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Translational Universality: The Struggle over the Universal¹

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the idea of universality through the lens of translation, in an attempt to sketch out what can be called a translational universality. As the starting point, I will take into consideration the recent Étienne Balibar's works on the universals, and especially his strategy of translation, i.e. the strategy of enunciating the universal by means of translational process. In the next step, I will analyze political consequences of the universalizing practices of translation, which due to their capacity to enunciate the universals, according to Balibar's thesis, have generated political communities. In order to examine this aspect, I will discuss the constitutive role of translation in the formation (Bildung) of German cultural identity in the 19th Century, by exposing Humboldt-Schleiermacherian model of translation. In doing so I will lean on Berman's study on translation in Romantic Germany and on Venuti's political reading of nationalist narratives of typically German foreignizing translation. The conception of Bildung, envisaged as an experience of the otherness through translation, will be approached as a historical model to understand the notion of translational universality that is at issue in this paper. After these historical and philosophical analyses, which in translation view one possible way to articulate a certain struggle over the universal from the particular position of cultural difference, the article will address some questions regarding our contemporary situation: what would be a historically different and potentially emancipatory form of universality? What are the translational capacities of such a universality to generate a new framework for political communities?

Keywords: translation, universality, *Bildung*, community, in-betweenness

1. Introduction

A discussion of translation and universality can seem counterintuitive. Translation is usually seen as domain of the particular and of differences. And every, even elementary translation practice certainly shows it. What is translation if not the experience of the irreducible specificity of each language? It is in the moving between different languages that we realize that what can be easily expressed through the resources and structure of one

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language does not work in another language, so the particularity of each linguistic structure is immediately brought to light. And there is always a rest, some remainder which cannot be communicated within another linguistic and cultural framework because of the particular specificity of both languages. In this sense the particularity of each language coincides always with the possibility of the untranslatable. The untranslatable is the ultimate proof of linguistic and cultural differences. This is known to every translator that confronts his or her limits when trying to find a corresponding term or an expression. It must be said that these limits are actually not individual limits of some translator, but rather the limits of translation itself, a kind of intrinsic impossibility of languages that cannot correspond totally each to other. And if the untranslatable means also a demand to repeat translation, to continue to translate, each translation will be inevitably different - different from previous attempts, and again different from the original text. The particularity is, therefore, the main logical signature of translation, which at the same time enact itself as the experience of a limit and of differences (linguistic, cultural and so on).

What does it mean then to deal with universality in translation? Firstly, it must be said that it has nothing to do with the so-called translation universals – a term coined in translation studies to designate features that are found only in translation and in no other kind of text. On the other side, translational universality does not stand for a dream of the universal language, either as a kind of the Adamic originary language or as a perfect parameter of all natural languages, in the way it was polemically discussed by Umberto Eco in his *Search for the Perfect Language*. Eco's rejection of the universal language nonetheless can be very instructive here. We will endorse the claim that a universal language, in the sense of a unique superior and perfect language would render translation useless. But the rejection of the necessity of a universal language does not need to bring up a disavowal of the universality as such with regard to languages. On the contrary, the absence of a perfect infinite language opens up a translational space where different forms of universality are staged.

It seems also that in his attempt to escape identitarian vision of language and culture and all utopian and nostalgic attempts to regain or construct a universal language, Eco falls into the same trap of inverted essentialism. What becomes essentialized are particularity and difference. In order to countervail essentialist universalism, it is not enough to affirm the plurality as "originary" state of languages and their differences. It is rather translation as an activity of mediation between differences that has to occupy the place of the origin. And if it is true that possession of a perfect universal language would render translation useless, it is true as well that a multiversum of linguistic particularities does not guarantee translation only owing to the fact that there is an irreducible linguistic plurality. Eco's vision combines traditional Romantic Humboldtian idea about the original spirit of each language as

expression of the collective soul with the theory of translation as a form of communication. In doing so he ends up with the suppression of translation by absorbing it in the general communication between different symbolical and semantical orders². The plurality of particularities that dismisses the horizon of universality is just a mirroring reversal of the universality that colonizes differences. Furthermore, by eliminating the universality we are actually losing the grounds for a satisfactory account of the very particularity and difference, risking to treat them as somehow given. And indeed, what we will try to argue in this text is that it is translation that opens up a space for a different forms of universality, which we can define translational universality – the universality which lies in a differential relation, i.e. in the translation of particular and different languages each to other.

