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*MULTIMODAL CODE-SWITCHING / MULTIMODÁLIS KÓDVÁLTÁS*

A folyóirat megjelenését támogatja a Nemzeti Kulturális Alap.



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## MARIANNA DEGANUTTI – JOHANNA DOMOKOS

## Foreword

### Interrelated Modes of Multimediality, Expressiveness and Code-switching in Arts

Linguistic diversity can be found everywhere – including literature and other forms of artistic expression. Enclosing one or more linguistic codes has indeed been a common practice for poets and writers, painters and sculptors, film makers and actors, but also for music composers, singers and architects belonging to different traditions and eras. Let us think about authors who adopted multiple different tongues in their writing, e.g. Beckett, Nabokov, Joyce, etc. Or movies, such as *Call me by your name*, a film based on André Aciman's book of the same title and directed by Luca Guadagnino, in which characters interact in three languages: English, Italian, and French. There are also singers, especially opera singers, who sing in languages other than their native one/s, or simply employ multiple languages among those available in their repertoires, such as Zuccherò Fornaciari, who employs Italian, English, Spanish, etc. These are just a few examples among the myriads of multilingual artistic cases we constantly encounter in everyday life when we watch a movie, listen to the radio, or attend an exhibition.

Sometimes we recognize and pay attention to linguistic diversity in an immediate and natural way. It is often the case with explicit multilingual forms which capture our attention, sometimes even challenging our understanding/comprehension. Literary works, such as experimental poetry or the linguistically flamboyant *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce, do not fail to surprise the reader, linguistically speaking. At other times, by contrast we barely or do not even notice that multiple different codes are present in a work of art. The reason can certainly be that languages are present but not directly exposed, which often happens with the so-called latent practices.<sup>1</sup> Examples of the latter can be found in literary works, for instance, in which the author or the narrator linguistically mediates the story to facilitate the reader's comprehension.

It may also happen that we are simply not used to thinking about multilingualism outside the box. We are not trained to perceive letters of an alphabet in a building,

<sup>1</sup> See Till DEMBECK: "There is No Such Thing as a Monolingual Text! New Tools for Literary Scholarship" *Polyphonie: Mehrsprachigkeit, Kreativität, Schreiben*, 2017/1, [hdl.handle.net/10993/31641](https://hdl.handle.net/10993/31641); Giulia RADAELLI: *Literarische Mehrsprachigkeit: Sprachwechsel bei Elias Canetti und Ingeborg Bachmann*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2011; Gary D. KELLER: "The Literary Stratagems Available to the Bilingual Chicano Writer". In Francisco JIMÉNEZ (ed.): *The Identification and Analysis of Chicano Literature*, New York, Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1979, 263–316.

we do not identify different codes in dance, we have never compared multilingual creativity to cooking processes and recipes, we do not necessarily search for languages in a painting, etc. This publication starts from the idea that multilingualism manifests itself in various forms of contemporary artistic and non-artistic practices and that it should be investigated in all its modalities and interactions. The real starting point today is that we cannot think in terms of monomodality anymore. Once, as Kress and van Leeuwen suggest, there was, in Western culture, a distinct preference for monomodality. The most highly valued genres of writing (literary novels, academic treatises, official documents and reports, etc.) came entirely without illustration, and had graphically uniform, dense pages of print. Paintings nearly all used the same support (canvas) and the same medium (oils), whatever their style or subject. In concert performances all musicians dressed identically, only the conductor and the soloists were allowed a modicum of bodily expression. The specialised theoretical and critical disciplines which developed to speak of these arts became equally monomodal: one language to speak about language (linguistics), another to speak about art (art history), yet another to speak about music (musicology), and so on, each with its own methods, its own assumptions, its own technical vocabulary, its own strengths and its own blind spots.<sup>2</sup>

However, above all since the twentieth century, things have changed considerably and today it would be short-sighted and narrow-minded to privilege monomodality over multimodality. The reason is simple: there has been a key perspective change demonstrating that multiple systems and sources must be included in an analysis aspiring to grasp artistic production to its fullest, given that multimodality has become the norm rather than the exception.<sup>3</sup> More practically, this means that we should take into consideration all the resources related to a specific work disregarding whether they belong to a specific mode rather than another. Just to give a literary example, as argued by Kress and van Leeuwen, “there are many other resources that can be used to create texts in addition to the spoken and written word.”<sup>4</sup> Apart from the linguistic ones, there are various other “semiotic systems” that make up texts and “comprise at least language, gesture, music, and movement.”<sup>5</sup> Wording, in other terms, cannot exist without all the other related factors, such as “typography, layout, color” but also “sound, gesture and facial expression”<sup>6</sup> which contribute to the meaning-making processes and to the final realization of a work. For this reason, semiotic repertoires – meant as the totality of resources used by people to communicate spanning speech, image,

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<sup>2</sup> Gunther KRESS – Theo VAN LEEUWEN: *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, 1–2.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony BALDRY – Paul J. THIBAUT: *Multimodal Transcription and Text Analysis: A Multimedia Toolkit and Coursebook*, London, Equinox, 2006, 4.

<sup>4</sup> KRESS – VAN LEEUWEN: *op. cit.* 4.

<sup>5</sup> KRESS – VAN LEEUWEN: *ibid.* 1.

<sup>6</sup> Nina NØRGAARD: *Multimodal Stylistics of the Novel: More than Words*, London, Routledge, 2018, 17.

text, gaze, movement, etc.<sup>7</sup> – have become the real focus, allowing wider and more inclusive and dynamic investigations.

What does all this mean when it comes to multilingualism? If multimodal meaning can be found at the interaction between the different modes, linguistic diversity should also be investigated from a perspective of interaction and integration between different systems. As this special issue *Multimodal Code-switching in Arts*<sup>8</sup> will demonstrate, these systems cannot be considered as separate entities anymore but rather in their dynamic intercommunication. Whether we consider their multimodal interactions as an extension of monomodal meanings<sup>9</sup> or as more integrated systems,<sup>10</sup> this opens a series of relevant questions related to linguistic diversity that have to be addressed when we approach literary and artistic production. These sorts of questions, as we will explain after having quickly hinted at what has been already done in the multimodal field until today, directly concern the articles included in this special issue.

To summarize current investigations briefly, we can say that there are some studies on multimodal aspects which are usually related to a specific artistic subfield e.g. literary, film, music or artistic studies. One of the pioneering studies related to figurative arts has been the work of Gardner-Chloros<sup>11</sup> on code-switching. By applying the concept of code-switching to figurative arts, Gardner-Chloros demonstrated that language and art – and more specifically the relationship between pictures, sounds and concepts – are much closer than one might expect at first. Not only because the interpretation of pictures might have something to do with linguistic factors,<sup>12</sup> but also because the simultaneous use of art and text is far from being an exception. Let us just think about calligraphy, hieroglyphics, or

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<sup>7</sup> Annelies KUSTERS – Massimiliano SPOTTI – Ruth SWANWICK – Elina TAPIO: “Beyond languages, beyond modalities: transforming the study of semiotic repertoires”. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 2017/14, 219–232. DOI: 10.1080/14790718.2017.1321651. See also Annelies KUSTERS: “Introduction: the semiotic repertoire: assemblages and evaluation of resources”. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 2021/18, 183–189. DOI: 10.1080/14790718.2021.1898616.

<sup>8</sup> The term *multimodal code-switching* was first introduced during Johanna Domokos’ ICLA presentation on Tibor Szemző’s film works and discussed in more detail in Johanna DOMOKOS and Marianna DEGANUTTI’s *Literary Code-switching and Beyond. Motivation, Composition, Narrativity, Function, and Multimodal Aspects of Aesthetic Multi- and Translingualism* (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Victor LIM Fei: “Developing an integrative multi-semiotic model”. In Kay O’HALLORAN (ed.): *Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Systemic-functional Perspectives*, London, Continuum 2004, 220–246; Charles J. FORCEVILLE – Eduardo URIOS-APARISI (eds.): *Multimodal Metaphor*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, Francis STEEN – Mark TURNER: “Multimodal Construction Grammar”. In Mike BORKENT – Barbara DANCYGIER – Jennifer HINNELL (eds.), *Language and the Creative Mind*, Stanford, CA, CSLI Publications, 2012, 255–274.

<sup>11</sup> Penelope GARDNER-CHLOROS: “Code-switching in art: from semiotics to sociolinguistics”. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 2010/4.3, 635–664.

<sup>12</sup> Michael BAXANDALL: *Patterns of Intention. On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 1985.

contemporary artistic expressions. Code-switching, continues Gardner-Chloros, is a concept which can be applied to style-switches and genre-switches in the arts as well – going beyond the mere linguistic framework.

Not only figurative arts can incorporate linguistic diversity. In fact, all artistic media in all their varieties can, taking advantage of the interaction with other modes and semiotic resources. Multilingualism in films, more precisely, in audiovisual studies, has been the object of multiple investigations over the last decades.<sup>13</sup> Spurred by the interest in the processes involved in translation, the dubbing and subtitling of movies – and therefore by the interaction of sound, images, texts, etc. – this field presents numerous relevant contributions which aimed to understand the relationship between this media and languages. This is attested by the fact that scholars provided specific definitions of how a multilingual audiovisual text can be defined, and tackled some key multilingual issues straddling different modes and semiotic resources and repertoires.<sup>14</sup> The translation process itself, which involves a considerable number of narratological, political, and aesthetic issues alongside the linguistic ones, represents another key perspective that can be used to elaborate linguistic diversity multimodally.

These are just a few examples of multimodal research conducted in artistic fields, which have unveiled relevant multilingual aspects. Music, theatre, dance and choreography, not to mention literature and many other artistic expressions, have also been approached through similar lenses. For instance, rap has been defined a “musical-literary form”<sup>15</sup> at the intersection of literature and music and dance as a language in itself. Based on Margolis, de Saussure and Halliday’s theoretical premises, Bannerman considers dance being structured as a language, whose

vocabulary and syntax are present in the way that the word vocabulary is often employed to describe the selection of specific movements, and syntax,

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<sup>13</sup> Lukas BLEICHENBACHER: *Multilingualism in the Movies Hollywood Characters and Their Language Choices*, Tübingen, Francke Verlag, 2008; Gemma KING: *Decentring France Multilingualism and Power in Contemporary French Cinema*, Cambridge, Manchester University Press, 2017; Verena BERGER – Miya KOMORI (eds.): *Polyglot Cinema Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, Vienna, LIT, 2010; Ralf JUNKERJÜRGEN – Gala REBANE, *Multilingualism in Film*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> KUSTERS, A.: “Introduction: the Semiotic Repertoire: Assemblages and Evaluation of Resources”. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 2021/18. 183–189. DOI: 10.1080/14790718.2021.1898616, 183–189.

<sup>15</sup> Imani PERRY: *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2004. Christoph SCHAUB: “The Transnational and Multilingual Feature Song in German Rap Music”. *German Studies Review*, 2021/ 44: 1. 107–125. See also Andrea CIRIBUCO: “Dance, multilingual repertoires and the Italian landscape: asylum seekers’ narratives in an arts-based project”, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 2022/22. 111–124. Michael KLIEN – Steve VALK – Jeffrey GORMLY: *Book of Recommendations. Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, Limerick, Daghdha Dance Company, 2008; Erika FISCHER-LICHTE: *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. by Saskya Iris JAIN, London, Routledge, 2008.



to represent the combination or arrangement of these movements (vocabulary) into chains or phrases of dance material as meta-kinetic rather than as meta-linguistic.<sup>16</sup>

This parallel has been extended also to other (non-artistic) practices, such as karate, which has also been considered a language.<sup>17</sup>

All these and many other related issues are elaborated in this special issue, which aspires to investigate multilingualism in different artistic productions, such as figurative arts, dance, music, or cinema. The main questions the articles in this special issue raise include for example, where can multilingualism be found in artistic production? What happens to languages (or even better, languaging and translanguaging) when multiple modes coexist? How do different modes interact and integrate each other, linguistically speaking? But also, what can be referred to as language?

The six articles of this special issue and Sabira Ståhlberg's artistic reflection will examine different case studies and contexts including multilingual writers (Anne Tardos) and poets (Sabira Ståhlberg), artists from the sixteenth century (Niccolò Nelli, Agostino Carracci, Giuseppe Maria Mitelli and Giuseppe Piattoli), films (Godard's *Le Mépris*), rap artists with an East Slavonic background, modern dance pieces and their choreography. These case studies belong to diverse cultural traditions and contexts; different modes and languages are involved in the works examined. The way artists, musicians, and writers use multilingualism, together with their language choices, aims and motivations, vary considerably, making this special issue a relevant forum in which multimodality and multilingualism are tested. Indeed, what emerges from these articles is that multimodality stimulates different multilingual approaches, ranging across intermedial code-switching, translanguaging, polyglossic and heteroglossic methods, which inevitably also imply power relations and hierarchies between languages as well as the involvement of extra-linguistic factors. Apart from that, multimodality spurs the examination of semiotic repertoires, which may imply bodily perceptions and sensations both from the inside and outside, as is the case for dance. Many other associations and links can be made in a multidimensional approach, in which the intermingling of diverse linguistic and artistic codes contributes to shaping the aesthetic experience. What matters the most, in any case, is the fact that multimodality should be conceived as a sort of integrating principle according to which the various operative modes has always to be considered in their interactions. Therefore, by looking at all factors influencing a work of art, such as the authorial motivation, the composition, the influencing narrative and fictional framework, its communicative functions,

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<sup>16</sup> Henrietta BANNERMAN: "Is dance a language? Movement, meaning and communication". *Dance Research*, 2014/32:1. 67.

<sup>17</sup> Hua ZHU – Wei LI – Daria JANKOWICZ-PYTEL: "Whose karate? Language and cultural learning in a multilingual karate club in London". *Applied Linguistics*, 2019/41: 1. 1–33. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amz014

and its multimodal manifestation, the multilingual is highlighted as a powerful aesthetic device appearing in various forms throughout time. Once a multilingual perspective is applied to artistic forms, the possibilities are not only multiplied but multilingualism becomes multi-modal as well. In other words, it will not only manifest along linguistic parameters, but will be reshaped by audio, visual, spatial, temporal and/or kinetic dimensions of the hypermedium they are placed in. Filmic, theatric and visual media open the door for many other combinations inside an artwork. Bearing that in mind, we hope that this contribution will open up new stimulating research on multilingualism seen through a multimodal eye.

The core of this publication includes the edited versions of presentations from the *Code-switching in Arts* (fall 2022), and *Multimodal code-switching* (spring 2023) conferences organized by Gáspár Károli University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and Bielefeld University. The conferences were part of the two-year research project *Code-switching in Arts* (2022- 2024) at Gáspár Károli University, which resulted in three book-length publications at L'Harmattan – Károli Books (*Code-switching in Arts* 2023, *Literary Code-switching and Beyond* 2023, and *Többnyelvűség a kortárs művészetben* 2024).

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TÍMEA KOVÁCS

## The Meaning of Code-Switching in Anne Tardos's Multilingual Poem *Ami Minden*

### *On Code-switching*

Ever since Gumperz defined conversational code-switching as “the juxtaposition within the same utterance of passages belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems,”<sup>1</sup> there have been numerous attempts to understand the whys and hows of code-switching. There is now a consensus that the use and meaning of code-switching is not arbitrary but can be interpreted as an interdependence “between the subjective, objective and social worlds.”<sup>2</sup> Following this tripartite distinction of perspectives on the meaning of code-switching, theorists differ in the importance they assign to the subjective, objective, and social factors as the most salient in the interpretation of code-switching.<sup>3</sup>

Different ways of interpreting the meaning of code-switching can also be detected in terms of how universal or idiosyncratic it is claimed to be. As a continuation of the early interactional sociolinguistic traditions of Blom & Gumperz,<sup>4</sup> some theorists claim that there is a universal (but ethnographically community-specific) normative framework which creates the context in which the meaning and function of code-switching can be interpreted.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to theorists interpreting the meaning-

<sup>1</sup> John J. GUMPERZ: *Discourse Strategies*, Cambridge – New York, Cambridge University Press, 1982, 59.

<sup>2</sup> Agnes BOLONYAI: “Who was the best: Power, knowledge and rationality in bilingual girls’ code choices”. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 2005/9.1, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Tímea KOVÁCS: *Code-Switching and Optimality: An optimality-theoretical approach to the socio-pragmatic patterns of Hungarian-English code-switching*, Budapest, L’Harmattan, 2018, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Jan-Petter BLOM – John J. GUMPERZ: “Social meaning in linguistic structure: Code-switching in Norway”. In John J. GUMPERZ – Dell HYMES (eds.): *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1972, 407–434.

<sup>5</sup> BLOM – GUMPERZ (1972); Joshua A. FISHMAN: *Hungarian Language Maintenance in the US*, Bloomington, Indiana University, 1966; Susan GAL: *Language Shift: Social Determinants of Linguistic Change in Bilingual Austria*, New York, Academic Press, 1979; Susan GAL: “The political economy of code choice”. In Monica HELLER (ed.): *Code-switching. Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, Berlin, New York, Amsterdam, Mouton de Gruyter, 1988, 245–264; Monica HELLER: “Code-switching and the politics of language”. In Lesley MILROY – Pieter MUYSKEN (eds.): *One Speaker, Two Languages: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Code-switching*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995, 158–174; Monica HELLER: “Strategic ambiguity: Code-switching in the management of conflict”. In Monica HELLER (ed.): *Code-switching*, 77–96; Carol MYERS-SCOTTON: *Duelling Languages: Grammatical Structures in Code-switching*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993; Carol MYERS-SCOTTON: “A theoretical introduction to the Markedness Model”. In Carol MYERS-SCOTTON (ed.): *Codes and Consequences: Choosing Linguistic Varieties*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, 18–38; Kathryn A. WOOLARD: “Code-switching and comedy in Catalonia”. In Monica HELLER (ed.): *Code-switching*, 53–76; Kathryn A. WOOLARD:

making function of code-switching in a universal framework, others claim that the instances of code-switching are more of idiosyncratic value as the community in which they occur is heterogeneous. Therefore, instead of assuming a normative, static framework, these theorists prefer a more dynamic, conversation-based, descriptive approach, which does not interpret the meaning and function of code-switching in a universal framework but rather demonstrates how that framework is created locally in a conversation.<sup>6</sup>

According to Myers-Scotton, code-switching is a linguistic device serving the idiosyncratic motivations of the speaker in the process of negotiating and indexing meaning against or in line with the expected rules and obligations, the normative social constraints, of a speech community.<sup>7</sup> Linguistic choices are seen as determined by universal cognitive processes as the markedness metric, which actually assesses the linguistic choice as marked or unmarked. However, the actual community-specific set of rights and obligations in which these linguistic choices gain their actual meaning of markedness or unmarkedness are determined by constructed sociocultural norms. Therefore, linguistic choices are constrained by a universal innate cognitive faculty, the markedness metric, as well as by community-specific constructed sociocultural norms.<sup>8</sup>

Auer claims that the analysis of code-switching should focus on its actual conversational instance-specific characteristics rather than on extra-interactional factors determined by the wider social context.<sup>9</sup> The main purpose of Conversation Analysis (CA) is to give a local interpretation of language alternation as a conversational activity relying on interactional evidence rather than on extra-linguistic assumptions. Code-switching should be taken seriously as a conversational activity, a “contextualization cue.”<sup>10</sup>

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*Double talk, Bilingualism and the Politics of Ethnicity in Catalonia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Peter AUER: *Bilingual Conversation*, Amsterdam – Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984; Peter AUER: “A postscript: Code-switching and social identity”. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2005/37, 403–410; Joseph GAFARANGA: “Demythologizing language alternation studies: Conversational structure vs. social structure in bilingual interaction”. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2005/37, 281–300; Penelope GARDNER-CHLOROS: *Language Selection and Switching in Strasbourg*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991; Christopher STROUD: “Perspectives on cultural variability of discourse and some implications for code-switching”. In Peter AUER (ed.) *Code-switching in Conversation: Language Interaction and Identity*, London – New York, Routledge, 1998, 321–348; Christopher STROUD: “The problem of intention and meaning in code-switching”. *Text*, 1992/12, 127–155; Ana Celia ZENTELLA: *Growing Up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York*, Malden, MA, Blackwell, 1997; Li WEI: “The ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions in the analysis of conversational code-switching”. In Peter AUER (ed.): *Code-switching in Conversation*, 156–176; Li WEI: “‘How can you tell?’ Towards a common sense explanation of conversational code-switching”. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2005/37, 375–389.

<sup>7</sup> MYERS-SCOTTON (1988): 151–186.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 18–38.

<sup>9</sup> AUER (1988): 187–213.

<sup>10</sup> AUER (1988): 6.

As opposed to theorists supposing the *a priori* existence of a social reality against or in the context of which certain code-switched instances gain meaning, Gafaranga sees language as a means of constructing its social reality, as a membership categorization device.<sup>11</sup> Hence, code-switching, as any linguistic choice, has to be examined as a way of (re)constructing social reality. Individuals (re)construct their realities by categorizing, identifying themselves in certain ways, and by affiliating to the rest of their reality through their linguistic choices. Hence, code-switching has to be examined as a linguistic device of a membership categorization through its construction of (social) identities, roles, and stances.<sup>12</sup>

Various researchers have analysed code-switching as a means of identity construction.<sup>13</sup> Williams focused her research more on code-switching as a means of assigning roles.<sup>14</sup> Jaffe claimed that by examining code-switching as a way of constructing stances, more insight can be gained into how speakers construct their realities with the help of code-switching.<sup>15</sup>

In the quest for a unifying, comprehensive, and universal framework of the whys and hows of code-switching, a new perspective has been proposed by Bhatt & Bolonyai, focusing on the interpretation of the meaning and functions of code-switching from a socio-cognitive perspective.<sup>16</sup> They set up a socio-cognitive, normative community framework interpreting the meaning of code-switching in consideration of the cognitive, objective and social factors interplaying in the mechanism of code-switching. Their model provides a unified theoretical framework of how the socio-pragmatically meaningful instances of code-switching can be assumed to index certain social constructs and to (re)negotiate the (con)textual framework within an ethnographically specific bilingual immigrant community's linguistic repertoire.

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<sup>11</sup> GAFARANGA (2005): 281–300.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Charles ANTAKI – Sue WIDDICOMBE: “Identity as an achievement”. In Charles ANTAKI – Sue WIDDICOMBE (eds.): *Identities in Talk*, London, Sage Publications, 1998, 1–14; AUER (2005); Katherine Hoi Ying CHEN: “The social distinctiveness of two code-mixing styles in Hong Kong”. In James COHEN – Kara T. MCALISTER – Kellie ROLSTAD – Jeff MACSWAN (eds.): *ISB4: Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism*, Somerville, MA, Cascadia Press, 2005, 527–542; Ben RAMPTON: *Crossing, Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents*, London, Longman, 1995; Maria-Carme TORRAS – Joseph GAFARANGA: “Social identities and language alternation in non-formal institutional bilingual talk: Trilingual encounters in Barcelona”. *Language in Society*, 2002/31.4, 527–548.

<sup>14</sup> Ashley M. WILLIAMS: “Fighting words and challenging expectations: Language alternation and social roles in a family dispute”. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2005/37.3, 317–328.

<sup>15</sup> Alexandra JAFFE: “Codeswitching and Stance: Issues in Interpretation”. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 2007/6.1, 53–77.

<sup>16</sup> Rakesh Mohan BHATT – Agnes BOLONYAI: “Code-switching and the optimal grammar of bilingual use”. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 2011/14.4, 522–546.

*Code-switching in Literature*

Recently, there has been an upsurge in interest in written code-switching, particularly in literature. Gardner-Chloros & Weston claim that there is at least a partial – and not inconsiderable – overlap between the functions of code-switching in spoken and written modalities.<sup>17</sup> A methodological quandary exists, “as many of the models discussed above for CS are based on oral data, it is unclear to what extent they can be applied to the written word.”<sup>18</sup> Sebba has misgivings about the applicability of oral models of code-switching to monologic written language, especially when it comprises multimodal features. He even questions whether the term “code-switching” is applicable to this medium at all, or if it describes “substantially different phenomena.”<sup>19</sup>

The use of several languages or varieties within the same text, or code-switching, has a multitude of possible functions within multilingual literature. “It includes different languages being used for different characters or voices; to mark out different parts of the text; to represent a mixed speech mode which characterizes the community; or to bring in different registers or sets of allusions. In the case of intense switching within the grammatical unit (sentence or word), it may be used for deliberate comic effect.”<sup>20</sup>

Other examples of code-switching as used in literature, often in a humorous or satirical way, include the representation of the speech of speakers of other languages, as in Shakespeare, *Henry V*; Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*; Tolstoy, *War & Peace*; or Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*. Such instances lend more authenticity than the representation of “foreign” speech through monolingual means, as attempted by Hemingway in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or Roth in *Call it Sleep*. Code-switching itself may also represent hesitant speech in characters who are not using their native tongue as in Twain’s *The Innocents Abroad*. Idiosyncratic multilingual speech can be used to draw attention to the particularities of certain characters.<sup>21</sup>

*The Framework of Domokos and Deganutti*

Literary code-switching was first theorized and classified by Johanna Domokos in 2018–2020. The six-scale (0-to-5) classification functions as a framework in which all literary heterogeneous code-switching strategies can be included. Later,

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<sup>17</sup> Penelope GARDNER-CHLOROS – Daniel WESTON: “Code-switching and multilingualism in literature”. *Language and Literature*, 2015/24.3. 182.

<sup>18</sup> GARDNER-CHLOROS – WESTON (2015): 183.

<sup>19</sup> Mark SEBBA: “Multilingualism in written discourse: An approach to the analysis of multilingual texts”. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 2012/17.1. 98.

<sup>20</sup> GARDNER-CHLOROS – WESTON (2015): 186.

<sup>21</sup> GARDNER-CHLOROS – WESTON (2015): 186.

in 2022, she, together with Marianna Deganutti, further elaborated the six-scale classification to a 0-to-6 degree (seven-scale) one. According to this model, literary code-switching instances can be classified as covert and overt (zero code-switching), starting from so-called “hidden or latent multilingual practices to the most openly expressed or manifest multilingual forms.”<sup>22</sup> According to this formulation, code-switching corresponds to several different practices, which are scaled into degrees from 0 to 5 and subdivided into further categories.<sup>23</sup> The 0-to-6-degree classification of code-switching classification further elaborated by Domokos & Deganutti in 2022<sup>24</sup> utilises Myers-Scotton’s intra- and inter-sentential code-switching terms, as well as her concepts of matrix and embedded languages.<sup>25</sup> By employing this framework (Table 1), the current terminological confusion dominating the literary multilingual field is meant to be replaced by a well-structured and clear theoretical structure based on code-switching practices.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 1:** Grammatic and graphemic code-switching types of the four levels of a literary work (level of the text, narration, and fictional world, plus the paratexts)

0 type or covert, and overt c-s (ZCS)	1st type or Intra-sentential c-s (CS1)	2nd type or Inter-sentential c-s (CS2)	3rd type or blurring the border of matrix and embedded languages (CS3)	4th type or lexico-morphologic translangualism (CS4)	5 <sup>th</sup> type or homophonic translangualism (CS5)	6 <sup>th</sup> type or syntactic translangualism (CS6)
It allows the writer to utilize language as a medium without any special reflection on multilingualism, so that the reader can better focus on the storyline.	It is characterized by the sporadic use of foreign words and tags in the sentences of the matrix language.	It corresponds to a text that includes whole sentences in another language.	It is a radically intensive form of code-switching, where the matrix language is almost deconstructed.	It uses a high number of diverse lexical and morphological units in a sentence.	It is neither intra- or inter-sentential, nor is it easy to identify the matrix and embedded languages.	Matrix and embedded languages intermingle due to pidginization, relexification and other forms of interlanguageing.

<sup>22</sup> JOHANNA DOMOKOS – MARIANNA DEGANUTTI: “Four major literary code-switching strategies in Hungarian literature: Decoding monolingualism”. *Hungarian Studies Yearbook* 2021/3.1. 43.

<sup>23</sup> DOMOKOS – DEGANUTTI (2021): 45.

<sup>24</sup> JOHANNA DOMOKOS – MARIANNA DEGANUTTI: *Literary Code-Switching and Beyond: Motivation, composition, narrativity, function, and multimodal aspects of aesthetic multi- and translangualism*, Budapest, L’Harmattan / Károli Book Series, 2023, 21.

<sup>25</sup> MYERS-SCOTTON (1993): 18–38.

<sup>26</sup> DOMOKOS – DEGANUTTI (2021): 59.



The quadrilingual poetic laboratory of Anne Tardos can be classified as an example of third-degree code-switching in the above framework. This type of code-switching blurs the boundaries between the matrix and the embedded languages and dismantles linguistic homogeneity even more remarkably, sometimes calling into question the matrix language of a text. Through the use of this kind of literary code-switching strategy, the author can activate multiple denotations, which would be unthinkable in a monolingual work.<sup>27</sup> In the next part, the third type of code-switch (CS<sub>3</sub>) used by Anne Tardos in a multilingual poem is analysed within the above framework.

### *Anne Tardos on her Multilingual Writing*

Anne Tardos was born in France in a family of Hungarian and Austrian descent. All her life she was exposed to different languages; she learned Hungarian, German, Russian, and French. Later she seems to have forgotten Russian, but at the age of 21 she learned English. As she recalls, none of these languages was her native or mother tongue, but “these four languages finally made up one whole: my singular, personal language.”<sup>28</sup> Hence, she used the collection of these four languages to create her own personal language that allowed her to “cross boundaries and break down the barriers of the established tongue.”<sup>29</sup>

In her writing, she also relied widely on her multilingual experience and use. She compared writing to “putting together objects out of curiosity in a given form.”<sup>30</sup> By placing, seemingly arbitrarily, linguistic elements of different languages, she engaged the reader or audience in the process of interactive creation, as they had to make some sense of this juxtaposition of multilingual elements. This kind of dialogue created between the text and the reader stimulates the reader to “enter into their artistic consciousness.”<sup>31</sup> Code-switching, or rather the juxtaposition of multilingual elements in her writing characterises Tardos’ unique writing style. She uses languages to break down the boundaries set up by given languages, thereby creating her own language, her own voice. In doing so, she invites the reader to enter into an interactive dialogue to discover their own “artistic consciousness” or language in which they can make sense of the complexity of these multilingual texts.

