On the Haunting of Hospitality
Derrida and Benjamin, with Reference to Some Medieval Examples

Francesca Manzari[1]

Abstract

Marcabru noted that Jaufré Rudel calls 'inn of the afar / *alberc de lohn'* both the remote place where his beloved lady of Tripoli resides, and the *locus* where the poets situates himself: an ideal place that Giorgio Agamben calls *topos outopos*. In the N voice or difficult voice of the *trobar*, this figures the contradiction on which the troubadour lives: at once the desire for the inaccessible body of his beloved, and the desire never to reach it. This issue is addressed here as a medieval instance of Derrida's 'hostipitality', with the ungraspable as the most precious good ever hosted in the rooms or *stanze* of the poem, and it is argued that this is primarily a question of translation. As a case in point, this article presents the Magna Curia of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen as a magisterial example of the *alberc de lohn topos*, where the Emperor became his *guests' guest* in a deliberate cultural transference policy that translated Aristotle and his Muslim and Jewish commentators, thus setting in motion a process of reciprocal acclimatization. The article further argues with Walter Benjamin and Antoine Berman, that translation as hostipitality or *'auberge de loin'* inscribes itself in futurity and reaches beyond the linguistic being of man..

Keywords

Jacques Derrida, Jaufré Rudel, Marcabru, Walter Benjamin, Antoine Berman, Giorgio Agamben, hospitality, hostipitality, Frederic II of Hohenstaufen, translation

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[1] *Aix-Marseille University,* francesca.manzari@univ-amu.fr

What joy will come to me when I ask her, for the love of God, to welcome the host of afar [the inn of the afar]: and if it pleases her, I shall be welcomed near her: Ah what charming talks, when the lover from afar is so near as to enjoy nice goodly words!'[2]

Thus sang Jaufré Rudel (c. 1125–1148) in his *canso de l'amour de loin* (*Canso of Love from Afar*). Jaufré Rudel calls 'inn of the afar / *alberc de lohn*' a topos that lies at the foundation of Western poetry: the room, or garden, *afar*, *to come*, distant in space or in time, which is the place of a hospitality of a particular kind, essential to the condition of the troubadour, and of poetic creation more generally speaking. Jaufré Rudel falls in love with a lady whom he has never seen, but of whom he has heard many praises, by travelers returning from the distant lands of the Eastern Mediterranean: the Lady of Tripoli. Thus, he composes a *Canso of Love from Afar*, theorizing the symbolic place, the place of places, the place from which to think the relationship of the troubadour to the beloved lady, but most of all the place from which to think the condition that gives birth to the Grand Chant. Contrarily to a common and well-known reading of Rudel's composition that suggests that the lady is placed afar, set at a distance, the better to be sung as an ideal, a certain clue in a dedication by Marcabru (fl. 1130–1150) to Jaufré Rudel leads me to think that the *inn afar* is not only an ideal remote place where the lady of Tripoli resides, but most of all the place where the poet Jaufré Rudel ideally situates himself. In 1147, Marcabru, famous representative of the N voice of the Trobar, that is to say of the difficult voice of the Trobar, sends one of his 'verses' with the melody of its accompaniment to Jaufré Rudel beyond the sea, to Jaufré Rudel overseas, *oltra mar*[3] This is not to say that Jaufré Rudel was actually in Egypt in 1147, but much rather that his friends, foremost among them Marcabru, knew him to be in the *inn afar*, literally a place where the 'afar', the foreigner, can reside, and find shelter. An ideal place that Jaufré Rudel has imagined beyond the sea, a place that Agamben would call *topos outopos*[4], from which to compose in the condition of an ideal *hostipitality*, which alone can guarantee the event of the song.

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[2] 'Be.m parra joys quan li querray, \ Per amor Dieu, l'alberc de lonh : \ É, s'a lieys platz, alberguarai \Près de lieys, si be.m suy de lonh : \ Quan drutz lonhdas er tan vezis \ Qu'ab bels digz jauzira solatz. \ Adoncs parra.l parlamens fis \ Quan drutz lonhdas er tan vezis \ Qu'ab bels digz jauzira solatz.' Prose translation by Alfred Jeanroy : 'Quelle joie m'apparaîtra quand je lui demanderai, pour l'amour de Dieu, d'héberger l'hôte lointain [l'auberge du lointain] : et s'il lui plaît, je serai hébergé près d'elle ; ah, les charmants entretiens, quand l'amant lointain sera si voisin qu'il jouira des doux beaux propos !' Jaufré Rudel, *Les chansons*, ed. A. Jeanroy, Paris, Édouard Champion, 1915, p. 13–14. Our translation.

[3] Cf. Alfred Jeanroy, 'Introduction', in Jaufré Rudel, *Les chansons*, *op. cit.*, p. III.

[4] See Giorgio Agamben, *Stanze. La parola e il fantasma nella cultura occidentale*, Einaudi, Torino, 1977, p. 69.

