

# The Antinomy of Multilingual US Literature

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After September 2001, among other effects that may or may not have been foreseen, the new direction of US national political imperatives revived support for foreign language learning as a component of human or cultural intelligence. Across the political spectrum, competence in languages other than English is now acknowledged as a serious weakness of educational, economic, and military resources in the United States. In the critical study of contemporary literature, the multilingual spirit of this new emphasis collides with the monolingual letter of the publication industry that produces books. In the production of research objects for scholars of contemporary literature, language difference, the ground zero of multiple language acquisition, is displaced by translative *representation* of language difference. To the extent that scholars understand themselves as analysts of already given objects, regarding intervention in the process of literary production as beyond their practical or desired ability, the premium placed on language difference here is insufficiently theorized.

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This essay ‘works’ at the intersection of an apparently formal problem with a material problem. In literary and cultural studies, any such intersection pits the *fact* against the *process* of production of our own research objects, in a conflict which, we might say, we have devised many ways to acknowledge without really analyzing — in so far as analysis brings us sooner or later, and uncomfortably, to the discipline we exercise on those objects, and on ourselves as their analysts, in our disciplinarity. The positivism latent even in our most pliant conceptions of scholarship is, we might say, both an acknowledged and unacknowledged ground of conflict at the intersection of research methodology with the reproduction not of methods so much as institutional positions for researchers. The pathos of this mix of assent and denial, of what one might call blindness in insight, is nowhere more abjectly figured than in the dispersions of global critical consciousness made a local imperative, carefully shielded from the bite of the anticolonial critique of the academy itself. What Haun Saussy describes as comparative literature having ‘won its battles’, in its dissemination to fields like United States studies (Saussy, 2006: 3), is understandably felt as a loss by those who

now hold the high ground. In US literary studies, assent takes the form of a distinction between the USA as legal object, or entity, or actor, and ‘America’ as a representation, or perhaps an imaginary, long since lost to the jurisdiction of US citizens (and in fact never having belonged to them at all). Denial, meanwhile, ensures that making a career in what we call ‘American literature’, either as its critic or as its primary producer (or as both), means asserting such jurisdiction, in any number of ways and at any of many available levels of intensity.

It is perhaps in an embrace, rather than in a discounting of this antinomy of critical practice that Gönül Pultar (1998) writes of the ‘ethnic fatigue’ legible, for example, in the work of Turkish-American poet Seyfettin Başçılar, who has resided in the United States since 1966, writing poetry in Turkish that is published in Turkey. The very aesthetic or habitus, as much as the settings, images, and themes of Başçılar’s poetry is arguably as ‘American’ as it is Turkish, and Pultar asks us to ask ourselves if it is so certainly *not* American literature, even (or especially) if it is written in one of the languages that less than one-tenth of one per cent of the US population, at the time of the 2000 census, could read. In Pultar’s outsider’s reading of the contemporary US literary and literary-critical scene, what she calls ‘ethnic fatigue’ is a product of double consciousness as a *medium*, rather than as an object of critical discourse. For Pultar, the non-Anglo whiteness of Caucasian Turkish-Americans, which makes them ‘too good’ for affirmative action, combines with a both contingent and persistent incommensurability, in the mediation, more than the mere civil status, that is migrancy from the non-West. In Turkish-American writing, as Pultar reads it, the repression of that incommensurability returns in the form of a weariness with writing in English. Pultar thus ‘translates’ — perhaps one should say ‘untranslates’ — for contemporary US studies the Turkish poetic trope of *hüzün*, as she reads it revalued in Başçılar’s poetry, as one figure for a non-Anglophone American literature.<sup>1</sup>

I think we have to think this *secession* from a critical scene as something more than confrontational self-immolation performed at the gates of the art institution. That is a modernist critical figuration of the avant-garde which, whether it ridicules the drive to invisibility or grants it real value, presumes that silently single regime we call our modernity as its arena of operation. Americanists, even (or especially) comparative Americanists, must accept, indeed assume, that ‘our’ writers may turn — may *have* turned — from the US-based literary-critical scene toward those of competing modernities, without yet also renouncing the figure ‘America’ and their claims on it. We must accept too, that in the violently mixed and conflicting temporalities that *can* form a lived everyday (at least if one is persuaded by the arguments of Harry Harootunian) reside both criticism’s best challenge, and its unpreventable failure, in a sense that is far more easily acknowledged than it is lived. It is not a matter of saying that global literary studies is the cultural policy of empire, but rather of recognizing the indiscipline in the expansion of any field, which both unsettles and resettles its critical wilderness.<sup>2</sup> ‘There is a relation’, Diana Taylor has argued, ‘between how one lives America and the naming and conceptualization of a field of study.’ Taylor asks us to ask ourselves how a repertoire of deeply and fatally performative cultural and critical practices, as ‘live embodied behaviors’, encounter the ‘scripted genres’ of the archive in our work — an encounter which Taylor implies must change that work in some substantive way (Taylor 2007: 1416–17).<sup>3</sup> What follows is, in its small way, an attempt to honor that request.



After September 2001, among other effects that may or may not have been foreseen, the new direction of US national political imperatives revived support for foreign language learning as a component of human or cultural intelligence — in both the humanistic and the military strategic or technocratic senses of ‘intelligence’.<sup>4</sup> Across the political spectrum, competence in languages other than English is now acknowledged as a serious weakness of educational, economic, and military resources in the United States — though the conclusions drawn from this premise vary widely, both practically and politically. Against the background of realignments precipitated by the events of that year, including waves of performative nativism and contempt for humanism and the push-back of demands for immigrants’ rights, the struggle for a new multilingual American ‘intelligence’ devolves on the politics of multilingualism in everyday *and* literary life. Gloria Anzaldúa’s challenge to North American Anglos to ‘meet her halfway’ in Spanish is, it seems, finally being taken seriously<sup>5</sup> — at least to the extent that interregional vogues for translation studies and global English studies are being imperiled by a drive toward what we might call ‘nontranslation studies’ and a renewed emphasis (from both right and left) on idiolectic incommensurability.<sup>6</sup>

One might say that in the critical study of contemporary literature, the multilingual spirit of this new emphasis collides with the monolingual letter of the publication industry that produces books, our professional research objects. On the one hand, the reimagination of comparative literature emanating from Istanbul rather than Marburg,<sup>7</sup> and of an ‘American literature’ originally and anarchically multilingual,<sup>8</sup> reflects a premium placed on language acquisition and its stakes in a contemporary critical politics of global culture. And this is, straightforwardly, a displacement of value reflecting increased self-consciousness about the cultural *and* linguistic Anglocentrism of professional literary-critical discourse itself.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the commercial publication of books, dominated by transnational media conglomerates with Anglophone resource bases and deep investments in export translation (Venuti, 1995 & 1998), works in various ways to undermine that interest. In the commodity production of research objects for scholars of contemporary literature, language difference, the ground zero of multiple language acquisition, is displaced by translative *representation* of language difference. To the extent that scholars understand themselves as analysts of already given objects, regarding intervention in the *process* of literary production as beyond their practical or desired ability, the premium placed here on language difference, I will suggest, is insufficiently theorized.

