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## 6 Challenges to monolingual national literatures

**Abstract:** Both social-existential and literary forms of multilingualism pose meaningful challenges to monolingual national literatures, but the reverse is also true. Claudio Guillén's typology of responses to the "latent" multilingualism of many societies distinguished between mere *Sprachmischung* and a more radical literary bilingualism, and was conscientiously attentive to the social dynamics of domination and subordination that guide the choice of a language of expression for multilingual or equilingual writers. And yet, like most who have written on this subject, Guillén had little to say about what I consider the primary *counter-challenge* posed by monolingual national literatures to the literary multilingualism that challenges *them*: the organization of the book and other print publication industries, which all too often block the publication of radically multilingual literature at the point of entry to the market or even at the creative source, barring access to the literary posterity of the library and archive or even dissuading multilingual writers from undertaking multilingual writing projects altogether.

### 1 Literature against publication

Both social-existential and literary forms of multilingualism pose meaningful challenges to monolingual national literatures, but the reverse is also true. In his typology of responses to what he called the "latent" multilingualism of many societies today, Claudio Guillén (1993; 1985) distinguished between mere *Sprachmischung* and a more radical literary bilingualism, and was conscientiously attentive to the social dynamics of domination and subordination that guide the choice of a language of expression for multilingual or equilingual writers. Guillén observed that "[i]n countless places and times, multilingualism is the characteristic feature of the society and consequently determines the posture of a writer toward that society. Multilingualism is also common among primitive peoples [...] But the advent of writing caused a rift and required a choice of language [...] diglossia is typical above all of countries in which the speech of common people is subjugated and devalued by another dominant language" (Guillén 1993, 265, quoted with omissions). Guillén faulted the late nineteenth century disciplinary formation of *littéra-*

ture comparée, whose scholarly practitioners earned fame for the multilingualism of their erudition, for its neglect of literary multilingualism: the multilingualism of the artifact rather than of the scholar studying it. He suggested quite pointedly that for all the implicit resistance of comparative research methods to the Romantic and imperial nationalism of the age, its practitioners were more deeply bound by it than they may have believed (Guillén 1993: 260–261).

Guillén made several distinctions that are still useful in thinking about challenges to monolingual national literatures, even if they were finally rather impressionistic and left without elaboration. The first was a distinction between the “latent” multilingualism of a unilingual culture or work of literature, formed by the historically routine hegemony of one language over others, and what we might call the “manifest” multilingualism (Guillén’s own word is “obvious”) of authors like Ramón Llull, who insisted nevertheless on “expressing themselves in more than one language” in their written work and so deliberately maintaining the means of doing so. (For Llull, Guillén notes, this meant cultivating Catalan as a literary language along with Latin, Arabic, and Provençal.) “It is important,” Guillén argued, “to distinguish between writers whose multilingualism – effective or not – is a personal destiny, results of avatars of their singular life story, like Joseph Conrad, and those who became multilingual in response to the peculiarities of their social surroundings and the particular historical moment handed them by fate. Great differences, both spatial and temporal, obtain between these innately polyglot circumstances, and the critic attempting to evaluate a bilingual writer should be acutely aware of these differences” (Guillén 1993: 268). What Guillén meant here remains typologically unclear, as he tended to defer rigorous exposition in favor of illustration through “a few examples” (Guillén 1993: 270). But he appears to have wanted to distinguish between 1) a kind of cultivated, even virtuosic multilingualism which, while certainly not socially and historically uncaused, remains idiosyncratically “artistic” in character; and 2) a less freely chosen, more externally determined multilingualism, leaving different traces in the different kind of literary artifact it produced.

Under the domination of something close to actual force, as in military conquest and colonization, Guillén noted, it is truly exceptional for a writer like Juan Wallparrimachi (1793–1814) to be able to “cling tenaciously” to a dominated language (in this case, Quechua). Equally rare was “the equal domination of two languages, or true equilingualism”: most often, a writer who produces or even publishes in more than one language will favor one language, in one way or another, and “the patently polyglot writer will be neither equilingual nor equipoetical” (Guillén 1993: 270). A radical literary bilingualism, Guillén concluded, had “little to do with the so-called *Sprachmischung*, if by that we mean the transitory use of other languages inserted into the dominant language of the comedy, a novel,

or poetry": such a mixture is basically a kind of seasoning of a text in a "native" language with the words of a "foreign" language (Guillén 1993: 272). It was both difficult and important, Guillén believed, to "determine whether or not these accidental *mélanges* reveal a true multilingualism, even a latent, genuine one": although Camilo José Cela, for example, had used more than three hundred Galician words in *Mazurca para dos mertos* (1983), Cela's prose, Guillén concluded, had not been transformed in any structurally significant way by the modification. Accordingly, Guillén concluded, Cela's "bilingualism does not go beyond a superficial and picturesque level" (Guillén 1993: 272–273).