The lady and the troubadour, secretly closed together in a room of the castle, or else hidden by the trees and flowers of the palace garden, find themselves in an enclave, on a territory within a territory, ruled by other laws than those that prevail in the land that surrounds them. They are held together by a single exercise of hospitality: the ordeal of the *assag*, by which the lady who receives, who hosts her visitor from afar, exchanges with him words that are substitutes for the consent to what, in any case, will not, cannot ever be granted. The troubadour lives on this contradiction; and he makes it the very motor of a desire that is both the desire for the inaccessible body of the beloved being, and the desire never to reach it; the desire that the lady be in flight, that she be the spirit of the song eternally in fugue, an absence about which poetic composition flutters. The lady's body itself remains untouched, while the troubadour's desire increases to enjoy the cruelty of his host. It is a convention, a ritual of hospitality that implies the keeping of the stranger at a distance, a hostility, an objection to there being any physical contact between host and guest, a form of *hostipitality* as a hyperbole of hospitality, as if hostility was indeed the indispensable component of successful hospitality, according to a portmanteau word that Derrida, in the third session of the seminar *Hospitalité*, on 20 December 1995, calls a 'troubling affinity between *hospes* and *hostis*'.[5] To comment on this famous topos of the Trobar, it would be possible to use Derrida's words in the seventh session, of 14 February 1996:

> It would suffice to transfer everything we have said about hospitality, it would suffice to translate it or transpose it or transcode it into the file of the great problem of the belonging [the own, or the proper in this sense], of the proper and the foreign, of the nearby and the afar, of neighborhood, of property and propriety, of intimacy and its contrary, of the inside and the outside, etc. With the possibility and the necessity of such a transfer, we are here, as always, dealing with a discursive dispositive of translation, a logic, perhaps the necessity of a computer program [*logiciel*] […] enabling us, very economically, […] to select in the text [of] what we say about hospitality (that is to say everything we say here), to

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[5] '[…] *affinité troublante entre* hospes *et* hostis', Jacques Derrida, *Hospitalité* vol. I *Séminaire (1995–1996)*, Paris, Seuil, 2021, p. 88.

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displace it in the computer to place it in the document or the file named 'proper', 'near', 'property', appropriation', or 'expropriation', or […] 'exappropriation'.[6]

We have begun by describing the question named *inn of the afar* in terms of what is 'belonging', 'nearby', 'appropriate' to the poetic: the ungraspable as the most precious good that can ever be kept in the rooms, the *stanze*, of a poem; the appropriation, each and every time unique, of a fugue movement, the appropriation, by the form of the poem, of the expropriation of its object. All these elements are the survival of poetry, but Derrida adds that it is also a question of translation. Right at the beginning of the first session, precisely at the point where, reading Kant, Derrida regrets that François Poirier and Françoise Proust, the French translators of *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (*Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*), have not rendered the two words used by Kant to speak of hospitality: *Hospitalität*, and its Germanic equivalent *Wirtbarkeit*, Derrida says: 'We shall often speak again of translation and hospitality: on the whole it is the same problem'.[7]

The history of the Middle Ages is teeming with examples of analogous pairings between hospitality and translation. For instance, these are the terms in which one can describe the multilingual Babel of the *Magna Curia* of Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194–1250). Frederick II created his court as a peculiar place of hospitality in which some of the most illustrious savants of his time found shelter and protection, dedicating themselves to the study and the translation of the texts of Greek antiquity, paying attention more particularly to the translation into Latin and Hebrew of the Arabic versions of the texts of Aristotle. Singular stellar friendships were struck in the Kingdom of Sicily, like the ones between Jacob Anatoli (1194–1256), Michael Scot (1175 – c. 1232), Ibn Sab'in (12216–1271), or Theodor of Antioch (1155–1246). These savants of high renown were invited and welcomed to the court of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. Their company contributed, on the one hand, to the reputation of Frederick II as *Stupor Mundi* and, on the other hand, to making the Magna Curia the 'true medieval center of plurilingualism'.[8]

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[6] '*Il suffirait de transférer tout ce que nous disons au titre de l'hospitalité, il suffirait de le traduire ou transposer ou transcoder dans le dossier du grand problème du propre, du propre et de l'étranger, du proche et du lointain, du voisinage, de la propriété et de la propreté, de l'intimité et de son contraire, du dedans et du dehors, etc. Avec la possibilité et la nécessité d'un tel transfert, nous sommes là, comme toujours, devant un dispositif discursif de traduction, devant une logique, voire devant la nécessité d'un logiciel […] permettant, de façon très économique, […] de sélectionner dans le texte [de] ce que nous disons de l'hospitalité (c'est-à-dire tout ce que nous disons ici), de le déplacer dans l'ordinateur pour le placer dans le document ou le dossier portant le titre de "propre" ou "proche" ou "propriété", "appropriation" ou "expropriation" ou […] "exappropriation".' Ibid.*, p. 244. Our translation.*

[7] '*Nous reparlerons souvent de traduction et d'hospitalité : c'est au fond le même problème*'. *Ibid.*, p. 21. Our translation.

[8] Patrizia Spallino, 'Le langage philosophique de l'empereur Frédéric II dans *Les Questions siciliennes* de Ibn Sab'in et *L'Aiguillon des disciples* de Ja'Aqov Anatoli', in *Le Plurilinguisme au Moyen Âge. De Babel à la langue une, Orient-Occident*, ed. C. Kappler and S. Thiolier-Méjean, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009, p. 133-46, p. 137.