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<sup>27</sup> DOMOKOS – DEGANUTTI (2021): 57.

<sup>28</sup> ANNE TARDOS: *Multilingualistic Existence*, 2011. [ny-web.be/artikels/multilingualistic-existence](http://ny-web.be/artikels/multilingualistic-existence).

<sup>29</sup> TARDOS (2011).

<sup>30</sup> ANNE TARDOS: “Poetic Form: It’s What’s for Dinner”. In ANNIE FINCH – SUSAN M. SCHULTZ (eds.): *Multiformalisms: Postmodern Poetics of Form*, Cincinnati, OH, Textos Books, 2008a, 526.

<sup>31</sup> ANNE TARDOS: “Why I Have Been Avoiding Doing Collaborative Performances Recently, and How My Years of Experience Doing Them Has Informed My Current Work”. For Panel Discussion at Naropa University, Boulder, CO, Summer, 2008b, 8.

*Analysis of Ami Minden*

One of Tardos' multilingually written texts, *Ami Minden*, was written in the late 1980s. In this poem she incorporated Hungarian, German, French and English linguistic elements. *Ami Minden* was first published in a book, *Cat Licked the Garlic* (1992).

Ami minden quand un yes or no je le said  
 viens am liebsten hätte ich dich du süßes de  
 ez nem baj das weisst du me a favor hogy  
 innen se faire croire tous less birds from the  
 forest who fly here by mistake als die Wälder  
 langsam verschwinden. Minden verschwinden,  
 mind your step and woof. Verschwinden de  
 nem innen – je vois the void in front of  
 mich, je sens als ich erzem qu'on aille, aille  
 de vágy a fejem, csak éppen (eben sagte ich  
 wie die Wälder verschwinden) I can repeat it  
 as a credo so it sinks into our cerveaux und  
 wird embedded there mint egy teória  
 mathématique “d’enchassement”  
 die Verankerungstheorie in der Mathematik,  
 hogy legalább...

As can be seen, longer pieces of text are placed side by side in such a way that the codes used are not mixed. This means that the elements are embedded in a linguistic frame without violating the structural constraints of a given language. However, this frame cannot be considered as a matrix language because there is no hierarchy between the pieces of linguistic elements: they are embedded in this frame, which is only a formal and not a linguistic structural frame, in a parallel way. Therefore, it is not the structure of the language that creates the frame or sets the limits of this mode of expression, but rather the poetic form. There is no dominant language, but the multilingual pieces are placed parallel to one another, creating a sense of transition through different codes or languages.

The title of the poem, *Ami Minden*, is also open to different interpretabilities. *Ami* in French means a (male) friend, but in Hungarian it is a relative pronoun. The word *Minden* in Hungarian means “everything,” but it can also refer to a small town in North Westphalia. The title already creates this multilingual setting in which individual elements can be interpreted differently in different linguistic domains. The reader is apparently left without cues, without reference points, without a matrix language in which elements gain meaning. They are influenced by the effect of the juxtaposition of multilingual elements and are involved in the process of

assigning meaning to the text. They are not entirely alone in their search for the meaning of the text, however, for Tardos has given instructions to the performers of the poem. Some parts of the poem had to be read in a normal tone, others in a more intense tone. She also left some parts to be interpreted as silence. Thus, the way the poem sounds, its spoken realisation, creates an effect on the reader (or listener) that goes beyond verbal interpretation by means of linguistic devices and opens up new ways of making sense without relying on a given linguistic structure. It could be interpreted as a return to a pre-linguistic way of experiencing reality in a multilingual setting. It is a transient mode in which transience is aided by switching between different verbal codes, semiotic cues to which cultural and personal experiences are linked with the need to understand a universal meaning. It comes from the very idiosyncratic source of an inner dialogue that seeks to be universally shared. In Tardos' own words, "by switching from one language to another I arrive at some deeper truth than if I were to remain within the confines of a single language."<sup>32</sup>

Caroline Bergvall described Tardos' multilingual poems as "shrapnels of tales from what is both a European and personal folklore."<sup>33</sup> She adds that they can be seen as "notations or inscriptions of a post-babelian narrative."<sup>34</sup> Anne Tardos was clearly fascinated by the cultural influences that accompany different languages. She claimed that language can change the way its speakers behave, or even the way they look. She noticed that the pitch of her voice changed when she spoke in different languages, and even her personality changed. It seemed to her that she might be a more generous person in English and a more relaxed or calm person in German. She found herself more irritable in French or more morose in Hungarian.<sup>35</sup>

By using different languages in her poems, Tardos allows the reader or listener to make subconscious associations with the languages without actually understanding them. In this way, she also uses languages to break down the barriers they create. She introduces ways of attaching meaning to texts by entering the unconscious layers of interpretability, where readers have to rely on their own feelings, emotions, associations rather than the cognitive structures of languages or codes. Meaning is therefore not created by cognitively interpretable verbal cues (codes or languages), but by how the individual unconsciously interprets such cues. Meaning is created not by relying on shared verbal codes, but by opening up new levels of idiosyncratic interpretability through multilingualism. Multilingualism is seen as a means of understanding reality in its complexity on the basis of idiosyncratically activated but universally shared cues, beyond the limits set by given linguistic structures.

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<sup>32</sup> Anne TARDOS: "Why I Write the Way I Write". Talk presented at the conference on Poetry & Pedagogy: Bard College, June 24–27, 1999; revised 2001–2002, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Anne TARDOS: Multilingual Writing, for Example, An Interview the Fall Festival on the Theme: "Alter-Englishes" of the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, Department of English, September 24–25, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> TARDOS (1999).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

### Conclusion

In this paper, the code-switching strategies and instances used in a multilingual poem, *Ami Minden* by Anne Tardos, have been analysed in the framework of literary code-switching strategies set up by Domokos and Deganutti.<sup>36</sup> Based on the 0-to-6-degree classification of code-switches, the poem by Anne Tardos can be classified as type 3 code-switching, as the matrix language is almost deconstructed. In deconstructing a matrix language, the reader of the poem is apparently left without a dominant linguistic structure, a framework within which linguistic elements make sense. Instead, they are engaged in the process of making meaning in a dimension where not only are linguistic boundaries crossed, but also the boundaries of conscious and subconscious interpretation of verbal cues are blurred. Therefore, for this boundary-crossing aspect that characterises the multilingual use of Anne Tardos, it can be considered as an example of translanguaging.<sup>37</sup> Through the almost complete deconstruction of a matrix language, a dominant linguistic structure, the four languages exist in parallel and form a unity. They create a linguistic repertoire in which different socially constructed verbal codes (languages) are used. However, by crossing these language barriers, meaning is created not in a specific linguistic repertoire, but in the quadrilingual repertoire that Anne Tardos has idiosyncratically constructed. Therefore, this literary (interlingual) translanguaging strategy<sup>38</sup> cannot be interpreted in the traditional sociolinguistic framework, as the codes (or languages) do not exist as separate socio-culturally created structures, but as a multilingual repertoire. By deconstructing socio-culturally created languages, the barriers that separate them are also deconstructed, and meaning is made individually in a multilingual repertoire that is universally shared.

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<sup>36</sup> DOMOKOS – DEGANUTTI (2021): 45.

<sup>37</sup> Ofelia GARCÍA – Li WEI: Introduction. In: *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*, London, Palgrave Pivot, 2014. DOI: 10.1057/9781137385765\_1.

<sup>38</sup> Johanna DOMOKOS: *Endangered Literature Essays on Translingualism, Interculturality, and Vulnerability*, Budapest, L’Harmattan / Károli Book Series, 2018, 147–148.

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### Abstract

*There has always been an interest in multilingualism in various fields of study. Linguists are particularly interested in why, how, and when multilingual speakers in specific communities draw on their multilingual repertoires, and what triggers certain salient tendencies in their language use. This paper examines a prominent feature of multilingual speech mode, code-switching, as a means of creating meaning in literary texts. In particular, the code-switching used by Anne Tardos in her literary work is analysed within the theoretical framework of literary code-switching established by Domokos & Deganutti (2021).*

**Keywords:** multilingual speakers, linguistic repertoire, code-switching, literary texts, theoretical framework

### *A kódváltás jelentése Anne Tardos Minden Ami című többnyelvű versében*

#### *Rezümé*

*A többnyelvűséget mindig is különböző tudományterületek érdeklődése övezte. A nyelvészeket elsősorban az érdekli, hogy a többnyelvű beszélők egy adott közösségben miért, hogyan és mikor használják többnyelvű repertoárjukat, és mi vált ki a nyelvhasználatukban bizonyos releváns tendenciákat. Ez a tanulmány a többnyelvű beszédmód egyik jellemzőjét, a kódváltást mint az irodalmi szövegek jelentésalkotásának eszközt vizsgálja – konkrétan az Anne Tardos irodalmi műveiben használt kódváltást elemezzük a Domokos & Deganutti (2021) által felállított irodalmi kódváltás elméleti keretén belül.*

**Kulcsszavak:** többnyelvű beszélők, többnyelvű repertoár, kódváltás, irodalmi szövegek, elméleti keret

DANIELA D' EUGENIO

## Images of Proverbs Intermedial Code-Switching in Italian Illustrations of Proverbs<sup>1</sup>

### *Illustrated Proverbs<sup>2</sup> as Intermedial Phenomena*

Much like linguistic code-switching implies a socio-communicative functionality achieved through the intermixing of two different languages (or variants of a language),<sup>3</sup> intermedial code-switching aims at attaining a specific socio-cultural objective in disseminating content through the combination of two or more media.<sup>4</sup> Similar to linguistic code-switching, intermedial code-switching accommodates gaps in knowledge, so that the involved codes may facilitate the process of meaning making and reflection. These media cannot rely on the same (linguistic) proximity that allows the emergence of code-switching between the standardized form of a language and its regional varieties. However, they do need to relate to each other (by similitude, opposition, synonymy, and so on) in order for them to communicate a comprehensible message. For instance, the intersection of the verbal and the visual allows for a meaningful and effective transmission of knowledge (and moral concepts in the context of this article) in ways that would be difficult or less appealing with just texts or images. The two media types can function together because they are complementary, and the general meaning of the resulting composition can be inferred only by means of a simultaneous interpretation of the textual and illustrative apparatus. In other words, separately

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Maria Sole Costanzo for introducing me to the concept of intermediality, to which I will refer later, and Dr. Deena R. Levy for her linguistic help. I also thank the anonymous reviewers of my essay for their precious comments. A special thanks to Prof. Wolfgang Mieder, who invited me to University of Burlington and introduced me to his International Proverb Library.

<sup>2</sup> In this contribution, the term “proverb” is used as a general term including different typologies of expressions. For an accurate definition and categorization of these expressions, see Daniela D'EUGENIO: *Paroimìa: Brusantino, Florio, Sarnelli, and Italian Proverbs from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 2021, 33–39.

<sup>3</sup> For further discussion on code-switching in the Italian language, see Gaetano BERRUTO: “Italiano regionale, commutazione di codice e enunciati mistilingui”. In Michele Cortelazzo – Alberto Mioni (eds.): *L'italiano regionale: Atti del XVIII Congresso internazionale di studi, Padova-Vicenza, 14–16 settembre 1984*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1990, 105–119, and Giovanna ALFONZETTI: *Enciclopedia Treccani dell'Italiano*, 2010, s.v. “commutazione di codice”, [treccani.it/enciclopedia/commutazione-di-codice\\_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/](http://treccani.it/enciclopedia/commutazione-di-codice_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/), accessed 13 July 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Irina RAJEWSKY: “Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality”. *Intermedialités: histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques/Intermediality: History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies*, 2005/6, 43–64. 50.



these media would not be able to convey the same message as when they are closely associated.

Illustrated proverbs are a well-fitting example of intermedial code-switching. As Yoko Mori writes, the early modern period, and specifically the sixteenth century, was “the age of the visual popularization of proverbs,”<sup>5</sup> since these expressions were used both for entertainment and admonition related to the oddities, abuses, and immorality of mankind. In their synthesis of words and images, visualized proverbs represented a multimedia product that, like visual storytelling, demanded an active role from the viewers. This means that viewers were asked to recognize the original proverbs and interpret the symbolic and allegorical concepts inserted into the illustration. Consequently, they would be able to appreciate the message of the expressions resulting from the combination of the textual and the visual and implement ethical improvements in their own behavior.

Mixed media represented a form of cultural and societal portrayal of the early modern period's „taste for images, erudition and allusiveness.”<sup>6</sup> Illustrated proverbs, as well as emblems and devices reflected a shift toward a greater sensibility for visual aspects, symbols, and celebration of wisdom.<sup>7</sup> For all of these genres, their intermixed nature guaranteed a longer lasting impression of their meaning and the dissemination of a more fruitful moral lesson.<sup>8</sup> It is worth noticing that in his 1618 *Nova Iconologia*, Cesare Ripa argues that a symbolic illustration should always be accompanied by a short, written description guaranteeing the intelligibility of its allegorical elements and its widespread reception (“[I] nomi delle cose sottoscritte all'istesse imagini” – “The names of the things are written below the images to which they refer”).<sup>9</sup> In order to achieve this objective, illustrated proverbs adhered to a structure that allowed for the maximum realization of their intermedial qualities by imitating the organization of space adopted for emblems: an *inscriptio* (the motto), a *pictura* (the image), and a *subscriptio* (the commentary). Such easily accessible and digestible structure was fundamental for the production of meaning also in sources that were not born originally as emblems but still combined the “syntagmatic and semiotic aspects of both words and images.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang MIEDER: *The Netherlandish Proverbs: An International Symposium on the Pieter Brueg(h)els*, Burlington, University of Vermont, 2004, 105.

<sup>6</sup> Mario PRAZ: *Studies in seventeenth-century imagery*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1964–1974, 87; see also György SZÖNYI: “The ‘Emblematic’ as a Way of Thinking and Seeing in Renaissance Culture”. *e-Colloquia. 16th Century English Culture, revista electronica*, 2003/1.1, 1–46.

<sup>7</sup> John MANNING: *The emblem*, London, Reaktion, 2002, 16–17.

<sup>8</sup> Robert CLEMENTS: *Picta Poesis: Literary and Humanistic Theory in Renaissance Emblem Books*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1960, 61–71, 85–120.

<sup>9</sup> Cesare RIPA: *Nova iconologia di Cesare Ripa perugino cavalier de SS. Maurizio et Lazzaro. [...] Ampliata ultimamente dallo stesso autore di trecento immagini e arricchita di molti discorsi pieni di varia eruditione, con nuovi intagli et con molti indici copiosi*, Padova, per Pietro Paolo Tozzi nella stampa del Pasquati, 1618, b2v.

<sup>10</sup> Tania TRIBE: “Word and Image in Emblematic Painting”. In Alison Adams – Anthony J. Harper (eds.): *The emblem in Renaissance and Baroque Europe: Tradition and variety. Selected papers of the Glasgow International Emblem Conference, 13–17 August, 1990*, Leiden, Brill, 1992, 254.

It is not surprising that emblem books had one of their antecedents precisely in manuscript collections of proverbs.<sup>11</sup> This was especially true for such collections of classical maxims and proverbial expressions that listed precepts deriving from ancient ethics and characterized by a figurative meaning able to trigger a visual representation. In turn, when artists decided to illustrate proverbs, the rich sixteenth-century tradition of emblems provided a prototype that they could easily imitate. In this context, Andrea Alciati's *Emblematum liber*<sup>12</sup> represented an influential work that would serve as a reference point for subsequent years. After its 1531 edition,<sup>13</sup> the three-part emblematic structure became mainstream for authors of emblem books and similar forms of emblematic expressions.<sup>14</sup> Local artists and collectors transposed and adapted this textual and illustrative content to their geographical, societal, and cultural contexts and exchanged ideas, prototypes, and techniques. The resemblance of textual sources and visual representations, despite the different methods used, testifies to the wealth of cross-references in material and visual culture throughout early modern Europe.<sup>15</sup>

These exchanges were particularly frequent between Italy and Northern Europe. Flemish and German printers and engravers, including Catholic ones who were persecuted in their own homeland for religious reasons, had a considerable impact on the European market throughout the first part of the 1500s.<sup>16</sup> In the second half, engravings and etchings from the North found their way south of the Alps by going through Antwerp, which at the time was one of the major publishing centers in Europe. Flemish artist Hieronymus Cock (1510–1570), one of the most renowned

<sup>11</sup> PRAZ: *Studies in seventeenth-century imagery*, 25; Alison SAUNDERS: "Is it a Proverb or is it an Emblem? French Manuscript Predecessors of the Emblem Book". *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 1993/55.1, 83–111. 84.

<sup>12</sup> *Emblematum liber* condensed classical proverbs, maxims, epigrams, and images that were already circulating all over Europe, mostly through Erasmus's *Adagia*, and could be easily transferred to Christian morals. ENENKEL: *The Invention of the Emblem*, 8–9 also mentions Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, fable literature, Isidorus's *Etymologiae*, Greek and Roman epos, and many other Greek and Latin sources.

<sup>13</sup> Andrea ALCIATI: *Viri clarissimi D. Andreae Alciati Iurisconsultissimi Mediolani ad D. Chonradum Peutingerum Augustanum Iurisconsultum Emblematum liber*, Augsburg, Heinrich Steyner, 1531.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that the 1531 edition of Alciati's *Emblematum liber* was the first one to present images along with the mottos that characterized the 1521 first edition; from then on, images were considered a valid component of emblems and became part of the "emblem poetics" (Karl A. E. ENENKEL: *The Invention of the Emblem Book and the Transmission of Knowledge ca. 1510–1610*, Leiden, Brill, 2019, XII). See also other possibilities for emblematic structures in MANNING: *The emblem*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea ALCIATI: *The Latin Emblems. Indexes and Lists, and Emblems in Translation*, Peter M. Daly – Virginia W. Callahan – Simon Cuttler (eds.), Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1985, vol. 2.

<sup>16</sup> The German progressive popularization of the printing process, which allowed producing fast and accessible prints, took root particularly in Venice (Andrew PETTEGREE: *The Book in the Renaissance*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010). There, the Bertelli brothers, along with Giovanni Francesco Camoccio, Giacomo Franco, and Niccolò Nelli, produced the majority of circulating engravings in Italy and beyond (for more information on these printmakers, see Anna OMODEO: *Mostra di stampe popolari venete del '500. Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, catalogo no. XX*, Firenze, Olschki, 1965, 53–57).

printers at the time, could count on contacts throughout all of Europe, particularly in the Italian peninsula.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617) traveled to Italy, stopping in Bologna and Rome, where he probably exchanged prints with the Carracci family.<sup>18</sup> The presence of all these Flemish professionals made it possible for works produced in Flanders to circulate among Italian professionals and artists; likewise, this is how Italian materials reached Northern Europe. Italian artists were introduced to the techniques and styles of Northern European painting and engraving, and Flemish engravers borrowed artistic patterns from Italy.<sup>19</sup> All of these borrowings created a “certain intellectual uniformity”<sup>20</sup> and a “shared sense of identity in a wider society,”<sup>21</sup> meaning that users of emblems, devices, and illustrated proverbs would feel a sense of belonging to the same textual-illustrative community and would become members of a collective memory system. It was, as György Szőnyi argues, a “way of thinking and seeing” that was shared in every aspect of art and culture.<sup>22</sup>

Within these practices of reciprocal influences, artists of illustrated proverbs drew from vast collections of textual and visual sources for moral instruction. The choice of which expressions to visualize was not a fortuitous process; instead, it was deliberate. Artists looked for expressions that were characterized by either narrative density or visual potentiality because they could be easily rendered into a “bildhafte Aussage” (“visual message”).<sup>23</sup> In the final hybridized product, the textual component reflected the nuances of the proverb’s interpretation, especially its metaphorical message, while also clarifying the ambiguous and enigmatic essence of symbols and allusions. At the same time, the illustrative apparatus

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<sup>17</sup> Cock’s connection to Italy resulted from a fruitful association with Mantuan engraver Giorgio Ghisi (1520–1582). Additionally, Cock’s former protégé, Cornelis Cort (1533–1578), resided in Italy for twelve years from 1565–1566 until his death and distinguished himself for his engravings based on Titian’s works; he worked with Ghisi, as well as in a lesser degree with Bolognese Marcantonio Raimondi (circa 1480–after 1530), and greatly influenced generations of Northern European and Italian printmakers, among whom is also Agostino Carracci (see Diane DEGRAZIA: *Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family: A Catalogue Raisonné Published in Conjunction with the Exhibition “Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family”, Held at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, March 18–May 20, 1979*, Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, 1979, 30–33). After bringing several drawings and prints back from Italy, Cock produced a considerable number of prints from Italian works that had huge circulation in Flanders (see Timothy RIGGS: *Hieronymus Cock: Printmaker and Publisher*, New York – London, Garland Publishing, 1977, 156–179).

<sup>18</sup> See DEGRAZIA: *Prints and Related Drawings*, 43–44.

<sup>19</sup> Gert Jan VAN DER SMAN: “Dutch and Flemish Printmakers in Rome 1565–1600”. *Print Quarterly*, 2005/22.3, 251–264.

<sup>20</sup> CLEMENTS: *Picta Poesis*, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Koen SCHOLTEN – Dirk VAN MIERT – Karl A.E. ENENKEL: *Memory and identity in the learned world. Community formation in the early modern world of learning and science*, Leiden, Brill, 2022, 1.

<sup>22</sup> SZŐNYI: “The ‘Emblematic’ as a Way of Thinking and Seeing”, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Dietmar PEIL: “Sprichwörter und ihre Illustrationen im *Thesaurus Philo-Politicus*”. *Proverbium*, 2021/38, 273–314. 274.

guaranteed a more immediate experience of the visualized proverbs, since viewers could recognize cultural and social aspects appealing instantly to their senses. Pictures would captivate their imagination and speak not only to their mind but also to their eyes. Such production was therefore aimed at making the content of these multimedia products accessible even to viewers without formal education.<sup>24</sup> The “pubblico mezzano” (“middle public”), as Francesco Bruni calls it,<sup>25</sup> was not too fond of classical and mythological references per se or in search of expensive engravings, such as those executed at a high level and with obscure allusions. It was, rather, attracted to refined artistic productions that showed moral and ethical aspects of human existence relevant to their everyday life. Despite different subject choices, though, such art had a lot in common with educated and formalized works, since they used the same images and patterns of representation. Additionally, members of the bourgeoisie and higher social strata were equally fascinated with these engravings. Both purchased them, even though at times satire was expressly directed against members of the upper class and their lavish (at least, from a non-aristocratic perspective) way of living.<sup>26</sup>

The following examples of illustrated proverbs are selected from the artistic production of four Italian artists between the second half of the sixteenth century and the second half of the seventeenth century: Niccolò Nelli (1533–1575) and Giuseppe Piattoli (1743–1823) from Florence, and Agostino Carracci (1557–1602) and Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (1634–1718) from Bologna. By depicting common spaces, daily activities, and familiar human types, the four artists sought to instruct people through the delivery of ethical messages within their respective cultural and social contexts of production and reception. Their works can be considered “pictorial form[s] of proverb collection,”<sup>27</sup> in which proverbs were selected primarily for their rhetorical structure (concise and, possibly, in rhyme form) and iconographic potentiality, as well as their effectiveness and impact on society. Additionally, their value as tools to teach moral messages and amuse pedagogically were taken into account. Whether produced as single etchings or engraved broadsheets, or more organic collections, the four artists’ illustrated proverbs show how the intermedial combination of the written and the visual ensured viewers a simultaneously moralizing, enriching, and pleasant experience – certainly more than if the works consisted of just written text alone. Undoubtedly, the visual component would not have been enough to guarantee an appropriate understanding of the proverbs’ meaning because of the infinite possible applications of their symbolic and allegorical references. However, viewing the images from the onset would set the ground for a reflection on what is appropriate and what is not, which the proverb

<sup>24</sup> PRAZ: *Studies in seventeenth-century imagery*, 169–203.

<sup>25</sup> Francesco BRUNI: *Boccaccio: L’invenzione della letteratura mezzana*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1990, 37.

<sup>26</sup> David KUNZLE: *The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c. 1450 to 1825*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973, 426.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 105.

would then confirm or refine. These engravings could be “consulted, memorized, recited, meditated upon, pointed out for authority” as forms of moral concepts crystallized into permanent visual forms to observe, interiorize, and appreciate as a multimodal and multisensorial experience.<sup>28</sup>

### *The Proverbs of Nelli, Carracci, Mitelli, and Piattoli*

The proverb production of Nelli, Carracci, Mitelli, and Piattoli interprets the intermedial combinations of text and image each in different structural ways.<sup>29</sup> Their illustrated proverbs combine textual elements (proverbs) and visual components (pictorial representations of the proverbs) without an overarching theme or explicit storylines connecting the different illustrations.<sup>30</sup> In their works, the text is a fundamental constituent of the iconographic apparatus. Yet, the relevance given to the textual portion cannot compete with the centrality assigned to the visual part. To varying degrees, the text of the four artists' illustrated proverbs appears on the top or the bottom of the image and in a small font or even in the form of a visual rebus, which consistently gives undisputed prevalence to the illustration. The images are not merely decorative, but rather serve to “reinforce meaning which is already clearly expressed in the text,” i.e., in the proverb.<sup>31</sup> The viewers must actively engage with the picture to understand the nuances that the proverbs or the accompanying texts reveal, to appreciate the image's message, and to find the correct correspondence between all of the different aspects of the artistic work. Only by doing this would they reap a fulfilling experience from a visual, textual, and moral perspective.

In the mid-1500s, Florentine printmaker Nelli owned one of the most prolific printing shops in Venice specializing in proverb and moral prints. His *Proverbii* (1564) is the first visual collection of expressions that are called “proverbs” (Figure 1). The work is organized into thirty-two expressions in the form of moralizing rhyming couplets disposed in four horizontal rows, each of which contains eight proverbs distinct from one another. *Proverbii's* regular, simple, and almost geometrical organization probably attracted the viewers' attention and made the work more alluring and accessible. Not yet arranged as emblems, Nelli's proverbs still optimize the space with an image and a motto/commentary. A broad sheet of paper like Nelli's engraving could be easily hung on walls or displayed in a room and, similarly to emblems, could serve as a reference work

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<sup>28</sup> Tessa WATT: *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 227.

<sup>29</sup> Sue WELSH REED – Richard WALLACE: *Italian etchers of the Renaissance & Baroque*, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 1989, 47–53.

<sup>30</sup> Walter GIBSON: *Figures of Speech: Picturing Proverbs in Renaissance Netherlands*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2010, 1.

<sup>31</sup> SAUNDERS: “Is it a Proverb or is it an Emblem?”, 95.

for constructing arguments on various themes based on the different visualized proverbs. The artwork of Flemish painter Frans Hogenberg (1535–1590) may have influenced Nelli's broadsheet with patterns of isolated vignettes connected to their equivalent proverbs. Specifically, *The Blue Cloak* (1558) represents forty-three illustrated proverbs paired with the equivalent textual sources "as evidence of the folly of the world."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, *Al Hoy* (1559) features twenty-nine scenes inspired by proverbs and biblical parables, accompanied by two- to four-line moralizing verses. While Hogenberg's textual parts are not regular in position, Nelli's proverbial texts feature on top of the corresponding image instead. Thus, they delimit the upper border of the space dedicated to a row of proverbs, while a continuous line that crosses the sheet from right to left defines the lower part. From a visual point of view, the proverbs are not united in a single framework, yet they share an anonymous plain landscape that repeats in each row, except for two proverbs placed in a marine setting. By visualizing behaviors founded on virtue, chastity, and prudence, as well as hate, lies, and laziness, Nelli created a catalog of virtuous actions to praise and unworthy ones to condemn. Like a comic strip of images arranged in a sequence, his illustrated proverbs represented a repertory of widely popularized moral examples with a clear pedagogical intent between demonstration and persuasion.<sup>33</sup>

Moving to Bologna, we find two artists realizing illustrated proverbs similarly, yet in different proportions. Agostino Carracci, brother of Annibale and cousin of Ludovico, with whom he founded the Carracci Academy in 1582 (called *Accademia degli Incamminati* in 1589), devoted his production to etchings and engravings more than to painting as had the other two.<sup>34</sup> Agostino's style reflects his exposure to different workshops and artists in his hometown, as well as in Parma (circa 1580), Rome (circa 1581 and later 1597–1600), and especially Venice (circa 1582 and 1588–1589). Here, he trained at the workshop of Dutch engraver Cornelis Cort and his engraving style reached full artistic maturity. Among his vast production, just a few examples of engraved proverbs are known. One of them, *Ogni cosa vince*

<sup>32</sup> MIEDER: *The Netherlandish Proverbs*, 53.

<sup>33</sup> KUNZLE: *The Early Comic Strip*, I–4. It is interesting to note that another engraving by Nelli, organized in a similar way to *Proverbia*, depicts the Topsy-Turvy World. The satirical and humorous representation of the consequences deriving from disintegrated social norms fascinated sixteenth-century viewers. Among the many illustrations that Nelli introduces in his *Il mondo alla riversa* (before 1564) are a donkey washing a man's head, a fish "swimming" in the trees and feeding on birds in the sea, and a wife riding her husband (see Giuseppe COCCHIARA: *Il mondo alla rovescia*, Torino, Boringhieri, 1981). These "inverted proverbs" represented an indirect invitation to preserve traditional social practices and customs in a society that was slightly moving toward the Counter-Reformation. Nelli supposedly reclaimed order but simultaneously entertained the public with a satirical representation of unconventional roles.