Surprisingly perhaps, and yet very much like most who have written on this subject, Guillén had little to say about the primary *counter*-challenge posed by monolingual national literatures to the literary multilingualism that challenges *them*: the organization of the book and other print publication industries, which all too often block the publication of radically multilingual literature at the point of entry to the market or even at the creative source, barring access to the literary posterity of the library and archive or even dissuading multilingual writers from undertaking multilingual writing projects altogether. We might say that what little study of multilingual literary artifacts we do have, at all, has often been in thrall to structural or "systemic" approaches that, intentionally or unintentionally, devote themselves so fully to the pursuit of the legible extant artifact, and to the description of its literary relations, that they fail to consider what it means that so few radically multilingual works of literature ever come into being, to begin with.

## 2 The consolation of typology

To date, only one literary critic whose work is available in the English language has attempted a rigorous narratological analysis of national-language code-switching in printed works of literature, as distinct from a simultaneously more generalized and more exclusively internal national heteroglossia. That critic is Meir Sternberg, whose probing and suggestive reflections on literary polylingualism are grounded first and foremost in a methodological segregation of the terms and objects of professional sociolinguistic discourse from those of literary criticism and scholarship. Literary works, Sternberg insists as a kind of condition for making use of his work, are in strictly textual terms "unilingual" and "polylingual," whereas "monolingualism" and "multilingualism" "are sociolinguistic terms for speakers and communities," useful in characterizing the range of a speaker or a community of speakers but not the diversity (or lack of diversity)

of a literary text. A literary text, Sternberg observes, has the capacity to represent a unilingual reality even where the individual speakers or communities of speakers thus represented are multilingual speakers or communities of speakers; and it also has the capacity to represent a polylingual reality even where the individual speakers or communities of speakers thus represented are monolingual speakers or communities of speakers (Sternberg 1981: 222).

Attacking what he called the "reproductive fallacy" presuming that literary dialogue is meant to represent speech (Sternberg 1981, 237), Sternberg insisted that the putative realism of literary polylingualism has meaning only within the reality-model of the fictive world presented by a work of literature. This swift, expedient segregation of the literariness of representation from the broader politics of representation with which it is so often entwined, in the official culture of the nation state, the school curriculum, and the book and other cultural markets, enabled Sternberg to build up an armature of typological concepts and terms whose considerable descriptive virtue must be weighed against its deferral of other modes of critical thought. Sternberg's insistence that "[i]n literary art [...] the realism of polylingual discourse – like the realism of discourse in general and of all nonverbal objects within the represented framework – cannot be understood apart from the text's overall referential strategy, of which it is both a miniature and a part or means" (Sternberg 1981: 233) subordinated the context of literary production to the internal structure of the produced artifact, understood as a miniature "world" bordering or containing other such miniature worlds. Relating such fictive structures to the putatively real world in which we produce, exchange, and consume them is a sensitive business indeed, fraught with all manner of methodological hazards, on warning us of which Sternberg expended considerable energy. Thus "to classify (or even worse, condemn) a work as unrealistic for failing to resort to translational forms that are in fact historically inaccessible or functionally irrelevant (if not detrimental) to it would be as absurd as the common practice of raising the stick of 'realism' against a work whose whole sin actually consists in leaving out certain areas of reality that are beneath its notice, outside its existential ken or beyond its artistic bounds" (Sternberg 1981: 233).

In some ways this could not be further from the spirit of Guillén's distinction between "mere" *Sprachmischung* and a more "radical" literary bilingualism, in so far as that distinction licensed reasonable critical evaluation of the cultural-political choices made, very much for better or for worse, by working writers in the process of producing their works. While where scholarly discipline is desired, at least, Sternberg's scholarly discipline is to be preferred to Guillén's fickle critical impressionism, it must be said that Sternberg's quasi-structuralism suffered the most typical liability of that kind of approach. In insisting so strongly on the

demystification of an imagined "necessary correspondence between mimetic form and mimetic function" (Sternberg 1981: 234), it risked obscuring the historical specificity of any instance where such terms might correlate or even converge, with political consequences outside the domain of the artifact itself – or where there are simply other, potentially more urgent questions at hand. Thus to Sternberg's postulate that "[w]hat is artistically more crucial than linguistic reality is the model(s) of that reality as internally patterned or invoked by the individual work and/or conventionally fashioned by the literary tradition and/or conceived of by the reader within the given cultural framework" (Sternberg 1981: 235), it is too easy to reply: But what if "artistic" importance is not what is important at all? The impoverishment of such a discourse is perhaps plainest in Sternberg's remarks on "Ian Fleming's representation of Negro dialect in the James Bond saga," which conclude that "[t]o dismiss his rendering as grossly inaccurate is to miss the whole point, and not simply because we have to do here with a genre of popular literature. To Fleming, such foreign speech is not a dialectological problem but a rhetorical tool – a possible source of local color and picturesque effect" (Sternberg 1981: 236).

