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Introduction

Barack Obama is, of course, in many ways already a historical figure. As the 44th president of the United States, he is the first of African American origin. During his first election campaign, in 2008, he became famous for his marvellous talent for giving speeches. His charisma, rhetorical strength and punchlines such as “Yes we can” are widely known, not just in America, but all over the world. Now that his second term is slowly coming to an end, books will be written about President Obama, overviews of his career will be published and collections of his professional highlights will be put together; in these, his most famous or most significant speeches cannot be omitted.

In this thesis, one of Barack Obama’s earliest speeches will be discussed; his election victory speech from November 2008, which he gave in Chicago, Illinois. The mock commission set for this thesis will be to translate it for a publisher who would either make such an overview of Obama’s life or career, or who would compose a collection of famous political speeches for a Dutch audience. This suggests a drastically different communicative situation than that in which the original was spoken. After all, six years have passed since the moment that Obama won the elections for the first time, the audience is completely different, and, perhaps most significant, the translated version of Obama’s speech will most likely be read instead of heard. The translation problems that these circumstances and other factors pose will be discussed below. Though difficult, this is exactly what makes this text fascinatingly interesting to translate. Analysing the speech provides insight into the popularity of Obama, what techniques he uses to appeal to his audience and what rhetorical strategies are involved in the text.

In the analysis, the remarkable quality of the speech will be overtly shown. It envelops many different aspects. It is historic, with references to Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King. It is strong, by offering people hope for change and perspective to a new future. Furthermore, it is personal, almost sentimental, by mentioning his grandmother who had passed away only two days before. It portrays all the facets of Obama, a leader, an educated man, a family

man. Firstly, the translation problems that the text prompts will be discussed, followed by my translation of the speech as well as the original.

As for the mock commission set for this thesis, I have differentiated between two kinds of notes in the translation. Normally, added information for the target audience would be added in footnotes below the text. In this case however, translational commentary for the first and second corrector have been added in these footnotes, and information that is meant for presumed readers of the translation is therefore placed in endnotes, following the translation.

Translation Problems

As mentioned previously, the very nature of the text prompts translational challenges. First of all, the medium of the text has changed, since the translation will be read and not recited. Secondly, the rhetorical strategies that Obama uses, which make it such a strong speech should be transferred to the translation. Though things might be more nuanced than that, since it is not always possible to transfer the exact meaning of a phrase or sentence, while keeping the form, structure, or style figure intact. This balance should always be taken into consideration.

Regarding translational problems, Christiane Nord describes four categories of translational problems, and suggest that dealing with them in a top-down, hierarchical order, is the most efficient way of making a coherent translational analysis. The first category contains pragmatic translation problems which result from differences in the communicative situations in which the source and target text are placed. Problems in this category occur very frequently in this speech. Second are culture-specific translation problems, which are specific for two cultures and result from the differences in norms and values between the source and target culture. All the problems that relate to the differences between the cultural values and norms of an American audience and those of a Dutch audience qualify for this category. Language-specific translation problems, which are specific for a language pair and result from the differences in grammatical structure between the source and target texts, make up the third category. In this case in particular, the balance or correlation between problems related to linguistic structure or rhetorical structure should be kept in mind, for they are not the same. The last category is that of text-specific translation problems, which occur when translating an individual text of which the solution cannot be applied to other translations. Examples of these are metaphors, instances of word play but also the very famous creed “Yes we can”. These four categories will be discussed below (Nord 2010, 147).

Pragmatic translation problems

As mentioned in the introduction, a very important pragmatic translation problem is the change of communicative situation of the speech from aural to textual. This influences many facets of the speech and which translation strategies that are to be used. Obviously Obama's use of intonation and where he places emphasis is absent when the text is read. Moreover, which is relevant when translating the text, the use of alliteration, assonance and such stylistic techniques as well as emphasis due to repetition may not be as strong. Therefore the aural strength and emphasis of a phrase is made subordinate to its informational content. This is exactly what Nord means by her top-down hierarchical structure of the categories of translation problems. By dealing with this pragmatic translation problem here, the specific instances that will be encountered in the text will be more easily resolved. Below, especially in the section on language-specific translation problems we will find numerous examples of stylistically refined phrases, which will be difficult to translate while being kept stylistically intact. The notion that, regarding the change of communicative situation, the meaning and content of the phrase is more important than the aural emphasis, will provide the right strategy to use when translating.

Secondly, there are many examples of pragmatic translation problems to be found in Obama's speech due to different levels of contextual knowledge of the audience. For the sake of conciseness, I will not discuss all of them here, only the most significant ones, or the ones that need further explanation. One of the most clear cases of this is to be found in the story of Ann Nixon Cooper. While portraying the past century of American history, Obama mentions famous events, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Birmingham Campaign, and the Battle of Selma during the Civil Rights Movement. Though these events have been crucial for the history of the United States, they may be less well-known to a non-American audience. The majority of a Dutch audience will not understand casual references to "buses in Montgomery", "hoses in Birmingham", or "a bridge in Selma". When dealing with these pragmatic problems in translation, I chose a solution based on an assumption of the contextual knowledge of a Dutch audience. The third option from Andrew