<sup>34</sup> For further details on the style of the three Carracci, see DEGRAZIA: *Prints and Related Drawings*, and Diane DEGRAZIA: *Correggio and His Legacy: Sixteenth-Century Emilian Drawings*, Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, 1984, 349–373 (Agostino Carracci is analyzed on pp. 357–363).

*l'oro*, belongs to a series of erotic etchings, probably circulating clandestinely, called *Lascivie* (1580–1590s) (Figure 2).<sup>35</sup> Although this work has clearly bigger dimensions than the other etchings of the series, its inclusion frames its message within the sexual sphere.<sup>36</sup> In comparison to Nelli's desire to create a moralizing experience for his readers, Carracci depicts aspects of his society with a critical eye towards the deficiencies and faults that characterize humankind. Therefore, *Ogni cosa vince l'oro*, much like other etchings, serves as an admonition of what everyone could face if behaving in the same way as his engraved figures do.<sup>37</sup> Despite not necessarily connected to an emblematic structure, the engraving still emphasizes the combination of the verbal and the visual in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Almost one century later, Mitelli's *Proverbi figurati* (1677–1678),<sup>38</sup> dedicated to Francesco Maria de' Medici, constituted the first example of an organized collection of moral expressions adapted into images.<sup>39</sup> The son of celebrated painter Agostino Mitelli, the artist perceived that same fascination for popular traditions and the least polished aspects of everyday life that had characterized the oeuvre of his fellow citizen Giulio Cesare Croce (1550–1609).<sup>40</sup> From a more artistic point of view, Mitelli operated in the same Bolognese environment where Agostino and

<sup>35</sup> See DEGRAZIA: *Prints and Related Drawings*, 304–305, and Marzia FAIETTI: "Rebus d'artista: Agostino Carracci e *La carta dell'ogni cosa vince l'oro*". *Artibus et Historiae*, 2007/28.55, 155–171. The other etching added to the series because of its erotic references is entitled *Il satiro "scandagliatore"* (see Stefania MASSARI – Simonetta PROSPERI VALENTI RODINÒ (eds.): *Tra mito e allegoria: Immagini a stampa nel '500 e '600*, Roma, Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica-Sistemi Informativi S.p.A., 1989, 348–349).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 350–351.

<sup>37</sup> Agostino Carracci also represented another proverb during his greatest moment of artistic maturity in Rome: *Omnia vincit amor* (1599; DEGRAZIA: *Prints and Related Drawings*, 339–341). This engraving was inspired by Annibale Carracci's 1598–1599 *Diana e Callisto*, coming from the cycle that he painted at Palazzo Farnese between 1597 and 1607 and to which Agostino also contributed. Set in an ideal landscape, which Agostino borrows from his younger brother, *Omnia vincit amor* represents, on one side, two nymphs and, on the other, a putto and Pan, the god of the wild, shepherds, and flocks. Cupid's victory over Pan (a word which in Greek means "all") visually represents the message of the expression, which is framed within a cloud overlooking the entire scene. The satyr's painful facial expression illustrates his failure against the power of love (MASSARI – PROSPERI VALENTI RODINÒ (eds.): *Tra mito e allegoria*, 352–353).

<sup>38</sup> Alberto MANFREDI – Lorenzo MARINESE: *Proverbi figurati di Giuseppe Maria Mitelli*, Milano, Cerastico, 1963.

<sup>39</sup> Achille BERTARELLI: *Le incisioni di Giuseppe Maria Mitelli: Catalogo critico*, Milano, Comune di Milano, 1940, 422–471.

<sup>40</sup> Connections between many of Mitelli's figures in his etchings and Croce's *Le piacevoli et ridicolose semplicità di Bertoldino* (1608) and *Le sottilissime astuzie di Bertoldo* (1609) are well known. Furthermore, Mitelli's *Questa è la numerosa compagnia dei ruvinati* (1687) seems to have drawn inspiration from Croce's poetic work, *La compagnia de i repezziati* (1608).

Annibale Carracci had worked a few decades before.<sup>41</sup> One of the founders of the Accademia Clementina in 1711,<sup>42</sup> he is the author of more than six hundred etchings featuring popular expressions, card games, and tarot cards.<sup>43</sup> His *Proverbi figurati* includes forty illustrations of proverbs, each one accompanied by three-lined verses and exploring concepts such as virtue, perseverance, trust, friendship, love, vices, violence, arrogance, and greed (Figure 3).<sup>44</sup> Much like proverbs are contradictory, Mitelli's visualizations reflect the ambiguous aspects of human personality and present them as characteristic of all humankind.<sup>45</sup> According to Paolo Bellini, the greatest intent of Mitelli's production was to "proporre soggetti di facile sapienza popolare, connessa con un moralismo laico e scontato, senza scosse, concepito secondo canoni di leggibilità e comprensione adatti a tutte le classi culturali" ("propose subjects embodying the easy popular wisdom, connected with a secular and obvious moralism, without surprises, conceived according to canons of readability and understanding suitable for all cultural classes").<sup>46</sup> For this reason, Mitelli's work presents an explicit and attractive "pictorial narrative" which runs

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<sup>41</sup> Mitelli realized several copper engravings based on a group of drawings, now lost, by Annibale Carracci. One of them is *Di Bologna. L'Arti per Via d'Anibal Caraci. Disegnate, intagliate, et offerte al grande et alto Nettuno Gigante, Signore della Piazza da Bologna, de Giuseppe Maria Mitelli* (1660). Additionally, Mitelli learned the art of caricatures from the two Carracci brothers, especially Agostino. For a discussion of the evolution of the Bolognese style from Annibale Carracci to Mitelli, see WELSH REED – WALLACE: *Italian etchers*, 105–112, 145–147.

<sup>42</sup> Paolo BELLINI: *Storia dell'incisione italiana. Il Seicento*, Piacenza, Tip. Le. Co., 1992, 113–117.

<sup>43</sup> For a list of all of Mitelli's works, see Clelia ALBERICI: *Incontro con la civica raccolta delle stampe Achille Bertarelli*, Milano, Comune di Milano–Ripartizione cultura e spettacolo, 1980. Already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Mitelli's proverb works were described as adorned with "motti in prosa, o in verso di qualche grazia, e di qualche sale" ("mottos in prose, or verse with some grace, and some wittiness"; Giovanni GANDELLINI GORI: *Notizie storiche degli intagliatori di Giovanni Gori Gambellini sanese. [...] e con un doppio indice alfabetico cronologico*, Siena, dai torchi d'Onorato Porri, 1808–1816, vol. 2, 2470). Among them is, for instance, a series of six printings, entitled *Così va il mondo alla rovescia* (post 1685), which evidently establishes a connection with Nelli's *Il mondo alla rovescia*, yet with a completely different structure that resembles the emblematic pattern of Mitelli's own *Proverbi figurati*.

<sup>44</sup> It seems that Mitelli's brother, Father Giovanni Maria (circa 1640–circa 1675), contributed to Giuseppe Maria's engravings with moral concepts, sentences, and verses. Giovanni was the author of *Vita et opere di Agostino Mitelli* (1665–1667) and was a member of the Ordine dei Chierici Regolari Ministri degli Infermi at the Convento di S. Colombano in Bologna. For further details on this fraternal collaboration, see *Cronica con molte Notizie Pittoresche ricavata dalla originale scritta dal Padre Giovanni Mitelli C.R.M.I. Religioso in S. Gregorio il quale era figlio di Agostino fratello di Giuseppe Mitelli Pittori Bolognesi* (Ms. B. 148 n. 1), a manuscript codex preserved at the Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio in Bologna (mentioned in Adriana ARFELLI: "Per la bibliografia di Agostino e Giuseppe Maria Mitelli". *Arte antica e moderna*, 1958/3, 295–301, 299, n. 9).

<sup>45</sup> The repetitive use of objects connected to the different professions and to everyday life in Bologna would create a recognizable and immediately relatable space, especially to those unable to understand all of the references to mythological and classical elements.

<sup>46</sup> BELLINI: *Storia dell'incisione italiana*, 16.



through all of the illustrations, later collected in a formal volume.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, much more than in Nelli's and Carracci's examples, Mitelli's illustrations imitate emblems in their organization of the space. The image is the central component, emphasized by its greater dimensions compared to all the other elements. The proverb serves as a motto, printed in capital letters on top of the etching; the verses at the bottom function as an expansion of the message expressed by both the image and the proverb, or as commentary on the subject matter, aiming at both the amusement and education of the work's viewers.<sup>48</sup>

A satirical approach to the representation of people and behaviors also characterizes Piattoli's proverb work. The son of Gaetano Piattoli and Anna Bacherini, both of whom were painters and portrait artists, he was a teacher of drawing at the Florentine Accademia di Belle Arti (1786–1807).<sup>49</sup> Collaborating with engraver Carlo Lasinio (1759–1838) and editors Giuseppe Bardi and Niccolò Pagni (both active in Florence at the end of the eighteenth century), Piattoli illustrated eighty proverbs in his two series of *Raccolta di quaranta proverbi toscani* (1786–1788) (Figure 4).<sup>50</sup> These visual proverbs combined his refined artistic skills with his attentive observation of eighteenth-century grand-ducal Tuscan society.<sup>51</sup> As such,

<sup>47</sup> KUNZLE: *The Early Comic Strip*, 287. Mitelli, however, was influenced by Nelli's choice of subject, as for instance in his *La cucagna nuova, trovata nella Porcolandria* (1703) with its motto *Cbi sempre vive mai more* ("He who always lives never dies"; BERTARELLI: *Le incisioni di Giuseppe Maria Mitelli*, 553). Much like Nelli's print *Cucagna* (1564), Mitelli's illustration of the Land of Cockaigne depicts different pleasures identified with vivacious captions. While Nelli's central point of Cockaigne is a mountain of grated cheese spewing forth macaroni and ravioli, Mitelli's coincides with a palace where all the delights are stored.

<sup>48</sup> As a moralistic observer of society, Mitelli "è a volte l'educatore, a volte l'informatore, a volte il beffeggiatore di un uso, a volte il puro burlone o caricaturista di piazza" ("he is sometimes the educator, sometimes the informer, sometimes the mocker of a custom, sometimes the pure prankster or street caricaturist"; REZIO BUSCAROLI: *Agostino e Giuseppe Maria Mitelli: Catalogo delle loro stampe nella raccolta Gozzadini nella Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio in Bologna. Con 15 tavole fuori testo*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1931, 13).

<sup>49</sup> For more information on Piattoli's paintings, see Marco CHIARINI – Barbara BREJON DE LAVERGNÉE: *Bellezze di Firenze: Disegni fiorentini del Seicento e del Settecento dal Museo di belle arti di Lille. Firenze, Sala bianca di Palazzo Pitti, 17 ottobre–1 dicembre 1991*, Milano, Fabbri, 1991, 168, and Barbara BREJON DE LAVERGNÉE – Frédérique LEMERLE: *Catalogue des dessins italiens: Collection du Palais des beaux-arts de Lille*, Lille, Réunion des musées nationaux-Palais des beaux-arts, 1997, 167–168.

<sup>50</sup> Giuseppe PIATTOLI: *I proverbi di Giuseppe Piattoli*, Roma, W. Appoloni, 2001. Lasinio, a teacher of etching at the Accademia di Belle Arti, was interested in printing folkloristic and educational works, including various series characterized by visual immediacy and perspicacious representations of the Florentine society; among them is *Serie di dodici ritratti di persone facete che servono a divertire il pubblico fiorentino* (1790). For more information about Lasinio's engravings, see Paola CASSINELLI: *Carlo Lasinio: Incisioni*, Firenze, Olschki, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Although resembling Venetian painters Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770) and Francesco Guardi (1712–1793), Piattoli's art testifies to his fascination with Tuscan habits and customs, as well as the lively humorous attitude of the local vernacular tradition. Other examples of this interest are his illustrations of the comic pranks by Piovano Arlotto, *Lo sposalizio di Marfisa* (inspired by Carlo Gozzi's 1774 *La Marfisa bizzarra*), *Giuochi, trattenimenti e feste annue che si costumano in Toscana e specialmente in Firenze* (1790–1795), and *I contadini della Toscana espressi al naturale secondo le diverse loro vestiture* (1796).

they satisfied the market request for illustrated books, following, on the one side, the Florentine tradition of bizarre representations,<sup>52</sup> and on the other, infusing it with grotesque style and contradictory juxtapositions.<sup>53</sup> Piattoli and Lasinio inserted the selected expressions inside a rectangle between the figure and the bottom margin of the page for the first series and outside of the space of the etching for the second series.<sup>54</sup> Below the proverbs, a quatrain of hendecasyllables function as a commentary, like in the most traditional emblems. The figures are not fixed in a rather generalized expression or inserted in a seraphic atmosphere, but rather they are always contextualized in an environment, either inside or outside, in the countryside or on a city street, creating a symbolic rendering of the place. According to Giancarlo Savino and Maria Solleciti, Piattoli shares with Mitelli chronological continuity, iconographic coherence, and a popular connotation, which resulted in wide reception.<sup>55</sup> The two artists' promotion of virtues and castigation of vices is, however, achieved differently. Piattoli illustrates adages and proverbs through the behavior of peasants, the middle-class, and nobles, without any social agenda. At times, he lampoons or satirizes aspects of their life and their attempts to climb the hierarchical ladder, but he never shows more appreciation for one group over the other, as it happens in Mitelli's examples. Additionally, Piattoli does not manifest the impetus toward social transformation and moral castigation that distinguishes Mitelli's works. The Florentine artist appears genuinely interested in the spontaneous depiction of human society, especially in Tuscany, and in the incongruities of life more than in ethical choices and their consequences, which fascinate Mitelli.

### *A Proverbial Comparison*

The illustrations by Nelli, Carracci, Mitelli, and Piattoli can be analyzed in their different contextual applications of a theme, both textually and pictorially. In particular, the topic of gold and money allows for a comparison of the many possible moral and/or immoral implications that the transactional act of paying someone

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<sup>52</sup> An example is the series *Bizzarrie* (1624), etched by Giovanni Battista Bracelli (1616–1649) in honor of Pietro de' Medici.

<sup>53</sup> It is possible that Piattoli's production set the ground for a revival of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century rich tradition of collections of Tuscan proverbs, which Giuseppe Giusti would bring back to glory with his *Raccolta di proverbi toscani* (1853 and 1871; see Giuseppe GIUSTI: *Proverbi*, Elisabetta Benucci (ed.), Firenze, Le lettere, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Even though the first series is oriented horizontally and the second series vertically, the contextualization is very similar in the eighty illustrations. The drawings in the first series are realized in pen or pencil and then water-colored, with more rigid figures but very detailed. The second series, instead, is water-colored, with varied and elaborate landscapes in which the figures act harmoniously with the context, losing, however, the physiognomic details that characterize the first series.

<sup>55</sup> Giancarlo SAVINO – Maria SOLLECITI (eds.): *Giochi mesi proverbi curiosità: Una scelta di acqueforti di Giuseppe Maria Mitelli e Giuseppe Piattoli*, Pistoia, Comune-Assessorato agli istituti culturali, 1980, 7.

may have. Gold and money are represented in the four artists' visualized proverbs as powerful means to obtain an objective, whether it is the satisfaction of an erotic desire vis-à-vis the ability to resist vices and enhance virtues, the achievement of a better afterlife or final reward out of a noble action, or the promise of treacherous complicity because of a crime.

Nelli's *Proverbia* contains a representation of a charitable act. The illustration, on the upper-level row of the engraving, features in the fifth position from the left-hand side and is identified by the expression: *Chi per l'amor de Dio del proprio dona / Nel ciel s'acquista trionfal corona* ("He who gives out something of his own for love of God acquires for himself a triumphant crown in the sky") (Figure 1).<sup>56</sup> The image presents a wealthy man reaching out with his right hand into his bag, supposedly carrying money, and giving some to a beggar in front of him with his left hand. The poverty of the beggar is evident: his clothes are torn, his beard is long, and he has just one leg. His eyes are intensively staring at the rich man on whom his possibility to eat and survive depends. The rich man's glare, instead, is turned to the viewers, while he has a dynamic posture as if in charge of his own actions and future. The image itself is self-explanatory: those who can, should be proactive and donate to those who possess less. Its combination with the rhymed distich enriches the composition with an added level, i.e., the reward that it is possible to obtain if one maintains a certain lifestyle on earth. As for the proverb's moral instruction, only by donating what one possesses out of love for God, does one deserve a space in the skies after death and is crowned for the value of his actions.

Gold, however, can be employed to obtain sexual favors because it "wins everything," as the afore-mentioned *Ogni cosa vince l'oro* by Carracci proves. In this etching, the connection between text and image is achieved by means of a rebus in the lower part of the etching. Replacing the more traditional rhymed explanatory distich, this rebus served as an intellectual divertissement (Figure 2). If codified correctly, it would reveal the proverb and thus verbalize the content of the illustration. The strip includes two feet with a small detail of a toenail, a thigh, and a knocked-over jug from which wine comes. These are followed by the letter <c>, after which the sequence concludes with the Italian masculine singular article <l'> and several coins. In wording, this succession of text and image is rendered as "ugna coscia vinc l'oro" ("nails thigh wins gold"), which recalls the proverbial expression: *Ogni cosa vince l'oro*.<sup>57</sup> In the central part of the work, the proverb is visualized through

<sup>56</sup> It is worth noting that, in this specific copy, the word "Dio" ("God") was inserted later due to a possible *saut du même au même* between "Dio" and "del" ("of"), also testified by the capital letter of the preposition.

<sup>57</sup> "Ugna," a regional, mostly Tuscan but also more southern, version of "unghia" ("nail"), explains the closure of the first vowel in /o/ that results in "ogna" and therefore "ogni" ("every"). "Coscia" ("thigh") represents the palatalized version of "cosa" ("thing"). The expression seems to come from Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, "Aurea sunt vere nunc saecula: plurimus auro / Venit honos: auro conciliatur amor" ("Now truly is the age of gold: for gold is sold many an honour, by gold is affection gained"; vol. 2, vv. 277–278; for more information, see FAIETTI: "Rebus d'artista", 165).

the acts of two figures, whose violent movements and convoluted postures contrast with the quiet and intimate environment of the room identified by the bed, the drapery, and the open window toward the external world. The twisting of the two bodies illustrates the fight between the old man and the young woman, probably a courtesan, who does not want to succumb to his pecuniary offer or at least pretends not to be willing to.<sup>58</sup> The same gesture described for Nelli's illustrated proverb appears here in the man's hand reaching for money in his bag. Yet, while Nelli's rich man is ostentatiously showing off his good heart and effortless gesture, Carracci's old man has his bag in front of his pudenda, almost to hide the cause of his actions, and shows all the effort necessary to win the woman over. Even though the woman tries to push the old man away with both hands, the presence of an angry Cupid breaking his bow foreshadows that his loving action will not be needed. Moreover, the dog licking its fur, a well-known symbol of marital fidelity, ironically recalls the ephemeral credibility of loyalty.<sup>59</sup> The meaning of the visual representation aligns with that which is intermedially expressed through the rebus: Money will conquer all, even the strongest one. Hence, the moral message includes an admonition towards women and the necessity for them to be strong and incorruptible because danger is always close.

Another interpretation on the topic of donating gold takes place in Mitelli's thirteenth illustration of his *Proverbi figurati*. In this instance, gold hides the worst oppressions because it guarantees silence, as the proverbial expression evokes: *Dove l'oro parla, ogni lingua tace* ("Where money speaks, every tongue is silent") (Figure 3). In the image, a commoner with a sword in his hand gives a bagful of money to what looks like a magistrate, recognized by his hat and cape; the magistrate brings his index finger to the mouth and, in so doing, expresses his intent to refrain from talking. A man lying dead on the ground identifies the commoner as a criminal and a killer who is ready to pay as long as everyone can be corrupted and keeps silent.<sup>60</sup> The description below the image reinforces the message that the power of gold is invincible and universal: "Convinta ogni ragion, muto ogni foro / Resta, dove la .....

<sup>58</sup> As Carlo Cesare Malvasia describes the illustration in his *Felsina pittrice*, this is "la carta dell'ogni cosa vince l'oro, enigmaticamente scritto sotto a quel vecchio, la di cui vergogna ben esprime quell'amore, che sul letto, per lui si spezza l'arco su un ginocchio [...]" ("the work of the gold wins everything, enigmatically written under that old man, whose shame well expresses that love, for which on the bed he breaks his bow on one knee"; Carlo Cesare MALVASIA: *Felsina Pittrice: Vite de' pittori bolognesi, del conte Carlo Cesare Malvasia, con aggiunte, correzioni e note inedite del medesimo autore, di Giampietro Zanotti e di altri scrittori viventi*, Bologna, Tipografia Guidi all'Ancora, 1841, vol. I, 80).

<sup>59</sup> On the literary and artistic inspirations for this etching, as well as for an interpretation of all the figures in the work, see FAIETTI: "Rebus d'artista".

<sup>60</sup> This message also features in another illustrated proverb that does not belong to the series *Proverbi figurati*, entitled *Chi gli vede, chi non gli vede, chi non gli vuole vedere* (between 1690–1710). The necessity of buying silence is represented here by the image of a woman who engages in an extramarital affair and then pays a man so that he will pretend not to have seen anything; the commentary states: "Tanta gioia l'oro arreca, / Che a l'honor chiude la bocca, / E il suo raggio ogni cor più casto accieca" ("Gold brings such a great joy that it makes honor silent and its power blinds even the most chaste hearts").

borsa apre la bocca, ch'orator non si trova eguale a l'oro" ("Where gold speaks, every mind is convinced and every mouth stays silent, because there is no speaker greater than gold"). As mentioned before, the organization of the visual and textual elements in Mitelli's proverbs, as well as the simplicity and straightforwardness of the composition contribute to the experience and effectiveness of the represented scene. The imbalance between the two vertical figures and the one horizontally lying on the ground guides the viewer's eyes towards the center of the engraving that corresponds to three hands disposed vertically: the commoner's hand holding the bag of money, the magistrate's hand ready to receive the bag, and the magistrate's other hand touching his lips. The proverb on top and the explanation at the bottom of the image provide a focus for the illustration: One should not succumb to those able to pay for the silence of others and should not accept dishonesty and corruption – rather, one should instead speak up and denounce the committed crimes.

In his *Raccolta* of illustrated proverbs, Piattoli represents the same message explored by Carracci by including a different contextual interpretation. The illustration belongs to the first forty visualized proverbs and, much like Carracci's work, presents a very detailed contextualization. Unsurprisingly, the first example of the collection deals with the topic of gold as a means to request sexual favors through the visualization of the expression *Donna che resiste all'oro val più d'un gran tesoro* ("The woman who resists money is worth more than a great treasure") (Figure 4). Featuring two figures who evidently belong to the working class, the scene ridicules a man who proposes to a woman, expecting to win her through money, only to be rejected. The four-rhymed verses at the bottom express the results of the young man's reckless and irreverent act: "In van tenti, o giovanotto audace, / con quell'oro che fulgido risplende. / Donna che solo d'onestà è capace / ricusa il tutto e l'onor suo non vende" ("In vain you try, audacious young man, with that gold that shines brightly. Woman who is only capable of honesty refuses everything and does not sell her honor"). The bodily movement and position of the two figures recall Carracci's engraving, including their facial expressions, their emotions, and the dramatic pathos of the scene. Moreover, contrary to the Bolognese engraver, here the woman is praised for her strength and her perseverance in defending her honor, which requires an effort equal to that of the old man in *Ogni cosa vince l'oro*. Additionally, if in Carracci's engraving the woman touches the old man's head with her hand to distance herself, here the man grabs the woman's hand to draw her nearer, while the woman separates herself from the man moving away diagonally from his body. In the end, neither Carracci's woman nor Piattoli's man succeed in their intent. In *Ogni cosa vince l'oro*, the woman surrenders to the old man's proposition and in Piattoli's *Raccolta*, the man finds himself with just his gold and unsatisfied desires. All of this emphasizes the honesty of Piattoli's woman and her value greater than a treasure, ultimately placing the proverb's moral message in the realm of feminine praise.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Note that another illustration in Piattoli's *Raccolta* represents how gold facilitates obtaining sexual favors: *Con le chiavi d'oro s'apre ogni porta* ("Every door is open with golden keys").



Figure 4. Giuseppe Piattoli, *Donna che resiste all'oro val più d'un gran tesoro*, in *Raccolta di quaranta proverbi toscani espressi in figure* (1786–88). Courtesy of The New York Public Library, Print Collection (MEM++ P583pr)

### Conclusions

The illustrated proverbs by Nelli, Carracci, Mitelli, and Piattoli speak of the pervasiveness and appeal of visualized expressions in early modern Italy and beyond. They also testify to the many pedagogical applications of proverbs as educational tools, means of amusement, sources of knowledge, and examples of moral authority. Between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the works of proverb artists offered a catalog “of moral transgressions to be rectified, of domestic disorders to be disciplined, of human follies to be avoided”;



in other words, they represented “a collective moral discourse in a highly accessible, iconographic form.”<sup>62</sup> Contextual interpretation was fundamental to understand how the written words enhanced the message of the images. The actual hybrid product embodied only one of the possible interpretations of the expression’s message and required the viewer’s participation in the meaning making process. This explains how the act of exchanging money, as illustrated by the four artists, finds various actualizations in the fruitful combination of the verbal and the visual. Yet, they all align, on the one hand, with a praise of honesty, charity, and decency and, on the other, with a castigation of weakness and abuse of power. As a result of intermedial practices of code-switching, early modern images of proverbs constituted a powerful example of the text-image relationship and of their cross-fertilization with moral instruction.

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<sup>62</sup> Sara F. MATTHEWS GRIECO: “Pedagogical Prints: Moralizing Broadshets and Wayward Women in Counter Reformation Italy”. In Geraldine A. Johnson – Sarah F. Matthews Grieco (eds.): *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 77.

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## Abstract

*The artistic productions of Niccolò Nelli (1533–1575), Agostino Carracci (1557–1602), Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (1634–1718), and Giuseppe Piattoli (1743–1823) exemplify combinations of textual and visual sources that perfectly represent intermedial code-switching. The four artists authored collections of illustrated proverbs that they either realized in isolation or included in comic strips and in more organized collections. The expressions in the works of Nelli, Carracci, Mitelli, and Piattoli were selected for their rhetorical structure, pedagogical intent, and social reception. These authors then merged their written texts with visual symbols and allegories that could appeal to the larger public, thus making their meaning more accessible. Such representations guided the readers visually and allowed them to undergo an ethical experience through the symbiotic association of iconic value and moral message.*

**Keywords:** Agostino Carracci, intermediality, Giuseppe Maria Mitelli, morality, Niccolò Nelli, Giuseppe Piattoli, proverbs

*Szólások képekben. Intermediális kódváltás szólásokat ábrázoló olasz metszeten  
Rezüimé*

*Niccolò Nelli (1533–75), Agostino Carracci (1557–1602), Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (1634–1718), és Giuseppe Piattoli (1743–1823) metszetein a szöveges és vizuális forrásoknak egy olyan kombinációja jelenik meg, amelyek tökéletes példái az intermediális kódváltásnak. A nevéikkel fémjelzett illusztrált szólások vagy egyedi, önálló kiadványban, vagy nagyobb gyűjtemények részeként jelentek meg. Nelli, Carracci, Mitelli és Piattoli a retorikai szerkezet, pedagógiai szándék és társadalmi elvárások alapján választott szólásokat a metszetelekhez, majd a szöveges tartalmat olyan szimbólumokkal és allegóriákkal társították, amelyek egy szélesebb közönség érdeklődésére is igény tarthattak, és így az üzenetük is elérhetőbbé vált. Az ilyen ábrázolásmód vizuálisan utat mutatott az olvasónak, és lehetővé tette, hogy az ikonikus érték és a morális üzenet szimbiotikus asszociációja révén etikai élményben részesüljön.*

**Kulcsszavak:** Agostino Carracci, intermedialitás, Giuseppe Maria Mitelli, moralitás, Niccolò Nelli, Giuseppe Piattoli, szólások

YVES LANDEROUIN

## From *Il disprezzo* to *Le Mépris* Multilingualism and Code-switching in Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris*

Adapted from a monolingual text, *Il disprezzo* (1954), a novel by Alberto Moravia, *Le Mépris*, which is regarded nowadays as one of Godard's major achievements, combines four different languages (French, German, English, and Italian). Undoubtedly, the international cast that Godard could afford on that special occasion enabled him to devise such a combination. This fact, though, does not explain his intentions. Not only did he want his actors to speak their own language, but he also had each of them, at times, switch from one language to another. In other terms, the dialogues use both multilingualism (several different languages are involved, according to the actors'/characters' nationalities) and code-switching (as a process of shifting from one linguistic code to another in one character's lines, sometimes in the same sentence). These two main features have not drawn enough attention among the numerous articles that *Le Mépris*'s complexities have inspired. Whenever critics (several of them will be mentioned here) deal with them, they do not dwell upon the matter. Yet these features play a major part in meaning-making, and any endeavor to get rid of them would jeopardize the film's structure and ruin its effect (Alain Bergala notes that an Italian version of *Le Mépris* tried to bring the dialogues back to their monolingual origin, as all actors were dubbed in Italian, including the translator figure Francesca, "who then absurdly repeated in the same language what other characters said").<sup>1</sup> What does this major part consist in? Notably, the different uses of languages in the film implied some cultural and political values or ideas that a contemporary viewer is not always aware of. What are they and does *Le Mépris* convey them through multilingualism and code-switching without questioning them? Eventually, the process that turned a monolingual text, *Il disprezzo*, into a multilingual film dialogue shed a fresh and valuable light on the original novel. Given the fact that Godard's famous film has introduced many spectators to Moravia's novel, multilingualism and code-switching surely have a significant impact on the way its readers apprehend it nowadays. What light do they cast on it?

<sup>1</sup> Alain BERGALA: *Godard au travail, les années 60*, Paris, édition Cahiers du cinéma, 2006, 179.

