido delle Colonne,** *Historia destructionis Troiae*
A la veie les aveit mis, Quant ses chevaus li fu ocis. Feruz esteit de dous espiez, Ne poëit mais ester sor piez: En mi la place s'estendi, E Troïlus sor lui chai. N'ot o lui compaignon ne per: Ainz qu'il s'en poüst relever, Fu Achillès sor lui venuz. Ha! las, tanz cous i ot feruz Sor lui d'espees maintenant! E Achillès se mist en tant Qu'il ot la teste désarmée. Grant défense, dure meslee Lor a rendu: mais ço que chaut? Rien ne li monte ne ne vaut, Quar Achillès, le reneié, Li a anceis le chief trenchié Qu'il puisse aveir socors n'aïe. Grant cruëuté, grant felenie A fait: bien s'en poüst sofrir; Ancor s'en puisse il repentir! A la coë de son cheval Atache le cors del vassal; Adonc le traîne après sei, Si quel virent cil del tornei. (ed. Constans 1904, 21425–21450)	Mirmidones autem Troilum inter bellantes sollicita mente querunt, ipsum animose bellantem inter turmas inueniunt. Tunc ipsum ex omni parte circumdant, in medio eorum ipsum constituunt. Sed ipse ex eis plurimos interfecit et infinitos ex eis letaliter uulnerauit. Verum dum nullus esset ex suis qui tunc ipsi Troilo succurreret, Mirmidones interficiunt eius equum, in eorum lanceis ipsum multipliciter uulnerant. Cassidem eius ab eius capite uiolenter extirpant, capucium lorice sue sibi per uiolenciam disrumpendo. Propter quod Troilus, nudato capite, exterminatis uiribus se defendit a Grecis. Tunc superuenit Achilles, qui postquam uidit Troilum habentem caput inerme et omni defensionis auxilio destitutum, in eum irruit furibundus, et nudato ense ictus ictibus cumulando caput eius crudeliter amputauit, caput ipsum proiciendo inter pedes equorum. Corpus autem eius suis manibus interceptum ad caudam equi sui firmiter alligauit, et per totum exercitum inuerecunde post equum suum crudeliter ipsum traxit. Sed O Homere, qui in libris tuis Achillem tot laudibus, tot preconiis extulisti, que probabilis ratio te induxit ut Achillem tantis probitatis titulis exaltasses, ex eo precipue quod dixeris Achillem ipsum in suis uiribus duos Hectores peremisse, ipsum uidelicet et Troilum, fratrem eius fortissimum? (ed. Griffin 1936, 26)

In his Latin transformation, Guido returns to prose but makes the scene even more rude and cruel. It leads however to an indignant apostrophe to Homer, inspired by his elevating Achilles to the status of a hero. By pushing Achilles' barbarous character even further, Guido clearly aims to open the diatribe against the classical poet. He

thus joins the attacks against (classical) poetry as the art of lying that we encounter so often during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A similar exclamation is simply unthinkable in the French universe that misses this direct link to Antiquity. The crossovers between Latin and French show how they originate from entirely different principles. They belong to different universes.

Cross-universe translations

Yet, one form of medieval translation seems to come close to a transsystemic or truly trans-universal transfer: translation from Greek or Arabic into Latin, i.e., from one cosmopolitan language into another.

The cosmopolitan aspect of the other languages lends stronger authority, another sense of the universes they belong to. In their case it concerns parallel universes with a comparable status to Latin, thus conferring on them a higher authority, comparable but not equal to the sacred text. They surely do not possess the authority of sacred texts (except for those in Greek of course) but they are as authoritative in the field of philosophical knowledge. Apparently, it did not occur to anyone to translate directly from one of the other cosmopolitan languages into one of the Western vernaculars, not even into French, rapidly taking over from Latin. Almost every translation into French passed by an intermediary Latin translation. It will be clear by now that this can be ascribed to the translations belonging to distinct universes rather than to the capacities of the translator. Latin, Greek, and Arabic were closer to each other than each of them were to the vernaculars – at least to the Western-European ones. For, in the East it became clear that the strict separation of cosmopolitan and vernacular universes was not a universal given.

Fundamentally, however, the attitude of mutual infusion of diverse universes does not suddenly disappear to make place for a more modern attitude of cross-lingual transfer. The Arabic or Greek (or other) universes will never be part of the medieval Western transferor as are the universes considered here. Yet, the approach of a cross-universe transferor is similar: he intrudes into the other universe as the infused universes do that are incorporated in himself. Thus, he is not simply translating or transferring the other universe into his own. No, he is rather incorporating the other universe into those that make up his multiverse, not by making it his own, but by infusing it into the universe in himself that comes closest to the other, i.e., the Latin as the cosmopolitan sister-universe.

Conclusion

Medieval translation is not based upon interlingual transfer such as translation is taken today. Rather, it seems based upon the transfer between distinct universes that are more linked to codes, forces, and social and cultural practices than to a language

properly spoken. Languages are linked to these universes, but they are not for that reason localized: they are not "nationalized". They are rather "culturalized", or linked to specific codes and practices that are un-interchangeable and thus untranslatable. They can be transferred without any problem within one universe from one language to the other, as long as they remain linked to the same universe, but they do not allow transferral from one universe to the other. This untranslatability does not constitute a problem since most of these different universes come together in the same person. To him as a medieval translator, it is almost evident to change from one to the other, akin to my example of changing clothes or like those who have a bilingual background know perfectly when to switch between languages. Perhaps better than anyone else they understand translations as indispensable and yet impossible. But they come perhaps closest to what I want to demonstrate here: incorporating diverse (lingual) universes will break down language as a national or nationalist identity-marker and thus form a counterweight to the dangers implied in all insurging regionalisms, including that of American English.

> ¡Más bien por imposible! dirá el lector. De acuerdo, pero la empresa era de antemano imposible y de todos los medios imposibles para llevarla a término, este era el más interesante.

> Rather as impossible! my reader will say. Granted, but the undertaking was impossible from the very beginning and of all the impossible ways of carrying it out, this was the *most* interesting. (Borges, *Pierre Menard,* trans. Irby)

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