Chesterman's pragmatic strategies, changing the information, seems most appropriate here. By changing the amount of information given, the passage becomes clear for the target audience (Chesterman 2010, 169). More explicit information about what is meant by these references to Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma is necessary for the target audience, for they do not have the same knowledge of American history as the audience of the source text. Obama only used images of these historical events, but in the target text I chose to explicitly name the events, without being too extensive about them for they are only images. The translation then becomes: "Zij was er in de tijd van de Montgomery-busboycot, de opstanden in Birmingham, Bloody Sunday in Selma,". The added clause "in de tijd van" is necessary to make explicit that it is a historical period which Obama wants to portray. In the same sentence we find a similar example for which I have chosen a different solution: "and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people that 'We Shall Overcome.'" The same consideration whether the target audience needs additional information to understand the reference should be made here. The preacher from Atlanta meant here is Martin Luther King (Straker, 2008). Based on the assumption that both Martin Luther King and the "We Shall Overcome"-song are widely known, also outside of the USA, no extra information is added in the translation. The whole sentence in the target text then becomes: "Zij was er in de tijd van de Montgomery-busboycot, de opstanden in Birmingham, Bloody Sunday in Selma, en van een predikant uit Atlanta die mensen vertelde dat 'We Shall Overcome'." In the first three images of historical events, the implicit information is made explicit, and the last one remains the same. Where in the source text the events are only alluded to, in the target text they are explicitly mentioned, without giving further explanation; they are merely an image and not the point that Obama is trying to make. Another example of the same type of pragmatic translation problem is found in the paragraph which Obama dedicates to his opponent Senator McCain. He states that: "Senator McCain [has] fought long and hard in this campaign, and he's fought even longer and harder for the country he loves." A statement that may not be as clear to a Dutch audience as it is to an American audience, because a Dutch audience may not be aware of McCain's military past. Here

I have chosen the same strategy of Chesterman's, to add information, although not in the target text itself, but to add an endnote for the reader. The fluency of the passage thus remains the same, but the necessary information for the different audience is added below.

How Obama uses American history in his speech is also a very important aspect of the rhetorical qualities of his speech. There are many references to important figures and events, as we have seen in the previous paragraph, some of them implicit, others more explicit. Additional examples of this are "despair in the dust bowl and depression across the land, [...] a New Deal", "it was a man from this state who first carried the banner of the Republican Party to the White House" and "the only way it's been done in America for two-hundred and twenty-one years". He uses this overview of history to convince the people that change can be made and has been made in the past, after which he brings it back to the present with the message that there are still many more things to be achieved. The duality of this problem is that because the historical aspects are an important rhetorical strategy of Obama's, they should be transferred to the translation. At the same time, it should be taken into consideration if more information should be added on behalf of the Dutch audience and which strategy of Chesterman's is to be used. Where it was possible to add necessary information without decreasing the fluency of the sentence I have done so. In other cases, like in the McCain example, I chose to use an endnote for providing the target audience with the necessary information.

As far as lay-out is concerned, I have altered the division of the different paragraphs of the text as would be appropriate for publication. Since the source text was originally spoken and not read, the paragraph division is unclear. In addition, strong lines were often followed by a loud applause by the audience, resulting in a necessary pause as well. The distribution of the paragraphs in my translation has not been picked at random. First of all, it groups related paragraphs together and therefore separates different sections of the speech. Secondly, a shorter paragraph now places more emphasis on its important last sentence.

Culture-specific translation problems

Cultural translation problems are obviously to be found in numerous examples. Since it is a very political environment in which the source text is embedded, and the political structures of the United States are vastly different from those of the Netherlands, discrepancies are inevitable. A very clear example of this is when Obama is portraying the problems that were at hand at the time: “There are mothers and fathers who will lie awake after their children fall asleep and wonder how they’ll make the mortgage, or pay their doctor’s bills, or save enough for college”. For a Dutch audience, the latter two examples that he gives to sketch a family with financial issues work very differently. First of all, the healthcare system in the Netherlands is very different from that in America and secondly, college also knows a very different financial system. In the Netherlands, private universities are far less common than in the United States, making it often much less expensive for parents to send their children to university. When it comes to translating this sentence, or rather this image, the question should be asked whether the image and the given examples are as strong to a Dutch audience as to an American audience. Different options are to just adopt the image identically into the translation, to again add a footnote to comment on the American situation of these matters, or to choose entirely different examples to portray the same image (Chesterman, 2010, 165). The latter seems inappropriate, because the examples used by Obama do not need to influence the reader of the target text the way he rhetorically influenced his original audience when he gave this speech. This was discussed in the previous section on pragmatic translation problems and the shift in communicative situation. I chose not to add any additional information to the translation of this passage, because although the cultures of the source audience and the target audience is different and the example does not apply identically to the Dutch environment, the meaning of the example is not lost on a Dutch audience.

Similar discrepancies due to different cultural norms can be found on word level. There are specific instances of words that need to be altered because they have a culturally different connotation in Dutch than in English. An example of this is the word “partner” which Obama uses

to describe his vice-president, Joe Biden. The Dutch language knows a literal equivalent of this word, “partner”, although this is generally used to refer to one’s significant other, and therefore this is not a suitable translation.