*Representing Babel*

In her article “‘Répète un peu pour voir’: Jean-Luc Godard et la catégorie de la répétition,” Sylvie Aymé writes: “*Tel est Le Mépris, la tragédie de la méprise après l’effondrement de Babel qui génère, outre le conflit des interprétations à propos de l’Odyssée, le babil sans espoir, compulsif et crispé d’un couple.*”<sup>2</sup> We will argue that multilingualism bears witness to a collapse that occurred after the opening scene and affects every protagonist (not only Paul and Camille). In the Edenic opening scene, communication between the two lovers ran smoothly in a monolingual conversation. Multilingualism occurs as soon as action involves people from the cinema world, “picture people,” in what used to be a temple of film making industry: Cinecittà. At first, in the screening room sequence, it does not look like a barrier. Watching the *Odyssey*’s rushes, the American producer (Jerry Prokosch), the German director (Fritz Lang) and the French scriptwriter (Paul Javal) seem to enjoy the same poetical mood. Prokosch himself becomes lyrical: “Oh Gods! I like gods. I like them very much...”<sup>3</sup> When Fritz Lang, playing his own part, quotes Dante’s *Inferno* first in German (“*O meine Bruder wenn ihr nach hundert tausend...*”), then in French and asks Paul whether he knows it, Paul takes over and quotes the following line in French: “*Déjà la mort contemplait les étoiles. Et notre joie se métamorphosait vite en pleurs...*”<sup>4</sup> Godard harnesses here and in other sequences the music of four different languages combined together. But that this music means psychological harmony and understanding between characters is an illusion spectators can’t labor under for a very long time. Clearly, Dante’s poetical quotation in German stands as a dismissible answer to the producer, who just said he had “a theory about the *Odyssey*.”<sup>5</sup> Later in the projection hall, Lang switches in the middle of a sentence from English to French, a language Prokosch doesn’t understand, to make a comment on the producer’s use of his cheque book: “Some years ago, several years ago, *les Hitlériens utilisaient le revolver au lieu du carnet de chèque.*”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in the “Silver cine” sequence, Lang replies in French to Jerry’s question “What do you think of [Paul],” as if he hasn’t heard it, in order to dismiss the producer’s narrow-minded views on *The Odyssey* and to set a discussion on a loftier philosophical ground.<sup>7</sup> In these occurrences, Fritz Lang, as a character, is actually speaking to those who can understand him, to the (ideal) spectator, but primarily to Paul. They both are men of culture, European, humanistic culture. Nevertheless, multilingualism doesn’t

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<sup>2</sup> Sylvie AYMÉ: “‘Répète un peu pour voir’: Jean-Luc Godard et la catégorie de la répétition”. In: Marc CERISUELO (ed.), *Jean-Luc Godard: au delà de l’image*, Paris, *Études cinématographiques*, N°194/202, 1993. 63–134. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Luc GODARD: *Le Mépris* [script], Paris, L’Avant-Scène cinéma, N°412–413 (mai/juin 1992), 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 66.

symbolize their spiritual complicity. As Raphaëlle J. Burns argues, Paul “reciting the closing lines of Dante’s verse in his own language (“*notre première joie se métamorphose en pleurs*”) can see only “closure”<sup>8</sup> (James Wilkes adds: “melancholy”<sup>9</sup>), whereas Lang’s quotation in German typically struck a more open and optimistic key: “... *Zögert nicht den Weg der Sonne folgend/die unbewobnten Welten zu ergründen.*”<sup>10</sup>

As for the sentimental theme, Godard uses multilingualism in an interesting way to underline the rift between two native French speakers. After letting his wife Camille go in Prokosch’s car (a watershed in the couple’s relationship), Paul walks to the producer’s villa, arrives very late and is asked by him: “What happened to you, Paul?” Then Paul looks at his wife and says: “*Qu’est-ce qu’il dit?*”<sup>11</sup> So, Camille’s crucial but unspoken interrogation (how could you let me go with him?) finds its way indirectly, at that moment, through a language Paul strives to understand. His inability to understand these English words emphasizes the fact that he doesn’t manage to guess the true meaning of what she doesn’t say or what she expresses with non-verbal codes like looks, gestures and face expressions. Symmetrically, later in the film, one may believe that Paul has a glimpse of what is happening to his couple when he understands on the spot Jerry’s English words “So I was right!”<sup>12</sup> and shouts like in a flash of intuition: “*À propos de quoi?*” Nevertheless, on the way to the truth that he will never quite reach, the despised husband keeps stumbling among words he can’t get a grip on, foreign to him even when they are spoken in his own language.

Francesca, Prokosch’s secretary, translator and major figure of multilingualism and code-switching here, plays an important part in highlighting psychological barriers. Paradoxically, the interpreter, who masters four languages, stands here as a Babelian figure. Yet, she tries her best to connect these very different people with each other. Several times, she goes beyond the limits of translation in order to make her employer understandable and acceptable to others. For instance, when he gets excited seeing a naked woman (supposed to be a mermaid) on screen, he whispers to Lang’s ear with a dirty smile: “Fritz, that’s wonderful for you and me, but you do not think the public is going to understand that?” Francesca’s translation omits to render the sexual hint of the sentence: “*C’est de l’art, mais est-ce que le public comprendra?*”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, during the very tense argument about Lang’s theory on *The Odyssey*, she not only confirms that Jerry disagrees with it, she explains quite cleverly

<sup>8</sup> Raphaëlle J. BURNS: “Experimenting with Cinema in Godard’s *Le Mépris*: The Past and the Present Between Possibility and Impossibility”. In COLIN MACCABE – LAURA MULVEY (ed.), *Godard’s Contempt*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 190–199. 196.

<sup>9</sup> JAMES WILKES: “*O gods...* Hidden Homeric Deities in Godard’s *Le Mépris*”. In MACCABE – MULVEY: *op. cit.* 42–51. 48.

<sup>10</sup> GODARD: *op. cit.* 24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

and develops his point of view, although he does not express it.<sup>14</sup> And clearly, she mitigates his rudeness when he says about Lang “I am not gonna lose my shirt for him”<sup>15</sup> (commented more than translated through Francesca’s words: “*Il va très mal!*”) or when she mistranslates his disdainful hand sign towards Camille, who asked him whether M. Lang will stay with them in his villa near Capri, with these three words: “*Où il voudra!*”<sup>16</sup> Such mistranslations are part of the “noise,” as William Viney puts it, constantly present in the “transmission of meaning” that *Le Mépris* “stages.”<sup>17</sup> Viney adds: “This noise works at the level of translation, through the figure of Francesca, and it works through the Hollywood system, in the conflicts of interpretation we witness throughout the film.”<sup>18</sup> One should go further on that track and make a rather different point: embodied in Francesca, charming and caring as she may be, the translating activity looks like a dirty job of submission, betrayal and pointless attempts. From this point of view, we may regard her silence at the end of the film, as a sign of failure. When Paul is leaving Capri, he tells her that Camille and Jerry died in the car crash. She passes by him without a glance or even a word. This attitude could mean that she is too shocked by this piece of news to start a conversation in any language. But if we think that misunderstandings, differences of thoughts and mental representations led the whole tragedy to its end, we understand that, eventually, the mediating figure can only keep silent and go away with downcast eyes.

Thus, multilingualism and code-switching take a substantial part in building a metaphorical Babel that starts collapsing early in the course of the narrative. The linguistic barrier symbolizes a psychological rift: even when some characters seem to understand each other for a while, the way they use French or English reminds us that they do not really live in the same world, highlighting their isolation. Instead of filling the gap, code-switching and, above all, translating emphasize its size.

### *Associating Cultural Schemes and Values to Languages*

Depiction of multilingualism and code-switching practices convey ideas about each of the four languages involved. If we look closely at the ways they are used here, it is worth noticing that they are associated with some specific values.

Unsurprisingly, Italian, the host country language in a way, belongs to the setting; a beautiful setting, like the rocks and blue sea near Capri,<sup>19</sup> but waning

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 78.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 67.

<sup>17</sup> William VINEY: “‘Not necessarily in that order’: *Contempt*, Adaptation and the Metacinematic”. In MACCABE – MULVEY: *op. cit.* 148–156. 155.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> See Ludovic CORTADE: *Le Mépris*: “Landscapes as Tragedy”, in Tom CONLEY – T. Jefferson KLINE (ed.): *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. 156–170.

too: the deserted Cinecittà seems to echo Louis Lumière's famous statement about doomed commercial prospects of cinema, which is written in the background of the projection hall, below the screen, and in Italian ("Il cinema é un invenzione senza avvenire"). Moreover, Italian is more or less restricted to utilitarian functions. On the shooting set, after Lang and his assistant (Godard himself) give the starting signal, operators and technicians add small words such as "Silenzio," "Motore," "Avanti," "Carrelo."<sup>20</sup> Prokosch utters a short instruction in Italian to the petrol station assistant<sup>21</sup> and elsewhere foreign characters seem to know nothing of their hosts' language but conventional and courtesy words ("Bongiorno," "ciao," "prego").<sup>22</sup> Besides, it is a meaningful fact that the only Italian protagonist of the film works as a full-time secretary devoted to her employer and even acting as a go-between when she translates his love invitation to Camille (shall we really consider, then, that this go-between position enables her to see anew, to escape from the restricted view, narrowed by contempt, the other characters have on life, as Raphaëlle J. Burns argues?).<sup>23</sup> Thus, may Godard be aware of it or not, Dante's tongue gives the impression that it is a kind of indigenous language in a colonial context. The great poet himself is quoted in German or French in the screening room sequence.

Obviously, French language owes its special status in the film to its French Swiss director as well as its main actors (Bardot and Piccoli) and to the fact that its original version is supposed to be understood by French speakers. But two other conclusions may be drawn from the way American and German characters use it.

Firstly, according to an old cliché still vivified by some American movies, French is the language of love and courtship. Apart from one small exception, the only attempts Prokosch makes to switch from English to French occur when he tries to speak gently to Camille: just before the car crash, at the petrol station, he asks her with a little flower in hand and a rather moving clumsiness: "*Camille, qu'est-ce que tu penses de moi?*"<sup>24</sup> And in a more delusive manner, earlier on, he urged her to sit beside him in his car, switching in the twinkling of an eye from a harsh "Get in!" to a sweeter "*S'il vous plait.*" So, in those lines, Godard asserts traditional ideas associated with his native language and at the same time questions them or at least mocks them by the irony of the context in which Prokosch speaks French.

Secondly, this language appears here to be the medium of critical spirit. We previously said that Lang didn't make his sarcastic remark on Jerry's assertion about "the word *culture*" in English, which he could have done. It may be added now that he chooses French here as he does when, soon afterwards and reciting Hölderlin's

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<sup>20</sup> GODARD: *op. cit.* 86.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

<sup>22</sup> Apart from "prego," "Strano" is the only Italian word F. Lang utters, repeating the answer Francesca gave to his question: "*Comment dit-on étrange en italien?*" (*ibid.* 27). The context suggests he mainly does it out of politeness.

<sup>23</sup> BURNS: *op. cit.* 195.

<sup>24</sup> GODARD: *op. cit.* 83.



verses to Francesca, he comments on them: “*Vous voyez la rédaction du dernier vers contredit les deux autres, ce n’est plus la présence de dieu, c’est l’absence de dieu qui rassure l’homme. C’est très étrange, mais vrai.*”<sup>25</sup> One could object that this last choice simply hints at the origin of Lang’s comment (which derives from a chapter of *L’espace littéraire* by Maurice Blanchot).<sup>26</sup> But this kind of justification would not explain why, on the other hand, in the “Silver Cine” sequence, the German director develops Hegel’s concept of epic’s objectivity in French!<sup>27</sup> And all throughout the film, the two men of culture use this language to exchange their views on literature, art, film industry or techniques<sup>28</sup> and even on the modern way of life, so that we are to think it is definitely the medium of intellectual discussions. Godard’s representation of French culture (which could be confirmed then by the major role played by French intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre but also by the fact that, in the early sixties, many of them criticized mass culture or “*culture industrielle*”<sup>29</sup>) makes his native language suited to question moral, religious and aesthetic principles driving the occidental world of his time.

Prokosch’s American English (spoken by the Hollywood actor Jack Palance) is not only linked here to money and business, but, on a larger scope, asserts itself as the medium of power: capitalistic power (using Francesca’s back as a desk, Jerry gives order in a rough way to Paul: “Stay right there”<sup>30</sup>), male power exerted against women (saying about an Italian girl: “If she agrees to take her clothes off”<sup>31</sup>), gods’ power over human beings. We should not forget that Godard’s editing closely associates Prokosch with Poseidon.<sup>32</sup> Gods, or what stands as gods in modern society, do not speak Greek anymore. They do not speak German either, and casting Fritz Lang as a director allows Godard to let his spectators hear the voice of an historic anti-nazi figure (Paul’s anecdote on his exile from Germany stresses the fact<sup>33</sup>) and listen to his sweet German poetical inflexions, instead of the usual Hitlerian shouting. New gods lead the world through American English language. But this association with power may not look as bad as it sounds, because the American character of the film, as Walter Stabb argues, is more subtly characterized

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>26</sup> See Olivier H. HARRIS: “Pure Cinéma? Blanchot, Godard, *Le Mépris*”. In MACCABE – MULVEY: *op. cit.* 96–106.

<sup>27</sup> GODARD: *op. cit.* 66.

<sup>28</sup> Lang on cinémascope: “*Ce n’est pas fait pour les hommes, c’est fait pour les serpents, pour les enterrements*” (*ibid.* 26).

<sup>29</sup> For instance, Pierre FOUGEYROLLAS and Gilbert COHEN-SÉAT: *L’Action sur l’homme: cinéma et télévision*, Paris, Denoël, 1961. See Jean-Pierre ESQUENAZI: *Godard et la société française des années 1960*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> GODARD: *op. cit.* 27.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 66.

<sup>32</sup> James WILKIES even finds Prokosch a prophetic gift like Chalcas in the *Iliad* (WILKIES: *op. cit.* 47).

<sup>33</sup> Even if, actually, the “real” Lang did not leave Nazi Germany in such a rush, according to Klaus KREIMER (*Une histoire du cinéma allemand: la UFA*, Paris, Flammarion, 1994.120).

than it is usually believed. First of all, he is a man of action, often filmed by Godard like a like a sword-and-sandal films' hero, in a rather positive way, like a "classical hero". And, as Stabb put it, "his dynamism operates as catalyst in forcing the resolution to Camille and Paul's unhappy relationship and in pushing onwards the production of *The Odyssey*."<sup>34</sup> This feature particularly stands out when we compare him with Paul, an irresolute character. Secondly, Stabb reminds us that Godard didn't despise money in cinema or complain about producers' demands ("For him the commercially minded problem posed by Prokosch became an opportunity not a constraint, a typical response in Godard's film making"; and Palance, an ex-boxer and a western movie actor, is a kind of "challenge" Godard "thrives on"<sup>35</sup>). This can mitigate, at least from some spectator's point of view, the negative value associated with this language of power.

So multilingualism and code-switching contribute to sketch in *Le Mépris* a certain cultural and economic map of the Sixties' western world. This map borrows from conventional types, but apart from the Italian ones maybe, it either questions them or puts them at a distance and in a new light. It must be added that the film draws a picture of a hierarchy between languages we would find difficult to come across in current cinema production. French, especially, doesn't play any longer the part Godard highlighted in his film. Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*, which plays with the same four languages,<sup>36</sup> epitomizes such an evolution, even if we could object that its action took place a long time ago, during the Second World War. There, French clearly appears as the language of defeated people, who desperately have to understand German and English intruders and who switch (sometimes improbably) from their native language to theirs in order to please or serve them. Paying tribute to his idol Godard, Tarantino names one of his French characters "Francesca". And she is still a female translator, but in an even more depreciating mode than the original Francesca, since she is a French "collabo", Goebbel's mistress, translating her German master's words into French. Other evidence than Tarantino's film can be mentioned. According to film analyst Stephen Follows, "in 2003, 16% of [North American] movies featured at least some spoken French, whereas in 2017 it had fallen to just 6%" and, in the same range of movies, "romance is more a feature of films with Italian than those with French."<sup>37</sup> But other data and studies would be needed to establish that, from this point of view, *Le Mépris* belongs to a remote past. Related to its semantic structures, the political and cultural ideas

<sup>34</sup> Walter STABB: "Producing Prokosch: Godard, Levine, Palance, Minelli and a lament to lost Hollywood". In MACCABE –MULVEY: *op. cit.* 179–189.184.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Nolwenn MINGANT points out that "Foreign languages are increasingly part of today's Hollywood film ... the presence of three or four languages other than English is not rare (*Ocean's Twelve, Rush Hour, Syriana, Babel*)". N. MINGANT: "Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*: a blueprint for dubbing translators? (2010) in *Meta*, n°55(4), 712–731. DOI: 10.7202/045687ar (accessed: February 09, 2024).

<sup>37</sup> Stephen FOLLOWS: Film data and education, [stephenfollows.com/languages-most-commonly-used-in-movies/](http://stephenfollows.com/languages-most-commonly-used-in-movies/) (accessed 9 February 2024).

it associates with each language add to the characterization of the protagonists. Besides, multilingualism and code-switching make it clearer that Godard's film is about a power struggle, a complex struggle not only between different individuals but between different cultures.

### *Casting a Valuable Light on Il Disprezzo*

Now, what does this all mean for *Il disprezzo*'s reception? Which of the novel's features stand out through this kind of "cinematic filter", as we may call it?

Firstly, the fact that the film characters speak four different languages, switch from one to the other, as well as Fritz lang does, without being translated at all or without being properly translated (and a part of the meaning comes, as we noticed, from a discrepancy between words and their rendering) adds for the unprepared spectator to the large amount of literary or filmic quotations in their conversation and to the complicated debate on *The Odyssey*. All of which could make him believe that *Il disprezzo* is a kind of avant-garde intellectual novel. Not so much wrongly. *Avant-garde* is certainly not a word one would use about Moravia's work. *Le Mépris* itself is less so than other Godard opuses. But watching it with its complexities makes us recall that *Il disprezzo* is the story of an intellectual type of character, since Ricardo sees himself as a serious writer (who joined, though reluctantly and for wrong reasons, the Italian Communist Party<sup>38</sup>) and since his thought and narrative keep feeding on literary reminiscences (not only from *The Odyssey* or Dante's *Inferno* but from Orpheus and Petrarch's sonnets<sup>39</sup>). *Le Mépris* shows it to us in its own way and by stressing the part that modern languages and movie culture play in contemporary intellectual life.

Secondly, this cinematic filter contributes to shape the way one regards Moravia's characters, especially if one discovers the novel after watching the film.

Surely, the wife played by Bardot has got something of the instinctive, unintellectual Emilia, the character Ricardo depicts in the novel.<sup>40</sup> We may laugh at the way Camille tries to make herself understood when she says to Jerry on the phone, with a broad French accent: "We talk of you". But the funny and rather casual summary of *The Odyssey* she gives in the same sequence ("l'histoire du type qui voyage"<sup>41</sup>) could mean that her bad English is more to be ascribed to carelessness than to ignorance or stupidity. She does understand English (better maybe than

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<sup>38</sup> See Alberto MORAVIA, *Il Disprezzo*, Firenze – Milano, Bompiani, 2017, end of chapter 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ricardo comments on one of Petrarch's sonnets in chapter 14 (MORAVIA: *op. cit.* 202-203). His evocation of his journey into "La Grotta Rosa" (chapter 22) after Emilia left him hints more at Orpheus searching Eurydice in the Underworld than at *Odysseus'* similar episode.

<sup>40</sup> "*Emilia non aveva ricevuto una buona educazione: aveva frequentato soltanto le prime scuole elementari e qualche anno delle magistrali; poi aveva lasciato gli studi...*" (MORAVIA: *op. cit.* 155).

<sup>41</sup> GODARD: *op. cit.* 59.

Paul). At the end of the “Silver Cine’s” debate on Homer, Prokosch asks her: “Why don’t you say something?”<sup>42</sup> Her answer (or her thought) at that moment (“*Je me tais parce que je n’ai rien à dire*”) suggests that *Il disprezzo*’s feminine protagonist should be regarded as more complex than expected.<sup>43</sup> On one hand, she means she is stupid or, at least, unable to talk about art and literature; on the other hand, her quick response to Jerry’s English question proves she is smarter than others may think,<sup>44</sup> which echoes Emilia’s surprising moments of brightness Ricardo mentioned in his narrative.<sup>45</sup> Only, the film indicates her brightness in a less disdainful manner (Ricardo links them to her closer acquaintance with nature and to simple people’s commonsense). Fritz Lang’s polyglotism contributes to cast a positive light on the German director figure, as if Godard had only selected one of Rheingold’s features in the novel and had magnified it. Indeed, in the pages where he is introduced by the narrator as a decent – but not first class – German director, Rheingold is said to bear a physical resemblance to Goethe.<sup>46</sup> From this detail Godard seems to derive his entire conception of a humanistic kind of artist, whose universal spirit (like Goethe’s) is displayed in his ability to speak French and Italian, as well as German, and to explain Hegel’s theory on epics in a foreign language.<sup>47</sup> Lang’s polyglotism completes the conception that led Godard to transfer this classical theory (which Rheingold regarded as idealistic and out-of-date) from the scriptwriter (Ricardo cherishes it in the novel) to the director<sup>48</sup> and, meanwhile, Rheingold’s earthly psychological point of view (which Ricardo regarded as realistic but inferior) on *The Odyssey* to the producer (Prokosch).<sup>49</sup> So here *Il disprezzo*’s readers tend to forget Rheingold’s mean side. And the perspective Godard adopts in *Le Mépris* definitely favors the director’s point of view.

Making a Babel of Ricardo’s world, the film obviously exacerbates the psychological barrier between the protagonists of the novel. In this regard, there is one

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 67.

<sup>43</sup> Another factor of complexity comes from the way Godard plays with the image Bardot’s former roles shaped in the spectator’s mind. See what Steven UNGAR writes about the casting: “As with Bardot, the casting of Palance confirmed that the character of the boorish producer drew on and worked against his previous roles in order to generate a dramatic tension unavailable to the novelist” (S. UNGAR: “Totally, Tenderly, Tragically...and in Color: Another look at Godard’s *Le Mépris*”. In CONLEY – T. Jefferson KLINE: *op. cit.* 149).

<sup>44</sup> Symbolically, in the same sequence, Bardot-Camille perfectly catches a hint that Godard drops in F. Lang’s line about Bertold Brecht: “*La ballade du pauvre B.B.*”

<sup>45</sup> « ... riusciva talvolta a formulare riflessioni e apprezzamenti assai acuti” (MORAVIA: *op. cit.* 155).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 127.

<sup>47</sup> On the opposite, in *Inglourious Basterds*, Colonel Hans Landa (Christoph Waltz)’s linguistic virtuosity (he fluently speaks the same four languages) is associated with force and violence. It is as much a power of evil as Fritz Lang’s same polyglotism is a sign of enlightenment.

<sup>48</sup> Ricardo thinks that Homer made *The Odyssey* with characters looking like the nature whose antic simplicity they shared (MORAVIA: *op. cit.* 185).

<sup>49</sup> Like Rheingold in the novel, Prokosch objects to the scriptwriter that the classical reading of *The Odyssey* is idealistic (See GODARD: *op. cit.* 78).

emblematic example among all the changes Godard made in the narrative. As mentioned before, when Paul arrives late at the director's home in Rome, he is asked by him: "What happened to you?" In *Il disprezzo*, Emilia directly asks Ricardo that kind of question in his language.<sup>50</sup> So, compared to the novel here, the film doubly separates the scriptwriter from his wife's conscience: firstly, because it gives her question to someone else and secondly, because it puts that question in words her husband doesn't manage to get. Doing so, it simply underlines Ricardo's inability to understand what his wife is feeling, what she thinks of the way he left her on her own with another man. This obviously was one of the key issues of *Il disprezzo*. When, in the last chapters, Ricardo get the answers to those questions, he starts dreaming of a kind of utopia whose description seems to relate to a pre-Babelian world, a world, as he puts it, "in which money did not count and in which language had retained its integrity."<sup>51</sup> Godard chooses to show how much Ricardo was right to state that this world "in fact did not exist."<sup>52</sup>

And finally, Babelian features affect the reader's interpretation of the way cinema and its world are regarded in the novel. In chapter 8, Ricardo complains about the intricacies of film production and in chapter 5 about the distance between what he writes and what the directors make of it. He describes his job like a frustrating collective process wherein talks and verbal exchanges of all kinds interfere too much. None of those complaints remains in the film; at least none remains in an explicit way. But one should not forget here that *Le Mépris* includes some transnational filming sessions of *The Odyssey* directed by Fritz Lang. These sequences, and especially the last one, draw a mixed picture of the seventh art's world. On one hand, spectators hear from the shooting set an impressive and pleasant symphony composed of different verbal tunes. After all, cinema is a cosmopolitan world and therefore a fascinating one. On the other hand, this combination seems to vindicate Ricardo's dislike of the film industry (the very dislike on which Moravia dwelt). Indeed, in the last sequence, Fritz Lang is asked whether he is ready, and it takes some time from the moment he says "yes" until the filming actually starts; for, in the interval, the director's instruction has to find its way through at least three different languages: "Kamera", says Lang; "Moteur", says his assistant (Godard); "Motore", repeats the Italian translator; "Partito", "Clap" etc.,<sup>53</sup> and there it eventually goes... Isn't that string of words a metaphor for film making as a complex, heavy and slow machine (at least big productions like the one Battista produces in the novel or even the one Godard is directing here on both levels of the *mise en abyme*, since no other film he has made before looked more like a Hollywood production than this one)? And eventually, does not it give credit to Ricardo's preference for a more straightforward way of cre-

<sup>50</sup> MORAVIA: *op. cit.* 60. ("Emilia [...], con tono lamentoso, quasi struggente, mi domanda dove sia stato tutto quel tempo")

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 266 ("nel quale il denaro non contava e il linguaggio era rimasto integro").

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* ("que non esisteva").

<sup>53</sup> GODARD: *op. cit.* 86.

ating: writing books (such as the one we are supposed to read or maybe, in the film, the one we see Paul typewriting at home in a very casual way before the argument scene with Camille<sup>54</sup>)? Thus, *Le Mépris* partly illustrates through code-switching and multilingualism (*vs* monolingualism) an artistic conception set out in Moravia's novel. But meanwhile, doing so, it cannot help reinforcing the glamor of film making, as well as, in some other ways, it contributes to nourish the "Mythe Bardot."

The two linguistic features surveyed here tend sometimes to imply ideas that were explicit in *Il disprezzo* and, sometimes, on the contrary, to put in a prominent position some meanings that were hardly noticeable in the novel or simply suggested there. They can partake of a more general reinterpretation process, like the flattering light cast on the film director's character.

### *Godard's Playfulness as a Conclusion*

Answering our initial questions led us to deal with meanings that had already been discussed in some other studies focused on the film's other features. It must be so, since our first purpose was to show how multilingualism and code-switching produce or underline such meaning as, for instance, the psychological gap between every character. But, on the way, we found some strange cases of understanding between them despite the linguistic barrier: on some rare and brief occasions when Paul and Camille hear the American producer, they overcome it; and on one occasion, as if he understood what the wife is thinking of her husband's decision to let her go with him in his car, Prokosch happens to articulate in foreign words her unspoken and maybe unconscious question, a crucial one for her sentimental life. These rare cases make the communication process look even more mysterious. As for the political and cultural ideas associated with the various languages involved, it appeared that *Le Mépris* reasserts certain associations and questions some others (when they are not the same ones). Through multilingualism it outlines the central place that people's mental representations enjoyed in *Il disprezzo*'s semantic structures. Yet, it doesn't transpose their oppositions in a simplistic fashion: Jerry Prokosch, confined in his native language, and the polyglot Fritz Lang are driven by different mental representations; but so are Paul and Camille, although they are supposed to speak the same language. The former opposition is not exactly congruent with the latter, because mental representations are not shaped only by languages. And *Le Mépris* reminded its spectators, in the Sixties, that movies play a major part in that shaping process, while it provided them with a more up-to-date understanding of *Il disprezzo*'s characters and themes. But its Babelian multilingualism doesn't only serve to embody a tragic vision of love and human relationships. And codeswitching, with the typical impression of estrangement it

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 58.

produces on spectators, also seems to belong to Godard's playful, inventive and liberated cinematic world, as some humoristic examples of Francesca's translation have shown here. To them we could apply what Jonathan Gross writes about filmic and literary references in the film:

*Le Mépris* overlays quotations and references in a way that does not straightforwardly lament the distance from the original. Enjoyment is taken in playing with and mingling these texts. The inevitable failure to reach the 'original', to fully 'retain the sense', frees the film to invoke and transform.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Jonathan GROSS, "In Translation: reconceptualizing 'home' through *Le Mépris* and its source texts". MACCABE–MULVEY: *op. cit.* 168–178, 175.

