



IN-BETWEEN-NESS “L'ANTRE-DES-LANGUES” Camille de Toledo

1. I call "**antre-des-langues**" the gap in-between languages. In french, we would call it the "interstice". In the London metro, the automatic voice says : *Mind the gap*. In a post-exotic world where living-in-exile becomes the rule, this *gap* is where we stand. It is both *mind the gap* & *the mind of the gap*. So the poetic and political question becomes : how can I inhabit this in-between-ness ? What is the mind that lies in this gap ? And how can I make this "entre-des-langues" a home, an "antre" ? In french, "antre" means refuge, shelter. So how can we make a "heimat" out of this "Zwischen-sprachlichkeit". Switching from "entre-des-langues" to "antre-des-langues" is the actual movement in which translation takes place.

2. **Thinking the in-between** is what the language can't conceive, but what the translation does experience. Language cuts reality into pieces, in two pieces. Something and its contrary. Language – and especially western philosophy as a belief in *logos* and *ordre des raisons* – tends to split reality in words that, at the end, would only be transitory body referring to pure *meanings*. François Julien, in the past decade, has tried to think the in-between using Chinese signs, especially one referring to *in-between*. Its theoretical propositions coincide with an endeavour to trans-pass the western way of thinking. In another field of existence – and yet, in my eyes, connected to a growing interest for in-between-ness – J. Butler has tried to give space to the in-between of genres. In the field of translation studies, also, the last twenty years renewed interest in the process of translation – from Antoine Berman to "le projet des Intraduisibles" carried by Barbara Cassin is giving a new *profundità* to the in-between of languages.

3. **Antre-des-langues and in-between-ness as powerful ignorance.** The in-between-ness of antre-des-langues is different from all these approaches, since it does not have anything to do with genres (Butler), nor with transcending western philosophy (Julien) nor with a translation turn engaging against the split between words and meanings, signs and *signifiants* (Cassin). The in-between-ness that lies in *l'entre-des-langues* is both po-ethical and political. It would relate more to Jacques Rancière's book : *Le maître ignorant*. An inversion of the relation we have to the "power of knowledge" over the "weakness of ignorance".

4. The ignorance as knowledge of the in-between.

The "untranslatable" hypothesis requires knowledge. It is both *reterritorialisation* (what is lost of a word, when the meaning is translated) – ie an attention to the link between sign-and-sens, as well as *detrterritorialisation* (the never-ending translation as a result of the inherent imperfection of translation). The untranslatable requires a great amount of knowledge and *erudition*. With regards to this *regime of knowledge* that goes with *untranslatableness*, this place that i call *in-between* (l'antre-des-langues) is a place of *weakness*, a place of un-knowing, where one stands in a place without words. In a way, the "antre-des-langues" is the situation of the baby, when (as Heller Rozen describes it in *Echolalies*) it is still possible to learn all languages, before any one of them has made us forget about the others. It would also be the situation of the "exilé" who *returned to ignorance*, as he is not able to speak and master the language of his new home.

5. Making in-between-ness the centre.

National, cultural and linguistic orders are essentially monolingual power structures.

In the history of translation, it was less seen as a way to bridge cultures, then a way to conquer them. By translating, one appropriates the knowledge of the "other". Translation in itself is therefore not a progressive gesture. It can be reactionary – translating to defend one's culture as a nationalistic/regional approach. Or it can accompany a domination process : translating to get hold of the *otherness* of a perceived foreign culture. In regards of these "translative patterns", the fact of designating "l'antre-des-langues" as the space where a "we" is still to be conceived and rendered possible (where translation is *the* central language), also shapes a new place : like a center with a whole in the middle with branches towards a diversity of languages and words.

6. A center with a whole. This center-with-a-whole can be linked to what Claudio Magris has described as the principle of "Mitteleuropa" both in "Danube", and "L'Anneau de Clarisse". A center with a whole in the middle is a model to think about Europe before (Magris commenting Musil) and after the destruction of european yiddishland (as I have commented in : *Le Hêtre et le Bouleau, an essay on European sadness*.) a. A place where translation is the common language. b. Translation as a language of languages replacing *yiddish* as the hybrid language linking countries beyond nation-states. c. A centrality that has no center but points out towards linguistic plurality. d. A language (translation) that needs to be learned by immigrants from post-colonial countries in a post-colonial Europe.

7. If "European literature" makes sense, its language is translation, its centre is as described by Claudio Magris—a center with a whole—and its place is "entre-des-langues". Making this place, language and center *happen* consists of changing *l'entre-des-langues* – which is a nowhere land – into an antre-des-langues, an in-between-ness that can become home-land, a heimat of in-between, a country entra-las-lenguas. So the question of a European literary as well as intellectual space becomes : how can we learn this language (the language of this antre-des-langues) ? What kind of school can teach such a language – *translation* ? We usually answer for national-languages such as english, french, german, or regional languages such as catalan by saying that the *cost of language* is : school. The budget that goes into school is the cost for a language to be transmitted. Yet for translation-as-language, who will accept to pay ? As this language would actually *make a European cultural and political entity a reality*, it becomes also a *welt-language* of languages.

8. On three world languages: At the beginning of the 21st century, one can say there are three world languages: a. global english b. technology c. translation. a. Global english carries cultural hegemony and thus is unacceptable as a cultural long-term option. b. Technology is the option pushed forward as a possible way for automatic translation, thus reducing languages to meaning or, using a hybrid between memory (the archives of translation) and machines, reaching the point where words and texts can be translated by machines. This, as a communication utopia, might be reachable. But it is not an option for arts and human sciences. In those fields that are at the very heart of politics—where there is a such thing as *society* and *politics*, there is expression, and where there is expression there is a need for human translation / voice – c. So, the third option remains as the only option. If there is a true understanding of the need to build a world-community, then, the concern for human translation will become more and more strategic.

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Extracts from "L'antre-des-langues", work in progress. Camille de Toledo (Berlin – September 2013)