Nevertheless, it is worth reviewing Sternberg's schema. At its core is the argument that the "interlingual tension" between (1) language as something represented in a work of literature and (2) language as a – rather, *the* – means of such representation itself, is best imagined as a mimetic tension, rather than as a communicative tension: that is, as a structural challenge for the descriptive literary critic, rather than an ostensibly external question of interpretation. "Literary art," Sternberg observes, "finds itself confronted by a formidable mimetic challenge: how to represent the reality of polylingual discourse through a communicative medium which is normally unilingual" (Sternberg 1981: 222). Sternberg identified three main "procedures" for either meeting, or avoiding this challenge. The first, "referential restriction," directly negates the conflicts it presents, "confining the scope of the represented world to the limits of a single, linguistically uniform community whose speech-patterns correspond to those of the implied audience, sometimes to the point of excluding interdialectal as well as interlingual tensions, as in the novels of Jane Austen" (Sternberg 1981: 223). The second, "vehicular matching," accepts such conflicts "as a matter of course, as a fact of life and a factor of communication"; we find this commonly in scholarly writing itself, Sternberg notes, but also in "different varieties of polyglot art, whether Jean Renoir's bilingual film *La grande illusion* or G. B. Shaw's polydialectal *Pygmalion*" (Sternberg 1981: 223). A third, "homogenizing convention," represents a kind of strategic, rather than naive reduction of polylingual extraverbal reality to textual uniformity: in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Sternberg argues, "the development of the most complex figurative patterns known to literary art hinges on the anti-

historical Englishing of the polylingual discourse held in the world of Romans and Egyptians" (Sternberg 1981: 224). This third procedure is opposed, Sternberg suggests, not to vehicular matching so much as to an ancillary fourth procedure, the "vehicular promiscuity" that Sternberg finds "typical of macaronic writing - from the medieval *muwaššah* to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* - where shifts of medium are mimetically gratuitous and polylingual means are often flagrantly summoned to represent a unilingual reality of discourse" (Sternberg 1981: 224).

Each of these three procedures, Sternberg observes, aims in its own way to eliminate the mimetic challenge of representing heterolingual discourse. In actual practice, this challenge can only be met by what Sternberg called "mimetic compromise," as various mimetic elements and strategies are tried and combined (Sternberg 1981: 225). Still, such compromise is defined by two extremes of polylingual representation. At one extreme, the one more commonly observed in extant literary artifacts, polylingual representation is effectively submerged in the unilingual representation of an extraverbal reality, or suppressed altogether. At the other extreme, the representation of an extraverbal reality is subordinated to "polylingual play." This second approach, Sternberg notes, "is not so common on a large scale - certainly not in drama and the novel, for fairly obvious generic reasons" (Sternberg 1981: 236).

Along the continuum defined by these two extremes, Sternberg located four types of the negotiation he termed "translational mimesis." The first, "selective reproduction," in which a heterolingual discourse is quoted intermittently, serves "as a kind of mimetic synechdoche" by which a standardized unilingual discourse is re-authorized, indexically acknowledging the historical polylingualism from which it emerged: for example, the shift from Hebrew to Aramaic in the "Persian" documents embedded in the Hebrew narrative of the Book of Ezra, Tolstoy's insertion of reported Francophone speech in *War and Peace*, Nabokov's insertion of Russian in *Pnin*, or Mann's insertion of Latin, French, and English in *Der Erwählte* (*The Holy Sinner*) (Sternberg 1981: 226). "Minimal units" of such selective reproduction include the "mimetic cliché" of such expressive interjections as "Damn!," "Parbleu!," "Donnerwetter!," or other manneristic, low information density tag phrases as are commonly used in popular culture and mass media, and which tend not to presume or demand multilingual reader competence (Sternberg 1981: 226). But "selective reproduction" can also describe the more challenging, indeed "uncompromising demands of unique dialogue and esoteric quotation (especially prevalent in minority culture and/or canonical literature)" (Sternberg 1981: 227), and it can include deliberately distorted or otherwise manipulated forms of "deviant allusion and internal misquotation," as well (Sternberg 1981: 227).

Two of the remaining three modes tend to make greater demands on reader competence. The second, "verbal transposition," is an overtly stylized and "mimetically oblique" mode, describing the interlingual tension and interference of code mixing or superimposition, as in the literal translation of Spanish idiom in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Sternberg 1981: 228). The third, "conceptual reflection," is marked not by the verbal forms of another language or languages so much as by its semantic and other referential ranges (Sternberg 1981: 230). A fourth mode, "explicit attribution," directly identifies an instance of discourse as having been spoken or written in another language (for example, "He spoke French"). Because it so directly asserts the reality of a heterolingual discourse, Sternberg suggested that explicit attribution was the most radical of the four modes, while noting that it could be difficult to distinguish from selective reproduction, in so far as textually, it too resolved to "the uncontested unilingualism of the representational medium" (Sternberg 1981: 232).