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### Abstract

*Among the studies focused on Le Mépris, multilingualism and code-switching have not drawn enough attention. This article brings answers to the following questions: what major part do these two features of the film play in the meaning-making? What political and cultural values or ideas does Godard’s film convey through them? And what light do they cast on the novel adapted here? Multilingualism and code-switching play a major part in representing human relationships, as they bear witness here of a Babelian collapse that occurs after the opening scene and affects every protagonist. Each of the four languages spoken conveys some specific ideas often associated with it, so that the film sketches a kind of cultural map of the early 1960’s world. But meanwhile, the way they are used questions some of those associations. Besides, by making a multilingual film from a monolingual text, Godard casts a fresh light on Moravia’s novel Il disprezzo. He underlines some of the characters’ features, the misunderstanding between them, and draws a mixed picture of the “movie world”. Finally, he uses languages in his own inventive and playful way, which mitigates the Babelian darkness of his film.*

**Keywords:** intermediality, film adaptation, multilingualism, J.L. Godard



Az *Il disprezzo* című regénytől A megvetés című filmig.  
Többnyelvűség és kódváltás Jean-Luc Godard filmjében  
Rezümé

A megvetés című filmről készült elemzésekben nem kapott elég figyelmet a többnyelvűség és a kódváltás. Tanulmányom az alábbi kérdésekre kínál választ: milyen jelentésképző szerepet tölt be ez a két sajátossága a filmnek? Milyen politikai és kulturális értékeket és gondolatokat közvetít általuk Godard filmje? És milyen fényt vetnek az adaptáció alapjául szolgáló regényre? A többnyelvűségnek és kódváltásnak nagy szerepe van emberi kapcsolatok ábrázolásában, mert arról a bábeli zűrzavarról tanúskodnak, amely a nyitójelenet után következik és minden főszereplőre hatást gyakorol. Mind a négy nyelv életre hívja azokat a képzettársításokat, amelyeket hozzájuk szoktunk kapcsolni, és így a film egyfajta kulturális térképet rajzol az 1960-as évek elejének világáról. Viszont az, ahogy a rendező ezeket a nyelveket használja, részben meg is kérdőjelezi az ismert képzettársításokat. Ráadásul azáltal, hogy egy egynyelvű szövegből többnyelvű filmet készít, Godard új fényben tünteti fel Moravia *Il disprezzo* című regényét is. Felerősíti néhány szereplő karakterét és a köztük lévő félreértéseket, és vegyes képet fest a "mozi világról". A különböző nyelveket találékony és játékos módon használja, ami enyhíti saját filmjének bábeli zűrzavarát.

**Kulcsszavak:** intermedialitás, filmadaptáció, multilingualizmus, J.L. Godard

ALEKSEJ TIKHONOV

## Translanguaging and Reflection on Language Realities in the Lyrics of German Rap Artists with an East Slavonic Background in the 21st Century

### Introduction

Since the conferment of an honorary doctorate upon rapper Kanye West in 2015<sup>1</sup> and the awarding of the Pulitzer Prize to Kendrick Lamar in 2018,<sup>2</sup> rap has not only achieved mainstream recognition but also emerged as the most dynamic form of musical expression, exerting significant influence on the economic, cultural, and political landscapes in the United States, Germany, and many other countries.<sup>3</sup> Rap artists, frequently originating from socioeconomically underprivileged backgrounds,<sup>4</sup> assume the role of opinion leaders and employ their widespread reach among predominantly youthful audiences to address social and political issues. Consequently, they often become the voice of marginalized young individuals.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, the linguistic elements employed in rap lyrics and their semantic implications can serve as a response to prevailing social and political concerns, as exemplified by the initial quotation from the presented study: “Hier, wo Keiner Deutsch lernt,<sup>German</sup> welcome to Kreuzberg<sup>English</sup>”<sup>6</sup>

The quote above serves as the guiding principle for this article as musician Capital Bra’s lyrics show several dimensions of the research focus of this study. The lyrical identity of the rapper assumes that nobody in the Berlin district

<sup>1</sup> T. OWOSEJE: “Kanye West’s Honorary Doctorate Rescinded by Prestigious Chicago Art College”. CNN, 9 December 2022, [cnn.com/style/article/kanye-west-honorary-degree-rescinded-intl-scli/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/style/article/kanye-west-honorary-degree-rescinded-intl-scli/index.html), accessed 9 January 2024. In 2022, the Chicago Art College revoked his honorary title due to the expression of racist and anti-Semitic sentiments.

<sup>2</sup> The Pulitzer Prizes: DAMN. by Kendrick Lamar, 2018. [pulitzer.org/winners/kendrick-lamar](https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/kendrick-lamar), accessed 9 January 2024.

<sup>3</sup> M. R. HODGMAN: “Class, Race, Credibility, and Authenticity within the Hip-Hop Music Genre”. *Journal of Sociological Research* 2013/4.2. 402. DOI: 10.5296/jsr.v4i2.4503; M. GIBSON: “‘That’s Hip-Hop to Me!’: Race, Space, and Temporal Logics of Authenticity in Independent Cultural Production”. *Poetics* 2014/46.1. 38–55. DOI: 10.1016/j.poetic.2014.09.002; M. AHLERS: “Kollegah the Boss: A Case Study of Persona, Types of Capital, and Virtuosity in German Gangsta Rap”. *Popular Music* 38.3 (October 2019). 457–80. DOI: 10.1017/S0261143019000473.

<sup>4</sup> A. MCCOY: “Rap Music”. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.287.

<sup>5</sup> P. J. KUTTNER: “Hip-Hop Citizens: Arts-Based, Culturally Sustaining Civic Engagement Pedagogy”. *Harvard Educational Review* 2016/86.4. 527–55. DOI: 10.17763/1943-5045-86.4.527.

<sup>6</sup> “Here, where nobody is learning German, welcome to Kreuzberg” (Capital Bra „Deutlich genug” feat. King Khalil (2016).

of Kreuzberg<sup>7</sup> speaks or learns German. The hyperbolic representation of the language situation in Kreuzberg is intended to point out that German is neither the single language of communication, nor is it a necessary language in this district of Berlin. After this statement, listeners are welcomed in English. The title of the song, *Deutlich genug* (Clear enough), and the lyrics highlight the fact that the rapper was singled out for his incoherent or incorrect German in the past (as was his colleague King Khalil, with whom he recorded the song). The lyrics therefore express how the two musicians are now heard and understood, regardless of how clear and grammatically correct their German is.

Wladislaw Balowazki, known by the stage name Capital Bra, was born in Russia in 1994. A few years later, he moved with his family to Ukraine and finally to Berlin, where he was socialized. His featured artist in the song is the Berlin-born German-Lebanese rapper King Khalil. The linguistic constellation found in the song *Deutlich genug* (Clear enough) arises from a combination of diverse heritage languages and cultural backgrounds, as well as socialization in Berlin's German-speaking environment. This constellation is characterized by multilingual practices and a dynamic code-switching between German and English, and it is semantically referring to German not being the mother tongue of most of the citizens in the multicultural district of Berlin-Kreuzberg.

The case study analyses the use of translingual resources in the lyrics of the three most popular German rappers with an East Slavonic language background. In combination with the semantic connotations of the relevant language(s) and projected attitudes towards language realities in Germany, the corpus case study focuses on two questions:

According to the statements made by the rappers in the lyrics, what role do the individual languages and word choice play for themselves and in German society?

What does the rappers' translingual behaviour look like in their lyrics compared to their statements about the languages and communication in the same lyrics?

After explaining why German-East Slavonic rappers are the focus of the study and summarizing the state of research on the subject, I will answer these two research questions using methods of corpus linguistics. An outline of the language biographies of the respective rappers (Capital Bra, Olexesh, Antifuchs) is also part of the supplementary data of this study.

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<sup>7</sup> The census of the district administration from 2019 states that of the more than 290,000 inhabitants of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, around 43% have a so-called *migration background* or *individual migration history*. Nevertheless, refugees and people from post-Soviet and post-Yugoslavian countries are not included in the 43%. ([berlin.de/ba-friedrichshain-kreuzberg/politik-und-verwaltung/beauftragte/integration/zuwanderung/](https://berlin.de/ba-friedrichshain-kreuzberg/politik-und-verwaltung/beauftragte/integration/zuwanderung/) accessed January 31, 2023)

*Why East Slavonic Languages?*

In German rap (*Deutschrap*) lyrics, multilingual practices provide one of the current topical issues, alongside the general marginalization of the genre, its artists, and its audience since the 1990s. Turkish-/Kurdish-German musicians have especially been under the scrutiny of critics.<sup>8</sup> The Kurdish-German rapper Haftbefehl was particularly innovative in the first half of the 2010s, becoming the first commercially successful artist to use code-switching in ways previously unseen by the German public. Switching between languages was fast, spontaneous, creative, with no apparent dominance of one language, and composed as poetry which not everyone may readily understand.<sup>9</sup> The multilingual practice of translanguaging with no, or a flat, prestige hierarchy can be seen as an extension of the code-switching phenomenon in which the focus is on the language users, not on the difference between language use and the standard defined in grammar books. Thus, the concept of translanguaging is redefining the interrelation between bilingualism and monolingualism, where bi- or multilingualism is the typical language constellation on the individual level and questions the perspective on language as a distinct entity.<sup>10</sup>

Since the beginning of the 2010s, German rappers with Slavonic backgrounds have become increasingly popular. The reason for the time lag between the popularization of Turkish and Kurdish in German rap and the mainly East Slavic languages in German rap is the time of immigration to Germany. Whilst migration from Turkey to (West) Germany started in the 1960s, migration from the (former) Soviet states began in the 1980s. The gap of 20–30 years is also reflected in the spread of languages in *Deutschrap*. In the late 2010s, German rappers born in Ukraine, Russia, and Kazakhstan became more dominant in *Deutschrap*.<sup>11</sup> They brought new linguistic influences to the music genre, primarily through lexical borrowings (or indeed, whole sequences) in Russian, which appear in the lyrics next to text passages in German, English, Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic. Many German artists with Eastern Slavonic backgrounds became counted among the country's most commercially successful rappers. Their language biographies and their translingual practices in the lyrics will be presented and examined in this article.

<sup>8</sup> Ayse S. CAGLAR, "Popular Culture, Marginality, and Institutional Incorporation: German-Turkish Rap and Turkish Pop in Berlin". *Cultural dynamics* 10.3 (1998), 245.

<sup>9</sup> Małgorzata DERECKA, "Sprachspielerei oder bewusster Sprachwechsel? Code-Switching, Bricolagen und Hybridbildungen im Gangsta-Rap von Haftbefehl". *Linguistische Treffen in Wrocław* 19.1 (2021), 53–62.

<sup>10</sup> Ofelia GARCIA – Li WEI, *Translanguaging language, bilingualism and education*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> 34.6% of Kazakhstan's population speak one of the East Slavonic languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, or Polish (a West Slavonic language) (Juldyz SMAGULOVA, "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use". *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* [2008], 442).

*State of Research*

Cotgrove was the first researcher who extensively examined the multilingual practices in Deutschrapp in the 21st century whilst considering East Slavonic languages. In addition to a detailed description of how multiethnolects in Germany developed under the influence of Turkish and Arabic, he also takes nine rappers of different origins into account. One of the nine artists has a Slavonic migration background: Capital Bra.<sup>12</sup> Tikhonov's pilot study was focused on German rappers with a West and East Slavonic language background. He analysed lyrics by the Polish-German rappers Schwesta Ewa and Krime, and the Ukrainian-Russian-German rappers Capital Bra and Olexesh. The study compared West Slavonic and East Slavonic influences, and the identity models projected throughout multilingual language use. Like Cotgrove, Tikhonov concluded that hybrid identities are directly formed through language behaviour. One of the main findings was the frequent contextualization of international politics in the artists' lyrics with Ukrainian and Russian backgrounds, whilst the rappers with a Polish background were revealed as apolitical and hardly relating to Poland as their homeland. Capital Bra sympathizes with Putin, yet at the same time criticizes the war in Ukraine.<sup>13</sup> In 2021, Havryliv explored East and South Slavonic pejoratives loaned from rap lyrics into the colloquial spoken register of pupils in Vienna. The main sources for the lexical borrowings were the lyrics and social media postings of the rappers Capital Bra, Olexesh, and the influencer Slavik. The central finding here was that pupils in Vienna spontaneously use lexis from several Slavonic languages, Turkish, English, Arabic, and Farsi as a natural way of communication in a multicultural society, which also improves intercultural understanding, meaning less potential for conflict as a monolingual communication.<sup>14</sup>

*The Choice of Rappers & Lyrics*

The selection of the relevant musicians must have clear reasons because, apart from the musicians analyzed in the article, other German rap artists are also bi- or multilingual, having similar or comparable levels of German and one or more East Slavonic languages. Four selection criteria back up the relevance of rappers for this analysis: (i) the artist or one of her/his parents has an East Slavonic migration history, (ii) an official account represents the artist on YouTube and Spotify, (iii) the

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<sup>12</sup> Louis Alexander COTGROVE: "The Importance of Linguistic Markers of Identity and Authenticity in German Gangsta Rap". *Journal of Languages, Texts, and Society* 2 (2018), 67–98.

<sup>13</sup> Aleksej TIKHONOV: "Multilingualism and Identity: Polish and Russian Influences in German Rap". *Multietnica: Journal of the Hugo Valentin Centre*, 2020, 55–66. DOI: 10.33063/diva-437458.

<sup>14</sup> Oksana HAVRYLIV: "‘Fuck Oida!’ Entlehnungen im Bereich der Pejorativa bei Wiener SchülerInnen". *Germanistische Mitteilungen* 47 (2021), 171–197. DOI: 10.33675/GM/2021/47/11.

artist has at least one video on YouTube with at least 1 million views, (iv) the artist has at least one song on Spotify with at least 250,000 streams.

Considering these four criteria, the analysis is intended to ensure that the selection of musicians is objective and does not represent a marginal phenomenon but can very well be viewed as a trend. This procedure makes it clear that the musicians address a broad audience with their music and lyrics.

Capital Bra was born in Russia in 1994. His family moved to Dnipro (eastern Ukraine) a few years later. In the early 2000s, his family finally moved to Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, where the rapper was socialized. Olexesh was born in Kyiv in 1988. In 1994 he moved to Darmstadt-Kranichstein with his Ukrainian mother, where he grew up. Antifuchs was born in the Kazakh city of Taraz in 1989 and came to Flensburg at the age of one with her Russian-German family. The rappers Capital Bra and Olexesh thus show similar language biographies. Both spent their early childhood in the Ukrainian-Russian environment and then grew up in German cities, where their environment was mainly multilingual due to the social structure of their residential districts. German, English, Ukrainian, Russian, Arabic, and Turkish played a role in their youth. Antifuchs, on the other hand, came to Germany as a baby and acquired Russian skills in Germany in a family environment. Multilingualism also played a role in her language biography, though less intensively than it did for Capital Bra and Olexesh. In the case of Antifuchs, her youth consisted of a German-Russian environment at home contrasting with a German environment outside of the home. English, Turkish, and Arabic also play a minor role in the urban context of Flensburg.

To ensure the objectivity of the lyrics' choice, all official songs released by the artists between 2010 and 2021 will be included in the corpus. Of course, the relevant artists have also released songs since 2021. However, as the DRaKoSlavEast 2021 corpus was completed for the analysis, the data represents the corresponding period. Analysis of the corpus version completed in 2021 was performed in 2022 at the Code-switching in Arts conference between September 29 and October 1, 2022.

### *Corpus Design*

The 0.5-version of the DRaKoSlav corpus **DRaKoSlavEast (Deutsch Rap Korpus Slavic Edition East)** (2021) consists of lyrics of 400 songs from official albums, mixtapes, and EPs by the three artists. With regard to the distribution of the lyrics per artist, the corpus is composed as follows:

■ Olexesh (204 songs; 51 %) ■ Capital Bra (143 songs; 36 %) ■ Antifuchs (53 songs; 13 %)



The varying quantity of songs per artist may give the impression of unbalanced data; for example, there is a large contrast between the 204 song lyrics by Olexesh and the 53 by Antifuchs included in the corpus. However, the corpus remains representative. DRaKoSlavEast contains lyrics of all songs released under the present artists' pseudonyms since the beginning of their careers in the early 2010s and up to 2021. The inclusion of all lyrics written by the rappers guarantees the utmost accuracy of the data, thereby ensuring the reliability of the analysis. The exact size of the corpus is 230,349 tokens, 182,166 words, and 2,014 sentences. The number of the used lemma is 14,016. The data was annotated as German txt-files on the SketchEngine platform with the RFTagger on the syntactic and morphological level.<sup>15</sup> The assignment of the word forms to certain POS classes is based on the automatic evaluation of the common suffixes and lower and upper cases. Since the tagger was trained and evaluated on standard language texts, lexicon of the substandard falls into the category of unique word forms or unknown words. These are expressions such as *Bratans* ('Brother<sub>Russian</sub> + S<sub>German plural masculine affix nominative</sub>'), which are not yet considered standard German, but are still recognized by the tagger as nouns. So, if *Bratans* occurs often enough, is capitalized, and includes the plural masculine inflection affix <-s>, it is counted as a noun following German grammar.

The search in the corpus works in various ways. Users can search for specific word forms, phrases, (sub)clauses, grammatical categories (tags or combinations of tags), lemmas, or keyword combinations for a specific topic. For example, in the present article, the topic that has to do with language was analysed. The complication is that German spellings of language (*Sprache*) and to speak (*sprechen*) differs through the vocal <a> and <e> in the root, and through the derivation affixes <-e> and <-en>, but the nominative form and the infinitive as well as their paradigm should be included in one search request in the corpus. Corpus Query Language (CQL) enables the combined and simultaneous search query, including both lemmas: [word="Sprach.\*| sprach.\*| Sprech.\*|sprech.\*"]. This search query includes all word forms that start with the letters <sprach> or <sprech> and continue with any number and combination of letters. This method ensures the counting of word forms even if they are capitalized or not. The same applies to the possible alternative spelling of the noun with a small first letter, which may happen, for example, due to a mistake in the transliteration of the lyrics. The concordance result presentation on SketchEngine includes all found keywords with left and right contexts, the tracking of the original song file in the corpus, the absolute number of hits, the relative number of hits in instances per million tokens (i.p.m.), and the percent of the whole corpus. DRaKoSlavEast and its previous versions<sup>16</sup> are already freely available under certain conditions at SketchEngine.

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<sup>15</sup> Helmut SCHMID and Florian LAWS: "Estimation of Conditional Probabilities with Decision Trees and an Application to Fine-Grained POS Tagging" *COLING 2008* (2008), 777-784, [aclanthology.org/Co8-1098](http://aclanthology.org/Co8-1098).

<sup>16</sup> DRaKoSlav 0.1 (East & West Slavonic) (2019/2020): lyrics from the albums of Capital Bra, Olexesh,

*Keywords in Context (KWIC)*

The KWIC analysis consists of two semantic areas: (i) language itself and the act of speaking; (ii) specific languages relevant to the subject of the study (German, Ukrainian, Russian). Search queries of both categories have relevant and irrelevant results, of which the relative frequency in i.p.m. is measured.

Category (i) contains 171.3 i.p.m. throughout the corpus. Of these, 24.5 are relevant for the analysis. The respective languages in category (ii) have given the following frequencies:

	German	Ukrainian	Russian
relevant	31,5 i.p.m.	3,5 i.p.m.	10,5 i.p.m.
total	206,2 i.p.m.	17,5 i.p.m.	160,8 i.p.m.

When considering the results quantitatively, the keywords *language*, *to speak*, and the *German language* turn out to be of a high frequency compared with the results for Ukrainian and Russian. In the next step, the interpretation of the results changes from the quantitative to the qualitative level. The individual, particularly relevant hits from the corpus, will be examined more closely.

In the song “HaHaHaHa” featuring Hanybal (2015), Olexesh poses the question, “Listen to what I’m telling you! Do you understand my language?” referring to the same sociolinguistic complex as Capital Bra 2016 cited in the introduction of this article. In addition to the line quoted in the introduction, Capital Bra explicitly reacts to the experience of not being understood with aggression: *Wie, mein Deutsch ist nicht deutlich? Das wär’ echt nicht gut! // Ich ficke deine Mutter. Ist das deutlich genug?* (What, my German isn’t clear? It isn’t really good! // I fuck your mother! Is that clear enough?) (“Deutlich genug” (Clear enough) featuring King Khalil) (2016). In this context, the experience of unsuccessful communication in German justifies excessive retaliation. The skill of speaking German thus also becomes a key feature of Capital Bra’s language biography. One year before Capital Bra, Olexesh (as the first East Slavonic German rapper) projects his experience of not being understood in a new country onto his lyrical self and simultaneously indicates that he wants to be heard and understood. Since its emergence in the 1970s, rap culture has been shaped by the fact that rappers have to carry a certain amount of credibility in their lyrics to be respected and accepted within the scene. This peculiarity of rap lyrics presupposes, in most cases,

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Schwesta Ewa & Krime, 137.798 tokens, presented at the Sheffield Postgraduate Conference in Linguistics: Linguistic Variation and Identity 2019, University of Sheffield, published in ΤΙΚΗΘΝΟΝ, *op. cit.* DRaKoSlav 0.2 (East & South Slavonic) (2021): lyrics from the albums of Capital Bra, Olexesh, Čelo & Haze, presented at the LTS Conference 2021: Responding to Conflict, Crisis and Change, University of Nottingham.



the equalization of the lyrical I and the actual I.<sup>17</sup> Contrary to Roland Barthes, in this case, the author of the (rap)poems is not dead but alive and deliberately overrides the boundary between the literary and non-literary text.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the rapper and his social environment experienced the situations described in the lyrics. A year later, Olexesh describes his everyday communication in the song “64 Kammern” (2016) as *Ich spreche alle Sprachen* (I speak all languages). In doing so, he first subtly introduces the topic of multilingualism in his lyrics. He cements this further in his song “Sag mir, auf was stehst du” (Tell me, what do you like) featuring Mosh36 & Veysel (2018). Through a monolingual hyperbola, he introduces a text sequence in which he uses five languages<sup>19</sup> or translanguing word forms within two lines and nine word forms:

Red‘ nicht zwanzig Sprachen<sub>German</sub>,  
 Rap<sub>German</sub> – Amore<sub>Italian</sub>, БЛЯТЬ<sub>Russian</sub>  
 Häng‘ mit<sub>German</sub> Bratans<sub>Russian+German</sub> hier im Club<sub>German</sub><sup>20</sup>

In addition to German, Russian, Italian, and English, Olexesh also uses the translanguing form *Bratans*, combining the Russian stem with the German plural affix. Olexesh can also consciously set boundaries between languages and switch between monolingual and translanguing lyrics. This observation becomes clear in the next monolingual example in German, which also addresses the German language: *Der erste Tag beginnt, // Einschulung, deutsche Sprache, // Doch sagte Mutter, // Dass ich damals schon ‘ne Eins versprach* (The first day begins, // School enrolment, German language, // My mom said // that I promised an A back then) (“Lebendig begraben” (Buried alive) (2014)). The rapper is not only referring to the German language but also to German as a school subject, for which he promised his mother that he would only get the best grades.

Quantitatively compared to German and generally to the act of speaking, Ukrainian and Russian play a minor role in the lyrics analyzed; however, a qualitative analysis should clarify the relevance of the text passages for the study. In his 2014 song *Nu pagadi* (Well, just you wait) Olexesh mentions and uses the Russian language for the first time:

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Levin BECKER: “On the first person”. in Daniel Levin BECKER: *What’s good: Notes on Rap and Language*, San Francisco, City Lights Publishers, 2022, 150–156.

<sup>18</sup> R. BARTHES: “The Death of the Author”. In D. FINKELSTEIN – A. MCCLEERY, (eds.): *The Book History Reader*, London – New York, Routledge, 2003, 221–24.

<sup>19</sup> The fifth language is English, which is only expressed through the borrowed word forms <rap> and <club>. The word forms are used organically in German and may no longer be recognized as foreign words.

<sup>20</sup> [ ] don’t speak twenty languages // Rap – love, shit, // Chilling with brothers in the club.

Вот в начале, чё ты паришь,<sup>Russian</sup>  
 Erster Track auf Russisch mach ich,<sup>German</sup>  
 Deep<sup>English</sup>, hör den Slawen Rap,<sup>German</sup>  
 Er geht mir durch den Kopf,<sup>German</sup>  
 И мне хуй на ментов,<sup>Russian</sup>  
 Ich kenn kein Stop<sup>German</sup><sup>21</sup>

With these lines, Olexesh raps about his ability to rap in Russian, whilst simultaneously demonstrating his language skills. He uses, among other things, vulgar lexis of Russian. Antifuchs also uses vulgar Russian in her song *1989* (2018), not only referring to her use of the language, but also to her family's Russian:

Aufgewachsen zwischen Digga, kaltem Wind und  
 bisschen platt Russisch fluchenden Verwandten,<sup>German</sup>  
 Иди нахуй, сука, блять!<sup>Russian</sup><sup>22</sup>

In his song *Ballert* (Banging) (2018), Capital Bra refers to the phonological peculiarities of his oral realization of a consonant, namely the pronunciation of the voiced alveolar vibrant in a manner consistent with Ukrainian. Once again, the rapper draws here the attention to the clarity or unambiguousness of his language expression, and he is aware of the pronunciation difference from standard German. However, he does not try to hide or adapt it to standard German, instead emphasizing it and thus making it the trademark of his recitative:

Rollendes R, ukrainischer Stil,<sup>German</sup> Bra,<sup>Russian</sup>  
 Wer hat hier Hunger, sag', wer ist hier<sup>German</sup> real?<sup>English</sup><sup>23</sup>

Although contexts of Ukrainian and Russian are rare, they can be considered relevant to the study. It is noteworthy that all three musicians had addressed the two languages at roughly the same stages of their careers: at the beginning of their careers in the mid-2010s and in the turning point year for German rap, 2018, when rap finally arrived the mainstream of the German music landscape.

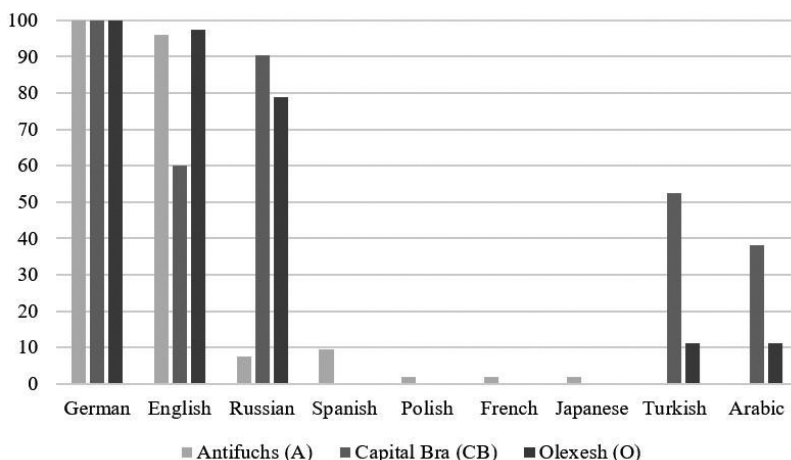
.....  
<sup>21</sup> That's the beginning, why are you bothering me, // I do my first track in Russian, // Deep, listen to the Slavonic rap, // It's going through my head, // And I don't give a fuck about the cops, // I don't know how to stop.

<sup>22</sup> Growing up between [the word] homie, a cold wind and // relatives swearing a little lumpish in Russian // Fuck off, bitch shit!

<sup>23</sup> Rolling the R, Ukrainian style, Bro, // Who's hungry here, tell me who's real here?

*Language Statistics*

The relevant quotes, in which the rappers comment on individual languages and the role of languages, have shown this to be a relevant topic to them. Nevertheless, it remains a conclusion based on a few statements, and its validity can be questioned. As a further step in the investigation, the distribution of specific languages in the lyrics is examined to determine how multilingual the musicians are. The results of the quantitative investigation step of the distribution of languages in the lyrics are:



All three musicians use German in 100% of the lyrics. English is also heavily used – Antifuchs and Olexesh use English in over 95% of the lyrics. Capital Bra is the only one who uses Russian more often than English. He uses Russian in 91% of the lyrics and English in 60%. Antifuchs uses Russian the least – in about 7% of the lyrics. She uses Spanish more often – in 9% of her lyrics – also Polish, French, and Japanese. Capital Bra and Olexesh (the former especially) often use Turkish and Arabic. Capital Bra uses the two languages in 40 and 54% of his lyrics, and Olexesh in 12% of the lyrics.

The interesting observation in the statistics is that Capital Bra and Olexesh behave similarly for the three most commonly used languages, although there is also a slight difference here: Capital Bra, who grew up in the outskirts of eastern Berlin, uses English much less often than Russian. Olexesh, on the other hand, was socialized in the western part of Germany and uses English far more often than Russian. Antifuchs, who never really lived in Kazakhstan and was socialized in northern Germany, hardly ever uses Russian. However, English and a diversity of languages are relevant to her lyrics. It is also worth noting that Russian is the most common language in relation to Capital Bra after German, but Turkish and Arabic are also more common than for the other two rappers. This statement

can also be attributed to the social and business environment in which he was socialized as a young adult in Berlin-Kreuzberg and other Berlin districts in the city's center and West.

### *Conclusion and Outlook*

At the beginning of this article, a new trend in German rap was presented – the growing influence of rappers of East Slavonic origin since the mid-2010s. From the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, apart from English, mainly Turkish and Arabic dominated German rap. One of the new East Slavonic rappers – Capital Bra – even became the most successful musician in Germany in the 21st century, remaining so to this day. In line with this trend, the respective languages also play an increasingly important role in the genre, society, and in pop culture in general. The first research question was derived from this: According to the statements made by the rappers in the lyrics, what role do the individual languages play for themselves and in German society?

The qualitative corpus-linguistic study has shown that the competence of the German language is an integral part of the lyrics – all analysed rappers have topicalized their socialization in a multilinguistic context, dominated by German but incorporating their Slavonic family's language, English, and other minority languages commonly spoken in Germany (first and foremost Turkish and Arabic). Above all, the ability to express oneself verbally in an understandable way is a central topic. Independently of one another, the rappers' experience of not being understood is a recurring topic in their songs, because their German does not correspond to standard German. It might be due to other reasons, e.g. expressing identity, a sense of belonging, not necessarily competence. The experience is processed in the lyrics in various ways – from a proud announcement that the musician is now rapping in German and is heard by everyone (Olexesh) to aggressive statements about this experience and the rhetorical question of whether one is now understood as a famous musician (Capital Bra). Overall, the act of speaking and how the recipient of the communication situation receives the message plays an essential role in the lyrics.

Russian and Ukrainian also play a role in the lyrics, albeit a smaller one if you use quantitative methods. Both languages are mainly used and contextualized as languages in which the rappers (Olexesh) can still rap alongside German and English or as a trademark in the phonetic realization of the lyrics in German with a Ukrainian pronunciation of consonants (Capital Bra). However, Russian is also presented as a language only spoken in the family (Antifuchs).