The befriending of Michael Scott and Jacob Anatoli, among others, is consistent with Frederick II's political project, which was already Roger II's, who founded the kingdom of Sicily (in 1130),[9] and which would also be endorsed by subsequent monarchs: the point was to give shape to the dream of a strong state, independent from the power of the Church, a state that chose its international alliances independently from the desiderata of the papacy:

> The Catholic Church could absolutely not tolerate this strategy, because of the repercussions that it would imply in the relations with other cultures (the Greco-Byzantine, the Arabo-Islamic, and the Jewish cultures, in relation to which the Latin Roman Church, especially after the schism of the Eastern Church in 1054, saw in the Romanorum rex and its Imperum the only true and strenuous defender of the values of western Christianity.[10]

When Aristotle arrived in the Latin West through the commentaries of Averroes, this triggered a cultural renewal, a tendency to the moderation of religious communities, a new way of conceiving politics, the government of cities and individuals.[11] The Kingdom of Sicily, and in particular the University of Naples, founded by Emperor Frederic II in 1224, were the center from which Aristotle's thinking radiated out into the Latin Christian world, along with other important centers like Toledo, Provence, Montpellier, Catalonia, Salamanca, and Seville. The Kingdom of Sicily became a cultural workshop where Aristotle was translated and interpreted. It was through the prism of Aristotelian philosophy that the Sicilian studies of mathematics, geometry, physics, natural sciences, and medicine were conceived. Frederick II's family had always demonstrated a particular interest in the practice of translation, so much so that it can be said that Frederick II's intellectual activities began with translation. This was a Norman heritage: King William I of Sicily (1120–1166), 'William the Bad', Frederick II's uncle and the son and successor of Roger II , already considered translation a political activity.

In the 13th century, the history of the Sicilian court, thanks to the legendary hospitality of the Emperor, became a history of politics and translation. To the successive popes who continually castigated Frederick and demanded his submission, threatening excommunication and indeed excommunicating him twice, until

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[9] Roger II was the father of Constance de Hauteville, Queen of Sicily, Holy Roman Empress and Queen of the Romans as the consort of Emperor Henry VI, and mother of Emperor Frederick II.

[10] Alessandro Musco, '*Stupor Mundi*: Cultures and Differences in Sicily and the Mediterranean World', in *Le plurilinguisme au Moyen Âge, op. cit.,* p. 147-156, p. 148–149.

[11] See Musco, *ibid*. p. 150.

Innocent IV finally deposed him in 1245, Frederick replied by building an *Inn of the Afar*. Whereas the static, immovable strength of the papacy relied on erasure and exclusion, Frederick II's power based itself on the hosting of strangers in the ceaseless mobility of his own court as a constantly shifting political center of the Holy Roman Empire. The Emperor aimed to bypass the political and ideological fortifications of the Roman Catholic Church and, to counteract the motionless model of its temporal power, conceived the idea of a state founded on Averroes' political ideal, according to which the power of the monarch is grounded in culture and knowledge. In the philosophy of Averroes, the sovereign is 'a sure guide, the sacred symbol of a new, rational society'[12] in which science is not only at the service of the state, but founds the dispositive of power. Knowledge was here both centripetal and centrifugal. The power organism, or state apparatus, called the scientists and philosophers of its time to its support, and in its turn constituted the radiating center from which science and knowledge emanated. Frederick II was exemplary in that he received the gift of hospitality so that it became a gift for others in return. When he gave by welcoming, it was not to impose on foreigners the conditions of his hospitality. He became the guest of his guests, and was himself accommodated in return in the immense knowledge that they brought along with them, so that, by his eminently hospitable practice, Frederick II *became his guests' guest*, a sublime guest, who was both a host, and a guest in his own home. That was because his home, and the economy of his household, let themselves be fashioned by the arriving stranger and readily shed the idiomatic features that would initially have been at the origin of the proper and the improper, of the aboriginal and the foreign.

In his epoch-making biography of Frederick II, Ernst Kantorowicz considered that 'From the intellectual point of view Frederick's new secular State was a triumph of that lay culture which, for the last century, had been spreading in wider and wider circles. This was the first time that profane learning had been concentrated and organized'.[13] And this was achieved by a deliberate practice of hospitality as a means of intellectual, and therefore ideological and political emancipation. The Emperor welcomed groundbreaking thinkers, writers, and above all translators of his time, not merely offering them political asylum, but allowing their teachings to have a strong influence on him and on the ideas that presided over the political organization of his kingdom and of the Empire, and from there to acquire worldwide resonance. One telling example in this respect was Frederick's invitation of Jacob

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[12] *Ibid.,* p. 150.

[13] Ernst Kantorowicz, *Frederick II (1194–1250)*, trad. E. O. Lorimer, New York, Frederick Ungar, 1931, p. 293.

Anatoli, very probably at the request of his court astrologer Michael Scot (c. 1175 - c. 1236), one of the most renowned intellectuals of the time, trained in Oxford and Paris, and having studied in Toledo and Bologna. The Scottish philosopher was a translator from the Arabic of certain texts of Aristotle, and of the comments of the Greek philosopher by Averroes, an accomplishment that he shared with the Provençal Jacob Anatoli (c. 1194–1256) who repeatedly mentioned Michael Scot as one of his two principal models.

Anatoli's other declared master was his father-in-law Samuel Ibn Tibbon (c.1150-c.1230), who had acquired worldwide fame as a translator of Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* into Hebrew. Maimonides (Moses ben Maimom, 1138–1204) or Ramdam, born in Cordoba in Muslim Spain like Averroes (Ibn Rushd 1126–1198), was the other great assimilator of Aristotelian philosophy in the 12th century, acclimatizing it to Judaism, very much as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) would acculturate it to Christianity in the 13th century. Maimodines's works elicited some resistance in Andalusia and in Provence, where the translations and teachings of the Tibbon family triggered the great Maimonidean controversy that divided the Provençal Jewish community in the 1230s. These events, together with his admiration for Michael Scot, led Jacob Anatoli to accept Frederick II's invitation to join his court as a physician and a translator.[14]

This was in 1231, the year of the *Constitutions of Melfi* (*Liber augustalis*) by which the Emperor, having just reconquered his South-Italian land that the pope had invaded during his absence on the Sixth Crusade, sought to endow his Kingdom of Sicily with a body of rational secular laws. Jacob Anatoli founded a Maimonidean school in Naples, where Frederick II had founded a new University with the political aim of training lay civil servants, judges, notaries, and other lawyers to implement the laws based on the assimilation of the new philosophical ideas.