2. Strategy of translation

A contemporary project to rethink universality through translation can be found in Étienne Balibar's recent work on the universals (Balibar 2016). He distinguishes three strategies as three modes to express the contradictions that are involved in the enunciation of the universal. One of these strategies of enunciation of the universal is, namely, the strategy of translation (the first two are strategies of disjunction and subsumption), and it is explained in these terms:

² It is very indicative how Umberto Eco envisaged the future of the multilingual Europe: "Polyglot Europe will not be a continent where individuals converse fluently in all the other languages; in the best of cases, it could be a continent where differences of language are no longer barriers to communication, where people can meet each other and speak together, each in his or her own tongue, understanding, as best they can, the speech of others. In this way, even those who never learn to speak another language fluently could still participate in its particular genius, catching a glimpse of the particular cultural universe that every individual expresses each time he or she speaks the language of his or her ancestors and his or her own tradition." (Eco 1995, 351) The model that Eco proposes is the recognition of particularity without really speaking or translating its language. But if we do not need to speak the language of the other, but just to catch the glimpse of it, so that it is enough for communication, then translation is really useless and not needed. Such a radical recognition of the peculiarity of each particular culture without a need to learn, speak or translate its language is a further consequence of a dialogical-communicative multiculturalist approach that, in the final instance, disregards otherness, paradoxically and contrary to declared intentions, and moreover, it leaves each culture in the state of immobility (we will just speak the language of our traditions and communicate easily with others). In this sense Eco's proposal is quite opposite to Walter Benjamin's vision. We could say: while Umberto Eco proposes communication beyond and without translation, Benjamin prospects translation beyond communication.

To speak the universal as translation therefore is not simply to advocate translating (or translating more), but it is to translate again, otherwise and elsewhere, for other groups and individuals who will thus gain access to the labor of translation. And if translating practices have produce (and keep producing) political communities, to reflect on the possible transformations of these practices is eminently a meta-political, a philosophical task. (Balibar 2006, 14)

Here we can single out two elements that will be important for our discourse on translational universality: translating *of* others as translation *for* others; and translation as the practice of producing political communities. We will come back to these issues after a historical analysis of the relation between translation, universality and community in the 19th Century Germany. However, beside these claims there is also an expression, a kind of pun, evoked by Balibar in order to explain the strategy of translation. This ambiguous expression that works well in French and Italian, but is untranslatable in English (another fact that makes this expression performatively interesting) is: "Les langues se parlent" (in Italian "le lingue si parlano"). It can be read in two ways, so we have to use two sentences in English in order to translate it properly: "languages are spoken" and "languages speak to one another". Both claims do not refer to any specific language but to languages in their plurality, in their abstract plurality, one can say. The first meaning of "Les langues se parlent" contains an abstract universal impersonal claim, in the sense that there is a plurality of languages and their passive form of "being spoken" by subjects that in this relation remain indeterminate as well as the place and context where languages are spoken. The second meaning of the expression takes into account the reciprocity of languages, their mutual relationship – languages are not only spoken, they speak as well, and they speak each to other. It can be said, following up Walter Benjamin (Benjamin 1977), that this mutual relationship stays at the origin of the plurality of languages: we cannot think the linguistic plurality without intrinsic relationality of each singular language to its otherness. In other terms, a language is language only if it speaks to the other, and in the last analysis, if it is translated into another language.

The short analysis of Balibar's expression provides a first draft of the concept of universality in which we are interested here. Languages are universally translatable and universally spoken: universality is articulated through a double relation. But at this point, we are tempted to combine those two meanings and to invert the common-sense conviction that we translate only when the capacity of speaking i.e. the possibility of communication is put out of action. Instead, it could be said that languages are spoken because they speak each to other. In order to have a universal claim it is necessary to have a relation and inter-

action between particular languages as subjects of communication. Languages are in relation each to other, they need each other. In other words, there is always some translation at work. And translation keeps the instances of particularity and universality together, in such a way that the form of universality emerges exactly through relation between the particulars. Although Balibar's figure remains somehow abstract and requires further explanation, it uses a translational linguistic paradigm in order to reformulate the universality on the basis of multiplicity. Moreover, by combining impersonality and reciprocity it suggests that universality is enunciated as double relation, i.e. relation with itself through reference to indeterminate impersonal subjects, and relation between the particulars. To this double relation constitutive for the notion of universality we can add another one: relation of the particular with itself. Such a net of relations builds the starting point for our notion of translational universality.

Firstly, the main idea of this paper is that translation is the horizon where a certain form of universality is at work. It is already clear that this universality is not merely logical, as a formal genus sub-dividable into many subordinate species. Rather we are deploying Hegelian account of universality, that is concrete and determinate one, the universality that is always embodied in some particular position. Thus, what is at issue here is not universality which subsumes the particulars, but it is rather the universality which assumes the particularity as the element of its own determination, its concrete soil. But here we have to go further and be more precise: the universality is a relation between the particulars in which each particular goes beyond itself, becomes something other. Universality is the process of turning the particular against itself. It is the self-reflexion of the particular that struggles with itself and shows that it cannot be reduced to a mere isolated particularity. What counts here, therefore, is not only a relation between at least two particulars, but also the relation of the particular with itself.

If translation is, in the first place, a relation between two particular determinate languages, the universality then is placed exactly in this tension that each language develops with itself and through its relation with other language. Therefore, the universality is not to be found in some abstraction outside particular determinations, but in this very relation by means of which each language turns against itself, pushing its limits of expressivity, experimenting with its semantic and syntactic apparatus by trying to speak the language of the other, to express the otherness.