### 3 Does a bell toll in a (particular) language?

As Sternberg provides fewer examples of either "conceptual reflection" or "explicit attribution" than of "selective reproduction" or "verbal transposition," we will look more closely at the linguistic texture of one work he cites in connection with the latter. The pages of Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), the most suffused with Spanish of his works of fiction, are studded with Spanish words and phrases that might be said to localize both political and cultural (including linguistic) conflict in the mind of the character Robert Jordan, a U.S. volunteer for the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War.

Though the linguistic texture of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* arguably generates many both centripetal and centrifugal interlinguistic effects, scholarship focused on the novel has always, often polemically, noted its limits as a form of tokenization, which one might certainly choose to read at odds with the cultural internationalism of the cause it supports. Josephs (1983) catalogued over sixty unique Spanish-language errors in the 1940 edition of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* that went uncorrected in subsequent editions. While admitting that such errors were mainly orthographic and typographic, Josephs argued that collectively, they destroyed the "credibility" of both Robert Jordan as a fictional character (an ostensibly fluent speaker of Spanish and professor of Spanish language and culture) and of Hemingway himself. This was, perhaps, too ready a claim, too deeply grounded in the kind of unexamined criteria of authenticity and believability that Sternberg's structural world/modeling approach very productively lets us leave behind. A

plausible argument could certainly be made that such inconsistency serves in itself, irrespective of authorial intention and integrity, to question the ideal of native-level fluency, and that value obtains from reading it rhetorically in any case. That is to say that the novel's narrator, as a construction of perfect linguistic cosmopolitanism – a Robert Jordan who, we are told, is “understanding the language completely and speaking it idiomatically” – moves us in one direction, while the novel's linguistic texture, riven with archaism, awkward translation, and error, moves in another.

A generation earlier, Edward Fenimore had observed that the Spanish in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* “serves [...] as a justification for breaking down the forms of a colloquial English, thus opening the way for a kind of reconstruction in which, although the Spanish is never wholly forgotten, the essential is the recapture of the varying tones inherent in a more or less unfamiliar, frequently artificial, but also vigorously poetic English” (Fenimore 1943: 83). Still, this “vigorously poetic English” might also, as Josephs prefers, be received as the textual expression of the ethnocentrism of an internationally celebrated Anglophone author who, taking for granted a monolingual audience, clumsily and monolingually appropriated the language of Spain the way he traded for his own gain on the cultural capital of an exoticized version of its social culture. This is the position taken by Milton M. Azevedo:

Hemingway seems to rely, whether consciously or not, on our not having a knowledge of the language, on our having rather a linguistic ingenuousness which will allow us to accept, or at least not to question, what Hemingway presents as Spanish [...] *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was not written for anyone who reads Spanish [...] the novel had been written for an American public and a public ignorant of Spain and Spanish [...] What *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is, then, is not at all the novel of the Spanish Civil War written by a “citizen of the world”; it is, rather, a novel about the Spanish Civil War written by an American. (Azevedo 2000: 217–218; Azevedo 2000: 219, quoted with omissions)

In his own way, and despite partly refusing its implications, Fenimore saw this quite well:

When Spanish *mucho* [...] is used in a manner conflicting with the proper use of English “much” the echo in an ear still objectively conscious of Spanish will hold something of the primitive [...] in such cases [...] knowledge of that language is immaterial to the important thing – the tacit assumption that it is Spanish, and, based upon this assumption, our acceptance of a non-colloquial English [...] we feel it “Spanish” [...] for it carries out what might be termed the essentially unilinear psychology of the speakers, a concentration upon the solitary fact which is completely harmonious [*sic*] with the primitive tone. It is Spanish in the sense that as readers we tacitly assume the primitive, in common with all the unfamiliar, to be necessarily Spanish. (Fenimore 1943: 73–75; Fenimore 1943: 78; Fenimore 1943: 85, quoted with omissions)