In addition to the geopolitical issue created by the fact that Frederick II was both King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor, thus achieving the territorial union of Germany and Italy that the papacy found utterly intolerable, his open-mindedness to rationalistic philosophical ideas was added to the list of accusations that led to his being twice excommunicated and finally deposed. Chief among the many reasons why Frederick II was Antichrist to the Guelphs and Stupor Mundi to

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[14] See Luciana Pepi, 'Jacob Anatoli', in *Enciclopedia federiciana*, Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana (Istituto Treccani), 2005, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/jacob-anatoli_%28Federiciana%29/; Luciana Pepi, 'Jaqov Anatoli tra tradizione ed innovazione', in *Traduzioni e Tradizioni: Il pensiero medievale nell'incontro tra le culture mediterranee (Siracusa, 26–29 settembre 2011)*, eds. A. Musco et G. Musotto, Palermo, Officina di studi medievali, 2014, ('Schede medievali', 52), p. 333-348 ; H. G. Enelow, 'Anatolio, Jacob Ben Abba Mari Ben Simon (Simeon, sometimes corrupted into Abtalion)', in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. I. Singer et al., vol. 1, New York, Funk & Wagnalls, 1901, p. 562–64.

the Ghibellines were the social and political implementations of his philosophical convictions, which included the accommodation and the protection of non-Christian communities. Thus, on the occasion of an antisemitic pogrom in Fulda (Hesse), in 1236 the Emperor commanded an inquiry that demonstrated the irrational falsehood of the accusations of ritual child murder waged against the Jews, then seized the opportunity to grant a privilege to German Jews, later extended to all, a *Privilegium et sententia in favorem iudaeorum*[15] that made them 'servants of his household' ('*servi camere nostre*'): typically a gesture of hospitality that amounted to considering the Jews, wherever they were, technically under the protective roof of the sovereign's house. The 1236 privilege in favor of the Jews came to confirm certain legal dispositions of the 1231 *Constitutions of Melfi*, by which 'Jews and Saracens are to be permitted to initiate lawsuits, for "we do not wish them to be persecuted in their innocence simply because they are Jews or Saracens".'[16]

The Saracens, that is to say the Muslims who had colonized the West and South regions of the island of Sicily had been vanquished by several military campaigns in the 1220s, and the remnant populations had been transported, not to some distant outpost, but on the contrary inland, to Lucera, a city in Apulia some twenty kilometers to the North-West of Foggia, where Frederick had elected to set up his principal residence, strategically closer than Palermo and Naples to his realm's northern border with the Papal States. To the scandal of the papacy, these Muslims were allowed to practice their religion on Christian land, and under the protection of the Holy Roman Emperor himself. However, these industrious Saracens paid heavy taxes to their master, and even more significantly they formed an army corps of footmen and bowmen who, impervious to Christian disputes between Guelphs and Ghibellines, played an important part in the struggle of the Emperor against the Pope.[17] Whereas Frederick's hosting of the Saracens presented an obvious military

[15] '*Hinc est itaque quod presentis scripti serie noverit presens etas et successiva posteritas, quod universi Alemannie servi camere nostre nostre celsitudini supplicarunt, quatenus privilegium divi augusti avi nostri Friderici felicis memorie indultum Wormaciensibus Iudeis et consodalibus eorum dignaremur de nostra gracia universis Iudeis Alemannie confirmare. [...] Nos itaque indempnitati et quieto statui Iudeorum Alemannie providentes, omnibus Iudeis ad cameram nostram immediate spectantibus hanc specialem graciam duximus faciendam, videlicet quod imitantes et inherentes statutis predicti avi nostri privilegium suprascriptum et ea que continentur in eo, quemadmodum divus augustus avus noster Wormaciensibus Iudeis et consodalibus eorum concessit liberaliter et indulsit, eis de innata clemencia confirmamus. [...] quicunque se Iudeis servis nostris favorabiles et benivolos exhibuerint, nobis deferre non dubitent , ceteris, qui contra presentis confirmacionis et absolucionis nostre paginam venire presumpserint, offensam nostre celsitudinis incursuris.*' Fredericus II, 'Privilegium et sententia in favorem iudaeorun. 1236. iul.', in *Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum [1198–1272]*, II, Hannoverae, Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1896, (*Monumenta Germaniae historica*, Legum sectio IV), p. 274-276, § 204, p. 274-275.

[16] '*Iudeis autem et Saracenis etiam et pro eis aliis, officialibus scilicet, in prescriptis casibus imponendi defensas concedimus facultatem, quos non propterea, quia Iudei vel Saraceni sunt, arceri volumus innocentes.*' *Die Konstitutionen Friedrichs II. für das Königreich Sizilien.*, (*Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum*, Tomus II Supplementum), ed. Wolfgang Stürner, Hannover, Hahnshe Buchhandlung, 1996, § I.18, p. 170-171.