In that regard, translation is a mode of constitution of the concrete universal. And moreover, such a notion of universality cannot be reduced to be just a result of self-reflexive relation of the particularity in translation; it is also the condition of possibility of this very translational process. If translation were only the relation between the particular

entities there would be no translation. The dimension of universality, therefore, is required in order to account for the very possibility of the relation within plurality of languages.

Actually, all these problems can be approached from different angles. Andrew Benjamin, for example, writes in his text on Walter Benjamin that there are two preconditions regarding translation, "the necessary absence of universality that generates the need to translate" and "the necessary retention of a form of universality in any account of translation's possibility" (Benjamin 2002, 110). So, this tricky situation in which universality is absent - here this absence of universality stands for an unavoidable difference between languages that cannot be subsumed under a universal neutral perspective -, but the universality is also necessarily involved as condition to have languages as particular and specific, what is also a condition to have translation. For Andrew Benjamin this is indicative of the very character of the notion of universality that is at work in translation. He points out that it is the very universality that allows for the plurality of different particular languages, so a relation to the universal is already present in each particular in order to be something particular (see Benjamin 2002, 111). In other terms, in order to have language in its specificity, the language must be translatable, it must be primordially related to another language, i.e. potentially related to all languages. Therefore, what makes a language a language is its universal translatability. I would endorse this claim by saying that relationship of the particular and the universal is already inscribed in the possibility to have languages and in the necessity to have translations.

But this dialectic of the universal and the particular operative on, we can say, transcendental level, can (and must) be treated also through its historical appearances and configuration. The historical instantiation of forms of universality in translation of particular languages and cultures shows also that there is also a necessary conflictuality. Actually – following Hegel – the conflict and antagonism are the forms of particularization of the universality. Or, to say it with Balibar: each enunciation of the universal is at odds with its countervailing universality. This is why we preferred to express the problem in terms of the struggle over the universal. Translation and conflict are two complementary modes of the construction of the universality, and this is possible only because the universality exists as relation between the particulars which claim to universality and struggle over the place of the universal.

3. Historical approach: Translation and *Bildung*

In order to understand how a certain conception of universality, historically speaking, was involved in practices of translation, and how, due to such a conception of univer-

salinity, translation was always constitutive for political communities, I will briefly expose Humboldt-Schleiermacherian model of translation. For merely argumentative reasons, I will treat these two authors together, and in order to sketch out a common model of translation I will disregard their differences. However, both Humboldt's and Schleiermacher's theories of translation can be taken as representative examples of the Romantic interpretation of translation. They also share the same political and social meaning assigned to translation: for both Humboldt and Schleiermacher translation is an instrument in the formation (*Bildung*) of the linguistic community, i.e. German community and in other words German nation.

Humboldt in *Introduction* to his translation of *Agamemnon* explicitly asserts that it is translation that gives the language and spirit of a nation that which it does not possess or possesses in another form (Humboldt 1992, 57). Translation, as an experience of the foreign and the unique method of bringing the foreign elements within one's own culture, figures as a process by means of which translator's own culture is transformed and formed. Translation is, therefore, a process and a result of becoming-other (*Anderswerden*). It is a becoming-other and transformation not only of the text that is translated, namely the original, but transformation of the language and culture in which it is translated. Transformational effects of translation serve actually the self-formation of the language through translation, i.e. self-formation through the experience of otherness. Humboldt and Schleiermacher fully recognize transformative potential of translation and its importance for the formation of the national language. For these authors translation is more than a mere transmission: it is a crucial element in the political strategy of formation of the linguistic identity that is at the root of that modern form of community known as a nation.

"To the same extent that a language is enriched, a nation is also enriched. Think how the German language, to cite only one example, has profited since it began imitating Greek meter. And think how our nation has progressed, not just the well-educated among us but the masses as well – even women and children, since the Greeks have been available to our nation's readers in an authentic and undistorted form" (Humboldt 1992, 57).

This progress, however, has to be distinguished from the cultural processes in other countries, especially in at that time dominant France:

How else has it happened that none of the spirit of the ancients has been assimilated by the French as a nation? Even though all of major Greeks and Romans have been translated into the French style quite well, neither the spirit of antiquity nor even an understanding of that spirit has permeated the French nation (we are not speaking here of individual scholars). (Humboldt 1992, 58).

Similar ideas about French "resistance" to the spirit of ancient works can be found also in Herder:

The French, who are too proud of their national taste, draw everything close to it, instead of adapting themselves to the taste of another epoch ... We poor Germans, on the other hand, still almost without public and without country, still without the tyrant of a national taste, we want to see this epoch as it is. And in Homer's case the best translation cannot accomplish this without the notes and explanations of an eminent critical spirit. (Sdun 1967, 27)³

As we can see, there are two cultures that serve as terms of comparison – the Greek and Roman one ("the spirit of antiquity"), as distinguished sources of translational work, and the French one, representing another, counter-model of translation. Actually, what matters here is more than a mere comparison with the classicist French style of translating in an attempt to propose a different, German model of translation: it is rather an act of political resistance to the French cultural and political domination embodied in translation theory and practice as well. French translations, mostly from the 18th Century, such as for instance Voltaire's translation of Shakespeare, tried to apply a rule which reveals itself as assimilating toward foreign cultures: translation shall be done as if the foreign work translated has been originally written in French. Translational appropriation of the otherness, of the foreign work, shall be complete. If we take translations from Greek as an example, it would mean that a translator should not imitate Greek semantics, syntax or stylistics (as Humboldt proposes in the above quoted passage). Instead, every trace of the foreign work in its translation has to be erased, as if this translation were not a translation, as if it were written in French following canons of French language and according to the taste of French readers.