Language pair-specific translation problems

Translational problems related to the specific language pair are also very much present, although not inherently due to English syntax, but rather to the stylistic, rhetoric, register that Obama uses. A rhetorical analysis of the speech can provide insight into which translation strategies should be used. Many different researchers have already looked into Obama’s speeches. Hans de Bruijn makes an excellent analysis of Obama’s speech strategies and his use of rhetorical structures. De Bruijn begins his essay by explaining what makes Obama and his speeches important to research. As a first he mentions Obama’s charisma, and his role as an interpreter-in-chief; he always needs to communicate his plans and policies convincingly. Furthermore, even more significant to the topic of this thesis, he mentions both the relationship between new media and the classical political speech, as well as the socially diverse environment which Obama has to address. Also, De Bruijn mentions a number of factors that make Obama’s speeches strong, among which: the tension that is created by his composition, the correlation between the social and the personal, the political oxymoron which makes the speech appealing to a diverse audience, and very much present in Obama’s victory speech, the resonating refrain. He explains how they work as follows: “Belangrijk is dat zowel ‘Yes We Can’ als ‘There you go again’ vrij inhoudsloze *oneliners* zijn. Maar dat kan dan weer een kracht zijn: eenieder kan er zijn eigen betekenis aan geven en des te groter is de kans dat het refrein een of meer van de vier functies kan vervullen – herinneren, beleven, de tegenstander neerzetten en de opmaat naar een apotheose zijn – Important is that both ‘Yes We Can’ and ‘There you go again’ are quite meaningless one-liners. However, that can in fact be their strength: everyone can assign their own meaning to them which enhances the possibility for the refrain to fulfil one of the four functions: to recollect, to experience, to discredit the opponent and to be the

prelude to an apotheosis.” (De Bruijn 2009, 25). This is of course only one of the sources that can be used to analyse Obama’s rhetoric. A very old and very famous work that can offer insight into the rhetorical structure of texts is Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. Aristotle names three “modes of persuasion”: the personal character of the speaker to make him credible, persuasion of the audience when the speech stirs their emotions, and thirdly through speech itself by providing persuasive argument (Aristotle 1984). Obama frequently uses the first two modes in his victory speech. He portrays himself as a family man by referring to his recently passed away grandmother and in the paragraph that is dedicated to his wife and his daughters. Also, he tries to stir the audience by using stories like the story of Ann Nixon Cooper. Junling Wang makes use of a Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse Obama’s speech. In this very statistical approach he charts Obama’s use of modal verbs, tenses and personal pronouns to portray his speech. For example, Wang indicates that Obama uses the personal pronoun “we” 60 times in his 2,057 word speech to convey a sense of unity. In addition, Wang mentions three discourse processes that Obama uses in his speech: material processes of “doing” which expresses a goal, “I thank”, “I promise”, relational processes of being to describe an attributive relation, “the dream of our founder is alive”, and mental processes of feeling thinking, and seeing, “we know the government can’t solve every problem” (Wang 2010, 257-60). This is just a selection of works on rhetoric and Obama’s strategies that need to be kept in mind when translating.

Specific instances of rhetorical strategies that Obama uses that occur when translating the speech will be examined below. With regard to the very diverse audience that the speech addresses as mentioned by De Bruijn, a very explicit example can be found in the third paragraph: “[...] the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled”. Obama wants no minority to feel left out, he wants to be the President of every American, as he emphasises on more occasions in the speech; “a government of the people, by the people and for the people has not perished from this Earth”, “I will listen to you, especially when we disagree” and most clearly “And to those

Americans whose support I have yet to earn – I may not have won your vote, but I hear your voices, I need your help, and I will be your President too”. The way in which Obama explicitly mentions the various minorities and social groups that he wants to address have been transferred to the translation very literally to maintain the sense of unity that he wants to convey: “het antwoord dat werd gegeven door jong en oud, arm en rijk, democraat en republikein, zwart, blank, Aziatisch, homoseksueel, heteroseksueel, gehandicapt en niet-gehandicapt – Amerikanen die de boodschap uitdragen dat wij nooit zomaar een verzameling van rode en blauwe staten zijn geweest; wij zijn, eens en voor altijd, de Verenigde Staten van Amerika.” This message of unity is thus a constant theme in his speech, and he also concludes with it, “out of many, we are one.” This is a very important message to be transferred into the translation.

Text-specific translation problems

In addition to the recurrent themes that can be found throughout the speech, there are also translational problems related to Obama’s rhetoric on a lower, often syntactical level. The speech is full of triplets, in which the same word, or the same structure is repeated three times for emphasis. Examples are abundant; in the very first paragraph “who still doubts [...], who still wonders [...], who still questions”, which can be converted relatively easily “die eraan twijfelt [...], die zich nog afvraagt [...], die nog twijfelt”. Later on we find another example: “but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment.” The strong repetition of the word “this” builds a lot of tension, ultimately coming to a climax in “change has come to America”, which is the most pressing message of the entire speech. In Dutch, this offers a very simple problem, namely that the demonstrative pronoun knows two different forms in Dutch, which makes it “deze dag, [...] deze verkiezing, [...] dit cruciale moment.” The repetition is therefore no longer of the same word, although it still involves the same consonant three times. This is not problematic because, as discussed, this aural emphasis has become subordinate to the meaning due to the change of communicative situation.