[17] See Wolfgang Stürner, *Friedrich II. Teil 2: Der Kaiser 1220–1250*, vol. 1, Darmstadt, Primus, 2000, p. 73 etc.

interest, in the case of the Jews his imperial hospitality was repaid by economic advantages, insofar as he allowed Jewish bankers to lend money for interest. These could be viewed as exchanges of services profitable on both sides in the good management of the *oikos*. As an instance of technology transference, the Jews of the Tunisian Djerba were invited to migrate to South Italy to develop the production of silk under royal protection.

Frederick II's hospitality makes the Sicilian court and more generally the Kingdom of Sicily under his reign a multifarious place, in constant transformation, forever and infinitely foreign, in which hospitality, being practiced in all directions, blurred the distinctive features of hosts and guest, of the welcoming and the welcomed, inverting them, and reshuffling them according to the needs of the scientific and political community, and more generally those of the society as a whole. In a text entitled *Frédéric II et l'Islam*, Henri Bresc writes that 'a high and urgent feeling of his duty towards science places [Frederick II] on a par with the Muslim sovereigns of his time and of the past, who were themselves the servants of *hikma*, or wisdom'.[18] Thus, the historical exemplum of the court of Frederick II shows that it is possible to adhere to Derrida's argument in the second session of the seminar on *Hospitality*, when he says:

> Benveniste and those who easily follow him […], others, or ourselves, some ones among us or within us, inhabit a world, a culture, a language, a society in which identity, the self, ipseity, the selfness of the self are not, in any case must not, should not depend on, be derived from, mastery or power. [One must be able to be oneself without this depending on a power, neither one's own nor another's].[19]

In the case of Frederick II, the being oneself comes less from the power conferred upon him by his titles than from a certain *relationship with himself*, which makes him discover an ipseity that is constantly becoming other. This discovery is rendered possible by the translating activity, which is also at work in hospitality as a condition of existence, and which constantly submits the Emperor to the ordeal of dialogue with the other. Thus, the self is an always *other* counterpart, *a constantly other*

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[18] '[…] *un sentiment élevé et urgent de son devoir envers la science rapproche [Frédéric II] des souverains musulmans de son époque et du passé, eux-mêmes serviteurs de la* hikma*, de la sagesse*'. Henri Bresc, 'Frédéric II et l'Islam', in *Frédéric II (1194–1250 et l'héritage normand de Sicile*, ed. A.-M. Flambard Hèricher, Caen, Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2001, p. 79-92, OpenEdition Books 2017 : https://books.openedition.org/puc/10155. Our translation.

[19] '*Benveniste et ceux qui le suivraient facilement […], d'autres ou nous-mêmes, certains parmi nous ou en nous, habitent un monde, une culture, un langage, une société dans lesquels l'identité, le soi-même, l'ipséité, la mêmeté du soi-même ne sont pas, en tout cas ne doivent pas, ne devraient pas dépendre de, être dérivés de la maîtrise ou du pouvoir. [On doit pouvoir être soi-même sans que cela dépende d'un pouvoir, ni du sien ni d'un autre]*'. Jacques Derrida, *Hospitalité*, op. cit., p. 68. Our translation.

vis-à-vis, rendered possible by the exercise of hospitality. The self then becomes the place from which it is possible to entertain a reflection on the reciprocal relationship of the same and the other. Without ever acting as a middle term, or go-between, the self comes to enlighten the relationship between the subjects and their others. In the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl describes the 'constitution of oneself', *Selbsterfahrung*, as 'self-explication', *Selbstauslegung*, where the ego constitutes itself *qua alter ego*:

> In this intentionality, the new sense of being constitutes itself, which surpasses the boundaries of my monadic ego in my self-specificity, and an ego constitutes itself not as *I-self* [*nicht als Ich-selbst*], but insofar as it *reflects itself* in my proper I [*in meinem eigenen Ich*], my monad. But the second self is not purely and simply given us itself as proper, on the contrary it is constituted as alter ego, so that I am myself in my specificity the ego pointed out as a moment by this expression of alter ego.[20]

The hermeneutic of the self, such as Ricœur practices it, finds its place between the apology of the *cogito* and its destitution.[21] From the moment when the 'cogito posits itself' (*se pose*) to the moment when it 'breaks' (*se brise*) under the assaults of Nietzsche, what we see is the emergence of a Self defined by the Other. If for Rimbaud 'I is another', ('*je est un autre*') for Ricœur 'oneself is another' ('*soi est un autre*'). The question of the link between oneself and the Other remains, for the philosopher, quite as obvious and basic as the question of sameness and otherness, identity and alterity. Unlike the dialectic relationship between the same and the Other, which would be substantially disjunctive, the relationship between ipseity and alterity is to be found elsewhere than in opposition. Alterity does not play the part of a protector against solipsistic drifts, since alterity is already other *in se*. What is at home in itself can at each and every moment be both itself and other.

That is the reason why Derrida convokes another element, besides the one of the same and the other, to deal with the problem that results from the encounter of these two instances. He brings to contribution the figure of the *Other* in a textualizing elsewhere. He convokes the translating activity as a possibility of deterritorialization of the problems linked to the question of alterity. To put it with Walter Benjamin:

[20] "*In dieser ausgezeichneten Intentionalität konstituiert sich der neue Seinssinn, der mein monadisches ego in seiner Selbsteigenheit überschreitet, und es konstituiert sich ein ego nicht als Ich-selbst, sondern als sich in meinem eigenen Ich, meiner Monade spiegelndes. Aber das zweite ego ist nicht schlechthin da und eigentlich selbst gegeben, sondern es ist als alter ego konstituiert, wobei das durch diesen Ausdruck alter ego als Moment angedeutete ego Ich-selbst in meiner Eigenheit bin*". Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana gesammelte Werke 1 Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, ed. Herman L. van Breda, 2. Aufl., Photomechan. Nachdr, The Hague [u. a.], Nijhoff, 1991, p. 125. Our translation.