The second research question was intended to examine this result more closely and show whether and how the qualitatively determined conclusions correspond to quantitative data on the language behavior of the rappers. Therefore, the question

was asked: What does the rappers' translingual behavior look like in their lyrics compared to their statements about the languages and communication in the same lyrics?

As expected, German is the most common language in the lyrics. All three musicians use it in 100% of the lyrics. For other languages, the results are more variable. Capital Bra, who was born in Russia and grew up in Ukraine and East Berlin, is the only one who uses Russian more often than English. Turkish appears in his lyrics almost as often (about 54% of the lyrics) as in English (60% of the lyrics). It is different in the lyrics of Olexesh, where Turkish (about 12% of the lyrics) appears rarely, and in the lyrics of Antifuchs not at all. Compared to Olexesh and Capital Bra, for Antifuchs, Russian is more of a family language and is hardly used at all (less than 10% of the lyrics). However, Antifuchs shows a broader range of languages in the lyrics than her male colleagues – seven languages.

Overall, the evidence supports the theory that the country of origin plays a lesser role in translanguaging. The age at which the person came to Germany plays a more significant role. Olexesh and Capital Bra attended kindergarten in Ukraine, whilst Antifuchs migrated to Germany as an infant. Accordingly, Olexesh and Capital Bra identify themselves much more with Ukrainian (and Russian) than Antifuchs and show it qualitatively and quantitatively in their lyrics. The place of socialization also plays a role. While Olexesh and Capital Bra grew up in multicultural districts of major German cities, Antifuchs grew up in a smaller town where German was the dominant language. From this, the observation about the use of Turkish and Arabic in the lyrics seems to be logical – both languages play a role above all in Capital Bra's lyrics, yet they are also relevant (although not dominant) in Olexesh's lyrics. The quantitative analysis of the findings indicates that rappers not only address the concept of a multicultural and multilingual society from the semantic point of view but also actively portray it through their linguistic choices in lyrics. A pertinent example is Capital Bra, whose upbringing in the culturally diverse city of Berlin, having been born in Russia and raised in Ukraine and Germany, has imbued Turkish with a significance comparable to that of English in terms of lyrical language usage.

Future steps for the investigation would be to supplement the corpus with data from West Slavonic German rappers and to carry out a detailed gender-linguistic analysis of translanguaging language behavior. Furthermore, rappers without a Slavonic background should be included to create a comparative value. In addition, the study should include a detailed morphological and syntactical analysis of translanguaging phenomena in the lyrics to explore the functioning of translanguaging more deeply.

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### Abstract

*Multilingual diversity in German rap music has been marginalized since the 1990s. In the late 2010s German-Ukrainian-Russian rapper Capital Bra drew much attention to rap in Germany after making 13 number-one chart hits in 12 months, becoming the most popular German artist of the 21st century. Despite this fact, research on linguistic diversity in rap has yet to be conducted. A corpus of lyrics from 400 songs by three German-East Slavonic rappers – Antifuchs, Capital Bra, and Olexesh – forms the basis for the analysis. The songs are from the 2010s and early 2020s and total a count of 230,349 tokens. All three rappers are of Ukrainian, (Ukrainian-)Russian, or (Kazakh-)Russian origin. The lyrics are analysed with qualitative and quantitative methods of corpus-linguistics to find out how relevant languages and translanguaging are for the rappers and how they perform translanguaging in their lyrics.*

**Keywords:** German rap, multilingualism, East Slavonic artists, lyrics

### *Transzlingválás és a nyelvi valóság megjelenítése*

*keleti szláv származású német rapzenészek dalszövegeiben a 21. században*

### *Rezümé*

*A német rapzenében az 1990-es évek óta háttérbe szorult a többnyelvűség. Azonban a 2010-es évek végén az német–ukrán–orosz származású Capital Bra a rapre irányította a figyelmet Németországban, miután egy év alatt 13 dala került fel a slágerlista élére, és ezzel a legnépszerűbb német előadóművészé vált. Ennek ellenére a rapzene nyelvi sokszínűségéről még nem készült kutatás. A jelen tanulmányban vizsgált korpusz három német-keleti szláv művész: Antifuchs, Capital Bra és Olexesh 400 dalának szövegéből áll, amelyek 2010 és a 2020-as évek eleje között születtek és összesen 230.349 tokenszámúak. A három művész ukrán, ukrán–orosz és kazah származású. A dalszövegeiket a korpusznyelvészet kvalitatív és kvantitatív módszerével elemzem és arra a kérdésre keresem a választ, hogy mennyire relevánsak ezek a nyelvek és a transzlingválás a zenészek számára, és mindez hogyan jelenik meg a dalszövegeikben.*

**Kulcsszavak:** németrapzene, multilingualizmus, keleti szláv művészek, dalszövegek

BILIANA VASSILEVA

## Code-switching in Choreography

*A Reflection, Based on Immersive Field Notes*

In this study,<sup>1</sup> I will approach the concept of a dance code, defined as an alternative kind of knowledge, distinct from intellectual processes. Mastering dance codes implies somatic awareness, channeled into choreography. The choice of choreographic artworks in the study is based on the creative use of code-switching. It implies multiple interweaving options such as quick shifts in movement dynamics, which allow the coexistence of different body states. The concept of dance code is also used to link choreographic works, via comparisons and analogies, to other contemporary arts research fields such as cultural studies. The latter conceive code-switching as art phenomena.

Dance code as a communication tool can emerge or be understood as such by long-term dedicated investment of effort. In order to understand its potential, researchers in arts studies must harness observation, feeling, sensing, and reading in order to gain some specific knowledge of codes.<sup>2</sup> Some examples of researchers who have actually done this, and to whom the author is responding, are Susan Leigh Foster<sup>3</sup> and Sondra Fraleigh.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the methods applied in this study are observation and reading together with embodied first-person research.

The study results, derived both from the practices of embodying dance and of taking academic field notes, can engage in fruitful discussions about the multiple ways embodiment, corporeality, and somatic intelligence can introduce rigorous methodologies and theories. Code-switching helps to reveal both the benefits and the dangers of the dancer's, the choreographer's, and the researcher's embodiments as artistic ambiguity. The latter occurs often, and it should be discussed as a result of creativity and deep thought.

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to IRET (Institut de Recherche en Etudes Théâtrales), La Sorbonne Nouvelle – Université de Paris 3, for the invitation to the “Agir jazz: Geste créateur / Geste politique” international conference, held in Paris on 23–25 November 2017, organized by Sylvie Chalaye and Pierre Letessier.

<sup>2</sup> In that regard, some of the choreography phrases which have been studied here have also been experienced through embodiment processes by the author as a dancer. The reader will find web links to the choreography works studied below. Other research tools applied in this study are movement and dance composition analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Leigh FOSTER: *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*, Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Sondra Horton FRALEIGH: *Dancing Identity: Metaphysics in Motion*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.



The concept of dance code applied in this study is conceived as an embodied affect, and less as a signification. In order to achieve a deeper understanding of how it is used by the choreographers themselves, in a process of code-switching, some fundamental analysis tools in the fields of dance studies, such as movement analysis and choreography analysis, are applied. These methodology tools approach a dance gesture/posture simultaneously as a structure, sense, and meaning. For instance, the jazz songs quoted in this study are analyzed by the author via the “timbre” of the voice and the choice of particular lyrics, inducing kinesthetic images and worked-out dance gestures (*Macho Dancer*, 2013). The following examples of choreography can help us understand why and how the “traditional” notion of code-switching in linguistics, and the way in which it is adapted to dance, may rely on similar concepts, but it functions in its own specific way, as linguistics is the scientific study of language. The modern study of linguistics is called a science because it entails the comprehensive, systematic, objective, and precise analysis of all aspects of language – cognitive, social, environmental, and biological, as well as structural. According to it, code-switching is the act of changing between two or more languages, dialects (= forms of a language), or accents (= ways of pronouncing words) when you are speaking. Code-switching is common among bilinguals in many communities. Every day, minorities engage in the art of code-switching in order to assimilate into the white majority.

The first piece explored in this study is *Junkie* from *Blues for the Jungle* (1966), by the American choreographer Eleo Pomare, which stages the politics of the Afro-American dancing body.<sup>5</sup> My research focuses on the aesthetic codes he creates in order to represent on stage his own “junkie” character and the code-switching he makes use of, so as to create unity with the other “street problems” personas in the piece. A similar mechanism of code-switching also appears in some dancers’ solos, “ballerinas on crack” in *The Sea Within* by the Belgian choreographer Lisbeth Gruwez (2015).<sup>6</sup> These examples show how the choreographic use of code-switching expresses needs to excavate cultures of ableism, social filters, gender norms, trauma, illness, discomfort, and legal parameters of bodily expression. In regard to that, *Näss (Les Gens)*, by the French choreographer Fouad Boussouf (2018), is discussed as a relationship between cultures of migration, built on non-conventional urban styles of code-switching.<sup>7</sup>

The Filipino choreographer Eisa Jocson’s *Macho Dancer* (2013) is a solo work in which a woman performs *macho dance*.<sup>8</sup> In the Philippines, erotic clubs and bars

<sup>5</sup> Eleo POMARE: *Archive Material*, youtube.com/watch?v=QhLmhuZBshs (12/06/2023); Free to Dance Episode 3: Go for what You Know, *History and influence of African American Dance on the modern culture*, PBS Documentary, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Lisbeth GRUWEZ / VOETVOLK: *The Sea Within*, ImPulsTanz, youtu.be/T8-T1s1DbFk (12/06/2023).

<sup>7</sup> Fouad BOUSSOUF: *Näss (Les Gens)*, *Festival Paris l’Eté*, youtube.com/watch?v=RQzbOow6zew (12/06/2023).

<sup>8</sup> Eisa JOCSO: *Macho Dancer*, Centre National de la Danse / Numerodanse.fr, numeridanse.tv/video-theque-danse/macho-dancer (12/06/2023).

have their own form of dance: that of *macho dancers*, who perform for both men and women. Their performances are based on a specific movement vocabulary and physicality, which can also be perceived as aesthetic codes. In *Macho Dancer*, Eisa Jocson explores this economically motivated language of seduction, using notions of masculinity as body capital, and proposes a version that transgresses gender codes. Alone on stage, she recreates the muscular tension and compact undulations of this dance to a nostalgic musical repertoire from the 1980s and 1990s. Embodying a macho dancer via a process of code-switching, she challenges our perception of sexuality and questions gender as a tool for social mobility.

Code-switching in choreography requires a clear distinction between the *soma* and the body of the dancers. Somatics is the field of research of the soma: in particular, the body as it is perceived from the inside, a perception in the first person. When a human being is observed from the outside, i.e. from the point of view of the third person, it is the manifestation of the human body that is perceived. But when that same human being is observed from the first-person perspective, from their own proprioceptive sensations, a completely different manifestation is perceived: the human soma.<sup>9</sup>

The motion of codeswitching in these pieces is based entirely on primal somatic exploration, which blends with the most elaborate art concepts – abstraction, experimental music. It makes use of the open body forces such as screams, touch and animalistic tunings. Thus, the choreography calls on the openness of interpretation. The works discussed in this study remind us also that code-switching, the practice of alternating between different languages, ways of speaking, conduct, and presentation of self, is often the reality for marginalized groups. Other studies on multilingualism and marginalized groups in 21st century, such as Blommaert, Pennycook and Otsuji, Rosa and Flores, Zhu Hua, offer a deeper contextualization in research fields other than choreography and dance environments/phenomenon.

### *Code-switching via Gender Fluidity and Feminism Complexity*

Performing gender in dance has often been a practice of reversibility, which in some cultures is even a tradition: many contemporary dance companies hold repertoires both of gendered and non-gendered distribution of roles. The concepts of gender and sexuality are modern Western constructs. Sexuality is considered and studied as a specific erotic aspect of human life from the 19th century on. The term “gender” appeared in late 60s in order to differentiate socio-cultural masculine and feminine identities from biological sex. We can refer to many feminist thinkers who discussed this idea such as Judith Butler, Barbara Kruger (quoted below), and others. Many feminist thinkers have popularized the idea of “gender trouble,” Judith Butler

<sup>9</sup> Thomas HANNA: “Qu’est-ce que la somatique?” Traduction de Agnès Benoit-Nader. *Recherches en danse [En ligne]*, 16 juin 2017, 1–10. [journals.openedition.org/danse/1232](https://journals.openedition.org/danse/1232) (12/06/2023).

to begin with.<sup>10</sup> A closer look at what can be considered as “gendered” or “non-gendered” shows the possible reversibility of codes: for instance, the male and the female version of the song “I put a spell on you”. In Garou’s version of the song, the harsh voice is tough but often cracks and admits weakness, while in Joss Stone’s interpretation, even though based on feminine vulnerability, the voice carries on with a considerable amount of power. As mentioned above, the jazz songs quoted in this study are analyzed by the author of the study via the “timbre” of the voice and the choice of particular lyrics, inducing images.

The gendered ensembles and solos in *Blues for the Jungle*, *The Sea Within*, *Näss* and *Macho Dancer* stage men holding feminine qualities or vice versa – women who are capable of having a sharp snap into a masculine vocabulary of dance codes. The phenomenon of code-switching is linked to aesthetic, social, cultural, and even political loss of conventional categories, and therefore to the trouble in the ongoing art/life relationship that it can bring. For instance, the movement training of somatic dissolution in *The Sea Within* provokes altered states of consciousness and shifting values: the choreographer’s discourse about feminine/masculine forces put into play presents dance as an art form beyond a simple gender definition.

We may ask: are the performance requirements in virtuosity such as mastering the dance codes so high that they transfer the body/mind beyond gender? Or is it all about an inclusiveness, a disbelief about “fixed gendering”? This kind of expanded dance culture introduces the idea of ambiguity developed by Barbara Kruger’s vision of “your body is a battleground”<sup>11</sup> in the 1989 March on Washington in support of women’s rights. The proliferation of contemporary dance performances dealing with the shifts of gender and of gender codes criticizes mainstream culture. The interplay with these kinds of codes is “at least as important in conveying a generalized imagination of modernity and wealth as they are in stimulating erotic feeling.”<sup>12</sup>

Arts code-switching, approached through choreography practice, stems from the idea of fluid gender to that of feminist complexity. The feminist approach to jazz in the twentieth century aligns, for instance, with Lucille Bogan’s intention of “I’m gonna split my oil with you” in the popular song *Oklahoma Man Blues*, where oil stands both for real petroleum and for libido charge. The singer switches the meanings of “oil” and uses them as “undercover” codes in order to explore sexuality as both blurry and precise places.

Dancing female bodies are also capable of ironic interplay of code, which can function as fiasco: what does an audience expect? What does an audience get? A leading female shaman-like figure, dressed in red, from *The Sea Within*, wakes up the female ensemble consciousness and triggers a desire for a revolution, a rebellion from

<sup>10</sup> Judith BUTLER: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York, Routledge, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara KRUGER: “YOUR BODY IS A BATTLEGROUND”. POSTER IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS, MARCH ON WASHINGTON, 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Judith FARQUHAR – Qicheng ZHANG: *Ten Thousand Things: Nurturing Life in Contemporary Beijing*, New York Zone Press, 2012, 45.

the monopoly of the male gaze. Instances of code-switching in the choreographies quoted in this study can be considered as criticism, for they try to disturb social conventions by staging what is deranging. Often a dancer breaks out from the chorus line for a short ecstatic solo, then almost immediately gets absorbed again in the ensemble. It reminds us of the summer visions of a wave detaching itself for a few seconds from the sea, then vanishing back into it. In regard to that, the female solos from *The Sea Within* are built up on counterpoint flexible postures depicting orgasmic climaxes, backed up by a chorus line.<sup>13</sup>

Arts code-switching may produce vital fuel for reversing social order and laughing at it at the same time. Applied to dance as an art form, it can be an efficient criticism of what may be considered as common taste. Each choreographer develops this potential in his/her own way: Lizbeth Gruwez works on a critical satire of behavior, from contradictory wishes to shooting and destroying unwanted reality; Fouad Boussouf questions the use of, and the mixing of, cultural artefacts such as oriental dance, hip hop, slam, by mixing them all together and thus creating a specific new aesthetics for the crooked male characters in *Näss*; Eleo Pomare takes the audience on his “junkie” trip, beyond the habits of choreographic representation in *Blues for the Jungle*; struck by the harsh life in the city for Afro-Americans, in *Blues for the Jungle*, he stages a cast of Black-identity characters previously unseen on the stage.

Eisa Jocson represents a male Filipino style stripper in a most detailed and realistic way in *Macho Dancer*. During an intensive workshop by Eisa Jocson at the annual dance festival Camping 2022, organized by CND – the National Center of Dance in Paris, France, the choreographer has explained to us (the author of this study took part in the workshop) the many codes composing this kind of performance and its particular “style” – such as slow and heavy motion, strategies of seduction, addressed to the audience.

These choreographies contain, address and reply to a series of multiple crises – those of womanhood, madness, power and identity loss, transmission. These crises are situated in the time when the choreographers were working, and they explicitly refer to such crises. We may quote a few interviews: Eleo Pomare on Afro-American community struggles,<sup>14</sup> Eisa Jocson on Philippine migrant bodies,<sup>15</sup> Lizbeth Gruwez on ultraconservatism<sup>16</sup> and, finally, Fouad Boussouf on the multiculturalism of dance in the Middle East.<sup>17</sup> Often the crises somehow get resolved, even without a rational answer, by the groovy responses to the music by the dancers.

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<sup>13</sup> GRUWEZ: *The Sea Within*.

<sup>14</sup> POMARE: *Archive Material*.

<sup>15</sup> EISA JOCSON: *Corponomy*, eisajocson.wordpress.com/2019-corponomy-installation/ (17/07/2023).

<sup>16</sup> LIZBETH GRUWEZ: *It's Going to Get Worse and Worse and Worse, My Friend*, numeridanse.tv/en/dance-videotheque/its-going-get-worse-and-worse-and-worse-my-friend (17/07/2023).

<sup>17</sup> FOUAD BOUSSOUF: *Dossier pédagogique de Näss*, ac-lyon.fr/dossier-pedagogique-du-spectacle-nass-de-fouad-boussouf-124646 (17/07/2023).

The mechanics of code-switching in dance are often based on groove. Two examples of how this process functions show the use of multiple tempos which coexist inside the same song. Groove also helps to achieve altered states of consciousness that facilitate the dancers' performance. This phenomenon brings a variety of interpretations of code-switching itself in a lively, flowful way. An interesting question about code-switching-inspired principles of choreography-making is how to negotiate improvisational tasks within the frame of very precise instructions, or how to construct the progression of a solo in an enlarged context, such as the circulation of roles in *Blues for the Jungle* and *Näss*, the collective buildup for the spectacular solos in *The Sea Within*, or the choreographic choices made to compose the structure of *Macho Dancer*.

### *Code-switching as a Process of Shuffling*

The analysis of blending moves and specific phrasings in *Blues for the Jungle*, *Näss*, and *The Sea Within* discloses a "cloud" of proximity evolving between the dancers. There is no "lead" role: the ensemble shuffles all the time. In comparison to code-switching in jazz structures through gestures which can be "ambiguous," conceived in order to allow modification, to be played with, the ensembles of *Blues for the Jungle*, *Näss*, and *The Sea Within* can shuffle in numerous ways, while meticulously performing the pre-established choreographic structure. Each dancer simultaneously holds an individual and collective role and therefore a unique function within an ensemble which is constantly rearranging itself, while keeping a clear identity of each of its elements.

Dance codes emerge within the group in order to embody the mechanical labor, or the daily routine, or the biological tuning between precisely gendered bodies. In order to establish more clearly how the different types of gestures and postures can function as "codes," let's have a deeper look at Lizbeth Gruwez's choreographic aesthetics. In *The Sea Within*, she creates her own contemporary dance hybrid style. The ten female dancers represent a multicultural ensemble and each of them is free to perform the gestures and postures set by the choreographer's score according to a different dance background. Some move the pelvis in a particular way, by mixing softness, swaying, ballet postures, belly dance elements, Asian body techniques, but all of them are pointing out the constant multiplicity of roles and skills women are supposed to hold. The gestures as expressions of femininity vary from "shimmy" trembling to "decorating" delicately the face and the air around whenever they depict the water movements. The grounding in deep "pliés," the value of "snap into the moment," the delicacy of small gestures, the narration by shifts all assemble many mysterious codes, established often in a nonverbal way, during the long co-working process of the creation of the choreography. The dancers use the code-switching process as an in-dance conversation to draw somatic attention zooms inwards and outwards of the female body.

The choreographic codes become a creative vocabulary, mixing Western (ballet, modern dance elements, etc.) and Eastern aesthetics as opposed to mainstream dance styles, easy to recognize. Code-switching induced by these multinational ensembles is also an advocacy for the cultural diversity of dancing bodies. Different body types all keep up the required precision for the performed vocabulary. Thus, the choreographic use of codes belonging to various dance styles explores a multiplicity of identities and aesthetic choices. Code-switching applies the idea of “sensorial corruption,” which is to say a constant rediscovery and deepening of a range of sensations, rather than mastering a number of predefined shapes and other fixed aesthetic, social and cultural categories. This phenomenon appears in the co-working between different ethnic cultures in *Näss*, or in the subversive aesthetics of *Blues for the Jungle*, depicting characters from the streets of Harlem, unseen on stage so far.

A musician needs to hear unknown sounds to compose something new. A choreographer’s quest can be quite similar when working with movement impulses, to find an individual place for a dancer within the group, such as cited above. The constant shuffling of the *Näss* group of male performers, or the so-far-unseen-on-stage characters in *Blues for the Jungle* imply both code-creating and code-switching. Accordingly, it is the gradual re-configurations of the ensemble of *The Sea Within* which allow the emergence of the few minutes’ solos of different dancers.

### *The Poetics of Shifting*

The solos from *The Sea Within* are based on fast shifts of images, each offering a clear representation of an original kinesthetic experience. During dance quotes of sophisticated ballet forms, the dancers ride on a series of abrupt improvisations, occasionally re-constructed into a short choreographic phrase which ironically refers to a gorilla, to male monsters, to crawling animals. The same kind of character appears in *Blues for the Jungle*. Eleo Pomare describes his *Junkie* as “he’s kind of a . . . on the nervous side”, challenging an audience that is expecting to see the cliché of “the beauty of the negro”: “I was very conscious of not wanting to appeal to an audience who was there just to see the beauty of the negro. And what a choreographer should do is to investigate or to be a forecaster for things to come.”<sup>18</sup> New choreographic codes thus blend features of what is human and what is animalistic by blurring popular and elite arts references and by shattering the possibility of identifying cultural sources of inspiration. The organic kinesthetic experience of code-switching engenders the question: whose fantasy does all this belong to?

There is a rich literature on the sexualization of black bodies and we may refer to one of the latest studies in the field of dance, *(Re:)Claiming Ballet*,<sup>19</sup> which compiles

<sup>18</sup> POMARE: Archive Material.

<sup>19</sup> Adesola AKINLEYE (ed.): *(Re:)Claiming Ballet*, Bristol, Intellect, 2021, 328.

some testimonies of Afro-American dancers nowadays. There is a double-edged strategy of interplay between a black identity and the necessity of acquiring all the professional codes of Western ballet, which is described by a few Afro-American ballerinas. They follow a thought process similar to that of Eleo Pomare: one needs to be fully aware and master both sets of codes and the switching in between them in order to survive in a very tricky and competitive environment.

The topic of competition, and the code-switching it may apply, is also approached by Lizbeth Gruwez in the *The Sea Within*. By the end of the piece, she stages each dancer turning for a while into an aggressive gorilla-like figure claiming the central spot of the stage, by overpowering the others with jumps and body-building-inspired postures. Here the animal behavior is used as an ironic metaphor of male abusive rudeness. The latter can be perceived as a symbol of overpowering gender in the West. Yet, in Asia, some traditional dance forms, such as the graceful Bali monkey, are considered both as a representation of, and a sophisticated reference for, non-Western eroticism.<sup>20</sup> Code-switching is simultaneously the result of the dancer's choices to "travel" through images, taken from improvisation sessions,<sup>21</sup> and the result of the choreographer's "writing" done by decision making.

A fundamental question concerning code-switching in a state of dizziness is how to transform control into freedom. This question is being put into play when there is a need to get away from too much serious determination of delivering a meaningful message.

Walter Benjamin has already discussed how barbarity is contained within the culture by precise analyses of the conditions allowing barbarity to exist within it. He discusses how slaves practicing art are supposed to have fun not only in order to enhance the entertainment business production, but also to create the free-of-guilt illusion of "they are actually fine."<sup>22</sup> Walter Benjamin did not comment on choreography, but we may compare that way of functioning with specific dance environments. For instance, in a similar way, Eisa Jocson's dance solo addresses the issue of "original culture as myth" by blending the ancient heritage of dance culture such as ballet (her background) with the latest novelties such as hip hop, rap, pole dancing, striptease, and so on in her androgynous *Macho Dancer* body, entertaining a mixed-gender audience. Each gesture, such as an aesthetic code she has chosen to compose her solo, comes from a different place and time: from coordinated ballet

<sup>20</sup> Some scholarly sources on Balinese dance and the importance of choreography in Balinese culture are Sally Ann NESS: "Bali, the camera, and dance: Performance studies and the lost legacy of the Mead/Bateson collaboration". *Journal of Asian Studies*, 67/4, 2005, 1251–1276; Bethany J. COLLIER: "Looking to the future: Training a new generation for Balinese Arja". *Asian Theatre Journal*, 31/2, 2014, 457–480.

<sup>21</sup> For more information about transforming and code-switching from local Balinese traditional repertory into contemporary dance improvisation, the reader can refer to the research creation project *Drifting/à la dérive*, led by the author of this study: Biliana VASSILEVA: *Drifting/à la dérive*, research creation project, bilidanse.wixsite.com/website-2 (29/01/2024).

<sup>22</sup> Walter BENJAMIN: *Paris Capitale du XXe siècle: Le livre des passages*, Paris, Edition du Cerf, 1989, 408.

postures – back, shoulders, etc. – to freestyle hip hop and other urban-style bumps. Following Walter Benjamin’s idea of an “aura,”<sup>23</sup> which is to say proximity projected far into the distance, we may see the dancer’s performance as an alternative space, created for gestures to circulate. Aura is a quality integral to an artwork that cannot be communicated through mechanical reproduction techniques, such as photography. The term was used by Walter Benjamin in his influential 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Benjamin argued that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: Its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” He referred this unique cultural context, i.e. “its presence in time and space” as its “aura.” The specific performative approach of *Macho Dancer* shows how code-switching emerges from negotiating imagination and reality between a female choreographer and male dancers as study material, in order to change the nature of the work required of a female dancer.

### *Code-switching for Subversion: Shadow Boxing*

The dancers in *Blues for the Jungle*, *Näss*, *The Sea Within*, and *Macho Dancer* shift in between ballet, modern, folk postures, and hip hop moves, adding even some slam elements. Each new mood or gesture accumulation contains a playful choice of codes, similar to “how” a jazz jam functions: mixing blues, swing, and bebop. During these “meanderings” the dance gesture creates quick, urgent, hectic space, almost a kind of “dance tagging.” In the ensemble of *The Sea Within* each dancer detaches from the waiting row by surprise. The solos in *The Sea Within* or *Näss* reveal the jazz choreographic inquiry about the place and the role of a soloist within the ensemble, as the dancers burst out through harmonious structures as figures of rebellion. Some of the gestures function in a tension/release polarity. The composition also retains the possibility of adding something new, of integrating what may come along, of establishing a new code.

It explores the metaphor of the “madness” of the dancer, disrupting the ensemble. The idea of madness questions the ambiguity of “good health in a sick environment,” or the necessity of getting severely sick as a remedy which is another kind of getaway. The very difficult social scene of random survivals, depicted in *Blues for the Jungle*, offers subversive representations of social categories. Code-switching becomes multi-voicing: it is not about playing characters, but about embodying a polyphony of symbolic voices.

In a similar way, the choreographic structure of *Blues for the Jungle* contains sharp jumps and sounds, which reveal psychological crises, as opposed to quiet environments and controlled positions/gestures in a secure social space. The

<sup>23</sup> Walter BENJAMIN: “L’œuvre d’art à l’époque de sa reproduction mécanisée”. *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, V/1936, 40–68.



irregular music and the sudden screams create double-edged disturbance. In all the pieces cited in this study, the themes of madness and delirium are investigated by long lasting research. The choreographers develop new uses of code-switching for expressivity-charged performativity. They also build bridges between what can be qualified, with a lot of precaution, as global/local dances.

### *Challenging the Spectator by Code-switching*

Multiple studies address choreography-making as intertextuality. Cultural studies may use the cases of delocalized choreographies in order to point out political anomalies happening elsewhere. Two examples analyzed in this study show us how this works: in *Blues for the Jungle*, Eleo Pomare stages in a secure theater space the street life from the dangerous neighborhood of Harlem, while Eisa Jocson turns international travel and a local style of male striptease into an economical seduction endeavor via the choreography of *Macho Dancer*. In that regard, dance and cultural studies explore the perception of arts codes and how they deal with various kinds of social (military), racist (minority), and feminist issues, as we may see in the other two case studies discussed in this paper: *Näss* and *The Sea Within*.

*Näss* is performed by a small group, constantly moving together in tight proximity. This collective movement may refer to exile, forced displacements, or to visiting, mingling, mixing, and holding onto multicultural townships, multiple languages. Switching dance codes such as steps, or t-shirts via the rhythmic experience of the choreographic structure of *Näss* brings differences and minorities together.

Code-switching in the female ensemble from *The Sea Within*, or in the “gender blender” of *Macho Dancer* between Eisa Jocson and the original *macho dancers*, are more like linked to the sheer act of proposing empowering novelties in a jazz, or nowadays contemporary hybrid performance. The initial question, guiding political and aesthetic inquiries (such as *Black Lives Matter* or *Black is Beautiful*), was which audience actually – white or black? – the choreographer seeks to please.