### Plurilingualism in translation

Because it marks differently scaled imaginations of market or audience, the economic divide between trade and ‘independent’ book publishing in the US also marks different approaches to the problem of multilingualism in published books. US book publishing can be divided into three distinct sectors: trade publishing, based for the most part in New York City and integrated during the 1990s into multinational media conglomerates; scholarly publishing, consisting mainly of domestic university presses (few of which are as strongly supported as they once were by their host institutions); and ‘independent’ publishing, encompassing everything from high-visibility regional

publishers competing with the trades but not yet integrated into the New York system (Graywolf Press in Minnesota, for example) to very small presses tied to specific regional or local literary, intellectual, political, or independent scholarly communities. For almost anyone working in, working for, or working with publishing (which is to say anyone who produces books), and for any reasonably discerning reader, the distinction between trade publishing, on the one hand, and scholarly and independent publishing, on the other, is plain.<sup>10</sup> In most cases, it is a distinction between radically different levels of (and levels of access to) economic resources, and thus of particular ‘classes’ — admittedly an abusive term here — of literary writers marked by specific dispositions of time and work: sometimes, and most plainly, those who can hope to earn a living from writing alone versus those who cannot. This distinction also marks a point of transition in an individual literary or academic writer’s career, the jump to trade publishing (which either reflects or produces, depending on how one sees it, a broader audience) serving as a symbolic form of upward mobility.

Virtually all books published for distribution in the United States by US trade publishers are published in English, for an audience that by market mandate is presumed monolingual in English.<sup>11</sup> But as the work of Lawrence Venuti, among others, has consistently emphasized, a large portion of the market for books published in the United States is international: that is to say, a market for books published in translation *from* English (Venuti, 1995 & 1998). Regarded as a market, this ‘global’ literary audience — a presumed monolingual Anglophone audience at home, plus a presumed monolingual non-Anglophone audience abroad — represents two sources of pressure for editorial standardization: one directed toward readability for the largest possible Anglophone home audience, and the other toward translatability for the largest possible multinational audience abroad.<sup>12</sup> In books published in the United States, words and phrases in languages other than English are obstacles, then, not only for the monolingual Anglophone reader, but also for the translator, whose principal task is resolving the source English into the target language of a foreign market. What we might call ‘strong’ plurilingualism — the interpolation into English of significant quantities of a language or languages other than English — is today found exclusively in books published by ‘independent’ publishing houses *not* oriented in this way to translation.

One consequence of this is that editorial conventions for ‘managing’ foreign languages can best be observed in an emerging canon of contemporary US multiethnic literary memoir and fiction published by the trade division of the publishing industry.<sup>13</sup> And here we can see something of the functional paradox at work in contemporary notions of transnational literature: a paradox for which I prefer the term *antinomy*, to emphasize the constitutive or permanent character of contradiction *at the ground of publication itself* over its research character as an object of interest in an always already given field. For the narratives of language acquisition and bi- or plurilingual experience of which so many such multiethnic US literary works consist must make frequent reference, from within the original English in which they are published — this, after all, is the story they tell — to a non-English language or languages: to the language(s) the story they tell has taken them *from*. And yet to ‘speak’ in that language or languages — to interpolate it in significant quantities into

their original English — would be to violate the market mandate of transmission, including transmission as foreign (re)translation. This is where the editorial apparatus of a trade publisher exerts itself visibly, and where the new comparative Americanist criticism and scholarship of contemporary literature — often and oddly less perceptive, on this issue, than some book criticism in the popular media — can find itself circumscribed: ‘worlded’.<sup>14</sup>

We might say there are three main conventions for managing languages other than English in US trade-published books. First, they are *contained* — confined to single words, phrases, or brief exchanges of spoken dialogue, as touches of cultural verisimilitude (or its simulation) that ‘season’ the text ever so lightly with the foreign without dulling its domestic flavor. Second, they are ‘tagged’ (by convention, with italic type) to mark them as voiced (as breaks in a continuum of subvocalized prose) and to mark them as ‘foreign’ language. Third, they are translated — usually in direct apposition, as in ‘The Mexican said *Hola*, or hello’. Languages other than English are administered, so to speak, in an ethnographic or pedagogic mode presuming the lowest common denominator, Anglophone monolingualism.<sup>15</sup>

Notwithstanding, however, the plurilingual intercultural initiatives of the Common European Framework for Language Learning and Teaching and the presence in its midst of a constitutionally plurilingual nation-state (Switzerland), such ‘domesticating’ conventions can be observed in literature published in continental Europe, too — even (or especially) in a work widely celebrated for its mixture of languages (such as Turkish-German author Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Mutterzunge* [Brandt, 2004]). This, then — and here is the broader frame of my argument — is hardly a question of Anglophone (or Anglophile) barbarism, as some might see it, but of the nationalized languages of book publishing generally. The national and international book publication of literature requires, indeed enforces national linguistic standardization. Furthermore: it is in no way upset by moderate challenge to the national standard (in the low/high-culture erudition of dialect mimicry, appropriation of argot or specialized jargon, and so on). Such challenge, often enough, is recoded as innovation — hybridization or syncretism of the national language — and thus serves to reassert the standard while expanding its flexibility and powers of incorporation as a *literary* standard.<sup>16</sup> What the nationalized languages of book publishing cannot tolerate, on the other hand — and where the line dividing trade from scholarly and ‘independent’ presses is drawn — is departure from the national standard: moving inward, in one direction, toward idiolectic private or invented language, and outward in the other, toward inter-national, public plurilingualism.

## Memoir and countermemoir

I want now briefly to examine Ilan Stavans’s ‘language memoir’ *On Borrowed Words: A Memoir of Language*. Published in the original English by Viking in 2001, this narrative traces its narrator’s crossing from Mexico (and Spanish) to the United States (and English) by way of Israel (and both Yiddish and Hebrew). In a scene in the book’s last chapter, a coda, Stavans’s narrator is having breakfast with Richard Rodriguez, the author of *Hunger for Memory*, another English-language memoir of multilingualism, while the two discuss writing, identity and language in their lives

and work. ‘What does the switch from one language to another really entail?’, asks ‘Rodriguez’ at one point, referring to the narrator’s four primary languages. Here is the narrator’s answer (partly, as you will see, reported in direct quotation, and partly narrated):

‘My English-language persona is the one that superimposes itself on all previous others. In it are the seeds of Yiddish and Hebrew, but mostly Spanish’. I invoke the Yiddish translation of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, which, in its title page, read ‘*fartunkeld und farveserd*’ — translated and improved. [...] ‘You know, sometimes I have the feeling I’m not one but two, three, four people. Is there an *original* person? An essence? I’m not altogether sure, for without language I am nobody. Language makes us able to fit into a context. And what is there to be found in the interstices between contexts? Not silence, Richard — oh, no. Something far less compelling: pure kitsch’. (Stavans 2001: 249–50; quoted with omissions)

Within this sentence, a phrase in Yiddish, ‘*fartunkeld und farveserd*’, is ‘translated’ by an appositive in English, ‘translated and improved’, in apparent obedience to the editorial conventions I described above. Though it violates these conventions at times, *On Borrowed Words* for the most part follows them, minimizing the quantity of Spanish and Yiddish inserted into the English text, invariably italicizing it, and frequently translating it (accurately), as in this typical example: ‘Until my mother said, “*Shoyn genug*”, enough is enough, *ya es suficiente*’ (Stavans 2001: 122). In the sentence invoking a Yiddish translation of *Lear*, however, the English appositive is a paratranslation, encoding a tropism or a solecism that must remain opaque to the reader with no Yiddish.<sup>17</sup> Here the editorial convention is used against itself, as it were, its very resistance to the act of imagination forced to demand it.