[21] Paul Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris, Seuil, 1990, p. 15.

'some concepts of relation keep their good, even perhaps their best signification if they are not immediately related exclusively to man'.[22]

The same unicity, the same junction, the same relation of analogy between hospitality and translation is also noticed by Antoine Berman, the friend whom Derrida pays homage to several times, and who in 1985 had devoted to translation a study entitled 'La traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain' – 'Translation and the Letter or the Inn of the Afar'.[23] Immediately, Berman writes that this is a reference to Jaufré Rudel, to whom he owes the intervention of one of the most striking formulae ever used to speak of the translating space: 'the inn of the afar'. Derrida knew the essay very well, for he was already reading the proofs of the manuscript in 1991, before it was published in book form by Éditions du Seuil in 1999. Antoine Berman was a former student of Henri Meschonnic, with whom he had subsequently fallen out, and it was with him that, from 1985 on (the year of the first version of Berman's essay), Derrida reflected on the movement of translation. In the same year 1985, Derrida published 'Des Tours de Babel' in French and in English translation, although a first published version of the text in Italian translation had already been issued in 1982.[24] It is typical of Derrida that an Italian translation of the text was issued years before the publication of the original, which itself was published as an appendix to its English translation. Incidentally, Berman's migration from Meschonnic to Derrida is closely linked to an intellectual debate between the two philosophers, and respectively between what we could call the stylistic and the hermeneutic schools that animate the new integration of translation into French philosophical studies in the first half of the 1980s.

In 1988, at the *Assises de Traduction Littéraire en Arles*, Derrida gave a conference entitled 'What Is a "Relevant" Translation?' ('Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction "relevante"?'),[25] excerpted from the second session of the seminar that followed the

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[22] '*[Ihm gegenüber ist darauf hinzuweisen, daß] gewisse Relationsbegriffe ihren guten, ja vielleicht besten Sinn behalten, wenn sie nicht von vorne herein ausschließlich auf den Menschen bezogen werden*'. Walter Benjamin, 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.4, *Kleine Prosa, Baudelaire-Übertragungen*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp (Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft n° 934), 2006, p. 9-21, p. 10. Our translation.

[23] Antoine Berman, 'La traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain', in *Les tours de Babel*, Mauvezin, Trans-Europ-Repress (T. E. R.), 1985, p. 32–150 ; rep.: Antoine Berman, *La traduction et la lettre ou l'Auberge du lointain*, Paris, Seuil (L'ordre philosophique), 1999.

[24] Jacques Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', 1st published version: in Italian, tr. Stefano Rosso, *aut-aut*, vol. 189–190 "Paesaggi benjaminiani", maggio-agosto 1982, https://autaut.ilsaggiatore.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/189–190.pdf, p. 67-97. Jacques Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', in *Difference in Translation*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, 1st published French version p. 209–248, English version tr. Joseph F. Graham p. 165–207.

[25] Jacques Derrida, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction "relevante" ?', in *Quinzièmes Assises de la traduction littéraire (Arles 1998)*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1999, p. 21-48. Jacques Derrida, 'What Is a "Relevant" Translation?', tr. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 27 / 2, The University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 174-200.

one on *Hospitality*, that is to say the 1997–1998 seminar *Le parjure et le pardon*.[26] In his conclusion to the first session of the *Hospitality* seminar, on 15 November 1995, Derrida presents the temporal stakes of hospitality in terms of opening and futurity:

> When we say that 'we do not yet know what hospitality is', we also imply that we do not yet know who and what is to come, nor any more what *is called* hospitality, because first and foremost hospitality *is called*, even if this call does not embody itself in human language[27.]

To which Derrida adds orally, augmenting and overreaching the text he had written for the occasion:

> Neither in a language that might be, to use traditional categories, divine or animal, as long as, stupidly, let us say massively, as long as one determines hospitality as a human thing, one forbids oneself to speak of hospitality concerning God, animals or plants, already, one can be sure that there is something of hospitality that one does not yet manage to think,[28]

The lines that come next are devoted to Heidegger's text *What Is Called Thinking*[29] (1951–1952), which is a text known, in particular, to contain the thinking Heidegger developed about the question of translation from the Greek to the German, and notably when the translator is Hölderlin. But Derrida also cites an autobiographical passage of Heidegger's text in which the philosopher establishes a rapprochement between thinking and the place of thought when it is a mountain top: 'suddenly to lose oneself in the fog', 'not to know what it means to be in a high mountain'.

> In uncertain weather, someone, who may even be alone, leaves a mountain lodge (*Jemand verläßt bei unsicherem Wetter und gar noch allein eine Berghütte zu einer Gipfelbesteigung*) to climb onto a mountaintop. He soon gets lost in the suddenly fallen fog. This man has no idea of what it means (*es heißt*) to be in high mountains.

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[26] Jacques Derrida, *Le parjure et le pardon*, vol. 1, Séminaire 1997–1998, eds. G. Michaud et N. Cotton, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 'Bibliothèque Derrida', 2019, p. 81 sq.