In the postwar “postmodern” period, U.S. novelists writing for a majority Anglophone readership wrought variations on the interwar modernism bequeathed them by Hemingway and his contemporaries. The “border culture” novels of Cormac McCarthy, comprising *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* (1992a), *All the Pretty Horses* (1992b), *The Crossing* (1994), and *Cities of the Plain* (1998) are one prominent instance, each novel incorporating greater quantities of Spanish phrasing and dialogue than the previous, in a manner that took greater and greater risks with the encoding or concealment of content in the de facto second national language of the United States.<sup>1</sup> McCarthy’s novels were written for a North American readership closer to the end of the twentieth century than to its middle, and they demanded at least a rudimentary knowledge of North American borderlands Spanish – understood here as the language of those on the losing end of the U.S. invasion of Mexico, not merely victims themselves but the co-sponsors of indigenous genocide. McCarthy’s Satanic “judge,” the indestructible force roving *Blood Meridian*’s apocalyptic frontier landscape, is a figure of multilingualism as evil, able to acquire and manipulate any “Indian lingo” with ease (Masters 1998: 27). Unlike Hemingway’s Robert Jordan, who in his ability to move easily through Spanish linguistic and cultural landscapes and to serve as a love object for a Spanish national (the character Maria, standing for Spain itself in her portrayal as a victim of rape) embodies a benevolent cosmopolitan fantasy of mobility and transparency, McCarthy’s judge is a malevolent trickster who speaks not only Spanish, French, and Dutch, but any given indigenous language he encounters, and who seems to acquire detailed and accurate ethnographic and geographic knowledge of indigenous culture upon first contact. The judge’s totalizing appropriation of the frontier, indeed his ambition to subsume within his ever-present “notebook” the cultures of the entire planet, is a harbinger of apocalypse, and the permission the narrative voice of *Blood Meridian* gives to untranslated Spanish asks us to identify with the terror of his monolingual counterpart, the character known only as “the kid.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Blood Meridian* contained 125 interpolated Spanish words, phrases, or short dialogue passages of 1–10 words each, on 44 of 337 pages, with the longest continuous passage of Spanish being four consecutive dialogue sentences of four, one, five, and eight words each; *All the Pretty Horses*, 205 words, phrases or dialogue passages on 77 of 301 pages, with the longest continuous passage of Spanish five sentences of five, four, nine, six, and seventeen words each, and as many as eighteen dialogue passages in Spanish on a single page; *Cities of the Plain*, 268 words, phrases or dialogue passages on 80 of 291 pages; *The Crossing*, 453 words, phrases or dialogue passages on 155 of 425 pages. This progressive intensification of Spanish in McCarthy’s novels came to an end with the more homogeneously Anglophone *No Country for Old Men* (2005).

## 4 The refusal to translate...

Of what he called “large-scale vehicular matching,” Sternberg observed that it was often “so inconsistent with the normal conditions of communication” as to “be thought to divert attention from more important matters and to require too much polyglot expertise on the part of the author and his reading-public” (Sternberg 1981: 225). For a sense of what is elided in the deployment of such apparently natural categories as “normal,” “communication,” “expertise,” “author,” and “reading public,” we must turn to less methodologically segregated or segmented approaches to literary multilingualism, approaches freer from a dependence on the consolation of typology. Of the refusal of the U.S. Latina writer Susana Chávez-Silverman to “translate her multilingual life into just one language,” Ania Spyra concludes that it “creates a text interstitial in both language and genre” (Spyra 2011: 199). Such interstitiality is not merely a problem of description for the literary critic, recapturable through the addition of another term and concept to a typological schema; in marking additionally, perhaps ultimately the cultural-political context for the *production* of works of literature, rather than only their reception, it reaches into the disorderly translation zone that scholarly discipline so often attempts to hold at bay. “Writers who mix languages at the level of syntax, as Chávez-Silverman does,” Spyra suggests, “respond to globalisation with a radical politics of language that refuses to admit monolingualism even at the level of subjectivity, let alone of a national literature” (Spyra 2011: 199).

When they circulate in North American translation, works of literature published in national variations of Spanish spoken and written *outside* North America pose yet another set of problems. Where the Spanish interpolated into *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or *Blood Meridian* necessarily “vanishes” when its base language, English, is translated for a Spanish edition, English phrasing and dialogue in Spanish-language works such as Julio Cortázar’s *Rayuela* (1963) and Juan Goytisolo’s *Makbara* (1980) is correspondingly lost in translation for English editions. The exuberantly improvisational, encyclopedist trilingual and quadrilingual chains of literary and musical association spun by Horacio Oliveira in the alcohol and nicotine-fueled amities of *Rayuela*’s Paris settle a specific weight on the English-language lyrics of U.S. ragtime, blues, and jazz song, with the paradoxical result that the privilege the novel’s world grants to the iconic specificity of North American Anglophone popular cultural production literally cannot be “seen” in the novel’s translation for a North American monolingual Anglophone reader.

Much has been made of the structural device Cortázar prepared to invite two different readings of the novel: one linear, made by turning the pages in order, and one non-linear, beginning with the seventy-third chapter and following num-

bered "links" provided at the close of each chapter (or following the table Cortázar included up front). Less often remarked is the contrast between the exuberant national plurilingualism of the novel's first section, taking place in a bohemian and cosmopolitan Paris "del lado de allá," and the comparative monolingualism of the novel's second section, which takes place "del lado de acá," in Oliveira's native Buenos Aires. Its own linguistic and complex symbolic containments (of possibilities for social solidarity across gender and class lines) notwithstanding, *Rayuela* also contains passages of strong plurilingualism, which countermand those containments as well. In high modernist style, the novel bristles with citations: titles and quotations from real and imagined literary works, but also titles and lyrics from U.S. and U.S.-influenced popular music. The novel's interpolated English phrasing is very seldom glossed or translated, and is often counterposed to French treated in much the same way:

Desvalida, se le ocurrían pensamientos sublimes, citas de poemas que se apropiaba para sentirse en el corazón mismo de la alcachofa, por un lado *I ain't got nobody, and nobody cares for me*, que no era cierto ya que por lo menos dos de los presentes estaban malhumorados por causa de ella, y al mismo tiempo un verso de Perse, algo así como *Tu es là, mon amour, et je n'ai lieu qu'en toi*, donde la Maga se refugiaba apretándose contral el sonido de *lieu*, de *Tu est là, mon amour* [...] y que la música de Hines coincidiera con manchas rojas y azules que bailaban por dentro de sus párpados y se llamaban, no se sabía por qué, Volaná y Valené, a la izquierda Volaná (*and nobody cares for me*) girando enloquecidamente, arriba Valené, suspendida como una estrella de un azul pierodellafrancesca, et je n'ai lieu qu'en toi, Volaná y Valené, Ronald no podría tocar jamás el piano como Earl Hines, en realidad Horacio y ella deberían tener ese disco y escucharlo de noche en la oscuridad, aprender a amarse con esas frases, esas largas caricias nerviosas, *I ain't got nobody* en la espalda, en los hombros, los dedos detrás del cuello, entrando las uñas en el pelo y retirándolas poco a poco, un torbellino final y Valené se fundía con Volaná, *tu es là, mon amour and nobody cares for me*, Horacio estaba ahí pero nadie se ocupaba de ella... (Cortázar 1980: 62)

Helpless, she thought sublime thoughts, quotations from poems which made her feel that she was in the very heart of the artichoke, on one side "I ain't got nobody, and nobody cares for me," which was not entirely true, because at least two people were present who were in a bad mood over her, and at the same time a line from Perse, something like "*Tu es là, mon amour, et je n'ai lieu qu'en toi*, where La Maga took refuge snuggling up to the sound of *lieu*, of *Tu es là, mon amour* [...] while Hines's music matched the red and blue spots which danced around behind her eyelids, which for some reason were called Volaná and Valené, Volaná on the left ("and nobody cares for me") spinning madly, Valené on top, hanging like a star in a pierodellafrancesca blue, et je n'ai lieu qu'en toi, Volaná and Valené, Ronald would never be able to play the piano like Earl Hines, Horacio and she should really own that record to listen to at night in the dark, to learn how to make love to the phrasing, those long, nervous caresses, "I ain't got nobody" on the back, on the shoulders, fingers behind the neck, nails working in and out of the hair, one last whirlwind and Valené merges with Volaná, *tu est là, mon amour and nobody cares for me*, Horacio was there but nobody bothered with her... (Cortázar 1966: 65)

In Rabassa's English translation, untranslated French continues to be marked with italics, as it is in the Spanish original; no such preservation is possible with the original English phrasing, which fades into the target language. Either Rabassa, or one of his editors, resorts to quotation marks to mark the first three instances of what would otherwise be invisibly untranslated English, but relinquishes them in the fourth instance. To be sure, in the original, this passage provides (here, "jazzy") structures of repetition, which serve in part to neutralize the opacity of non-Spanish phrases for a reader lacking English (or French), by integrating them into a kind of lyric supplement to the narrative (a record playing, the character La Maga listening and thinking) that is only fully marked in the Spanish original. Furthermore, such phrases are quotations, and as such, might be said to be sacrificed without enormous loss, since the information value of a quotation is mostly illustrative. "*I ain't got nobody, and nobody cares for me, que no era cierto...*," on the other hand, does seem to request comprehension of the English phrase, since the quotation is not supplementing a statement but making one, one the truth content of which the next clause in Spanish qualifies. We might say that such "invisible difference" centrifugally constitutes a linguistic particularity anchoring the text to a specific interlinguistic context, and at the same time – in its prediction, indeed in its generation of that difference, in configurations that vary for each potential translation and circulation situation – a centripetal excess of that particularity.<sup>2</sup>

By the same token, the English dialogue spoken by U.S. tourists on the pages of Goytisolo's *Makbara*, in the scenes set in a Marrakech tannery pit, or the entire paragraphs culled from a Pittsburgh municipal visitor's guide (itself part of a sequence mercilessly lampooning the professional conduct of U.S. academic post-colonial studies, at an unnamed Pittsburgh university's "Cathedral of Learning") and interpolated in their original English, remain untranslatably linguistically specific in their determining function as untranslated markers of the mediality of U.S. Anglophone discourse.<sup>3</sup> The Moroccan Darija that Goytisolo also interpolates onto the pages of *Makbara*, meanwhile, serves to triangulate this reversible incommensurability, in a third language incomprehensible to the novel's spectatorial subject positions as marked by any of its hegemonic languages. (*Makbara* is dedicated "A quienes la inspiraron y no leerán": To those who inspired it and will not read it.) Like the passage in Darija followed by six Arabic lines from sura 109 of the Quran that closes an earlier novel, *Juan sin Tierra*, this is meant quite

2 See Sorensen (1999). On the global market economics of the Latin American Boom, beyond my purview in this essay yet essential to the broader cultural context here, see in particular Herrero-Olaizola (2000), Levinson (2001), and Cohn (2006).