These choreographic inquiries are addressing fans of all kinds of dance styles – Western contemporary dance audience, Filipino club dance lovers. How does this kind of code-switching negotiate with aesthetic judgement? Some urban style dance elements such as hip hop moves, rap music, or techno beat turn the choreography into an alternative power to mainstream styles such as ballet, modern, or even contemporary dance codified form. The casual outfits of the dancers in all the quoted choreographies allow easy shifts between dance styles, without determining or belonging to tight definitions.

*Conclusion: Switching Codes as Choreographic Creativity*

*Blues for the Jungle*, *Näss*, *The Sea Within* and *Macho Dancer* proceed to switch codes by matching contrasts between soft and explosive power, by making spontaneous body reactivity/reactions arise, both within the performers' and the spectators' body-minds. *The Sea Within* plays with codes revealing totem figures, such as subjective sensitive womanhood or stereotypes contained within the feminist ironic quotes. Eleo Pomare discusses the complexity of a dancer-choreographer relationship in an interview<sup>24</sup> where he describes the jazz strategy of code-switching in order to avoid hitting in a direct way, termed "shadow boxing." It is often an emergency improvisation, as code-switching is all about the ability to listen, first of all, to a specific social environment.

The issues of code-switching, such as moves and motions between the dancers in *Näss*, are not about choreographing the utopia of freedom, but mostly about the expression of inner liberty. However, code-switching in this piece also carries some political references – such as the bodies outlined on a wall, jumping higher and higher as if to grasp some air and go beyond a frontier, impossible to cross.

Code-switching between the social conventions of certain lifestyles in *Macho Dancer* is transformed into a source of fluid gender expressivity: the overspilling of moves becomes choreography, the sounds become music – such as the feet tapping the ground in *Näss*, or the bodies clashing against it in *Blues for the Jungle*. In that way, code-switching in all these choreographic compositions, including that of *The Sea Within*, can remind us of some creative processes of the Beat Generation – such as the session material brought inside the final structure, which stems from it; or Kerouac's advice to "never revise a manuscript," in order to achieve that peculiar kind of mindfulness nudity, by the use of mutual improvisational interaction.

During the dance performances explored in this study, code-switching plays with the options to tense/release into a lapse of a second; they reverse the respectful attitude of a reverence towards the spectators on stage (to show bits of skin as in *Macho Dancer*, or body parts beneath simple colorful t-shirts in *Näss*). Sometimes it is all about an ironic self-representation of a "dancer at work," but also a barely disguised reversed gaze of the "rich" audience (expats), knowledgeable fans (balletomania), and so on.

Code-switching provokes even more the trouble for the spectator's gaze, as the latter also becomes an active contributor to establishing non-verbal code-switching between the onstage paroxystic figures, as an ongoing process of shifting meaning and highly charged sensory input.

We may conclude that the four choreographers quoted in this study: Eleo Pomare, Lizbeth Gruwez, Fouad Boussouf, and Eisa Jocson, explore the potential of code-switching in dance via careful ethnographic observations and structures of the free flow of codes contained within skillfully conceived choreographic scores.

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<sup>24</sup> POMARE: *Archive Material*.

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*Abstract*

*The objective of the study is to approach the concept of a dance code as an alternative kind of knowledge, distinct from intellectual processes, as well as a communication tool. The study was carried out by the analysis of four choreographic pieces that deal with the process of cod-switching within a composition structure: Junkie from Blues for the Jungle (1966), by the American choreographer Eleo Pomare; the Filipina choreographer Eisa Jocson's Macho Dancer (2013); The Sea Within by the Belgian choreographer Lizbeth Gruwez (2015); and Näss (Les Gens) by the French choreographer Fouad Boussouf (2018). The topic is approached by the methods of choreography and movement analysis, combined with embodiment and "practice as research" experience. Researchers in dance studies must harness observation, feeling, sensing, and reading in order to gain some specific knowledge of codes.*

**Keywords:** dance code, gestures, choreography, movement analysis, intercultural studies

*Kódváltás a koreográfiában**Rezümé*

*A tanulmány célja, hogy bemutassa a tánckód mint az intellektuális folyamatoktól eltérő alternatív tudás és mint kommunikációs eszköz fogalmát. Négy olyan koreográfia elemzésére épül, amelyek a kompozícióon belüli kódváltás folyamatát mutatják be: Eleo Pomare amerikai koreográfus Junkie from Blues for the Jungle [Junkie a Dzsungelbluesből] (1966), Eisa Jocson filippínó koreográfus Macho Dancer [Macsó táncos] (2013), Lizbeth Gruwez belga koreográfus The Sea Within [A belső tenger] (2015) és Fouad Boussouf francia koreográfus Näss (Les Gens) [Näss (A nép)] (2018) című műveire. A műveket a koreográfia- és mozgáselemzés módszerének és "gyakorlat mint kutatás", élményének kombinációjával elemzem. A táncművészet kutatójának egyaránt bagyatkoznia kell a megfigyelésre, tapintásra, érzékelésre és olvasásra annak érdekében, hogy értelmezni tudja a kódokat.*

**Kulcsszavak:** tánckód, mozdulatok, koreográfia, mozgáselemzés, interkulturális tanulmányok

ILDIKÓ TAMÁS

## Identity, Bilingualism, Minority Status Sámi young people on Instagram

In this study, I will analyse a selected topic by examining two Sámi Instagram profiles. Both social network profiles specialise in memes, with a focus exclusively on Sámis. Nevertheless, they also target a wider audience with their messages. This is also represented in using at least two, but in some cases three languages simultaneously, as well as in the translations and explanations posted together with the images. I will examine the question of how an emblematic element of the Sámi identity is transformed from offline discourses into online folklore, and how younger generations use the essential cultural elements that define their identity in social media.

I have chosen two Instagram profiles, *@samiskmeme* and *@saamiresiliencememes* as the subject of my study, focusing on their linguistic and folkloristic aspects. Even the names of the profiles refer to the topic of Sámis and the way they process and publish their content. The *@samiskmeme* profile covers a broader range of topics, while *@saamiresiliencememes* is more coherent in terms of the message they would like to convey: they post mostly political content, defending the rights of indigenous Sámis and building an openly activist profile. Nevertheless, there is a significant overlap in the material of the two sites in terms of the schemes used. The number of active visitors to the profiles (based on likes) is around 200 in both cases; nevertheless, there are also posts with more than 400 likes. The commenting activity is much lower. The number of comments rarely exceeds ten, and most of them tend to contain only emoticons or tag other profiles.

I followed both profiles for 6 months, archiving published content in separate folders and creating thematic and formal subfolders for posts with common characteristics. Thus, I could systematically store clearly distinguishable and correlating variants. However, typology is secondary to the research question in the present study; I mainly conducted a contextual analysis. I saved full-screen photos in my own archives, which include the date of publication, the number of likes at the time of saving, captions, comments and hashtags (in part or in full, depending on their volume).

I paid special attention to the overlaps in content and format between the two profiles, which are also kept in separate folders. Such posts can be seen as variants of each other, which the following two examples illustrate well:



1.



2.

Pictures 1 and 2 are internationally used templates, and several versions of them are also well-known in Hungary. The first example conveys a political message: it refers to the conflict between the Sámis and the so-called “colonisers.” The superficial, homogenising view of outsiders is compared with local cultural diversity. The oppositions of *one versus many*, *foreign versus own* are expressed in the use of names. The generic and foreign geographical name *Lapland*, which contains the pejorative connotation of the word *Lapp*, contrasts with the names of the area inhabited by the Sámis, listed using various Sámi idioms. In Picture 2, the distinction between the forms of the Nordic-Sámi verb *leat*: dual first person (*letne* ‘we are two’) and plural first person (*leat* ‘we – are more than – two’), becomes a representation of the couple’s fidelity. One wonders whether the grammatically incorrect form *mii letnet* (instead of the correct *moai letne*) is a mere mistake of the author, or a reference to the Sámi-stranger opposition.<sup>1</sup> The latter meaning horizon is supported by a number of other Instagram profile posts about a foreigner’s inability to master the Sámi language. In addition, the insufficient knowledge of the native language of the Sámis and the current changes in the Sámi language are also often expressed as complaints in the post. Sámi was considered a stigmatized language until the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; as a result, it could skip even generations. This leads to the absurd situation that only the youngest are proficient in their mother tongue in many Sámi families, as they are now free to learn and practice it as a result of the Sámi revitalisation. Older people, even if they know the Sámi language, cannot always use it in writing, and the meme as a form of communication is more common in younger age groups.

<sup>1</sup> Posts on the internet tend to omit or neglect linguistic standards. This is not only true for the Sámis, as the international material is very similar in this respect. Online verbal content is much closer to everyday, verbal communication, and mistakes in language, different spellings, changes in segmentation are in some cases a means of wordplay that can add extra meaning to the message.

Both sites studied include internationally used templates as well as specific Sámi templates, which may represent specific cultural phenomena (handicrafts, costumes, etc.) or contemporary Sámi films, photos or drawings of public figures, animations, etc. Here are two examples presented for each type. Picture 3 depicts the elementary problems of the indigenous people and illustrates one of the fundamental roles of the Sámi memes. They are another means of expressing a common destiny, encouraging unity, standing up together for their rights, and protesting at the same time. Everything has forerunners and parallels. One example is the poster campaigns of *Suohpanterror*,<sup>2</sup> an activist group that uses visual art to convey political messages, which are repeatedly displayed offline and online. Colonialism continues to be one of the most common themes, and one that appears in many different ways in Sámi online profiles. Picture 4 is one of the iconic frames from *The Sound of Music* (1965), often used as a meme template, creatively transformed into a Sámi content. The Sámi text translates as “I’m finally at my summer accommodation.” Of course, the message is only understood by those who are familiar with the cyclical nomadism of the Sámis’ reindeer-husbandry lifestyle, the tradition of periodic moves between winter and summer accommodation. One of my examples in Pictures 5 and 6 is a scene from a film directed by Nils Gaup and screened for Hungarian audiences under the title *Ofelaš* “Pathfinder” (1987), with the main character set in a completely different context, and the other is a Sámi shaman (quite precisely, this is one of the most famous shamanic depictions from historical sources<sup>3</sup>). The combination of the shamanic drum – as an authentic and emblematic Sámi object – with a motif that is similar in form but still foreign, and illustrates globalisation at the same time, is a good example how memes achieve a humorous effect by evoking unusual and unexpected associations. The translation of the Sámi text is: “when you need to see into another world/dimension [in a sacred sense] but you are very hungry.”<sup>4</sup> These two memes use the internationally widespread “When...” formula.<sup>5</sup>

The creativity in the way it is portrayed and the punchline or humour it generates is the element that helps to convey the message, and makes the meme stand out from the simple form of sharing your opinion on the internet. The message is always at the centre of the memes, and the recurring images and texts are the “composition” or “presentation” of this message. The message, as well as the motifs, formulas,

<sup>2</sup> *Suohpanterror* (“lasso terror”) is an activist group of Sámi artists founded in 2012. For more details, see [facebook.com/suohpanterror](https://facebook.com/suohpanterror).

<sup>3</sup> Knud LEEM: *Beskrivelse over Finnmarkens Lapper, deres Tungemaal, Levemaade og forrige afgudsdyrkelse*, Copenhagen, 1767.

<sup>4</sup> Note: the illative form of *geasseorobot* “summer accommodation” in the first text should be *geasseorobabkii*.

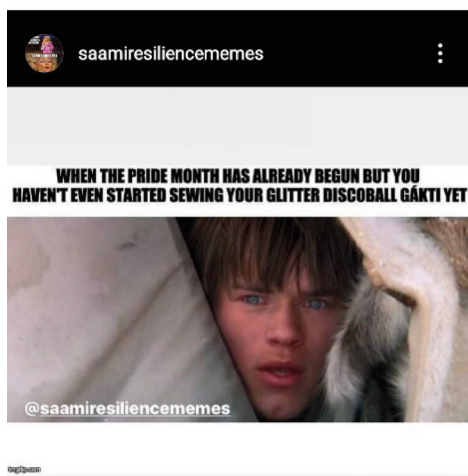
<sup>5</sup> The latter type is characterised by the fact that they are based on typical phenomena (e.g. facial expression, posture, location) which are easy to present along with the emotions they convey. A statement or “typical” situation is assigned to the attitude represented by these facial expressions. The constant formulaic element of verbal content is the “when/but” introduction.



3.



4.



5.



6.

and clichés mobilised, are part of a wider intertextual discourse that transcends the online register. This is why only those who are “in context” are able to decode the message. They know the language, be it abbreviations or other codes of online social communication, the source of the images used (e.g. when using an image from a film, the specific scene or even the whole film as an interpretative context is very important to understand the additional meanings). Knowledge of memes of a similar format may also be relevant, as well as knowledge of the social and



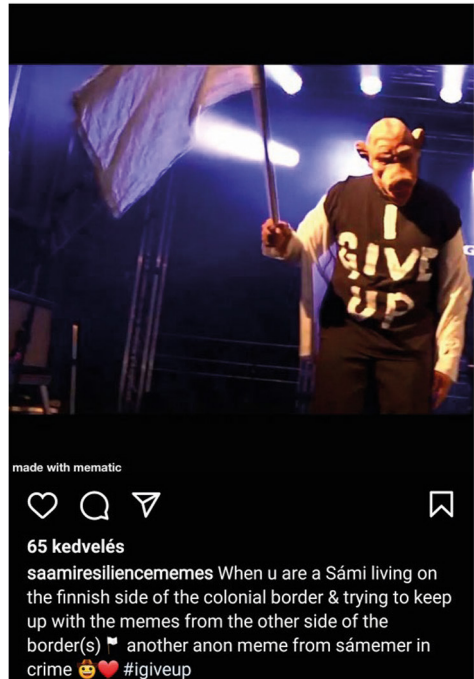
cultural events which the content reflects. There are, of course, different levels of interpretation, but the indirect meanings are only revealed to those who are insiders and familiar with the same discourses. However, memes are not (in most cases) made for a narrow audience, i.e. they are not based on specific knowledge of a small community. This is why we also find memes in English on the online platforms I studied.

In the case of the memes presented in my study, the intention to communicate to as wide an audience as possible, and to those of other nationalities living in contact with them, or even to a wider audience is often evident. Mutual translations of the subtitles (English, Norwegian, and Sami) can be found below the pictures (sometimes the same meme is published in several languages), and comments are also provided to help understanding. At the same time, just as there are meaning horizons that are only accessible to a particular ethnicity or other community (e.g. a fan community), we can observe meaning horizons on the sites I follow that are only accessible to users who are familiar with internal discourses. In this respect, there are significant caesuras not only between the Sámis and non-Sámis, but also between different Sámi communities, as illustrated by the following example, which probably refers to two Norwegian songs, and through them the difficulties of understanding each other, and even the complete abandonment of communication.<sup>6</sup> (The English translation helps to render intelligible the captions using Sámi and Norwegian languages or Norwegian words with Sámi suffixes):

From the memes I examined, I chose examples that can be placed in the context of the wider Sámi culture. In this study, due to space limitations, I present a single thematic group, an important element of the Sámi identity: cold tolerance, which is a dominant, often thematized segment of the us-versus-them opposition.

Creative adaptation to extreme cold is a cornerstone of the Sámis' specialised culture. Thermal insulation (be it in houses, tents, or clothing) was provided in the past with locally available materi-

Go du sykaseamos šjangsat fiksemii nachas  
leat sjekketriksat muhto gii nu álgá flørtet  
dekningain høyre vensteris



7.

<sup>6</sup> Gábor Tillinger helped me with the interpretation of the meme in Norwegian. Thank you, Gábor!

als from the natural environment, and many continue to do so.<sup>7</sup> This is repeatedly reflected in everyday communication, media, and traditional folklore, often in contexts where the authentic, cold-tolerant Nordic is represented by the Sámis, and the “southern” population, helpless in the face of a harsh climate, by Norwegians, Swedes, Finns, etc. For example, they often make fun of inappropriate clothing, especially the thin, “trashy” footwear worn by non-Sámis, or vice versa, the fact that “Southerners” are cold even in their high-tech gear, while the Sámis are not in their simple, traditional clothing. This motif is also known from Sámi fairy tales and lore, and appears in stories about the Stállo, a relative of the silly devil type figure (ATU 1000–1169<sup>8</sup>). The Stállo is a central figure in the folklore of the Sámis, and his figure is surrounded by many beliefs. They mostly appear in male form, alone or with their dogs, although in some areas whole Stállo families are known, so female and child Stállos also appear.<sup>9</sup> The children are usually unnamed, but the Stállo wife has a single name: *Njannja*. Some respondents to the folklore texts collected in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century even claimed to know of families related to the Stállos.<sup>10</sup> Marriages to beings from the supernatural sphere naturally reflect attitudes to mixed marriages. The stereotype that the Stállos are violent also helps to link the stories of the Stállo as a mythical creature with real people (outsiders, foreigners, settlers, etc.).<sup>11</sup> Violence and cruelty are prominent features of the Stállo.

In fairy tales and folktales, the life of the Stállo is most often ended by freezing to death, e.g. while chasing the mythical Sámi tale/lore hero, he freezes to death due to his lack of suitable clothing. The following memes depict a lack of tolerance to cold (e.g. in the case of Norwegians, or “Westerners” in general), while cold tolerance is praised as a special Sámi gift, of course in a humorous way typical of memes. Translations of the following Sámi memes and captions: “Westerner/Norwegian: Why aren’t the Sámis cold? The Sámis: That’s a secret” (Picture 8); “Westerners/Norwegians when the temperature drops below 15°C cold” (Picture 10).

Being prepared for the cold, or the lack of it, is also reflected in the interpretation of political and cultural events, whether in official media reports or in oral stories. One of the best-known examples of this was the highly publicised visit of Crown Prince Haakon of Norway and his wife Mette-Marit to Kautokeino in February 2009. During their stay in the north, the idea of sleeping in a tent came up, though Mette-Marit did not dare to sleep in there due to the -30 to -35°C cold. Although the press coverage of the event was positive (on the whole), some forums criticised the fact that the royal couple wore overalls under the winter outfit they received as

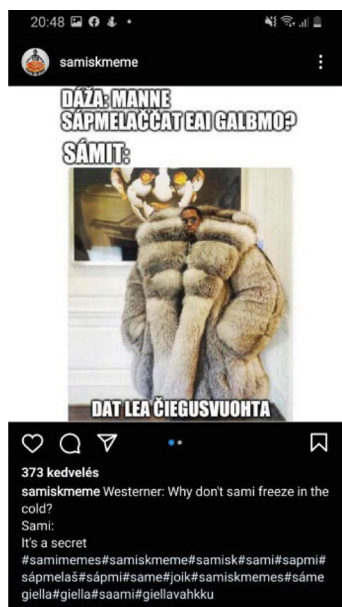
<sup>7</sup> Sigga-Marja MAGGA: “The Process of creating Sámi handicraft Duodji: From national symbol to norm and resistance”. In Mantila, H. – Sivonen, J. – Brunni, S. – Leinonen, K. – Palviainen, S. (eds.): *Congressus Duodecimus Internationalis Fenno-Ugristarum*, Oulu, University of Oulu, 2015, 448–449.

<sup>8</sup> ATU: international storybook index.

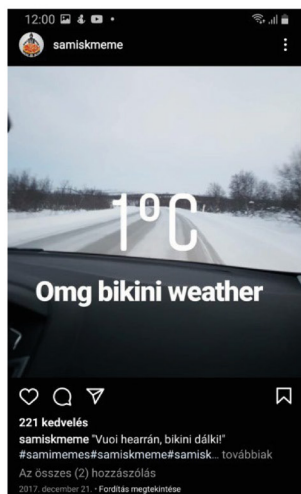
<sup>9</sup> TAMÁS Ildikó: “Szajvók, sztálló és társaik”. *Napút*, 2004/8, 13–20.

<sup>10</sup> Johan TURI: *A lappok élete*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1983, 219.

<sup>11</sup> AUGUS V. KOSKIMIES – TOIVO I. ITKONEN: *Inari Sámi Folklore: Stories from Aanaar*, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2019, 87–88.



8.



9.



10.

a gift from the Sámis. The refusal to stay in a tent and the fact that they wore overalls revived the old motif, well known from early ethnographic collections, that only the Sámis can tolerate the cold.

Of course, in the case of the memes analysed, it is not only this motif, which originated in the long past and has been transferred from the verbal to the online register, that appears in connection with cold tolerance. The following examples illustrate an internationally widespread stereotype of overdressing (wearing an unreasonable and ridiculous amount of clothes), which is completely separable from the exclusively ethnic content, that mothers and grandmothers protect their children and grandchildren from the cold. In this case, self-irony is also expressed, as traditional winter wear is greatly exaggerated (Picture 11). Translation of the caption: “When it’s cold outside and your mum dresses you.” In addition to the Sámi meme, I present two examples with Hungarian captions to demonstrate the international spread of the topic.

Although the visual component conveying the message has been primarily the clothing in the examples given so far, we also find different formulations. The meme with the caption “bikini weather” (Picture 9) presented above serves as a transition, since only the text refers to one type of clothing, the picture itself puts the emphasis elsewhere. The example below goes in a completely different direction from the topic of dressing up in warm clothes. It shows driving in a snowstorm – which is dangerous and annoying for others – from the non-Sámis’ (top picture) and the Sámis’ (bottom picture) perspective. It also uses a very common basic theme,



11.

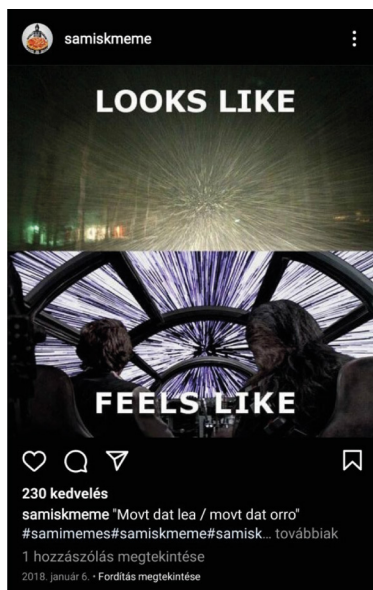


12.



13.

14.



the iconic films of the *Star Wars* universe (in this case, the light-speed switch scene), which appears in many memes.

In communication that evokes the dimension of tales and films, the dislocation of danger or problem into the world of fantasy is usually an important element. Going far beyond creative formation or pure humour, these memes also have the function of shaping community reactions, values and “channelling” certain themes into everyday communication. The creators, sharers, and contributors of the social content analysed also act as the vernacular authority – guiding and shaping the discourse –, of which they are well aware. Their active participation counters and balances the intentions of the “central (power) actors.” The comments often express harsh social criticism. As far as formal features are concerned, new and traditional elements usually appear in combination with each other (e.g. an older pattern is filled with topical content, a familiar motif is given a new meaning, or a new motif is introduced into a familiar context), thus linking familiar with unusual elements. The most common way to do this is to transpose the scenes and heroes of a cartoon or a film into a current situation or a field of meaning that people are currently concerned with. The combination of a familiar form and novel, topical content creates the basic situation for a punchline, humour, or even harsh criticism.

Among the tools of understanding the message and orienting the meaning, the above examples highlight the use of multilingualism, i.e. translations or direct multilingualism (see Picture 1).<sup>12</sup> The Nordic-Sámis are present in most entries, either as a textual component of the meme or as a caption (if English or another language appears in the meme), and for those unfamiliar with the Sámi language, English and Norwegian translations are provided to help decode the message. The use of internationally popular meme clichés, such as well-known actors, film scenes or public figures, as part of the visual content is suitable for addressing a wider audience, but a fair number of specific, ethnic motifs, such as traditional numerical objects and symbols, also appear.

Humour should also be mentioned as an important stylistic element in widespread online communication. In the case of the memes I analysed, humour also carries a value judgement: it combines the what-whom opposition with the good/productive vs. bad/unproductive opposition. Humorous content acts as a kind of valve. It formulates the otherwise unspeakable things (according to current PC rules, they can only be formulated with codes) by dramatizing them, putting into a different discursive dimension (thereby legitimising) issues that would otherwise be offensive, shocking, or otherwise unacceptable in their usual context.

Finally, it is worth analysing the content in the light of national identity building. The representation of the interests and political unification of the culturally very diverse Sámi groups living in several countries took place in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and can be traced back to a few decades, not counting more isolated initiatives. The establishment of the Sámi parliaments in the last two decades of the last century is a sign of the success of the revitalisation process that took off in the second half of the 1960s, but indigenous national minorities without statehood continue to face many problems. One positive outcome of the assimilation policy<sup>13</sup> – which became increasingly prevalent in the Nordic countries from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards – was that the Sámis acquired the discourses and skills of power that were essential for asserting their rights later on.<sup>14</sup> Despite their adherence to the traditional attributes of “being Sámi,” the Sámis are open to accepting the changes that modernisation brings, as long as these do not threaten their own identity and national interests. They have taken advantage of radio, television, and then the internet as modern communication channels from the beginning, and, following their current social media activity, they continue to use online platforms to serve their own interests. The vast geographical distances, the borders separating them, and their small populations make communication channels particularly important. To preserve their identity, they continue to focus on the motifs and

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<sup>12</sup> “Lapland” as opposed to linguistically diverse names.

<sup>13</sup> Harald EIDHEIM: “When Ethnic Identity is a Social Stigma”. In Fredrik Barth (ed.): *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, Bergen, Universitetsforlaget, 1969, 39–57.

<sup>14</sup> Henry MINDE: “Assimilation of the Sami: Implementation and Consequences”. *Gáldu čála: Journal of Indigenous Peoples Rights*, 2005/3.

symbols that the intellectuals who envisioned and initiated the revitalisation in the second half of the last century selected from traditional Sámi culture (including folklore).<sup>15</sup> These contents, rooted in Sámi folklore and identity discourse, easily found their way into the world of memes, while remaining part of offline folklore.

Through the memes presented in the study, I illustrated that folklore – which for a long time existed only in the oral world – easily conquers newer registers, and even in the most modern forms of communication and in a changed social environment, the motifs and meanings that embody the essentials of Sámi culture continue to live on, such as the cultural and technical specialisation adapted to the harsh Arctic landscape and weather, which evokes a sense of wonder in outsiders and pride in the Sámis.<sup>16</sup> Adaptation is the key to survival for peoples living in extreme natural conditions. This is not only reflected in the use of new technical achievements, but also in the preservation of continuity and the successful combination of old and new, as exemplified by the successful expansion of the Sámi folklore in a new online medium.

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<sup>15</sup> For more, see Ivar BJØRKLUND: *Sápmi – nášuvdna rieggáda*, Tromsø, Tromssa Musea, Tromssa Universiteahta, 2000; TAMÁS Ildikó: “A sarki fény színei: Szimbólumok a számi nemzeti identitáskonstrukció folyamatában”. *Ethno-Lore*, 32, 2015, 415–446; Else Grete BRODERSTAD: “The promises and challenges of indigenous self-determination”. *International Journal*, 66/4, 2011, 893–907.

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### Abstract

*This paper provides an analysis of the process how folklore phenomena and bilingualism find their way to the online sphere. The author bases her study on an exact time frame of some Sámi web-domains and gives an online ethnographical discussion of the Sámi ethnic discourse. She chose a topic for this in-depth analysis – the emblematic relation between indigenous people who get used to the frozen arctic winter and the outlanders who did not. This opposition gives ground for many jokes, argumentations, and statements that sometimes cross the border of the politically correct style. This study also proves that the border between online and offline folklore is far from being a strict one, and we must consider both as parts of the folklore of Sámi ethnic identity.*

**Keywords:** Sámi, indigenous, ethnic identity, bilingualism, folklore, online-offline.

*Identitás, kétnyelvűség, kisebbségi lét: Számi fiatalok az Instagramon**Rezümé*

*Tanulmányomban azt a kérdést vizsgálom, hogy a számi identitás egyik emblemikus eleme hogyan transzformálódik az offline diskurzusokból az online folklórbá, illetve a fiatalabb nemzedékek hogyan használják fel az identitásukat meghatározó kulturális elemeket, a szóbeliségben is meglévő kétnyelvűséget a közösségi médiában. A vizsgálat két számi Instagram profil adott időkeretben megjelent tartalmaira fókuszál, a szerző az ezekben megjelenő etnikai diskurzus online etnográfiai tárgyalását adja. Az Instagram posztok tematikájában megjelenik a fagyos sarkvidéki télhez, illetve a hideghez viszonyulás, ami mint biológiai és kulturális jelenség, alkalmasnak bizonyul az etnikai különbségek kommunikálására az őslakosok és az „idegenek” között. Ez az ellentét számos viccnek és egyéb humoros tartalomnak ad teret, amelyek néha átlépik a politikailag korrekt stílus határát. A tanulmányban bemutatott mémeken keresztül illusztrálom, hogy a sokáig csak a szóbeliségben létező folklór könnyedén meghódítja az újabb regisztereket, és még a legmodernebb közlésformákban, megváltozott társadalmi környezetben is tovább élnek a számi kultúrát esszenciálisan megtestesítő motívumok és jelentések.*

**Kulcsszavak:** számi, őslakos, etnikus identitás, kétnyelvűség, folklór, online-offline



SABIRA STÅHLBERG

**AllΦaBeet: A Glimpse into a Multilingual Writer's Kitchen**

How does a multilingual writer create a poem with several languages, writing systems, visual elements, and sounds? Good question. Frankly, I have no idea. As a researcher, I have been trying to map out my multilingual creative processes for many years. But I still cannot say for sure exactly how they happen; there are so many aspects which remain hidden, although I try to follow the whys and wheres of every little ingredient I use. A creative process is confusing and chaotic. Every poem and every book is different. My creative work develops and transforms with each new topic. As a writer, I accept the possibility that maybe we will never know in detail how the creative processes happen. There seem to be endless processes within one author, and several of them are running at the same time. Creative processes cannot be isolated from the writer's everyday life. Life itself is a creative process for those who permit it.