Beside these triplets, there are other things that are not translated easily. Obama often repeats the word “tonight”, to emphasise the present as opposed to the past, as mentioned before. When translating, this repetition should remain strong by translating the word identically every time, and not varying with words as “vannacht, vanavond, deze avond”, et cetera. In this fashion, consistency leads to cohesion just like in the source text. The beginning of his speech is another example of this. The first paragraph ends with “tonight is your answer,” after which the following three begin with “It’s the answer [...]”. This relationship has to be maintained in the translation in order to reach the same cohesion. This specific instance has been elaborated on in a footnote after this first paragraph.

Also, the text is stylistically very appealing, with, for instance, the use of much alliteration. A few examples are: “hatched in the halls [...], it began in the backyards”, “partisanship and pettiness [...] that has poisoned our politics for so long” and “if America’s beacon still burns as bright”. Obviously, when choosing to translate the original phrase accurately in terms of meaning, the alliteration will be lost: “uitgebroed in de hallen van Washington, zij begon in de achertuinen [...]”. On the other hand, trying to maintain the alliteration would mean to change the literal meaning of the phrase. This is a balance that has to be dealt with carefully; to keep the meaning of the text unchanged, while making the translation as stylistically delicate. Again, I chose to favour the meaning of the sentence above its stylistic aspects.

The most intriguing text-specific problem is of course the phrase “Yes we can”. It is a very strong phrase which has been heard throughout Obama’s campaign. However, the sentence is meaningless because there is no object in the sentence. Therefore it is not easy to translate the phrase. Auxiliary verbs in Dutch cannot be used without direct object as they can in English. “Ja, wij kunnen” is therefore excluded as a translation, for the sentence is ungrammatical. This grammatical problem might be easily solved by adding an object: “Ja, wij kunnen het”, but that makes a sentence without meaning. The importance of the “Yes we can”-motto in the source text is not in the meaning of the phrase. The most likely meaning that can be assigned to the sentence would be “Yes, we can make that change”, but the real purpose of it is arousing the public as the

second mode of persuasion described by Aristotle (transl. Barnes, 1984). Obama ends the last seven paragraphs of his speech with this refrain, so that it stays with the audience and makes a lasting impression. If this same purpose is to be maintained in the translation of the speech, the best solution is to simply keep the phrase untranslated. This can best be qualified as Chesterman's second syntactical strategy (2010, 155). This is the best option for this phrase because firstly, it is a very simple phrase to understand for a foreign audience. Any speaker of Dutch will be able to understand the English sentence "Yes we can", and it therefore does not impose any semantic difficulties when it stays in the target text its English form. Secondly, no Dutch translation will be as strong rhetorically as the original is. The phrase has not been used just in this speech in November 2008, but throughout the entire campaign. If it were to be translated, it would inevitably lose this denotation and the associations that come with this creed. Thirdly, the phrase has already been taken into the Dutch language and culture. There is an addiction clinic in the Netherland that is named the "Yes We Can Clinics", and a platform for non-profit organisations that has the clever name "Yes We Care". This proves that the phrase has already been naturalised into the Dutch language and can be maintained in the Dutch translation of the speech without any problems.

The translation

Als er nog iemand is die eraan twijfelt dat in Amerika alles mogelijk is, die zich nog afvraagt of de droom van onze grondleggers tegenwoordig nog bestaat, die nog twijfelt aan de kracht van onze democratie; het antwoord op al die vragen wordt vanavond gegeven.¹ Het is het antwoord dat werd gegeven door mensen die in lange rijen stonden² rond scholen en kerken, door mensen die uren hadden staan wachten, velen voor de eerste keer in hun leven, omdat zij geloofden dat het deze keer anders moest; dat hun stem het verschil zou kunnen maken. Het is het antwoord dat werd gegeven door jong en oud, arm en rijk, democraat en republikein, zwart, blank, Aziatisch, homoseksueel, heteroseksueel, gehandicapt en niet-gehandicapt – Amerikanen die de boodschap uitdragen dat wij nooit zomaar een verzameling van rode en blauwe staten zijn geweest; wij zijn, eens en voor altijd, de Verenigde Staten van Amerika. Het is het antwoord dat mensen die zo lang en van zo velen te horen hebben gekregen dat ze cynisch en bang moesten zijn en onzeker over wat we kunnen bereiken, heeft bewogen hun handen op de boog van de geschiedenis te leggen en deze weer om te buigen naar hoop op betere tijden.

We hebben er lang op moeten wachten, maar vanavond, door wat we hebben gedaan op deze dag, in deze verkiezing, op dit cruciale moment, is er in Amerika een nieuw tijdperk aangebroken.

Ik heb zojuist een nobel³ telefoontje gehad van senator McCain. Hij heeft hard gevochten in deze verkiezingsstrijd, en nog veel meer voor het land dat hij lief heeftⁱ. Hij heeft offers gebracht voor Amerika die de meesten van ons zich nog niet eens half kunnen voorstellen, en wij hebben veel te danken aan wat deze dappere en onzelfzuchtige leider voor dit land heeft gedaan. Ik wil hem

¹ “Tonight is your answer” from the source text offers a number of difficulties. Obama addresses the people with doubts, the people who wonder about the things he mentions, but there is no explicit question to answer, therefore, the phrase itself is, in fact, empty. It is however, very effective as an apotheosis of this repetitive paragraph, and the implicit meaning that is in these four words should be transferred in the translation. Moreover, the word “answer” forms the connection to the next three paragraphs that again form a repetition: “It’s the answer...”. Thus, I chose to maintain the word “antwoord” in my translation, but to add a clause so that it becomes a logical Dutch sentence.