*On Borrowed Words* is a fascinating text in part for this doubling, which at once submits to the artifactual monolingualism demanded of it as a (trade) *book* — though not without analyzing that submission at some length — and subverts it with a ‘secret’ resistance splitting its audience, as here. An early chapter, ‘*México Lindo*’, works through the contrast between books as objects, or as commodities *containing* writing, and books as texts, or sites of writing’s dissemination. One form of the narrator’s self-conscious experience of books, he tells us, consists (naturally enough) of reading them; the other — which at times seems more urgent, or is more absorbing — of collecting, transporting, packing or unpacking, arranging, or (in a scene of the anxiety of influence, focused on Borges) destroying them. The conflict between these two modes of interaction with books, which turns on the narrator’s reading of Walter Benjamin’s essay ‘Unpacking My Library’, is a conflict between private and public forms of experience — the distinction between which the literary capital of New York, when the narrator finally arrives there, totally obscures. Abandoning the ‘portable home’ of his library, the narrator immerses himself in the city’s quotidian — for which he then finds only analogies for *reading* suffice (New York, for example, is a ‘huge book’ of ‘multilingual poetry’ [Stavans 2001: 11]). In this city, people read books in public: a habit producing memories of privately imagined (read) experience anchored to public and vividly real space. To collect books without reading them is, as Benjamin hinted, to return them to the radical privacy of writing as lived time — that is to say, as an index to mortality. This subversion of exchange finds its

analogue in reading books in public (in the hypostasized public of the City), where it reintroduces privacy into the public sphere. Against this more radical confusion, the narrator concludes, the ‘local color’ of literary detail — the tourist’s (or nationalist’s) emblematic camel, as signifier for authentic cultural difference — can never be anything more than *representation* (Stavans 2001: 30).

As memoir, *On Borrowed Words* is in fact the story of a second memoir represented within it — a private or ‘countermemoir’ composed by Bobbe Bela, the narrator’s grandmother, when she learns that he plans to write a memoir as such (a memoir for publication: by more or less clear implication, *On Borrowed Words* itself). Not least in the illegibility of its representation within another text, *this* memoir also confuses the distinction between public and private writing. Though ‘private’ (not intended for publication), Bobbe Bela’s countermemoir is, like *On Borrowed Words*, composed in an acquired, rather than in a native language (here, Spanish rather than Yiddish), in purposeful manipulation of the registers of symbolic power and the boundary dividing the domestic from the public sphere. This publicity within privacy, addressing itself to the narrator — and, through him, to his audience as a published author — forces him to the question of linguistic verisimilitude, within which there lies a kind of abyss. To publish a memoir, the narrator reflects, is to transform oneself into a fictional character: here, a monoglot. ‘Shouldn’t [*On Borrowed Words*] be written in at least three or four languages? [...] But no publisher in his right mind would endorse such an endeavor’ (Stavans 2001: 88).

This ‘memoir of language’ cannot capture the silent and private art of a divided, multiple, plurilingual self; it can only express it, in vulgar and public form, as kitsch. In the interstices of multiple language worlds, we find not the sacred poetic autonomy of literariness, but the collective and prosaic equivalence of plurilingualism *in translation*. The specularity of the breakfast scene with ‘Richard Rodriguez’, itself — its reanimation of two author-functions in a species of allegorical dialogue, as between talking heads or figurines — seems a conscious forcing of generic bad taste over the high-metafictional mode of the narrator’s Oedipal father, Borges. Though finally, *On Borrowed Words* is a concession to the publisher ‘in his right mind’ (meaning, motivated by profit) rather than a serious challenge to what that sanity represents, the narrator’s choice of kitsch over silence here is significant — and meaningfully counterweights that concession.

Rodriguez’s own *Hunger for Memory*, by contrast, famously constructed public multilingualism (understood as both the presumption and the goal of bilingual education policies) as ‘sentimentality’ — a key term of derision for the failure or refusal to recognize the border marking the domestic sphere of family (and the private language of home, with its hierarchies of tradition and authority) and the public sphere of school (and the leveling language of modern democratic citizenship). In its resistance to the ‘middle-class pastoral’ of 1980s identarian multiculturalism, *Hunger for Memory* shares with *On Borrowed Words* a fascination with the ‘public privacy’ of writing and its defacements: just as the writer writes not to give others ‘voice’, but to distinguish (and obscure) himself against them, the political representation of ‘cultural rights’ is designed to deny the ethnic immigrant access to power, by enclosing her in her own cultural idiom. If for all its intellectual ferocity, *Hunger for Memory* remains unpersuasive (and now clearly mistaken) on one point,<sup>18</sup> it is the realpolitik of English

as the public language of the United States *now and in future* (if that were the case, the US Senate would not have felt the need again to exercise, as it did most recently in March 2008, a national language resolution).<sup>19</sup> Here, the kitsch excess of the gaps between Stavans's narrator's language worlds is the object, not the subject of instruction — a distinction that *Hunger of Memory's* subtitle, *The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, signals clearly. Cloaked in respect for cultural rights, the pastoral sentimentality that Rodriguez diagnoses (entirely correctly) as a convenient way of denying the immigrant citizenship finds perfect expression in the weak plurilingualism of political figures like New York City mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and President George W. Bush, addressing in public the 'Latino vote' — yet witness how quickly Bush's debatable Spanish proficiency turned controversial, during the massive immigrants' rights marches of 2006, and had to be denied by the voice of the White House: one indication that 'speaking Spanish in public' is not the innocence Rodriguez's narrator makes it out to be.<sup>20</sup> The narrative's antinomian 'scholarship boy', at the same time a good student and a bad student, serves to instruct us in the conflict between private and public authority; yet the gaze of the silent, 'alien' Mexican laborers, in the scene where he acts as their Spanish-English interpreter (Rodriguez, 1983: 138), is nothing if not an exteriorization of that conflict, in a way that fundamentally undercuts the narrator's central argument: that intimacy is not a function of language, which is rooted (or takes root) and cannot be exchanged, but a function of 'community', which can (Rodriguez, 1983: 32). The ethnic confusion that engulfs the family — the mother's 'inexplicably' Irish surname, the siblings' inconsistency of complexion, the identifications way off the mark that, the narrator says, 'people' keep making (Rodriguez, 1983: 114–15) — serves less to illustrate the narrator's point, which is that anyone willing to distinguish civic from ethnic life has already, in a sense, become American, than to point to the language (rooted or not) through which they can exist *as* a communal group at all.