This French way of translating (Goethe called it *parodistic*) reflects, in fact, the rational spirit of Enlightenment, or to be precise, its colonizing aspect in dealing with the foreign. As Lawrence Venuti explains (Venuti 2008), the translation practice that dominated France since neoclassicism is domesticating i.e. an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign to dominant linguistic canons and cultural values. By employing the notion of universality, we can say that what is at work behind this French model of translation is a certain concept of universality, which we can name "extensive universality". In other words, French culture of the 18th Century approaches its cultural otherness insofar as it is capable to subsume it according to its own norms; it "translates" to the extent that the foreign has to disappear as the foreign. The encounter with the foreign is aimed at including it, by canceling its exteri-

³ The English translation is taken from Berman 1992, 40.

ority through a mere extension of the proper identity which already acts as universal, so that it can be only expanded by means of domestication and subsumption of other cultures. The point with the extensive universality is do not to lose anything of ourselves in our dealing with the otherness, but to assimilate it.

Humboldt-Schleiermacherian model of translation, differently, counters intentionally the French model of universalization through domestication and expansion. But actually, as we will see, these two models share the same framework, they mirror each other, and hence they are reducible to the same principle, that is, the principle of nation as main linguistic community with its values of exclusive belonging. In Balibar's term, it is a situation of conflicting universalities where the struggle over the universal, or enunciation of the universal has the form of self-affirmation of the national language.

Translational practice for the Germans in the era of Romanticism is assumed as a collective cultural agenda of a nation in the process of its formation, of its *Bildung*. While the French political community, realized through universalistic values of the French Revolution and its legacy in the cosmopolitan laws and Napoleonic wars, aims at extension of its already possessed universality, the Germans are facing the process of formation of the universality through an intensive work of translation and foreignization of the own. This universalization is actually functional to the process of self-formation of the particular identity. Translation practice and its theorization reflect the dialectical interaction between universality and particularity in the historical conditions of the national framing and bordering. How the awareness of importance of translation for the collective cultural identity through its universalization was spread among the leading German thinkers at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century can be easily proven by a few of quotes.

Apart from the Romans, we are the only nation to have felt the impulse of translation, so irresistibly, and to owe to it so infinitely in culture (*Bildung*) ... this impulse is an indication of the very elevated and original character of the German people. Germanity is a cosmopolitanism mixed with the most vigorous individualism. Only for us have translations become expansions. (Novalis 1954, 367)⁴

In Schleiermacher's lecture on the *Different Methods of Translating* held in Berlin at the Academy of Sciences in 1813 these ideas are expressed in a tone of the collective program of an enunciating "We":

Who would claim that anything has ever been translated, whether from an ancient or a Germanic tongue, into French! But we Germans, while we might willingly give ear to such counsel, will surely not follow it. An inner necessity, in which a peculiar calling

⁴ English translation is quoted according to Berman 1992, 105.

of our people asserts itself clearly enough, has driven us to translation en masse; there is no turning back, we must keep forging on. (Schleiermacher 2012, 62)

In Schleiermacher, moreover, we do not find only the idea that translation enriches and develops translator's own culture (*Bildung*), in its particularity, but it exhibits a certain historical universality as well.

Just as it is perhaps only through the cultivation of foreign plant life that our soil has become richer and more fertile, and our climate more pleasing and milder, so too do we feel that our language, since our Nordic lassitude prevents us from exercising it sufficiently, can most vigorously flourish and develop its own strength only through extensive contact with the foreign. And we must add to this, it seems, that our people, because of its esteem for the foreign and its own mediating nature, may be destined to unite all the jewels of foreign science and art together with our own in our own tongue, forming, as it were, a great historical whole that will be preserved at the center and heart of Europe, so that now, with the help of our language, everyone will be able to enjoy all the beautiful things that the most different ages have given us as purely and perfectly as possible for one who is foreign to them. Indeed, this seems to be the true historical goal of translation as a whole ... (Schleiermacher 2012, 62)

What Schleiermacher is saying with this metaphor of cultivation of the soil and transplantation of the foreign plants is that German language shall open itself to the foreign, in order to refine its language, enrich its territory, but not only for the purposes of education. It is the true historical goal of translation, says Schleiermacher, and in these words, we can identify a constitutive assertion of universality. In contrast to the French model, we can call this universality "intensive universality", since it aims to accumulate and integrates differences in itself, without subsuming them. An intensive universality is also a differential universality, constituted through foreignization.