² The first of many examples of personification in the source text, which, in English, work perfectly, but are problematic in Dutch. The answer is not spoken by the lines, but by the people in the lines.

³ The word “gracious” imposes difficulties because of the connotation of the word. The literal Dutch translation “eerbiedwaardig” does not fit the syntax of the sentence, another option “hoffelijk” has a far too old-fashioned connotation, while a more free alternative “sportief”, may sound condescending. “Nobel” therefore seems the most suitable solution.

en gouverneur Palin feliciteren met alles wat ze hebben bereikt en ik kijk er naar uit om samen met hen, in de komende maanden te werken aan de beloftes en idealen van dit land.

Ik wil mijn kameraad⁴ op deze reis bedanken, een man die campagne voerde met heel zijn hart en die een stem gaf aan de mensen met wie hij is opgegroeid op de straten van Scranton, voor wie hij zich later sterk maakte in Delawareⁱⁱ, de vicepresident van de Verenigde Staten, Joe Biden.⁵ Ik zou hier vanavond niet staan zonder de onvoorwaardelijke steun van degene die de afgelopen zestien jaar mijn beste vriend was, de rots van onze familie en de liefde van mijn leven, die nieuwe First Lady van ons land, Michelle Obama. Sasha en Malia, ik hou zielsveel van jullie, en jullie hebben die nieuwe puppy die met ons meegaat naar het Witte Huis dik verdiend. En ook al is ze niet meer onder ons, ik weet dat mijn oma meekijkt, samen met de familie zonder wie ik niet was geworden wie ik nu ben. Vanavond mis ik hen en ik realiseer me dat ik hun zeer veel dank verschuldigd ben. Dan wil ik me richten tot mijn campagneleider David Plouffe, mijn hoofdstrateeg David Axelrod en het beste campagneteam uit de geschiedenis van de politiek: jullie hebben dit voor elkaar gekregen, en ik zal jullie eeuwig dankbaar zijn voor wat jullie hebben opgeofferd om dit te bereiken.

Maar bovenal, zal ik nooit vergeten wie deze overwinning werkelijk toekomt – het is jullie overwinning.

Ik was nooit de meeste waarschijnlijke kandidaat voor deze positie. We begonnen niet met veel geld en ook niet met veel aanhangers. Onze campagne werd niet uitgebroid in Washington – zij begon in achtertuinen in Des Moines, in woonkamers in Concord en in portieken in Charlestonⁱⁱⁱ. Onze campagne werd gebouwd door de arbeiders die van het beetje spaargeld dat zij hadden vijf dollar, of tien dollar, of twintig dollar gaven voor onze zaak. Onze campagne werd sterk door de jonge mensen die de mythe ontcrachtten dat hun generatie apathisch zou zijn, die huis en haard

⁴ A very similar problem to the one in the third note; the word “partner” in Dutch usually denotes someone’s significant other, which is clearly not what Obama refers to here.

⁵ Pragmatic translation problem imposed by the different levels of contextual knowledge between the different audiences, the same as in the paragraph on Senator McCain. Again I have inserted a note here that is to be taken into the publication to give the necessary information on Biden’s past to a Dutch audience.

verlieten voor werk dat hen weinig salaris bood en nog minder slaap. Onze campagne werd sterk door mensen die kou en hitte trotseerden om aan te kloppen bij volslagen onbekenden, door de miljoenen Amerikanen die zich als vrijwilligers meldden en die zich organiseerden en bewezen dat meer dan twee eeuwen na het ontstaan van de republiek⁶ een regering van het volk, door het volk en voor het volk nog niet verdwenen is. Dit is jullie overwinning. Ik weet dat jullie dit niet alleen maar deden om een verkiezing te winnen en ik weet dat jullie het niet voor mij deden. Jullie hebben dit gedaan omdat jullie begrijpen hoe omvangrijk de taak is die voor ons ligt. Want ook al vieren we vanavond feest, we weten dat de uitdagingen van morgen de grootste van ons leven zijn – twee oorlogen, een planeet in gevaar, de grootste financiële crisis in honderd jaar tijd. Ook al staan wij vanavond hier, we weten dat er dappere Amerikanen opstaan in de woestijnen van Irak en in de bergen van Afghanistan die hun leven wagen voor ons. Er zijn moeders en vaders die wakker liggen als hun kinderen op bed liggen en zich afvragen hoe ze hun hypotheek kunnen betalen, of de rekeningen, of het schoolgeld van hun kinderen. Er is nieuwe energie die we moeten benutten en er zijn nieuwe banen die we moeten creëren, er zijn nieuwe scholen te bouwen, bedreigingen die we het hoofd moeten bieden en bondgenootschappen die we moeten herstellen. De weg die voor ons ligt is lang. De weg is stijl. Misschien bereiken we ons doel niet binnen een jaar, of zelfs binnen een termijn, maar, Amerika, nog nooit ben ik zo hoopvol geweest dat we ons doel zullen bereiken als vanavond. Ik beloof het jullie – als één volk zullen we dat bereiken.