## Translucinación

Let me give as a second example two editorial projects, one in the auto-curating tradition of the avant-garde and focused on the present and the future, the other scholarly and looking to the past, using historical archives to challenge the founding myth of an Anglophone United States. Like Marc Shell and Werner Sollors's *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature*, the tenth issue of *Chain*, an annual edited by poet-scholars Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr, mixes examples of plurilingual and monolingual literature written in languages other than English, by visitors to, exiles from, and onlookers to the United States, with commissioned English translations of each work. In a gesture of which both teams of editors are fully cognizant and which they recognize as problematic, the ambitiously elastic linguistic horizon of each project is simultaneously stretched and then snapped back, reconstituted. In both projects — one revising the monolingual foundations of the federal United States of America, the other recognizing and problematizing the monolingualism of Anglophone avant-garde syntactic radicalism — the editors' discomfort with what they are doing is clear. 'Translucinación', Osman and Spahr write in their introduction, defining the neologism that gives the issue its title, 'is [...] a cross-cultural encounter



loaded with hope and yet always in danger of going wrong' (Osman and Spahr 2003: iii). And Shell observes:

The editors of this multilingual anthology, with its pervasive 'English Plus', facing-page, bilingual format, do not enter the fray in a political vacuum insofar as the very notion of common language is always fraught with political difficulty [...] *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature* attempts to recuperate forgotten American languages and literatures and to indicate how much remains to be done. At the same time, it inevitably recuperates the same movement toward 'anglicization' that led to the need for recuperation in the first place. (Shell 2000: 290–91)

Of course, publication is not publication without reading, and in the structurally monolingual literary culture of the United States, one makes the choice to write in English or else possibly not to write (or if writing, not to be read) at all. This is simple editorial (and social) convention, which none of us can ever fully escape. And yet each of these editorial projects paradoxically requires precisely that monolingualism which it has the potential, but never the full potency, to overturn, in so far as it must serve it, in order to challenge it.<sup>21</sup> This is not inconsequential, either. There are, and have been, alternatives — including *policies of nontranslation*.<sup>22</sup> It is not a matter of conflict between elite 'referential' and demotic existential plurilingualism as representational strategies (see Villanueva), but of control of the means of publication, which neither the primary producers nor the scholars of contemporary US literature are fully willing to assert.

Compromise with the profit-seeking of the book industry is written on the entire spectrum of contemporary literature, where it forces us to consider the *future* of our literary archives, not only their past — and where the strength of a work's plurilingualism often correlates with diminished visibility (publication by non-profit 'independent' publishing houses, or any of a scale of smaller units down to hand-printed limited editions) and either increased self-assertion as avant-gardism, or a kind of refusal of self-assertion altogether. Even, for example, in the second-wave recovery of work neglected by projects for ethnic studies focused initially on representations of identity,<sup>23</sup> patterns of selectivity in the analysis of formal, textual strategies are clearly visible — the containable or recuperable internal displacements of 'broken English', for example, drawing the bulk of some scholars' attention, at the expense of interlinguistic displacements (in a mark, perhaps, of the scholar's own negotiations of interlingual and plurilingual training and competence).

To take a now classic example: editions of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*, published by small independent presses in New York (Tanam) and Berkeley (Third Woman) before being reissued by the University of California Press in 2001, includes a wealth of interpolated realia including photographs, film stills, reproduced handwritten and typescript letters, anatomical diagrams, Chinese characters, and images of Korean hangul, as well as long passages of broken and lineated prose in French. In the arrangement of material, French-language passages are generally followed by English versions of the same text, either in succession or in facing-page arrangement (an exception is the sequence 'Aller/Retour', which grafts them together, yet still does not leave much French without an English equivalent). The Korean appearing on the book's first page, on the other hand, goes untransliterated and untranslated, as do some of the Chinese characters. And the dictation lessons enstructured or dissolved

in the work's French-language passages do seem (to judge from the habits of Cha scholarship, which either engage, or neglect or avoid *Dictée's* plurilingualism) to require bilingual reading, to the extent that the conventions of the dictation exercise itself and their violation (the transcription of punctuation words meant to be produced, rather than transcribed) invite one to monitor compliance.<sup>24</sup>

Less has been published, thus far, on Karen Tei Yamashita's *The Circle K Cycles* (2001), an intergeneric work focused on the culture of dekasegi (Brazilians of Japanese descent who came to Japan as migrant laborers during the 1990s), which moves from English into the 'Japanese English' of the retail market, Brazilian Portuguese, and Japanese, with one entire chapter in Portuguese and one in Japanese, followed by English versions. In a way, *The Circle K Cycles* manages to combine what at first appears to be the radical incommensurability of language worlds — in the demand for trilingual English-Brazilian Portuguese-Japanese fluency — with a partial attenuation of that incommensurability, in appositive translation at a structural extreme (the appending of entire chapters in multiple versions). It is in fact by radicalizing the redundancy of appositive translation that *The Circle K Cycles* creates a text, and a book, whose material structure and attendant horizons of expectation stand oddly and interestingly between 'strong' or constructive and 'weak' or containing appositive plurilingualism. On the one hand, the wholesale interpolation of ten- to twenty-page blocks of continuous Portuguese or Japanese marks out large zones of potentially total opacity for the simultaneously monocultural and monolingual reader implied by the 'Dekasegi Starter Dictionary' on *The Circle K Cycles's* very first page; this impulse, we might say, is primarily constructive or productive of difference. As Kandice Chuh observes,

In *Circle K Cycles*, generic hybridity structurally enables [Yamashita] to place variegated worldviews side by side [...] the interpretive flexibility required by the nonequivalence of *Circle K Cycles's* constitutive pieces is a textual iteration of traveling through difference. Comparisons are drawn not toward synthesis of differences or in an easy celebration; rather they are left open to signification. This space of comparison is the space between the ability to read and the ability to understand a language; it marks the differential knowledge necessary to move into the realm of fluency, of access to worldview.