*(Con)Fusion Cuisine*

I have always read and written in several languages, ever since I cracked the code *pähkinä* 'nut' [Finnish] of the азбука 'alphabet' [azbuka, Bulgarian] as a child, and embarked on the exciting reading and writing journey that I am still exploring. For many years, I tried to conform to national language, school and publisher standards, and I kept my *tellär* 'languages' [Tatar, Latin script] separated. Publishers refused to accept more than a word or two in another language, and they always insisted on translations. Anything else was too exotic. In a food book I co-wrote, *Sultanens auberginer*, 'The Sultan's Aubergines' (Swedish, 2003), only some names of dishes could appear in the original *dil* 'language' [Turkish], although the book contains *berättelser* 'stories' [Swedish], *muistoja* 'memories' [Finnish] and recipes from all continents.

Readers found these and my other minimalist excursions into other languages fascinating, but too complicated to understand, especially when I brought in 語言 'languages' [yǔyán, Chinese Traditional] too far away from what they considered to be "normal", that is their mother tongue, English, and maybe *Französisch* 'French' [German] or *allemande* 'German' [French]. But my world has never been this kind of normal – to me monolingualism has always seemed mystifying. My personal bubble, or the dimension I live in, is far more *skomplikowany* 'complicated' [Polish]. It is like an onion in which there are many layers.

So I started to hide multilingual elements in monolingual texts, just like lots of other authors have done before me. Tatar speakers laugh when they see the names of the characters in my novel *Molnvandraren* and *Pilvivaeltaja*, ‘Cloud Wanderer’ (parallel writing in Swedish and Finnish, 2006). Others need a dictionary to find out that Aunt Berenggi [bäräñge, бәрәңге, Tatar Latin and Cyrillic scripts] actually means ‘Aunt Potato’.

### *Towards Фpудом ‘Freedom’ [English, Cyrillic script]*

After leaving the *Universität* ‘university’ [German], I gave up trying to be conventional. There were three main reasons for this drastic turn. Nobody had the right to tell me anymore *so geht es nicht* ‘that’s not how it works’ [German], that I cannot not write or do like that (that being *mehrsprachig* ‘multilingual’ [German] and looking at the *világ* ‘world’ [Hungarian] from a multicultural perspective).

The second reason was that I finally re-identified myself publicly as a multilingual and multicultural person. I really could not be anything else with this *brokiga* [Swedish] *bunte* [German] *kirjava* [Finnish] *πολύχρωμος* [polýchromos, Greek] ‘multicolored, colorful’ background and life of mine. But to explain to the world what it means to be multilingual requires terminology. I began discovering new words for describing my polyglot situation after meeting Johanna Domokos in 2012. As a multilingual scholar and writer, Johanna encouraged me, the writer, to think more deeply about the thirty-something languages I already had stored in my brain.

Back then, I never imagined that I would end up as a multilingualism scholar as well. I just felt very relieved. I could finally tell all those people who were baffled or scared by my multiple languages why I did not fit into their monolingual forms and norms. But why should I always explain myself, as if I was doing something wrong? I turned the argument around. Now I tell anybody who cares to listen that the majority of humanity is multilingual, and that I belong to that majority.

The third reason for my change of direction was that I had established a publishing company. I could decide for myself what to do and publish. At this time, I was also teaching creative writing to multilingual groups in several countries. We had a lot of fun mixing languages. To make the discussions more interesting, I started to write mixed language poetry. *Polyglotta Sabirica* (2015) marked a new era of *libertate* ‘freedom’ [Romanian] in my writing.

As a polyglot writer, I decided at first to experiment with substituting *Wörter* ‘words’ [German] *et* ‘and’ [French] *části* ‘parts’ [Czech] of words. James Joyce did exactly that in *Finnegans Wake*, but I did not read his book until recently. Working with words, morphemes or changing the spelling was, however, too safe and easy. I soon felt dissatisfied and wanted bigger challenges.

Then I began playing with different alphabets and scripts. This was nothing new. I picked up the idea very early from a scholar in disguise, Georg August Wallin

(1811–1852), a Finland-Swedish Orientalist. He wrote his Swedish-language notes in Arabic letters during his years in Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean in the 1840s. Already as a teenager, I did not want anybody to be able to read my diary, so I wrote in different languages. During my field research journeys in Europe and Asia, I developed this technique further and started using different alphabets, for instance Cyrillic for English and Korean Hangeul for Swedish.

Writing in another alphabet or even mixing in Chinese characters was also too simple. My next step was to introduce grammar into the game. From here it was just a short hop to mixing all levels of language, from the phonetic level through morphemes and syntax to the semantic level. I did precisely that in a poetry collection about Anthropocene, *Wan Sun* (2021), and the mixed poetry and prose work *MoonSoon mišmaš* (2023). I

скриптс  
[Cyrillic transcription  
of English, scripts]  
알파벳  
[alpabes, Korean,  
'alphabet']  
字 [zi,  
Chinese,  
'character']  
граматика  
[Bulgarian, Serbian,  
Macedonian,  
'grammar']



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Fig 1. Scripts. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

continue to explore multilingualism in different ways, as *shkrimtar* 'writer' [Albanian], *istraživač* 'researcher' [Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian], and *издател* 'publisher' [Bulgarian]. I draw inspiration and ideas from the wells of everyday life in a dozen languages or so, reading both fiction and scientific literature, listening, watching; and from meetings with multilingualism scholars. Practically daily I discover new pathways and develop further techniques for multilingual writing.

### *Decoding Multilingual Poetry*

As a researcher, I know that decoding can be difficult and time-consuming without a key. Very few people in this world are able to read my poems without consulting dozens of dictionaries in both modern and extinct languages. That is why I nowadays provide English translations and keys to languages and references in my books.

How understandable are my references? Some are obvious, like allusions to world politics or plastic litter on the beach. Others are hidden, but their visibility or invisibility does not reduce the reading experience. The same poem can be read and understood in many ways, and it resonates differently with every reader. References are like popcorn: we start with a grain of maize and heat it up, and

suddenly it pops into another shape. We can never predict what form it will take. Sometimes it might be safer to use maize flour instead of making popcorn, and to prepare a maize porridge or cornmeal mush, *mămăligă* [Romanian], *polenta* [Italian], *качамак / kačamak* [kachamak, Bulgarian / Serbian]. Just do not forget to add some cheese, cream – or chili pepper! – to give it more character.

How much translation, self-translation or narrative about a poem is needed for the reader to enjoy it? That is difficult to answer. I often find that a translation is less rich in taste and less juicy than the original poem. A translation or narrative might also be too little for one reader and too much for another. If the writer explains too much, the poem becomes *platt som en pannkaka*, ‘flat like a pancake’ [Swedish]. If there is too little information to help the reader, the poem might turn into a *мишмаш* ‘mishmash’ [Bulgarian], a quick fried dish with paprika, tomatoes, eggs and *сирене* ‘white cheese’ [sirene, Bulgarian].

My measure is my *maga tilfinning* ‘stomach (gut) feeling’ [Icelandic] and my taste buds. I have to be satisfied. Not the reader, nor the researcher. *Moi-même* ‘I myself’ [French]. I use intuition and experience for choosing the amount of translation and explanations I provide for each poem. As a scholar, I could try hard to prepare a neat, ready-made explanation about writing a multilingual poem. But it would be a limited scholarly analysis, just the stem, not the paprika itself. As a writer, I find it much more inspiring to create a poem and see what happens along the way.

### *Preparazione [Italian]*



Fig 2. Paprika. Bulgarian words for paprika: chushka, paprika, piperka  
Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

To me, writing a multilingual poem is like cooking. There is a suitable Swedish expression, *koka ihop*. It means literally to ‘cook something together’, ‘cook up’ or ‘concoct’. But the expression also means to ‘make up’ or ‘invent’ a story, *koka ihop en historia*. Why is multilingual writing like cooking?

Firstly, both are creative processes. I read *oppskrifter* ‘recipes’ [Norwegian] but seldom follow them. *Opskrifter* ‘recipes’ [Danish] are

for *innblástur* ‘inspiration’ [Icelandic]. I probably do not need to mention that a lot of experimenting is going on in my *kök* ‘kitchen’ [Swedish].

Secondly, both provide vast possibilities to create new combinations and tastes. Fusion cuisine brings together ingredients and cooking techniques from different regions and traditions. Multilingual writing does the same with languages.

Thirdly, both writing and cooking contain the wonderful elements of *keşif* 'discovery' and *keyif* 'pleasure, joy, delight' [Turkish]. Not only the guest at the table, the reader, but also the cook, the writer, is enriched with new insights and experiences.

So where do we begin? Anyone who cooks knows that preparation is important, but the idea is the basis. All poems start from an idea, a word or an expression. Without an idea, we quickly get into *Teufels Küche*, 'the devil's kitchen' or a 'hell of a mess' [German]. It does not matter if the idea is realized or not, but without an idea the poem will be empty and dry like uncooked *penne* 'diagonally cut pasta' [Italian].

A poem about food would be suitable when discussing cooking and writing. Immediately the expression *poftă bună* 'enjoy your meal' [Romanian] floats into my mind. I like the sound of it and instantly remember a delicious fish dish I had on a boat on the Danube River, and the voice of the waitress, light and merry, wishing a pleasant meal (her face I cannot remember, only the *sonor* 'sonorous' [Romanian] cadence of her voice). *Poftă bună* is fresher in sound and taste than the overused *bon appétit* [French]. The expression could stand for itself in the poem. It can be the title, an appetizer, a main course or dessert. In the beginning, when starting to write a poem, everything is possible.

When I began writing mixed poems, I still suffered from *correctitis* [English invented word, 'correct language syndrome'], the syndrome of trying to keep to correct language. Yet mistakes crept in. Only after the first book did I realize that the errors were creative. A typing error could open the door to a new wor(l)d. It was like adding the wrong spice and finding that it actually made the dish more tasty.

Listening to people talk gives me new ideas. A *Lapsus* 'lapse, slip, mistake' [German] can become the seed for a poem. A friend recently said a funny word, *aufstrudeln*, when talking about someone whose life had been thrown into chaos. I immediately noted this fascinating Austrian word, 'to swirl, whirl, mix up', for future use. Do you see before your inner eyes the *Strudel*, the rolled Viennese pastry? *Strudel* also means 'a vortex, whirlpool'. But *aufstrudeln* does not exist in a German dictionary. In Austria *abstrudeln* means 'to struggle, toil, work hard'. With the prefix *auf-* 'up, on, above' the verb *strudeln* sounds much stronger than the diminishing *ab-*. *Aufstrudeln* means to 'mix, swirl, whirl up'. Let's put it into the poem we are creating and see how it will behave.

*Writer's Brain Bran*

Now, the question is how (much) do multilingual writers' knowledge, experience and skills influence the writing and the choice of words and languages? Few poems are quick stir-fries or fast food. Although I might write a poem *wikiwiki* 'quickly' [Hawaiian], that does not mean that I have not been fermenting or marinating the topic, or turning the formulations around in my mind like *shish kebab* 'grilled skewers' [original Arabic] for days or weeks, before I can deliver them on paper or screen. Many poems need to be boiled and also baked before they become edible at all. The polyglot poem mostly *muhii* 'stews, brews' [Finnish] in the author's head long before it is served to the reader.

All languages are active simultaneously in the brain. Yes, I think in many languages all the time. This is the simple answer to the ten-billion euro/dollar question everybody asks. For a multilingual it is natural to think in many languages. I have an enormous *whare pukapuka* 'library' [Maori] in my brain. This collection is being expanded ever since my birth, through listening, reading, and experimenting. No language is excluded; words or expressions often pop up even in languages that have been in disuse for a long time. Similarly, all knowledge, experience, skills, thoughts, questions, impressions, impulses, feelings, intuition, and lots of other conscious and unconscious processes are active in the brain when a poem is being cooked.

This is the moment when I tell the field researcher in me to sit down and observe quietly, because I usually go for the adventures. Many writers like to play safe and use only languages they "know" – whatever that means. Always using the same ingredients and techniques for poetry probably feels pleasant and comfortable. But we cannot live forever on French fries, *Pommes*, and sausage, *Wurst* [German]. Alternating ketchup, mustard and mayonnaise does not change anything except adding a new flavor.

A poem needs to be varied to be healthy. Without variation, it becomes as boring as the plastic wrap on a sandwich, or plastic chopsticks. I never stop exploring new pathways, because I am curious, not afraid to get lost, and I want to explore and experiment. I am not a settled farmer or gardener, but a language nomad and hunter-gatherer. My languages are like flocks of animals roaming freely over the wide *cmen* 'steppe' [Ukrainian] grasslands. When needed or I feel like it, I hunt up or gather other languages, and explore and experiment with them.

*Ingredientler [Turkmen]*

What ingredients or languages, and spices or visual elements go into the pot, pan or oven tray of a poem, and in what amounts? It all depends on the format, size, topic and content. Should the food poem be a 俳句 'haiku' [Japanese]? No, I am

thinking of something a bit longer. Let's make it simple, however, and decide on the use of let's say five languages for a start.

Which languages should be in the poem, then? We can always add or remove languages, but at least a bit of *carne* 'meat' [Portuguese, Spanish, Romanian] and *kapusta* 'cabbage' [Polish, Slovak], *каныца* [Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian], *káposzta* [Hungarian], *kupus* [Serbian, Croatian], *kapusta* [Mishar Tatar], *кэбестэ* [Tatar, Cyrillic script], and maybe *rote Bete* 'beet root' [German].

I would like to add some ginger to give the poem more tang. The Korean *sae-*nggang** sounds more interesting than the Chinese *jiāng* or *shēngjiāng*, or Japanese *shōga*. Then we would have a beet-root or cabbage dish with a gingery twist. But the poem can still become something completely else.

The choice of languages, vocabulary, grammar and sounds really depend on the topic. The question of topic and contents are tricky. It

might take days – and sleepless nights – to decide about them. They are like quality *zeleni čaj* 'green tea' [Slovenian, Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian]. Green tea has a pure, clear taste. Its exquisite flavors change with each pouring of hot water over the tea leaves. A multilingual poem should be the same. Of course, it could be just a play with words and structures, but then it feels like chewing-gum. One can blow bubbles and play around with a *kauwgom* 'chewing gum' [Dutch], but when it loses its flavor, we spit it out. Creating only one layer in a poem is like adding sugar or honey – or, even more horrible, milk! – to 綠茶 'green tea' [lùchá, Chinese Simplified; *ryokucha*, Japanese], which completely destroys the taste. The reader needs something more, some added value. The topics and thoughts should open up like a flowering tea bundle when one pours hot water over it. The reader should be able to read the poem over and over again and find new dimensions and flavors every time.



Fig. 3. Ginger. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

*Kokkamine* ‘Cooking’ [Estonian]

When the preparations are made, the tools are on the kitchen table, and the ideas are in place, the next question is about techniques. What techniques can we use for preparing a tasty and rich literary and audiovisual experience for the reader? The traditional divisions in linguistics can be employed, starting from phonemes and morphemes, and reaching the syntax and semantic levels. Some usual techniques are:

- *Visual: letters, alphabets, scripts, spelling, fonts, layout*
- *Audio: sounds, phonetic, melody, musicality*
- *Vocabulary: words, word parts, invented words*
- *Grammar, syntax, structure*
- *Semantic and symbolic meanings*

I use also the visual means modern technology offers, such as different fonts and layout options. I always read a new poem aloud to hear its rhythm and melody. If it is not musical enough, I edit it. The topic is trickier, as it can be hidden in any fold of the brain or dimension of the mind: memories, impressions, trains of thought, or in the dialogue with oneself or others, insights, feelings, symbols, meanings, research – in other words: anywhere.

After thinking about this food poem for several days – and nights – I find that I am stuck on the topic of strudels. I am constantly remembering strudels I have eaten and baked, and people with whom I have eaten them in Vienna and elsewhere.



Fig. 4. Strudel cousins. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

I have looked at recipes and found endless variations of fillings and feelings. I have followed many trains of thought about apples, raisins, whirlpools, and what rolling or folding a strudel could possibly symbolize. I have also done background research about strudels. Vienna learned to prepare this and many other dishes from the Ottomans; the oldest strudel recipe was recorded in 1696. The Ottoman Empire was the neighbor of the

Habsburg and later Austro-Hungarian (1867–1918) Empires for some four hundred years. The Strudel belongs to the Börek family.



A strudel can hide something like a memory or a feeling inside. It can be made with a sweet filling – or feeling – or salty with cheese and spinach, or just cheese, for example. A strudel is like people. At first, we see only the surface, but then we discover something more inside. Strudel is often made with puff pastry by modern, time-pressed cooks (not in Austria, I am told), but can also be prepared with thin filo pastry like its cousins from the Börek family.

So I will write a poem about a strudel. I identify three main methods for poem preparation. To make it easy, we could use the *turta* ‘pie’ [Turkish] method with a matrix language, for example English. That requires preparing the pastry first and then filling the crust with fruit or berries, words and elements from other languages.

The *meze* ‘snack, appetizer’ [Turkish] method goes a step further. There are several languages, olives, pastries, vegetables, fishes and meat served in separate bowls or on small plates. We take bits of words, expressions and beans here, and a bit of grammar, bread and mushrooms there, and let their tastes blend in the mouth.

The third and most advanced is the *güveç* ‘casserole, hot pot, crock, stew’ [Turkish] method. Now, a Balkan, Anatolian or eastern Mediterranean *güveç* in an earthenware pot contains usually at least five and mostly some ten to fifteen ingredients. It is cooked in the oven for several hours. The ingredients can mostly still be distinguished, but tastes, textures and colors have blended beautifully.

The *turta* and *meze* poems are easiest to prepare and analyze. The *güveç* method requires experience, knowledge and flexibility. An old pot, which has collected flavors for many years and generations is better than a new one for preparing *güveç*. In fact, the only way to become skilled in multilingual poetry cooking is to cook more poetry.



Fig. 5. Methods. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

\*

Now it is time to write the poem. The possibilities for combining different elements are almost endless, but I have chosen a simple strategy to make them clearer (my multilingual writing is usually much more chaotic and random). To illustrate what I just explained about methods, I will write the first line in pie crust English before

it is multilingualized. I will add visual and audio effects to it, too. The second line is an appetizer table, where I play with vocabulary and grammar without a matrix language. The third line is an earthenware pot with meanings and references in layers or mixed. I should say here that this poem is being created while I am cooking. It was not prepared beforehand.

Line I: Pie

*Touch a tower of apples and they will roll*

I am thinking about the pile of apples I need to peel and cut into cubes for the filling of the strudel. The pile of apples can also have symbolic meaning: when you start something, you never know where you will end up. Apples tend to roll all over the floor when they escape.

How can we make the line more interesting by adding other languages or fillings? I would substitute the word “apples” with the Chinese *píngguǒ*, which is a word I

have always liked the sound of. “Touch” and “tower” make up a nice alliteration in English, but I would use the Spanish *torre* instead of “tower” to give it a more rrrolling sound. Then, “and” is a word which appears too often in English, so maybe Hungarian *és* could contribute some more melody to the line? I like “will roll” for the sound, so here I would just change “roll” into Cyrillic letters.



Fig. 6. Apples. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

and simplified characters. For this poem I will use the simplified script, because it reminds me of the signs of apple sellers I often saw in the north and northwest while traveling in China, and the enormous juicy apples originating in the desert oases of East Turkestan.

In the first *turta* or pie strategy line I already played a little with vocabulary. But for the *meze* or snacks method, there is no matrix language, just a lot of little dishes. I am thinking in different languages from the start. Some German would be a good beginning. Can you see the apples dancing and hopping, *tanzten*, when they roll over the floor? They are happy, *joyeux*, a French word which sounds joyful.

But we need a bit of grammar play here, too. To the English “avoid” I add the Turkish verbal present ending *-yor*. It sounds almost like a melody with the plural

-lar, and both roll nicely on the tongue. The verb should be at the end of the sentence if we followed Turkish grammar, but I will leave it here, at least for the moment.

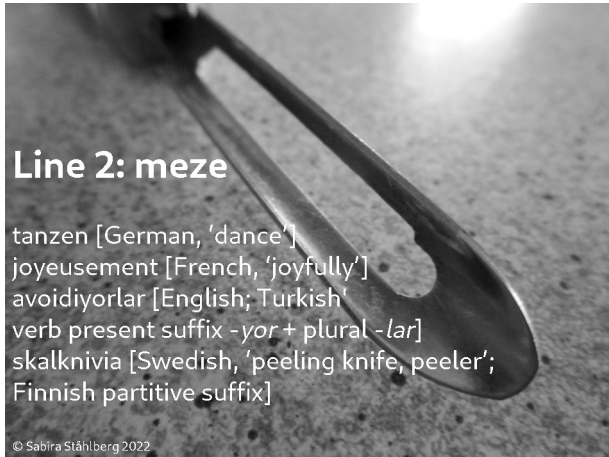
The next word, *skalkniv* in Swedish, sounds cruel enough with a long, open *aaab* in *skal* and a long *eeeh* in *kniv*. We can glue a suitable Finnish partitive ending to soften it. Partitive is one of fifteen cases used for Finnish nouns.

What happens to apples or events when they start rolling in life? At some point they are gathered up, peeled and cooked into a sweet filling together with raisins and sugar for a strudel. In real life, after something happens which destroys the apple (or ivory) tower we have built for ourselves, we might emerge from the ruins with scars and bruises. Yet, we have usually gained a new consciousness about ourselves, people around us, and the world.

Finally, it is time for the *güveç* method. I let the previous lines inspire the next line. In a haiku poem, the third line should bring in a surprise or change. This poem is however no haiku in form, although it could be one in spirit because it contains the seasonal word “apples”. They point to autumn. The poem also shifts our perspective about an everyday situation, which is typical for haiku poetry.

After some language play and adding the verb *aufstrudeln*, I let my imagination run wild. I am mixing words and elements, combining them in different ways, adding odd prefixes and suffixes, and changing the spelling, too. At first, I put a Cyrillic л ‘l’ in the middle of the English ‘as’ and make it *als* ‘as’ [German]. Then I use the French article *la* for the Bulgarian (feminine) word *борба* ‘struggle, fight’. But to strengthen the feeling of struggle, I add a Greek word with the same meaning, which in English associates with ‘agony’. The next word is Austrian, here comes *aufstrudeln* with an English verbal suffix. Probably the reader next recognizes the Russian loanword from Turkic languages for raisins, repeated twice in different alphabets and languages.

I cannot resist the word *glimlachen* ‘to smile’ [Dutch] – it is too close to English and Swedish *glimmer* not to receive an extra syllable. The common word ‘and’ is replaced with the usual but not too conspicuous word in Slavic languages, *i*. I always put in Uygur somewhere in my poems for political reasons; here it is the dough, reminding me of the tasty Uygur breads I have eaten and happy moments spent over dinners, breaking the bread and talking about life and the world. Mainly for rhythm



## Line 2: meze

tanzen [German, ‘dance’]  
 joyusement [French, ‘joyfully’]  
 avoidiyorlar [English; Turkish]  
 verb present suffix -yor + plural -lar]  
 skalknivia [Swedish, ‘peeling knife, peeler’;  
 Finnish partitive suffix]

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Fig. 7. Peeler. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

**Line 3: güveç**

A/л/s ['as' English + Cyrillic letter / German als, 'as']  
 la [French, feminine definite article]  
 борбачώνας [Bulgarian борба, 'struggle'  
 + Greek αγώνας, agonas, 'struggle, fight']  
 aufstrudels [Austrian non-standard, 'swirls'  
 + English present suffix],  
 изюмüzümler [Russian, izyum, 'raisin' + Turkish 'raisins']  
 glimmerlachen [Dutch, glimlachen 'to smile'  
 + Swedish/English glimmer],  
 i [Slavic languages, 'and']  
 خمیر [Uygur, xémir 'dough']  
 ペストリー [Japanese, pesutori 'pastry']  
 көлә [Tatar Cyrillic, kölä 'laughs'].  
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Fig. 8. Raisins. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

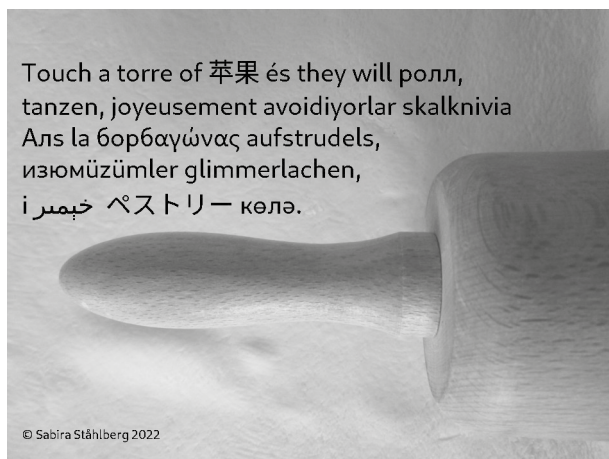
and phonetic reasons the Japanese (loan) word for pastry is added. I want to end the poem abruptly, because of the sudden laugh, so the Tatar word for laughing comes in handy.

The raisins are smiling and the pastry laughs aloud at the funny situation when the apples are running away from the peeler. Maybe the pastry is a bit puffed up – it is a puff pastry, after all – and looking down at the anarchist apples, it laughs con-

descendingly, because it knows that it will eventually wrap both apples and raisins inside itself. The three final lines reflect the futility of building any kinds of towers for safety. In Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sufism, and some other religions and philosophies everything is *anicca* [Pāli], *anitya* [Sanskrit], impermanent and transient. Having fun and laughing while we live here and now is an essential part of the human experience.

\*

Let's take a look at what we have so far:



Touch a torre of 苹果 és they will ролл,  
 tanzen, joyusement avoidiyorlar skalknivia  
 Алс la борбачώνας aufstrudels,  
 изюмüzümler glimmerlachen,  
 خمیر i पेस्ट्री көлә.

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Fig. 9. Pastry. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

Apparently, the original plan of five languages is far exceeded. There are some fifteen languages in the poem. The meat, cabbage and beetroots I thought of in the beginning do not fit in anymore, so they will be put into another poem some other time. But where did *poftă bună* 'enjoy your meal' [Romanian] disappear? Now my *sensación de la tripa* 'gut feeling' [Spanish] says that this expression should stand at the end of the

poem. I want to add some Cyrillic letters, especially the nicely rounded ф 'f' and б 'b' as well as the often confusing н 'n' for those only acquainted with Latin script, to remind us that the Cyrillic alphabet was used for Romanian far into the nineteenth century. The result is *Рофтă бунă!* [Latin-Cyrillic script mix].

Ultimately a title also has to be discovered or created, or if there was an idea before, it needs to be revised to reflect the poem. I see now not only *Strudel*, but also the word *strut* in it. Another possibility could be *Strauss*, the Viennese composers, or *Strauß* 'ostrich' [German]. *Strausdel* or *Strausel* would be a nod to Vienna, but it does not look as interesting as *Strutel*, so I will opt for the latter one. Maybe the apples or the dough are strutting, or the whole poem struts like a peacock? There are endless possibilities for interpretation.

A topic can be dealt with in innumerable ways. Every person writes differently. If another person writes a multilingual poem about a strudel or *strutel*, this writer would choose other languages or another content which refers to something in their life or way of thinking. The poem would be something completely different. Also, next time I write about a strudel, it will be dissimilar to this occasional poem.

This multilingual poem contains several conscious and unconscious methods, strategies and techniques. The more complicated and complex it becomes, the slower it will be read by you. Still, it reads fluently, despite the fact that it is full of mixed words, writing systems and grammar in languages from various language groups. All cooks perform actions they cannot explain, because these actions have become automatic or they are intuitive, or "just feel like that" is the way to do it. There are several parts of the process I have carried out without explaining, because I am unable to explain them.

What looked like a vegetable pie at the beginning turned into a strudel with raisins, apples and a whole lot of languages and spices. Is it edible at all? Can the reader digest it? I do not know. That is up to each reader. I just hope everyone can enjoy the poem – and have a good laugh.



Fig. 10. Time to eat. Picture: Sabira Ståhlberg 2022

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*Abstract*

*In the multilingual writer’s kitchen, poems are cooking. How does the author deal with several languages and how are word and language choices made? This article discusses the journey of the author from standardized, socially accepted monolingual norms to free multilingual writing, factors which might influence the writer in the writing process, and how the writer explains or creates references to the multilingual text, as well as the importance of language nomadism and variation in polyglot writing. Three strategies are identified on the basis of cooking techniques: in the turta or pie strategy, the author writes a monolingual text and then fills it with multilingual words; in the meze or appetizer method, writing is multilingual from the beginning; and in the güveç or hot pot strategy, writing is both multilingual and mixed from beginning to end. This study is an artistic-scholarly effort to discern and explore the creative processes and strategies of a multilingual author.*

**Keywords:** cooking, polyglot poetry, writing strategies

*AllDaBeet: betekintés egy többnyelvű író konyhájába*  
*Reziümé*

*Vers készül a többnyelvű író konyhájában. Hogy birkózik meg a költő több nyelv jelenlétével, és hogyan választ a szavak és nyelvek között? Jelen írás azt mutatja meg, hogyan jut el a költő a standard, társadalmilag elfogadott egynyelvű normától a többnyelvű szabad önkifejezésig,*

*milyen tényezők befolyásolhatják az alkotás során, és hogyan magyarázza vagy kommentálja a többnyelvű szöveget és a poliglott költészet nyelvi nomádiszmusának jelentőségét. Az alkalmazott főzési eljárás alapján három stratégia különíthető el: a pite-stratégia azt jelenti, hogy a költő megír egy egynyelvű szöveget aztán megtölti többnyelvű szavakkal; a mezze-módszerrel írt szöveg már kezdettől fogva többnyelvű; a güvecs-stratégia lényege pedig az, hogy a szövegben az elejétől a végéig jelen vannak és keverednek is a többnyelvű szavak. Jelen írás megpróbálja feltárni és elkülöníteni a többnyelvű szerző kreatív eljárásait és szövegalkotási stratégiáit.*

**Kulcsszavak:** többnyelvűség, szövegalkotási stratégia, recept

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