[27] '*Quand nous disons que "nous ne savons pas encore ce que c'est que l'hospitalité", nous sous-entendons aussi que nous ne savons pas encore qui et ce qui va venir, ni davantage ce qui* s'appelle *dans l'hospitalité, à savoir que l'hospitalité, d'abord ça* s'appelle*, même si cet appel ne prend pas corps dans du langage humain.*' Jacques Derrida, *Hospitalité*, *op. cit.*, p. 38. Our translation.

[28] '*Ni dans un langage éventuellement, pour se servir de catégories traditionnelles, divin ou animal dès lors que, bêtement, disons massivement, dès lors qu'on détermine l'hospitalité comme chose humaine, on s'interdit de parler de l'hospitalité à propos de Dieu, de l'animal ou des plantes déjà, on peut se dire qu'il y a quelque chose de l'hospitalité qu'on ne pense pas encore*'. *Ibid.* p. 48. Our translation. Et cf. p. 22, 184–185.

[29] '[…] *un célèbre texte de Heidegger* Was heißt Denken? *(1951–1952), trad. Granel,* Qu'appelle-t-on penser ?*, PUF, 1959)*'. Derrida, *Hospitalité*, *op. cit.*, p. 39. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt denken ?* Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 1954 ; *Qu'appelle-t-on penser?*, tr. Gérard Granel, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1973; *What is Called Thinking?*, tr. J. Glenn Gray, New York, Harper & Row, 1968.

He has no idea of what it takes, of the know-how one must have, and of the skills one must master for that.[30]

Between hospitality concerning God, the well-known reference to *What Is Called Thinking* for theoreticians of translation, and the image of the mountain top, what is being deployed in the first session of the seminar is the ensemble of references that inhabit Derrida's theory of translating. First of all, the reference to Benjamin who, in *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers,*[31] the celebrated preface to the German translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*, writes that it would be possible to 'speak of an unforgettable life or moment, even if all men had forgotten them'.

> So one could speak of an unforgettable life or moment even if all men had forgotten them. For if the essence of this life or of this moment demanded that they should not be forgotten, this predicate would contain nothing false, but only a demand to which men cannot reply, and at the same time no doubt the reference to a domain in which this demand would find a response: the memory of God. One should better envisage the translatability of the works of language, even if they were untranslatable for men.[32]

This is a passage that, in *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, comes soon after the question raised by Benjamin of the concept of translation. Not to refer it immediately to man leads the philosopher to conceive, as Derrida does for hospitality, of a translation as an apodictic call coming from the memory of God. And just as Derrida asserts that plants and animals would have much to teach us concerning hospitality, Benjamin writes, in his often-quoted letter to Scholem, published under the title *Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen* (*On Language as Such and on the Language of Man*). In this letter, Benjamin writes that 'There is no event or thing in either

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[30] '*Par un temps incertain, quelqu'un, qui est peut-être même seul, quitte un chalet de montagne (*Jemand verläßt bei unsicherem Wetter und gar noch allein eine Berghütte zu einer Gipfelbesteigung*) pour gravir un sommet. Il s'égare bientôt dans le brouillard qui tombe soudainement. Cet homme n'a aucune idée de ce que cela veut dire (*es heißt*) que d'être en haute montagne. Il n'a aucune idée de ce que cela exige, de ce qu'il faut savoir faire et de ce qu'il faut dominer pour cela*'. Derrida, *Hospitalité, op. cit.*, p.41-42; et cf. Martin Heidegger, 'Was heisst Denken?' [1954], *Gesamtausgabe. I. Abteilung, Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910–1976*, ed. P.-L. Coriando, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 2002, vol. 8, p. 128.

[31] Walter Benjamin, 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', in *Charles Baudelaire, Tableaux Parisiens*, Heidelberg, Richard Weissbach, 1923, p. VI-XVII, et in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.4, *op. cit.*, p. 9-21.

[32] '*So dürfte von einem unvergeßlichen Leben oder Augenblick gesprochen werden, auch wenn alle Menschen sie vergessen hätten. Wenn nämlich deren Wesen es forderte, nicht vergessen zu werden, so würde jenes Prädikat nichts Falsches, sondern nur eine Forderung, der Menschen nicht entsprechen, und zugleich auch wohl den Ver¬ weis auf einen Bereich enthalten, in dem ihr entsprochen wäre: auf ein Gedenken Gottes.*' Benjamin, *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzer, op. cit.*, p. 10. Our translation.

animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of each one to communicate its mental contents'.[33]

> The linguistic being of things is their language; this proposition, applied to man, means: the linguistic being of man is his language. Which signifies: man communicates his own mental being *in* his language. However, the language of man speaks in words. Man therefore communicates his own mental being (insofar as it is communicable) by *naming* all other things. But do we know any other languages that *name* things? It should not be· accepted that we know of no languages other than that of man, for this is untrue. We only know of no naming language other than that of man; to identify naming language with language as such is to rob linguistic theory of its deepest insights. – *It is therefore the linguistic being of man to name things.* Why name them? To whom does man communicate himself? – But is this question, as applied to man, different when applied to other communications (languages)? To whom does the lamp communicate itself? The mountain? The fox? – But here the answer is: to man. This is not anthropomorphism. The truth of this answer is shown in human knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] and perhaps also in art. Furthermore, if the lamp and the mountain and the fox did not communicate themselves to man, how should he be able to name them?[34]