Yamashita's structuring of *Circle K Cycles*, in other words, both prompts and models the movement into difference that hemispheric studies in one sense represents [...]. The likely monolingual US readers for whom Yamashita is writing can acknowledge the presence of the Portuguese but cannot render it intelligible: now you see me, now you don't. (Chuh, 2006: 631, 633, quoted with omissions)

And yet the mass-scale redundancy in the duplication of entire chapters in two or three languages seems mainly that: a purposeful and massive redundancy which breaks programmatically with the conserving or containing drive of mainstream (trade) market-oriented and cost-conscious editorial practice. While its Portuguese and Japanese chapters remain, so to speak, luxuriously 'useless' to the monolingual Anglophone reader of *The Circle K Cycles*, they do not appear constructed to conceal information from that reader, either. We must conclude, rather, that they serve as a kind of incentive and figure for language acquisition as a practice, without demanding it as a precondition for 'understanding' the work — or at least the *entire* work. Again, Chuh:

This doubled iteration structurally performs not only the difference that different languages make to representation but also the possibility of the incorporation of radical difference without its eradication. The interpretation of the polyglot reader fluent in English, Portuguese, and Japanese is not prioritized in this scheme. Rather, it evokes conversation; it requires the forming of relations across differences to produce greater collective knowledge. Here, again, the relevance of Yamashita's work to conceptualizing hemispheric studies emerges: the internal structures of the text reproduce this representation of a unified field of differences in a way that approximates the idea of a nonassimilative hemispheric studies. [...] Yamashita's structuring of *Circle K Cycles* and the ways in which she thematizes cultural differences in its constitutive pieces compellingly and simultaneously illuminate the value of multilingual facility and insist that being monolingual need not be a definitive barrier to cross-cultural knowledge. She echoes in this way Gayatri Spivak's reminder that comprehension of difference does not require complete fluency. Rather, what is important is the effort to become fluent — to move into another's (or an other's) worldview by moving into another language. (Chuh, 2006: 633, 634, quoted with omissions)

I quote directly from the work of another critic at such length, here, to return focus from the given critical object (the literary work) to the critical procedures that construct and manipulate it. Since the collapse of the theoretical self-reflection that peaked in the 1980s, US literary and cultural studies has for the most part confined its metacommentary to carefully circumscribed zones: defined 'occasions' consisting of special sessions at major national conferences, or special issues of major journals, or 'state of the profession' features such as those published in the Modern Language Association's journals *PMLA* and *Profession*. Arguably, it is the strong plurilingual tendency within a certain subgrouping of Latina/o, and especially Chicana/o primary literary production, which still poses a posteriori the most determined challenge today both to literary book publication itself and to the scholarship strongly dependent on book publication — and which perhaps consequently remains marginalized even in its very absorption by that scholarship. Taking as one of its important themes the marginalization of radical feminist and lesbian or queer Chicana writing in early academic formations of ethnic studies, the scholarship and personal writings of Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa focused insistently on the problem of bi- and plurilingualism *in publication*.<sup>25</sup> From her widely cited invitation to US, Mexican and Latina/o readers 'to be met halfway' in US Spanish, with its echoes of Césaire's 'Accommoder-vous de moi [...] Je ne m'accommode pas de vous!',<sup>26</sup> to her denunciations of the racism of Anglo literary and cultural critics who cherry-pick the more inclusive meditations (and monolingual Anglophone passages) in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, to her critiques of literary and cultural critics of color 'contributing to the invisibility of our sister-writers' (Anzaldúa, 1984: 167), Anzaldúa consistently pushed back against *translative* publication with a determination that mainstream academic ethnic literary studies, invested as it must be in the continuity and stability of ethnic literary production, is bound to find indecorous.

In its afterlife in a US studies newly self-conscious, again, Anzaldúa's major work is thus a form of hesitation between the incommensurability of lesbian feminist Chicana difference and the refusal to *translate* that difference (embodied in the radicalized code-switching of *Borderlands/La Frontera*), on the one hand, and a

dedication to intercultural communication demanding worthwhile compromise, on the other. This is, we might say, still the strongest case *visible*, on the US academic literary studies scene today, for intercultural contact as *strong* contact, or collision. For Anzaldúa, everything turned on the visibility accorded by book publication, a visibility determined by language acquisition *as a practice* and a ‘state’ of pluralized identity rather than as a means to an end in translation: ‘Because white eyes do not want to know us, they do not bother to learn our language, the language which reflects us, our culture, our spirit’ (Anzaldúa, 1987: 165). Indeed, there is reason to read what Henry Staten terms the ‘Aztlanism’ of Chicana/o writing as this provocation of *strong* contact, rather than the recidivist, regressivist, or separatist identarian essentialism Staten ascribes to it (and which moves against his own consent to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s stress on ‘inaccessibility *under the most favorable conditions*’ [Staten, 2005: 16]).

Like the essays and poems in Moraga’s *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*, the prose and prose-poetry sequences in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* interpolated paragraphs, stanzas, and entire poems and sections of nonfiction prose in variants of what can only be *printed* as Spanish, without providing (what would also clearly be) English equivalents. Where this limited the critical audience for *Borderlands/La Frontera* and works like it, by literally and symbolically repelling the scholarly reader without the cultural and linguistic competence to ‘work’ on the book, it carved niches within fields and subfields from comparative literature, US studies and ethnic studies down to Chicana/o studies itself, placing pressure simultaneously on the micrological identarianism of field studies and the macrological struggle of an incipiently ‘global’ field to live up to its name.<sup>27</sup> That that pressure today can no longer be contained *or* relieved by euphoric discourses of hybridization placing a premium on *translative* mixture is one argument implicit, perhaps, in the sharp contrast Paul Allatson draws between Spanglish and the Spanish/English of Susana Chávez-Silverman’s *Killer Crónicas: Bilingual Memories/Memorias Bilingües* (2004). Distinguishing between the bilingual code-switching of the line of Chicana writing represented by Moraga and Anzaldúa and the idiomatic inflection of English by Spanish in the aesthetic promoted in Ilan Stavans’s *Spanglish: The Making of a New American Language* (2004), Allatson observes:

[...] [D]eparting from Stavans’s unabashed enthusiasm for Spanglish, it must be emphasized that Susana Chávez-Silverman’s chronicles do not necessarily represent a coming to literary fruition of Spanglish. The power and inventiveness of *Killer Crónicas* lies, more precisely, in the author’s adept code-switching between English and Spanish. While the chronicles provide ample evidence of neologistic wordplay in both English and Spanish, one that might indeed be regarded as a literary form of Spanglish, their narrative momentums are firmly anchored in an unequivocal at-homeness in both tongues. (Allatson, 2004: x)

It is precisely this double- (or triple-, or quadruple-) voiced publicity in code-switching, its bypassing of the *literarity* of idiom, that I want to suggest offers another form of value on the critical scene of comparative US literary studies today — and which, so as both to warn of its literary or literarist incorporation *and* to honor Stavans’s own refusal of avant-garde silence, I will suggest we think in Stavans’s

(finally positive and affirmative) terms, as *kitsch*. As conceivable space, in other words, for non-relation. Not the private non-relation of avant-garde autonomy, moving from idiom to nonsense to silence, seeking escape from appropriation. Rather, a *public* non-relation — in which we find precisely *not*, or not *only* hybrid or syncretic language, but also, as Juliana Spahr suggests in her work on Pacific Basin literatures, ‘multilingual dialogue in multilingual situations’ (Spahr, 2004: 90).