In sum, by adopting foreign works in their translation German language, in Schleiermacher's view, not only hosts the works from other ages and foreign cultures, but it becomes a sort of universal culture, "a great historical whole" which collects all artifacts of human creation on the German soil in a kind of "cultural botanical" garden where many "cultural" species need to be preserved. In abstract and dialectical terms this process can be explained as following: in order to define itself in its particularity, a cultural space shall be raised to the universality, formed and educated as a concrete universal culture through a translational relation to the otherness. The universality of language and culture exists only through relation between particular languages, in other words, through translational appropriation of the otherness. But beside this relationship to the another particular, what is at stake here is also another form of universality, which historically took place in France with

the Enlightenment and the Revolution⁵ and which is also exemplified in translational practice. In order to be constituted as concrete and universal a culture needs to oppose another counter-universality. The universality is historically split in two forms which dialectically conflict each other.

The thesis about the constitutive role of translation in the formation (*Bildung*) of German cultural identity in the 19th Century is extensively thematized by Antoine Berman in his remarkable work on the Romantic theories of translation. Many Berman's insights are developed around the view that "translation is one of the instruments for the constitution of a universality" (Berman 1992, 14) – the view assigned to a series of German thinkers, from Goethe to Humboldt. Translations, as a constitutive moment of *Deutschheit*, are one of the main elements in its *Bildung*, in the self-formation of the national language and culture. Berman is right in inscribing translation in the structure of *Bildung*, defined as "one of the central concepts of German culture at the end of the eighteenth century" (Berman 1992, 14), but however he is more disposed to see it as a one-way passage from the particular to the universal, as the determination of the universal that each particularity lacks at the beginning. From our point of view, translation does not only result in the acquiring of the universal horizon, but also in the self-reflexive regaining of the particularity as well. In other terms, translation as a mode of relation with the other determines the particularity through its universalization. It is the becoming-itself of the particular culture through its becoming-other, where this otherness has double meaning: it is the otherness of another particular, but also the otherness of the particularity as such, i.e., the moment of universality. The process of the constitution of universality is, therefore, inseparable from the process of the becoming of particularity and its constitution as a relational concept. Translation is exactly the key moment, the agent of this relationality.

The concept of *Bildung* actually contains a dialectical movement between the particular and the universal that is enacted also in translation. Exactly in this sense translation is a form of *Bildung*, i.e. a form of "elevation to the universality" (*Erhebung zur Allgemeinheit*). The concept of *Bildung* as elevation to the universality has been thematized in Gadamer's "Truth and Method". Gadamer, moving from analysis of Herder and Hegel, stresses the importance of the concept of *Bildung*, which for him implies "keeping oneself open to what

⁵ Already Hegel claimed that, while the French gave to the revolution a practical and political existence, the Germans realized revolution in the form of the thought, i.e. as the philosophy of German idealism. The discordance between France and Germany will be again thematized by Marx in the idea of historical non-synchronicity of the Germans who lived their post-history (*Nachgeschichte*) in philosophy. And we could add: in the reappropriation of historical temporality through translating. Translation became expansion, as Novalis writes, and also a way to cope with "Deutsche Misère".

is other – to other, more universal points of view [...] a sense of proportion and distance in relation to itself, and hence consists in rising above itself to universality" (Gadamer 2013, 16). The process of formation actually starts with a distance toward ourselves, with our foreignization, with the encounter with other points of view. The universality then coincides with the return to ourselves, with the reappropriation. Actually, this equilibrium between proportion and distance is similar to what Schleiermacher in his speech on translation says about "the greatest difficulty our translator must confront" (Schleiermacher 2012, 53), i.e. to achieve the foreign likeness (*fremde Ähnlichkeit*) in his language with "art and measure". In other words, foreignization and estrangement of the mother tongue must be carefully conducted in order not to violate the main principles of identity, and to render possible the reappropriation of the self.

To sum up, translation is *Bildung*, since it dialectically combines the moments of particularity and universality; it is a self-formative self-reflexive practice in which a particular culture establishes relation with another particular culture and in doing so it transforms itself by adopting the foreign elements and reflecting its own particularity. The particular in such a way goes beyond itself, in order to maintain a relation with itself, and this going beyond and self-relationality is nothing but the process of the universality. Translational universality is a process of concretization of languages or cultures in translation. And from this reason it always implies a certain multiplicity.

In Gadamer's analysis of *Bildung* as the raising to the universal there is also a risk of presenting the universal as a mere result of the certain relation between the particulars. It is true that the universality is positioned within the relation and tension between the particular entities (languages, cultures, etc.), but moreover, the universality is also a form in which a particularity confronts itself. In a way, the universality is also a condition for the particular to become something other and to translate itself into the otherness. In this sense, the universality always emerges under particular conditions, but at the same time cannot be reduced to the outcome of the translational relation, for it grounds this very relation. Translational universality is a form in which particularity appears as particularity, it thematize itself. And this relation of universality is not just a peaceful self-relation, but rather a conflictual self-negation in the becoming-other, in translational transformation of language. A language becomes universal through translation and through conflict with itself, which is the peculiar form of particularization i.e. realization of the universal.