Er zullen tegenslagen en hindernissen komen. Velen van jullie zullen het niet eens zijn met iedere beslissing die ik neem of mijn beleid als president. Bovendien kan de overheid niet elk probleem oplossen. Maar ik zal altijd eerlijk tegen jullie zijn over de uitdagingen die ons te wachten staan. Ik zal naar jullie luisteren, juist wanneer we het niet eens zijn. En bovenal vraag ik van jullie om mee te bouwen aan deze natie, zoals dat in Amerika al tweehonderdeenentwintig jaar^{iv} gebeurt –

⁶ In the source text, this information is not given. Obama simply states “more than two centuries later”. For a Dutch audience, I thought it necessary to make this information explicit.

stap voor stap, steen voor steen, met vallen en opstaan⁷. Wat eenentwintig maanden geleden, midden in de winter begon mag hier niet eindigen op deze herfstavond. Deze overwinning alleen is niet de verandering die we zoeken; dit is alleen maar onze kans om die verandering waar te maken. En dat is niet mogelijk als we teruggaan naar hoe het was. Dat is niet mogelijk zonder jullie.

Laten we daarom een nieuwe geest van vaderlandsliefde oproepen; van dienstbaarheid en verantwoordelijkheid, waarin we ons allemaal voornemen om mee te doen en harder te werken en niet alleen voor onszelf te zorgen, maar voor elkaar. Laten we goed onthouden dat als deze financiële crisis ons iets heeft geleerd, het is dat het op de beurs niet goed kan gaan als het niet goed gaat met de beurzen van de mensen⁸. Winnen of verliezen: in dit land doen we het als één natie, als één volk⁹. Laten we de verleiding weerstaan om terug te vallen op de vooringenomenheid, de kleinzieligheid en de onvolwassenheid die al zo lang onze politiek heeft vergiftigd. Laten we goed onthouden dat Abraham Lincoln, de eerste die de vlag van de Republikeinse Partij meenam naar het Witte Huis, afkomstig was uit deze staat – de Republikeinse Partij gegrondvest is op de waarden van zelfredzaamheid, individuele vrijheid en nationale eenheid¹⁰. Dat zijn waarden die wij allemaal delen. Ook al viert de Democratische Partij vanavond een grote overwinning, we doen dat met bescheidenheid en de vastberadenheid om een einde te maken aan de verdeeldheid die onze vooruitgang zolang heeft verhinderd. Zoals Lincoln sprak tot een natie die veel meer verdeeld was dan de onze, “Wij zijn geen vijanden, maar vrienden... Door onze gepassioneerde overtuigingen staat onze verbondenheid onder spanning, maar die mag niet gebroken worden.” En tegen de Amerikanen van wie ik de steun nog moet verdienen - ik heb misschien niet jullie stem gewonnen,

⁷ This sentence involves a metaphor that is very difficult to translate to Dutch. Obama’s figure of speech works very well, the verb “remaking” suits the images of blocks, bricks and calloused hands perfectly. I have transferred this to Dutch by choosing the verb “bouwen”, but the image of “eeltige handen” is much less appropriate. Therefore, I chose to use Chesterman’s G10-strategy: to change it into a Dutch expression with the same meaning.

⁸ The figurative parallel between Wall Street and Main Street Obama uses is not as effective in Dutch as it is to an American audience. Again, the same strategy of Chesterman’s offers the best solution here. I have altered it to a Dutch word play between “de beurs”, representing Wall Street, and “beurzen van de mensen”, which represents Main Street.

⁹ This sentence forms a translation problem that belongs in Nord’s third category, that of language-specific translation problems. Both the terms “rise and fall” and the structure of the sentence is difficult to maintain in Dutch. I have thus radically altered the structure of the sentence and translated “rise and fall” quite freely with “winnen of verliezen”.

¹⁰ This sentence is one of the most challenging to translate adequately due to its complex syntactical structure. Especially because it is necessary to explicitly mention Abraham Lincoln here, otherwise the reference may be lost on the target audience. The sentence after the hyphen then becomes difficult to place. I have changed the order of the sentence in accordance with Chesterman’s seventh strategy of syntactical strategies.

maar ik hoor hem wel; ik heb jullie steun nodig en ik zal ook jullie president zijn. En aan iedereen die vanavond van buiten onze grenzen meekijkt, van parlementen en paleizen tot diegenen die aan een radio gekluisterd zitten in de vergeten uithoeken van onze wereld - onze verhalen zijn uniek, maar we delen ons lot, en een nieuw tijdperk van Amerikaans leiderschap is op handen. Aan hen die deze wereld willen afbreken - wij zullen jullie verslaan. Aan hen die vrede en geborgenheid zoeken - wij steunen jullie. En aan hen die zich hebben afgevraagd of het baken van Amerika nog zo helder brandt - vanavond hebben we opnieuw bewezen dat de ware kracht van ons land niet ligt in onze militaire macht, niet in onze welvaart, maar in de aanhoudende kracht van onze idealen: democratie, vrijheid, mogelijkheden en onverzettelijke hoop.