That ‘American’ literature is, after all, only a form of translation might serve, here, as both a conclusion and a (further) provocation. Perhaps only electronic publication, making use of multilingual character set encoding standards (such as the imperfect, but interesting Unicode<sup>28</sup>), could permit the publication — the *chance* of publication — of a radically, anarchically plurilingual literature, and the literary criticism that might follow it: making more than mere talk of our mandates for a renovated and radically multilingual ‘new American studies’, a ‘new comparative literature’, and so on. In the very tenuousness of their lives in print, such works of twentieth- and twenty-first century literature that have already pushed toward this condition figure a kind of impossibility in and for print-capitalist literary culture itself, an impossibility that makes them avant-garde in truly the least silly sense of that term. I mean their ability to index for us, in all the fullness of its contradictions, the mixed modernity of what Harry Harootian calls ‘noncontemporaneous contemporaneity’ (Harootian, 2007: 475): a *Zeitgeist* for an age with neither time nor spirit to spare.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> ‘Transpiring through the verses and inextricably entwined’, Pultar writes of Başıçlar’s poems, ‘are such compelling themes as loneliness, exile (*sürgün*), migration (*göç*), and *hüzün*, that untranslatable word connoting sadness and melancholy, a sort of *tristessa*, which, looked at from one angle, are all traditional motifs in Turkish poetics [...] What is this sense of “weariness” that emerges from the sadness, the *tristessa* of the transplant, articulated with such melancholy during a moment of *défaillance* by a persona of poetry that seems to encompass the whole of the poetry, as one big cry in the desert? What does it symbolize/signify? I suggest that this “ethnic fatigue”, as I would like to term it, is a syndrome, perhaps long in the making, now surfacing more compellingly than ever, that is an apt metaphor for the other “other American literature”, the non-Anglophone one’ (Pultar, 1998: 128, 135).

<sup>2</sup> For an extended argument of this point, conducted by bringing scholarly argumentation to meet its *poiesis*, see Howe (1993). ‘I am drawn toward the

disciplines of history and literary criticism’, Howe writes, ‘but in the dawning distance a dark wall of rule supports the structure of every letter, record, transcript: every proof of authority and power. I know records are compiled by winners, and scholarship is in collusion with Civil Government. I know this and go on searching for some trace of love’s infolding through all the paper in all the libraries I come to’ (Howe, 1993: 4). For more on Howe’s negotiation of such double reading, see Collis (2002). Walter Benn Michaels’s critique of Howe is worth consulting, as well; see Michaels (2004: 1–18).

<sup>3</sup> Taylor argues that an understanding of ‘America’ as a performance forces scholars to ‘rethink not only their object of analysis but also, more important, their scholarly interactions’. In this context — which invokes, among other things, the relationship between the ‘creative’ writers of US literature and its critical analysts — one might also think of what Fredric Jameson wrote, early in his career, of the deeply personal and essayistic work of Walter

Benjamin, now enormously influential (if seldom imitated) in US literary and cultural studies. The philosophy of modernity, Jameson suggests, is almost always *resigned* to modernity, accepting intellectual specialization as fate and displacing its hopes for re-enchantment onto someone else: the artist or writer. Benjamin is unique, Jameson says, in that, rejecting that resignation, he 'wants to save his own life as well' (Jameson, 1972: 61–62).

<sup>4</sup> The Modern Language Association of America occupies a peculiar place in the United States intellectual public sphere, today: on the one hand, advocating such 'cultural intelligence' to the US public, as the last agent charged with protecting it (linguists aside — and leaving aside their employment in departments of language and literature — who in the managerial sector of the US university are more likely to be multilingual than literary humanists?); on the other hand, forced to advocate the very same thing internally, to its own constituency. Such double voicing is often a feature of the annual presidential address to the association, as a rhetorical occasion — and of the reports of the association's task forces on pedagogy and curriculum design, as well. The US Association of Departments of Foreign Languages, as might be expected, also takes a leading role in advocating cultural intelligence as embodied in language acquisition and multilingualism. A selection of publications marking this intensification after 2001 might include Geisler (2002), Kramsch (2002), Pratt (2003), Pratt (2004), Stanton (2004), Stanton (2005), Saussy (2005), Geisler (2006), Perloff (2006), Stanton (2006), Steward (2006), and Geisler, Kramsch, McGinnis, Patrikis, Pratt, Ryding, and Saussy (2007). Service branches of the US armed forces have not made the massive investment in language training that one might (perhaps naively) have expected, after 2001 — among other reasons, because proposals for the computerized automation of translation are often more attractive. Still, in October 2001, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterey, California, was empowered to grant Associate of Arts degrees for the first time, while degree program changes as of early 2008 have removed time limits to the completion of degrees, permitted the award of multiple degrees, and expanded some curricular requirements.

<sup>5</sup> '[W]e Chicanos no longer feel that we need to beg entrance, that we need always to make the first overture — to translate to Anglos, Mexicans and Latinos [...] Today we ask to be met halfway' (Anzaldúa, 1987: 18).

<sup>6</sup> The growth of Anglo-American academic Translation Studies (I capitalize the phrase here, in acceptance of its aggressively disciplinary self-assertion) since the collapse of the Soviet Union as a rival empire, culture of belief, and linguistic entity, is

stunning. Though many would locate in the 1990s a 'cultural turn' incorporating into translation studies (among other things) the fully developed perspectives of postcolonial criticism, one might as easily read that turn as a moment in the *institutionalization* of a postcolonial studies stripped of its critique of the academy (an observation now made somewhat routinely, and in its own way, bureaucratically, about the legacy of Edward W. Said) — and look to a 'harder' turn imaginable for the present conjuncture, as Anglo-American scholars examine, again after 2001, their complicities in the management of foreign culture. Susan Bassnett remains the most active and systematic periodizer of the practice-discipline of translation studies; see in particular Bassnett (2002) and Bassnett and Trivedi (1999), as well as Bassnett (2005). Especially notable work that in one way or another engages the question of a 'harder' turn includes Apter (2003), Apter (2005), Brennan (2001), Brennan (2006), and Spahr (2004). Spivak (2003) is immensely provocative on translation as both necessary and necessarily difficult; as with the provocations of Said and Brennan (along with those of my colleague Djelal Kadir, and, as I will emphasize, Anzaldúa), Spivak's interventions are often enough affirmed at second hand and rarely taken to heart. See also Ross (2003), Corngold (2005), Patell (2005), Clark (2007), Côté (2007), Federici (2007), Hague (2007), Hayes (2007), Glowacka (2007), and Kabir (2007). I hope no one will mistake my omission of work published in other languages, here, for an oversight.

<sup>7</sup> See Said (1983: 5–9), Apter (1995), Damrosch (1995), Mufti (1998), Apter (2003), Apter (2005), and Ertürk (2008). See also Spivak (2003: 87, 87 n. 19).

<sup>8</sup> See Sollors (1998), Sollors (2000), Shell (2000), and Shell (2002).