Actually, in Humboldt-Schleiermacher's model this antagonistic aspect is somehow weekend or moderated. It is true that for German Romantics translation is an exposure to the otherness, and an openness to receive and adopt what is foreign, by changing and transforming own language, deviating it, innovating, and broadening the horizon of possessed

cultural references through an act of self-negation. This attitude has, as its result, a method that only in the 20th century has been defined as "foreignizing", or foreignizing translation. It consists in the idea expressed in Schleiermacher as a demand to move the reader of translation toward the author of the original text, in other words, to experiment with the common language of translator and reader, and to intervene in the language, creating the effect that our own language is not totally ours. As Rudolf Pannwitz puts it: "the fundamental error of the translator is to preserve the contingent state of his own language rather than submit it to the violent motion of the foreign language" (Pannwitz 1947, 193)⁶. If we analyze this issue on another level, regardless possible questions about errors or correct approaches of translator, the contingent state of "own language" is already something foreign, or in other words, the particularity, far from being something given or even essentialized and naturalized, is already a result of a translation.

By contextualizing the dialectics of *Bildung*, in terms of its political conditioning, we have seen how the elevation to universality is functional to the producing of national community and its language. As Lawrence Venuti notes "here nationalism is equivalent to universalism" (Venuti 2008, 91). We could add: by counteracting French hegemony and its form of universality, German thinkers are articulating another concept of universality through the practices of translation and according to the concept of *Bildung*. The universal determination of *Bildung* confers at the end a political form to a particular culture. Thus, elevation to the universality is also an elevation to a political identity. From this reason practice and theory of translation have always been a political act.

But in the authors of German Romanticism we do not find only the idea of the *Bildung* of the language of community, as a process of constitution of the "ownness" through its foreignization, but also conceptualization of a certain limit that translational practice and its language politics must respect. More than a limit, it is truly a border that divides the translating language for all other languages: such a border does not only define the structural limits of one language, it is also a demarcation line which has to separate German from other languages⁷. According to the old principle of determination (*Omnis determinatio est*

⁶ This English translation is taken from Berman 1992, 18. For another translations see Venuti 2008, 125.

⁷ Schleiermacher indeed mentions the line that translator must observe, otherwise he or she runs a risk not only to make a bad translation, but to engage in an inauthentic translation that betrays the highest principle of loyalty: "These are the sacrifices every translator of this sort is obliged to make, these the dangers to which he exposes himself if, in his attempt to preserve a foreign tone in the language of his translation, he does not observe that finest of lines, and these are dangers and sacrifices he cannot possibly avoid outright, as every person draws this line in a slightly different spot" (Schleiermacher, 2012, 53-54). I discuss this aspect in Hrnjez 2017.

negation), if language determines itself through translation, this determination appears necessarily as a negation, or a differentiation of everything that language is *not*. The crucial moment is when this negation takes a form of exclusion, or in other words, when inclusion of the foreign elements in the mother tongue is governed by the principle of loyal belonging to our own language community, which in the final analysis functions as an exclusion. From these reasons, to cross the line of demarcation, "that finest of lines" about which speaks Schleiermacher (see note 6), means not only to encounter dangers and risks in translation, but also to commit an act of betrayal, of unloyalty to the national language. The subject (in a translation practice that can be author or translator, and reader as well) seems exclusively defined by its national affiliation: "One must be loyal to one language or another, just as to one nation, or else drift disoriented in an unlovely in-between realm."⁸ (Schleiermacher 2012, 58)

This figure of in-betweenness, or unpleasant middle (*unerfreulicher Mitte*), is a symptomatic indication of that sort of translational universality that emerges in Humboldt-Schleiermacher's model of translation. What is exactly that "in-between realm"? As a consequence of a certain relation between particularity and universality, it is nothing but constructed figure and an effect of a certain exclusion that the concept of universality historically involves. In other words, the in-betweenness is an effect or a result of translation as well, or better to say, of a certain regime of translation (Sakai) that establishes a relation between universality and particularity. The place of in-betweenness appears only if the universality is particularized in a territorial or spatial manner, so that relation between particular languages appears as a relation between spatially divided sovereign entities. The territorialization of the universal is, moreover, articulated through the principle of exclusive belonging either to one or another linguistic territory, exposing the paradoxes and contradictions not only of that concrete historical formation of the universality as *Bildung*, but maybe of the concept of universality as such.

This analysis shall bring us to another set of questions: Is it possible to reconfigure the concept of universality starting exactly from the place of in-betweenness? How to propose an idea of universality which does not generate *its* in-betweenness as a place of exclusion? Or the universality has necessarily its blind spots? In order to challenge the concept of universality, with which we deal so far, it will be necessary to translate the language of the

⁸ „Wie einem Lande, so auch einer Sprache oder der anderen, muß der Mensch sich entschließen anzugehören, oder er schwebt haltungslos in unerfreulicher Mitte" (Schleiermacher 1963, 63) To be more precise, Schleiermacher actually says that one must decide himself where to belong.

excluded middle⁹. But in order to perceive the language of the in-betweenness we must already act with a different notion of universality that allows us to have a different look on that intermediary space between languages. Is not this middle position exactly the place where translator stays? Paradoxically, Schleiermacher's model of translation would be that one that does not make visible the very place of translator, since his place is overpowered by the demand to belong *either* to one *or* to another community.