Want dat is de ware geest van Amerika - dat Amerika kan veranderen. Onze unie kan worden geperfectioneerd. En wat we reeds hebben bereikt geeft ons hoop voor wat we morgen kunnen en moeten bereiken.

Deze verkiezingen kende vele primeurs en vele verhalen die nog jarenlang verteld zullen worden. Maar het verhaal dat ik vanavond in gedachten heb is dat van een vrouw die in Atlanta naar het stembureau ging. Ze is net als die miljoenen anderen die in de rij stonden om hun stem te laten gelden in deze verkiezingen, met één verschil - Ann Nixon Cooper is 106 jaar oud. Ze komt uit een tijd waarin de slavernij nog maar net was afgeschaft; een tijd zonder auto's op de weg, of vliegtuigen in de lucht; een tijd waarin iemand zoals zij niet kon stemmen om twee redenen - door het feit dat ze een vrouw was, en door haar huidskleur. Vanavond denk ik aan alles dat zij heeft gezien in haar eeuw in Amerika - het hartzeer en de hoop; de strijd en de vooruitgang; wanneer er geroepen werd dat we het niet kunnen, en de mensen die doorzetten met die Amerikaanse lijfspreuk: "Yes we can." In een tijd waarin de stem van vrouwen niet gehoord werd en hun hoop onbeantwoord bleef, heeft zij gezien hoe ze voor zichzelf opkwamen, hun stem lieten klinken en naar het stembiljet grepen. "Yes we can." Toen er wanhoop heerste in ons land in de tijd van de Dust Bowl en de Grote Depressie, heeft zij gezien hoe een natie de angst overwon met de New Deal, nieuwe banen en nieuwe eenheidszin. "Yes we can." Toen de bommen vielen in onze haven

en tirannie de wereld bedreigde, heeft zij gezien hoe een generatie opstond en hoe een democratie werd gered. “Yes we can.” Zij was er in de tijd van de Montgomery-busboycot, de opstanden in Birmingham, Bloody Sunday in Selma, en van een predikant uit Atlanta die mensen vertelde dat “We Shall Overcome”. “Yes we can.”

Een mens landde op de maan, een muur kwam naar beneden in Berlijn, een wereld werd verbonden door onze eigen wetenschap en verbeelding. En dit jaar, in deze verkiezingen, raakte zij met haar vinger een scherm aan, en sprak haar stem uit, want na honderd zes jaar in Amerika, door de mooiste tijden en ook de meest donkere dagen, weet zij hoe Amerika kan veranderen. “Yes we can!” Amerika, we zijn zo ver gekomen. We hebben zo veel gezien. Maar er is nog zoveel te doen. Dus laten we ons vanavond afvragen - als onze kinderen de volgende eeuw mogen zien; als mijn dochters zo oud mogen worden als Ann Nixon Cooper, welke ontwikkelingen zullen zij zien? Welke vooruitgang zullen we dan gemaakt hebben?

Dit is onze kans om gehoor te geven aan die oproep. Dit is ons moment. Dit is onze tijd - om mensen weer aan het werk te krijgen en kansen te creëren voor onze kinderen; om welvaart te herstellen en de vrede te promoten; om de American Dream te herstellen en die fundamentele waarheid opnieuw te bevestigen - dat we één zijn uit velen; dat zolang we ademen, we blijven hopen, en waar we cynisme en twijfel tegenkomen en mensen die zeggen dat het niet kan, wij zullen antwoorden met die tijdloze leus die de ziel van een volk weergeeft: “Yes We Can”. Dank u wel, God zegene u, en God zegene de Verenigde Staten van Amerika.

ⁱ Senator John McCain was gevechtsploot van de Amerikaanse marine in de tijd van de Vietnamoorlog. Hij werd neergeschoten boven Noord-Vietnam waar hij ruim vijf jaar werd vastgehouden als krijgsgevangene (McCain, 1999)

ⁱⁱ Joseph Biden is geboren in Scranton, Pennsylvania, en verhuisde later naar Delaware waar hij senator werd, vandaar dat Obama deze steden zo expliciet noemt (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/vice-president-biden>).

ⁱⁱⁱ Obama noemt hier bewust gewone, relatief kleine plaatsen en niet Washington, of Wall Street, waar campagnes vaak beginnen. Zo wil hij de mensen het gevoel te geven dat hij een man van het volk is.

^{iv} Hier wordt verwezen naar het jaar 1787, het jaar van de Amerikaanse constitutie.

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Appendix: the source text

If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.

It's the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers this nation has never seen; by people who waited three hours and four hours, many for the very first time in their lives, because they believed that this time must be different; that their voice could be that difference.

It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled – Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America.

It's the answer that led those who have been told for so long by so many to be cynical, and fearful, and doubtful of what we can achieve to put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day.

It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.

I just received a very gracious call from Senator McCain. He fought long and hard in this campaign, and he's fought even longer and harder for the country he loves. He has endured sacrifices for America that most of us cannot begin to imagine, and we are better off for the service rendered by this brave and selfless leader. I congratulate him and Governor Palin for all they have achieved, and I look forward to working with them to renew this nation's promise in the months ahead.

I want to thank my partner in this journey, a man who campaigned from his heart and spoke for the men and women he grew up with on the streets of Scranton and rode with on that train home to Delaware, the Vice President-elect of the United States, Joe Biden.