<sup>9</sup> See Moretti (2000), Arac (2002), Parla (2004), and Weinrich (2004).

<sup>10</sup> See Gold (1995: 13–14) on US independent publishing as a social movement, clearly distinguishable from corporate and university press publishing; see Dilevko and Dali (2006) on self-publishing in North America after the consolidation of the publishing industry in the 1990s; see Parker (2006) on the effects of conglomeration on children's book publishing, with specific attention to Spanish-English bilingualism, translation, and the relationship between national US and independent presses in the US Southwest. On independent publishing in an Anglo-American context, see Hampson and Richardson (2005); in an international context, and in connection with artists' books and the visual arts generally, see Fusco (2004).

<sup>11</sup> Major New York trade houses have created imprints publishing books in Spanish, such as Vintage Español (Random House/Vintage), Rayo (HarperCollins), and Atria (Simon and Schuster);

at least at present, however, such imprints publish significant amounts of material in translation to Spanish *from English*, as well as publishing original Spanish editions of works whose canonization arguably required English translation (for example, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*). New original writing in US Spanish comprises a minor to negligible share of their output. It is uncertain, at present, if the creation of such imprints is best understood as a response to, or a production of, consumer demand for their products, and to what extent they will (as either response or production) provide mass publication opportunities for new original literary writing in US Spanish, and thus for awareness, at what must pass for the public level, of an 'indigenous' Spanish-language American literature. Beyond that, of course, are the unfashionable question of what kind of literature that will be, and the unanswerable question of what *unfielded* groups of cultural producers already producing a vital literature in Spanish, but invisible to a literary studies bound to 'teachable' texts (meaning first, works in mass-distributable print), will think of it.

<sup>12</sup> This is the source of that popular canard of US cultural cosmopolitanism, the biographical note that one's writings have been translated into seven (or nine, or twelve) languages — a symptomatic source of pride, perhaps, for writers the majority of whom would never dream of writing in a language foreign to them.

<sup>13</sup> For criticism focused on this new canon of work — often, following Alice Kaplan, called 'language memoir' — see Kaplan (1994), Pavlenko (2001), Besemeres and Perkins (2003), Cowley (2003), and Kramsch (2005). Kaplan groups together Alfred Kazin, *A Walker in the City*, Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*, Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, and her own *French Lessons: A Memoir*, comparing them with works of postwar French literature including Sartre, *Les Mots*, Nathalie Sarraute, *Enfance*, Annie Ernaux, *La Place*, and Mehdi Charef, *Le Thé au Harem d'Archi Ahmed*. Pavlenko, who views contemporary 'language memoir' as a US literary development, adds Julia Alvarez, *Something to Declare*, Andrei Codrescu, *The Disappearance of the Outside*, Judith Ortiz Cofer, *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood*, Cathy Davidson, *Views of Mount Fuji: On Finding Myself in Japan*, Ariel Dorfman, *Heading South, Looking North: A Bilingual Journey*, Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, Natasha Lvovich, *The Multilingual Self: An Inquiry into Language Learning*, M. Elaine Mar, *Paper Daughter: A Memoir*, Kyoko Mori, *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught Between Cultures*, David Mura, *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansai*, Karen Ogulnick, *Onna Rashiku (Like a Woman):*

*The Diary of a Language Learner in Japan*, Luc Sante, *The Factory of Facts*, and Richard A. Watson, *The Philosopher's Demise: Learning French*.

<sup>14</sup> The sense of 'worlding' here is Djelal Kadir's; see Kadir (2001). Increasingly marginalized in US popular media, book criticism continues to engage the question of the distribution of resources for publication — a question that necessarily entails judgment on deserts to publication, in a consolidated industry forced to create profit margins comparable to entertainment media (and thus driven to quickly produce, and discard, hyped literary 'stars'). About the only solace to be taken from this is that the critical function, which US scholarship in literary studies today largely refuses, grows more, rather than less dynamic as pressure builds in the system. On polemics in contemporary book criticism in US popular media, see Julavits (2003), Birkerts (2004), Lennon (2004), and Pool (2007).

<sup>15</sup> To avoid generalizing the cultural politics of these conventions, I will confine the scope of those remarks that follow this section to editorial practices in the most profit-oriented sector of the US book publishing industry. Still, it is impossible to avoid the much larger and still very much ongoing debate about whether the administrative and administered languages in such a scenario can remain unaffected by each other (the conflict, for example, between 'Manichean' anticolonial and hybridist postcolonial positions on the cultural politics of imperial languages). For useful counterpoint, see the work of Braj Kachru and Alastair Pennycook, especially Pennycook (2007), Pennycook (2006), Pennycook and Karmani (2005), Kachru (2004), Pennycook (2004), Pennycook (2002), Pennycook (1998), Pennycook (1997), Kachru (1986), and Kachru (1983). It must be said that observations of the opportunity cost of *choosing* critical visibility, by writing in the imperial literary standard, are often met with a certain panic — dismissed as vanguardist or ultraleftist, hopelessly pessimistic, mystical, theocratic, or even terroristic, when they may as well be straightforwardly materialist observations of the structures of exclusion through which a bureaucratic apparatus maintains itself — and simple requests for scholarly self-understanding on that count. That every writer worth writing about is *free* to write and to be read is, after all, a convenient position for scholars needing ever greater quantities of critical raw materials: first of all, *visible* — in contemporary literary studies, *published* (and therefore *publishable*) — work. But one must keep both shores in sight, here; as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has put it apropos of linguistic postcoloniality as 'enabling violation' (here, in the Indian context): 'In order for there to be an all-India voice, we have had to dehegemonize English as one

of the Indian languages. Yet it must be said that, as a literary medium, it is in the hands of people who are enough at home in standard English as to be able to use Indian English only as the medium of protest, as mockery or teratology; and sometimes as no more than local color, necessarily from above' (Spivak, 1996: 19). Also useful in this context is Étienne Balibar's suggestion that as a facility that *becomes* a critical object, 'translation' (and the condition of that facility, multilingualism) is dynamically unevenly developed: a facility of intellectuals and writers who develop translation 'studies' on the one hand, and of anonymous migrants — Balibar's phrase — on the other. At the intermediary levels of the division of labor, Balibar writes, 'this virtually universal competence [in translation] is prevented, blocked by the almost uniformly monolingual national education systems' (Balibar, 2004: 178). With respect to US 'language memoir', Pavlenko (2001) notes that 'most [such] authors, except perhaps for the celebrated Nuyorican writing in Spanglish [...] confine the narrative to one language only, English' (Pavlenko 2001: 217). 'A [...] very important limitation', she continues, 'is the author's language of choice, in the present case exclusively English. This choice may act as a "filter" of sorts and privilege authors with a particular stance toward the intended audience, most likely a bid for acceptance. [...] It is quite possible that cross-cultural memoirs written by the same authors in other languages, and thus addressing a different audience, would paint the authors' acquisition of English in different ways. It remains to be seen what we can learn from stories told in other languages, or even from literary accounts written in English and turned down by American publishers as incomprehensible to the larger public. Finally, all the memoirs in question are written either by those who had acquired English successfully, or by Americans who had attempted to learn another language. While the latter strand allows us some glimpses into the nature of "failure" in language learning, it is a failure experienced by speakers of a powerful language. Only further inquiry could illuminate the experiences of immigrants who did not achieve a similar success in their learning of English' (Pavlenko, 2001: 235; quoted with omissions).