3 See Goytisolo (1980), Goytisolo and Lane (1993).

straightforwardly to estrange and exclude a typical (even typically multilingual) Euro–U.S. reader.<sup>4</sup> Goytisolo quite deliberately presumes unfamiliarity with Arabic in his Hispanophone readership: “El breve texto en árabe lo introduje para crear un efecto de ruptura [...] Gracias a ello lograba que el mensaje final resultara incomprensible y el lector se sintiera excluido, como si le hubieran dado con la puerta en las narices” (“I introduced the brief text in Arabic to create an effect of rupture [...] Thanks to it, the final message was incomprehensible and the reader felt excluded, as if the door had been slammed in his face”).<sup>5</sup>

## 5 ...and its mediation

It is in this spirit, perhaps, that Spyra echoes Guillén’s indictment of the discipline of comparative literature in its merely professional multilingualism, dependent as it is on “comparisons between literatures conceived as national and linguistic monoliths” (Spyra 2011: 199). To this restrictive cultural cosmopolitanism, she counterposes the notion of a cosmopolitan poetics, or “cosmopoetics,” that “refuses the monolingualism of translation” and pits the linguistic diversity of what Sternberg would call “extraverbal reality” against “the monolingual norms of nations,” especially the “homogenizing claims of global English” (Spyra 2011: 199).

So far, we see that what takes shape in these different critical perspectives is a conflict between critical claims made for literature’s capacity to represent or otherwise to mediate the world, on the one hand, and the world itself, on the other: that “extraverbal reality” that the critic often imagines – or must pretend to imagine – as inert, but which the writer, especially the writer of multilingual literature, may experience as profoundly dynamic, often disturbingly or even disablingly so. In some ways, multilingual literature merely accents a structural tension found in all the relations of art production to the verbal criticism in which it is described, but which is peculiarly intense in the domain of literature, in so far as unlike music, the plastic arts and even theatre, works of literature are created, preserved, and consumed more or less exclusively in language as the very same “medium” in which literary criticism itself is created, preserved, and consumed.

<sup>4</sup> See Goytisolo (1978), Goytisolo (1977).

<sup>5</sup> Qtd. in Kunz (1993: 245). See also Goytisolo (1984: 118): “The ‘meteco’ [of *Makbara*] is [...] not just any North African émigré. He also shortens, in condensed and caricaturesque form, the Occidental phantasmagoria concerning Islam and the Arabs: strange, opaque, soundless (*sordo* = deaf) by virtue of his earless condition; converting it to the logical and ‘rational’ discourse of Europeans, he expresses himself in a language incomprehensible to them.”

Not infrequently, the pressure this convergence exerts on the division of labor segregating the literary artist from the literary critic erupts in a new form of contemporary writing that destabilizes the generic distinctions on which that division of labor rests, as much as on standardized, even unitary linguistic codes. To call these works critical "memoirs" of multilingualism is, while not *unuseful*, to resort to expedient shorthand for a phenomenon that is anything but settled.

Ariel Dorfman's *Heading South, Looking North: A Bilingual Journey* is a structurally and psychically labyrinthine narrative of oscillation between the renunciation and embrace of two world languages which are also national languages: Argentine and Chilean Spanish, on the one hand, U.S. English on the other. Dorfman's narrative is structured by epochal transitions back and forth between these two languages, both of them hegemonic and yet asymmetric in their own relation. Appropriately, perhaps, from the very start these transitions back and forth between Spanish and English are imagined simultaneously as a fall from origin and as a kind of originary doubling, repetition, or iteration. Born in Buenos Aires, the book's child-narrator is hospitalized in New York after his parent's emigration following the Argentine coup of 1943. Reflecting on his repudiation of Spanish during and after this trauma of clinical and cultural isolation, the book's adult narrator later likens it to suicide, a killing of one's "other person" in the name of a new, substitute myth of origin (Dorfman 1998: 43).

But the oscillation this narrative enacts is also an enactment of the dynamism of national monolingualism and multinational multilingualism, themselves. These two social and political forms, one particularistic, one generalizable, are joined in a cultural analysis that confronts the incompatible yet mutually absorptive ideals of U.S. monoculturalism and Latin American hybrid culture. Here, the child narrator understands multilingualism as a natural condition, purposefully disavowing it in the name of the cultural condition of monolingualism. That the "fall" from multilingualism is imagined as a forgetting of origins is only the first swing of the pendulum that subsequently sections the adult narrator's life: try as he might, he tells us, the adult narrator cannot remember being the infant whose native language was Spanish: "the stone of my past became smoother and more enigmatic the more I fingered it" (Dorfman 1998, 48). Subsequent "falls" into the other language – first Spanish again, then English again, then Spanish again, as the narrative of *Heading South, Looking North* moves at once forward and around the adult narrator's life – might seem to serve as points of attachment and revival for a myth of primordial presence; but in truth they are additional, chained displacements, what the adult narrator calls "fallings again," repetitions of the child narrator's first entry into language (Dorfman 1998: 45).