I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my best friend for the last sixteen years, the rock of our family and the love of my life, our nation's next First Lady, Michelle Obama. Sasha and Malia, I love you both so much, and you have earned the new puppy that's coming with us to the White House. And while she's no longer with us, I know my grandmother is watching, along with the family that made me who I am. I miss them tonight, and know that my debt to them is beyond measure.

To my campaign manager David Plouffe, my chief strategist David Axelrod, and the best campaign team ever assembled in the history of politics – you made this happen, and I am forever grateful for what you've sacrificed to get it done.

But above all, I will never forget who this victory truly belongs to – it belongs to you.

I was never the likeliest candidate for this office. We didn't start with much money or many endorsements. Our campaign was not hatched in the halls of Washington – it began in the backyards of Des Moines and the living rooms of Concord and the front porches of Charleston.

It was built by working men and women who dug into what little savings they had to give five dollars and ten dollars and twenty dollars to this cause. It grew strength from the young people who rejected the myth of their generation's apathy; who left their homes and their families for jobs that offered little pay and less sleep; from the not-so-young people who braved the bitter cold and scorching heat to knock on the doors of perfect strangers; from the millions of Americans who volunteered, and organized, and proved that more than two centuries later, a government of the people, by the people and for the people has not perished from this Earth. This is your victory. I know you didn't do this just to win an election and I know you didn't do it for me. You did it because you understand the enormity of the task that lies ahead. For even as we celebrate tonight,

we know the challenges that tomorrow will bring are the greatest of our lifetime – two wars, a planet in peril, the worst financial crisis in a century. Even as we stand here tonight, we know there are brave Americans waking up in the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan to risk their lives for us. There are mothers and fathers who will lie awake after their children fall asleep and wonder how they'll make the mortgage, or pay their doctor's bills, or save enough for college. There is new energy to harness and new jobs to be created; new schools to build and threats to meet and alliances to repair.

The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America – I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you – we as a people will get there.

There will be setbacks and false starts. There are many who won't agree with every decision or policy I make as President, and we know that government can't solve every problem. But I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face. I will listen to you, especially when we disagree. And above all, I will ask you join in the work of remaking this nation the only way it's been done in America for two-hundred and twenty-one years – block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand.

What began twenty-one months ago in the depths of winter must not end on this autumn night. This victory alone is not the change we seek – it is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were. It cannot happen without you.

So let us summon a new spirit of patriotism; of service and responsibility where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves, but each other. Let us remember that if this financial crisis taught us anything, it's that we cannot have a thriving Wall Street while Main Street suffers – in this country, we rise or fall as one nation; as one people.

Let us resist the temptation to fall back on the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics for so long. Let us remember that it was a man from this state who first carried the banner of the Republican Party to the White House – a party founded on the values of self-reliance, individual liberty, and national unity. Those are values we all share, and while the Democratic Party has won a great victory tonight, we do so with a measure of humility and determination to heal the divides that have held back our progress. As Lincoln said to a nation far more divided than ours, “We are not enemies, but friends...though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection.” And to those Americans whose support I have yet to earn – I may not have won your vote, but I hear your voices, I need your help, and I will be your President too.

And to all those watching tonight from beyond our shores, from parliaments and palaces to those who are huddled around radios in the forgotten corners of our world – our stories are singular, but our destiny is shared, and a new dawn of American leadership is at hand. To those who would tear this world down – we will defeat you. To those who seek peace and security – we support you. And to all those who have wondered if America’s beacon still burns as bright – tonight we proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from our the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity, and unyielding hope.

For that is the true genius of America – that America can change. Our union can be perfected. And what we have already achieved gives us hope for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.

This election had many firsts and many stories that will be told for generations. But one that’s on my mind tonight is about a woman who cast her ballot in Atlanta. She’s a lot like the millions of others who stood in line to make their voice heard in this election except for one thing – Ann Nixon Cooper is 106 years old.

She was born just a generation past slavery; a time when there were no cars on the road or planes in the sky; when someone like her couldn't vote for two reasons – because she was a woman and because of the color of her skin.

And tonight, I think about all that she's seen throughout her century in America – the heartache and the hope; the struggle and the progress; the times we were told that we can't, and the people who pressed on with that American creed: Yes we can.

At a time when women's voices were silenced and their hopes dismissed, she lived to see them stand up and speak out and reach for the ballot. Yes we can.

When there was despair in the dust bowl and depression across the land, she saw a nation conquer fear itself with a New Deal, new jobs and a new sense of common purpose. Yes we can.

When the bombs fell on our harbor and tyranny threatened the world, she was there to witness a generation rise to greatness and a democracy was saved. Yes we can.

She was there for the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in Selma, and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people that “We Shall Overcome.” Yes we can.

A man touched down on the moon, a wall came down in Berlin, a world was connected by our own science and imagination. And this year, in this election, she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her vote, because after 106 years in America, through the best of times and the darkest of hours, she knows how America can change. Yes we can.

America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. But there is so much more to do. So tonight, let us ask ourselves – if our children should live to see the next century; if my daughters should be so lucky to live as long as Ann Nixon Cooper, what change will they see? What progress will we have made?

This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment. This is our time – to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth – that out of

many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes We Can. Thank you, God bless you, and may God Bless the United States of America.