4. Perspectives of the universality

The underlying idea is to challenge not only the concept of universality in its historical and political form of the national *Bildung*, but also the regime of translation that generated it. If a regime of translation functions as an activity of division or bordering between two linguistic areas, so that an indefinite middle realm remains as a part excluded from both sovereign territories (the excluded third), then by putting in question this mechanism of delineation/exclusion also the excluded in-betweenness appears in another light. It appears, namely, as a by-product of translation itself that must be taken into account not only as a symptomatic place of actual exclusion, but also as a place where a new form of universality can emerge. In fact, this reconfiguration of in-betweenness consists in a view that translation does not occur *between* two separated languages and cultures, but *within* each of these. The gap lies not between nationally determined and identified languages, even when we recognize their plurality, but in each language, in its inner heterogenous differentiability¹⁰. In

⁹ These questions recall Judith Butler's theses about the extension of the universality through the act of translation, when those excluded from the existing universality challenge it from outside by claiming the inclusion in the name of the same universality. This gesture which Butler calls performative contradiction (Butler 2002, 48) is actually the mechanism of articulation of the very universality. Although my position here differs mainly in the understanding of the universality (Butler endorses still a normative formulation of the universality which can be extended in an ever-expanding process of re-articulations), I will follow up this argumentation regarding the constitutive role of the excluded, which however cannot be totally identified with the moment of singularity or particularity (it is also the universality itself that appears as a particular). [See also Butler, Laclau, Žižek 2000].

¹⁰ This comes close to what Giacomo Marramao conceptualizes as a cosmopolitanism of difference: "In other words, we must take the reality of the hybrid as our point of departure, rather than simply appealing to the 'fact of pluralism' ... For the plurality in question is not only a plurality of the between, of the *infra*, but a plurality of the within, of the *intra*: it is not only inter-cultural, but also infra-cultural, not only inter-subjective, but also intra-subjective, not only between identities, but also internal to the symbolic constitution of each and every identity – whether it be individual or collective in character." (Marramao 2010, 3-20)

terms of universality-particularity, translation is a process of universalization of the particular, but this process is internal to the particular itself, it is present as its internal opening and differentiation, and not as something that is added to the particular from outside.

At this point, we can lean on Naoki Sakai's theory of translation as addressing, by taking on his concepts of homolingual and heterolingual address. What we have seen as typically German *Bildung*, the constitution of the community through a bordering process, that is through enclosure, demarcation and separation from other particular languages, corresponds to the homolingual address. According to Sakai, whether the addressing is homolingual or heterolingual does not depend on the fact that translators are addressing the audience (e.g. readers) that speak only one or more languages. The main criteria of distinction between two addressing lies in the character of that linguistic community where translation occurs and for which translators translate. The regime of the homolingual address presupposes an already given, homogenous "we", and its language, "our language", which is clearly separated from other languages, i.e. languages of foreigners. This representation involves a series of unreflected presuppositions, e.g. that communication within the borders of one language occurs without interruption, so it is taken for granted and based on "assumption of immediate and reciprocal apprehension" (Sakai, 1997, 5). This means that everyone who belongs to the same "We" is taking part in an uninterrupted continuity of communication, while incomprehension and the foreignness can appear only on the external border of such a community. Translation is therefore consequently envisaged as a relation with an external otherness, that is, with the foreigner who is represented as a member of another homogenous community. Here we can see how this representation of translation as bordering actually separates and creates its in-betweenness as an excluded middle space.

What Sakai actually wants to say is that practice of translation, besides being a process of universalization, always involves mechanisms of hegemony, that is, the universality in translation always has to do with certain hegemonic processes. In the case we analyzed, hegemonization requires a homogeneous space of communication where the members of community are presupposed as potential subjects of uninterrupted and unhindered communication, while the figure of the foreigner stays outside the borders of community. In such a framework, interruption of the presumed immediate comprehension coincides with interruption of that community (as if being and living together is possible only when the total transparency of mutual comprehension and communication is ensured). But the real insights in the character of political commonness and linguistic plurality gives us another picture: the communities of immediate comprehensions are rare, if not impossible. So called national language standards are nothing but historico-social products and conventions that hegemonize dialectal, idiomatic, vernacular plurality. Translation is therefore the

process that already happens before historically produced borders; this *intra*-lingual translation just remains invisible from the point of view of homolingual address. And this invisibility has the same status as that "unlovely middle" which appears as a "dangerous" by-product of the need for sovereignty.