As it turns out, the child narrator of *Heading South, Looking North* owes his very conception to the Spanish language not as a native, but as an acquired lan-

guage, his Romanian-born, Yiddish-speaking mother and his Ukrainian polygot, but not Yiddish-speaking father meeting as émigrés to Buenos Aires. For the adult narrator, this is a genetic analogue, as it were, for the fundamental ambivalence of the imperialism of imperial languages (both Spanish and English): violently translative and absorptive on the one hand, and serving as a shelter from some of life's *other* violences, on the other. The narrator's lifelong relationship with the United States and its language, culture, and society is constantly fissured by this ambivalence, for which the narrative of *Heading South, Looking North* offers a sociopolitical analogue in both biography and autobiography: persecuted as a leftist by Argentine fascists, the narrator's father visits the United States on a Guggenheim fellowship, then moves to a Rockefeller-funded State Department position, dependent thereafter on the largesse of U.S. liberal capitalism; meanwhile the narrator himself, in the course of his adult life, will leave Chile behind on two separate occasions for academic opportunities in the United States.

This "madness of being double" (Dorfman 1998: 42) is constantly reimagined as sanity, the sanity of being *one* reverting to "true" madness. Aggressively, if often also squeamishly unapologetic when it comes to exploiting his social mobility, the adult narrator accepts his native-level English proficiency as cultural capital, "a way of making a living, an advantage in the marketing of myself" (Dorfman 1998: 190). It is a pragmatism that accrues its own costs and benefits. On the plus side of this political balance sheet, there is deep insight into the reductions of partisan ideological conflict, particularly in a long history of United States interference in Chile, for which the narrator himself, as a cultural and media advisor in Allende's government, pays the price of a second exile (at first, in a kind of abyssal birth-echo, to Argentina "again"). There is a real cosmopolitanism, as well, relinquishing the home/away binary of exile and nostalgia, seeing the possibility of love as a counter-desire in the seductions of U.S. capitalist charisma, and finally extricating the English language from its possibly provincial identification with the United States (Dorfman 1998: 130). Finally, there is real insight into the world-historical specificity of a Latin American modernity as hybrid, monstrous, unclassifiable, a "fantastic composite" (Dorfman 1998: 193), neither Latin nor Hispanic and not even strictly speaking the global South (Dorfman 1998: 193).

On the minus side, there are innumerable discomforts of representation: being taken for a representative of the global North, on the one hand; on the other, having contributed (in the adult narrator's view) to Allende's misfortunes, by alienating moderate allies through a radicalism violently disavowing such *méconnaissance*. In the register of international relations, the compromise of these two language-selves and sociopolitical identities is imagined, by the adult narrator, as a truce. In the register of the family, meanwhile, he imagines it as a (an unlawful) marriage: in his own words, the adult narrator becomes a bigamist

of language, “marrying” both Spanish and English – always heading North, while at the same time always looking South (Dorfman 1998: 270). The most powerful passages of *Heading North, Looking South* offer the adult narrator’s reflections on this antinomy of home, which takes the form, as he puts it, of two irreducible and irreconcilable myths. One, that there is, indeed can ever be a “home” for anyone, imagined as a paradise of belonging, to be expelled from which is falling and death, to return to which is redemption. Another, that every such home was founded by a wanderer, an exile, someone for whom paradise was and is lost (Dorfman 1998: 275–276).

## 6 Conclusion: literature and its “outside”

Still, the truth is that in constituting new literary artifacts themselves, such works are testimonies of survival, and of the survival represented by publication itself, above all else. Beyond the question of the survival of works of literature there is the question of the survival of the human beings who create or – in perhaps fewer or perhaps many more cases – are never afforded the opportunity to create them in the first place. Here, we must look to literary-critical approaches that have directly and deeply integrated the history of political violence and warfare into the analysis of literary artifacts, or, where no such approaches can be found, past them altogether. Vicente L. Rafael’s descriptions of a renewed “weaponization of language” by the post-2001 U.S. security state are apposite here. Of the “theater-specific” Arabic, Pashto, or Dari acquired by U.S. combat personnel and contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq, Rafael has observed the “powerful fantasies” enacted and embodied in such necessarily expedient U.S. military language instruction. “[L]earning a foreign language,” Rafael reminds us, “especially one with the degree of difficulty of Arabic or lesser-taught languages like Dari and Pashto, takes a very long time, far longer than the time of invasions and occupations whose temporal horizons usually contract from one national election to another [...] Designed to be a weapon, the Language Enabled Soldier thus becomes obsolete even as he or she is being trained” (Rafael 2012: 59–60). For the most part, despite continued if relatively modest investments, electronically automated translation systems such as the DARPA-sponsored Phraselator (Rafael 2012: 62) have failed to take up the slack as hoped, leaving the multilingual discursive textures of intercultural military operations on the ground, structured by both strategic tokenization and unwelcome failure to translate, evoking nothing so much as the multilingual literary textualities analyzed with such care and precision by Sternberg, in a scholarly zone cordoned off from



the non-literary world. The question then, perhaps, is just what to make of the world's irruption into it.

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# The Multilingual Challenge

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