<sup>16</sup> In all but its most recidivist modes, US literary and cultural studies scholarship today operates by identifying the exception and rebinding it to the rule. It is in this (banal) sense that the canon-shattering procedures of academic cultural studies repeat canon formation — with radically different intent, to be sure, as well as effect.

<sup>17</sup> The phrase that ostensibly appeared on title pages of Yiddish translations of Shakespeare's plays is 'fartaystht un farbesert' (or 'ibergezetzst un farbesert'), usually rendered as 'translated and improved'.

'Fartunkeld' ('obscured'; as 'fartunkeln', also 'darkened', and as a comparative, 'more/better than') is apparently negative here, in relation to the relative neutrality of 'translated'; 'farveserd' — not to be found in a Yiddish dictionary — might be a solecism for 'farbesert'. (Entirely fancifully, but in keeping with the spirit of this passage, it might be permitted to evoke the German *verwesen*, to corrupt or rot.)

<sup>18</sup> The question of Rodriguez's reception is a difficult one, and his positions have evolved in time, beginning with his second book, *Days of Obligation* (Rodriguez, 1992). See Rafael Pérez-Torres's reconsideration (in conversation with the work of Josefina Saldaña) of the meaningful persistence, in Chicana/o studies, of contrasts between the conservative reception of the Rodriguez who vaulted onto the national stage in the mid-1980s, and the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, in Pérez-Torres (2006: 13ff). For my purpose here, what is important is the drift of those contrasts into the wide-angle view of US studies more generally, where they 'survive', in Jacques Derrida's sense, in metadisciplinary self-reflection after '9/11'. See my comment on Shelley Fisher Fishkin's 2004 presidential address to the American Studies Association, below. Derrida translates Walter Benjamin's locution 'fortleben' (from the 1921 essay 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers') as 'survivre' in Derrida (1985); for the French original, which appeared subsequently, see Derrida (1987).

<sup>19</sup> The National Language Act of 2008, introduced 5 March 2008 by Republican Senator James Inhofe (Oklahoma) 'to declare English as the national language of the Government of the United States, and for other purposes'. See also HR 5759, English as the Official Language Act of 2008, introduced in the US House of Representatives 10 April 2008.

<sup>20</sup> See 'White House says Bush doesn't speak Spanish all that well', Associated Press Worldstream, 4 May 2006. LexisNexis Academic (consulted April 2008).

<sup>21</sup> *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature* collects 'American' documents from the turn of the seventeenth century to the 1970s, counting among its mother tongues Massachusetts, Lenape, Navajo, Arabic, and Chinese, in addition to European and Scandinavian languages. But the *only* text in this remarkable archive explicitly identified by Shell and Sollors as 'multilingual' is the *Bee-Hive*, a six-hundred-page manuscript commonplace book assembled by Francis Daniel Pastorius, the early abolitionist memorialized in Whittier's *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim*. The other twenty-eight entries in the volume are labeled, in a dedicated column in the volume's table of contents, by the original, non-English language from which they are translated. In no other case, in other words, is a text in this anthology identified as having been *composed* by its author, or printed in any form, in more than one



language *contiguously*. *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature* is thus — as its subtitle, *A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations*, fully acknowledges — more a multilingual volume of documents than a volume of multilingual documents.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Apter, 2003: 'Looking again more closely at the table of contents of the Istanbul literary review [*Publications de la faculté des lettres de l'Université d'Istanbul*, 1937], we see a paradigm of *translatio* emerge that emphasizes the critical role of multilingualism within transnational humanism. The juxtaposition of Turkish, German, and French attests to a policy of *nontranslation* adopted without apology. [Leo] Spitzer's own contributions are exemplary here; in each individual essay one hears a cacophony of untranslated languages. And as a literary critic in command of French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Latin, Greek, Italian, English, Provençal, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Rumanian, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Sanskrit, Lithuanian, Old Church Slavonic, Albanian, Neo-Greek (and now, we ascertain, Turkish as well), he had many languages to choose from. It was, of course, a common practice among highly educated European literary scholars to leave passages and phrases free-standing in a naked state of untranslation; but for Spitzer nontranslation was a hallowed principle of his method' (277). One might argue persuasively that it is better to read something in translation than not to read it at all; but one might also consider the extent to which this way of framing the question saturates reading with comprehension — constructing a collectively and contractually, if not actually and individually monolingual reader (in the classroom, for example). The pedagogical bases for such constructions are practical to a fault: what students will do with any given text is fundamentally unpredictable. And teaching anecdotes, therefore, demonstrate nothing. Still, in teaching Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, as a nonexpert in Chicana/o and Latina/o studies, in courses focused on migration and language acquisition across national and ethnic categories, to overwhelmingly monolingual Anglophone and virtually

monoethnic undergraduates at a rural public US university, I find that those students without even the most rudimentary knowledge of Spanish (easily half or more of any given enrollment) are more curious about, and less reflexively hostile to, the book's strong plurilingualism than one might condescendingly expect.

<sup>23</sup> For a survey of positions in such work, see Lugo-Ortiz, Radhakrishnan, María Rodríguez, Sanders, and Warrior (2007) — the edited publication of papers delivered as part of a MLA 2006 annual convention session entitled 'Ethnic Studies in the Age of Transnationalism'.

<sup>24</sup> For scholarship on *Dictée* especially attentive to the work's plurilingualism, see Hayot (2006), Park (2005), Kim (2005), Min (1998), and Wong (1994). Of interest, as well, is how Cha scholarship vacillates in the symbolic dilemma posed by the work's title: is it the French '*dictée*', replete with *accent aigu*, of the first two editions — or the typographically Anglicized '*dictée*' under which the University of California Press now publishes and catalogs the book?

<sup>25</sup> See Moraga (1983), Anzaldúa and Moraga, eds (1984), Anzaldúa (1987), Moraga (1993), Moraga (1997), Anzaldúa and Keating (2000), Anzaldúa and Keating, eds (2002), and Anzaldúa (2007).

<sup>26</sup> Anzaldúa, 1987: 18; Césaire, 2000: 15. See also Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 81: 'Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate.'

<sup>27</sup> Shelley Fisher Fishkin's 2004 presidential address to the American Studies Association, which begins and ends by invoking Anzaldúa's work, remains the best introduction to this struggle in a US Studies now looking back at itself, as well as at its own first wave of disciplinary deprovincialization, over the intervening historical marker '9/11'. See Fishkin (2005).

<sup>28</sup> See Goundry (2001), Whistler (2001), Searle (2004a), and Searle (2004b).

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