In this light the "elevation to the universality" in Romantic Germany reveals itself as a hegemonic project of enclosing German cultural space, by conflicting the domination of the French universality, in order to border the community, define its cultural sovereignty and public space, establishing in such a way the continuity of communication. This was exactly the mission of German bourgeois intellectual elite - those who first enunciate "We"- in their political program of appropriation of the collective identity. And translation practice is capable of producing a definite political framework of participation and citizenship, only because the process of its production is translational in its character; in other words, it acts through establishing of a relation between the particulars with relation to a certain form of universality.

The question that we would like to raise now is whether translation as a practice of creation of the common language can contribute to the creation of a community which would not be based on the principles of territorial sovereignty and exclusive belonging. If translation by its nature means always to go beyond particularisms, to deal with otherness, and trying to speak the language of the other, what kind of community can be built upon the experience of translation? Is it possible to have a community of citizens as translators in which common language would be nothing but translation itself? One cannot neglect a certain utopian note in these ideas. But what is in fact at stake here is the character of our social and political existence and our (in)capacity to introduce transformations in order to produce multiple diversified communities and different forms of political universality by employing different regimes of translation.

The conception of language and translation, as it is presented in Humboldt-Schleiermacherian paradigm, faces its historical limits, or in other terms, it still claims its universal validity although historically it loses its effect of universality. The reason for this loss is that the particular position from which the universality once was enunciated falls short of its translational capacities. This deficiency can manifest itself in various identitarian essentializations and self-protective claiming of national sovereignty, and can assume violent forms by, for example, constructing the wall against strangers, or starting the war

against enemies¹¹. Wall and war are two figures that emerge when work of translation fails. Particularity then vindicates violently its right of existence against other particularities.

Our contemporary situation, therefore, demands a renewal of the work of translation. To use Walter Benjamin's terminology, when he speaks about survival of the texts and works in translation, what is at stake now is rather the survival of the very work of translation and its capacity to enunciate the universal. But, as we have already seen at the beginning, universality exists always *as a* particular in relation with other particulars, that is, in the relation of its universalization. In other terms, universality is always instantiated at a certain place and time, in a certain historical figure, and expressed by concrete subjects. These subjects of a new form of universalization could be localized exactly at the place which is excluded due to a homolingual reappropriation of the community, i.e. among those who do not belong "either here or there" and are destined to drift in in-betweenness. This in-betweenness is now inhabited more than before and its voices are more and more to be heard. A historically different and potentially emancipatory form of universality, which must clear its path by conflicting the universality of the actual international world segmented by national borders, can be articulated exactly within the languages of in-betweenness, at all those invisible places of the foreign that wait for translation, where this translation is another name for their universalization.

In the situation of heterolingual addressing (Sakai), comprehension and incomprehension are not separated by ethnically defined borders, because incomprehension happens on many levels, so that translation as well must act on different levels of linguistic variety and in various zones of cultural and social incomprehension. A consequence of this approach is the abandonment of the vision of a pure and homogenous linguistic community for which translation happens only on its external borders, in the contact zone with some external otherness. Such an externality, as well as all those excluded spaces in the middle, are nothing but a product of a certain self-identification, of *Bildung*, that is, the universalization of the particular. To challenge this vision means, actually, to recognize and address the zones of internal otherness, to make visible their particular languages that are excluded through homolingual addressing and to translate them. What from the point of view of one model of universality appears as an in-between undetermined figure, from the point of view of another universality is determined as the subject and object of translation, as the foreign-

¹¹ About antithesis of war and translation and about their overlapping in our globalized world writes Etienne Balibar: Both war and translation are related to the bordering of political space and appropriation of a collective identity. They are two "antithetic models for the construction of the stranger" (Balibar 2014, 94).

ness that already inhabits our common space¹² (e.g. foreign non-citizens, extra-communitarians, refugees, migrant workers, but also plurilingual and culturally diversified citizens who cannot inscribe themselves exclusively into one community). Their position actually coincides with that of translator who is not translating anymore into his or her mother tongue, but translates so to say from the foreign into the foreign. It is not translation imagined as a transplantation of the foreign plants for the sake of the enrichment of the native mother terrain; it is translation *of the other for the others*, for the sake of the foreign itself.

We can now shortly recall in mind Balibar's ambiguous expression "Les langues se parlent" from the beginning of this article, as an expression of the universality. In Balibar's insistence on co-implication between impersonality and reciprocity we can already envisage a reversal of the perspective which in Humboldt-Schleiermacher model is based on belonging and on exclusive sovereignty (translation of the other for the own). Languages are spoken and the subjects do not belong only to one or to another language. They rather belong to the multiplicity of languages, to languages that speak each to other, and speak one through the other. This multiplicity sets the basis for the universality which is at odds with that form of universality which historically gave birth to nation-state sovereignty. The language of this universality would be the very translation. Translation as a mother tongue of universality.

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¹² We can express it in the words of Giacomo Marramao when he says that "the house of the universal is not already there, waiting to be occupied, but must be constructed in a genuinely multilateral manner. We cannot simply say to the others: come, and you will be accommodated in our house, integrate, and you will be included within our civilization that is based on the concept of right. On the contrary, what we need to do is precisely to negotiate a new common space, to construct together a new house of the universal" (Marramao 2010, 15-16).

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