And this language is also a *call for* translation, it *calls for* translation, it *calls to* translation, just as Derrida would say that 'it calls for hospitality'. This calling, like all vocations, is always unfolding in a future, because, as Benjamin says, the survival of linguistic and spiritual essences is a call for translation, and this call is in itself an accomplishment always to come. But this task of hospitality, the task of 'receiving the unspoken nameless language of things' into the 'naming language' of man,

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[33] Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man', in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1 (1913–1926), eds. M. P. Bullock & M. W. Jennings, Cambridge, Mass, Belknap Press, 1996, p. 62-74, p. 62. '*Es gibt kein Geschehen oder Ding weder in der belebten noch in der unbelebten Natur, das nicht in gewisser Weise an der Sprache teilhätte, denn es ist jedem wesentlich, seinen geistigen Inhalt mitzuteilen.*' Walter Benjamin, 'Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.1, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1991, p. 140-158, p. 140–141.

[34] Benjamin, 'On Language as Such …', *op. cit.* p. 64. '*Das sprachliche Wesen der Dinge ist ihre Sprache; dieser Satz auf den Menschen angewandt besagt: Das sprachliche Wesen des Menschen ist seine Sprache. Das heißt: Der Mensch teilt sein eignes geistiges Wesen* in *seiner Sprache mit. Die Sprache des Menschen spricht aber in Worten. Der Mensch teilt also sein eignes geistiges Wesen (sofern es mitteilbar ist) mit, indem er alle anderen Dinge* benennt. *Kennen wir aber noch andere Sprachen, welche die Dinge benennen? Man wende nicht ein, wir kennten keine Sprache außer der des Menschen, das ist unwahr. Nur keine* benennende *Sprache kennen wir außer der menschlichen; mit einer Identifizierung von benennender Sprache mit Sprache überhaupt beraubt sich die Sprachtheorie der tiefsten Einsichten.* - Das sprachliche Wesen des Menschen ist also, daß er die Dinge benennt. *Wozu benennt? Wem teilt der Mensch sich mit? - Aber ist diese Frage beim Menschen eine andere als bei anderen Mitteilungen (Sprachen)? Wem teilt die Lampe sich mit? Das Gebirge? Der Fuchs? - Hier aber lautet die Antwort: dem Menschen. Das ist kein Anthropomorphismus. Die Wahrheit dieser Antwort erweist sich in der Erkenntnis und vielleicht auch in der Kunst. Zudem: wenn Lampe und Gebirge und der Fuchs sich dem Menschen nicht mitteilen würden, wie sollte er sie dann benennen?*' Benjamin, 'Über Sprache überhaupt…', *op. cit.* p. 143.

the endless and always recommenced task of the translator is 'the task that God expressly assigns to man himself: that of naming things', and, says Benjamin, 'The objectivity of this translation is, however, guaranteed by God'.

> The translation of the language of things into that of man is not only a translation of the mute into the sonic; it is also the translation of the nameless into name. It is therefore the translation of an imperfect language into a more perfect one, and cannot but add something to it, namely knowledge. The objectivity of this translation is, however, guaranteed by God. For God created things; the creative word in them is the germ of the cognizing name, just as God, too, finally named each thing after it was created. But obviously this naming is only an expression of the identity of the creative word and the cognizing name in God, not the prior solution of the task that God expressly assigns to man himself: that of naming things. In receiving the nameless unspoken language of things and converting it by name into sounds, man performs this task.[35]

As for the image of the mountain top, it is indeed in 'What Is a "Relevant" Translation?' that Derrida describes translation as an experience of the sublime. Translation is not equivalence, translation is *relevance*, survival of the original. This is once again a place, a locus, the place of an image of the mountain top that enables us to conceive of one of the possibilities to speak of *hospitality as translation*. One could approach the issue in terms of survival, with all the Hegelian implications that we have learned to associate with survival as *Aufhebung* on reading *La vie la mort*. Hospitality and translation are a matter of survival, because it is impossible to separate them from the *relevance*, the *relieving*, the *relief*, which always makes us inscribe them in a futurity, a '*to-come*', and a '*can-be*' that is not exclusively linked to the definition of the human, but that thanks to an endeavor of relevance, of *Aufhebung*, would reassure us as to the indissoluble union of *physis* and *logos*.

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[35] Benjamin, 'On Language as Such …', *op. cit.* p. 70. '*Die Übersetzung der Sprache der Dinge in die des Menschen ist nicht nur Übersetzung des Stummen in das Lauthafte, sie ist die Übersetzung des Namenlosen in den Namen. Das ist also die Übersetzung einer unvollkommenen Sprache in eine vollkommenere, sie kann nicht anders als etwas dazu tun, nämlich die Erkenntnis. Die Objektivität dieser Übersetzung ist aber in Gott verbürgt. Denn Gott hat die Dinge geschaffen, das schaffende Wort in ihnen ist der Keim des erkennenden Namens, wie Gott auch am Ende jedes Ding benannte, nachdem es geschaffen war. Aber offenbar ist diese Benennung nur der Ausdruck der Identität des schaffenden Wortes und des erkennenden Namens in Gott, nicht die vorhergenommene Lösung jener Aufgabe, die Gott ausdrücklich dem Menschen selbst zuschreibt: nämlich die Dinge zu benennen. Indem er die stumme namenlose Sprache der Dinge empfängt und sie in den Namen in Lauten überträgt, löst der Mensch diese Aufgabe.*' Benjamin, 'Über Sprache überhaupt…', *op. cit.* p. 151.