LITERARY MULTILINGUALISM I: GENERAL OUTLINES AND WESTERN WORLD

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Contents

Summary

The term *literary multilingualism* primarily refers to the more or less extended mix of two or more languages in the same text, entailing a cross-cultural or experimental effect. Besides *intra*textual multilingualism, or mixtilingualism, there is an *inter*textual multilingualism between heteroglot works of different authors linked to each other in a

specific way (like those of the European and Latin American corpus of Petrarchan poetry) or between the heteroglot works of the same bilingual author (like Samuel Beckett's alternative English and French fiction and drama). Intratextual multilingualism was a marginal phenomenon during the predominantly monolingual periods of literary history from Greek and Roman antiquity until the end of the 19th century. Generally, it was regarded as *barbarian* owing to the ruling rhetorical principle of *purity*. Nevertheless, there were some important enclaves of traditional multilingualism that reached from medieval diglossia and courtly polyglossy to the linguistic hybridism of baroque and the comic genre. Modern world traffic and global communication as well as the transgression of the limits between the literary genres have been fundamental conditions for the increasing multilingualism of modern world literature since the 20th century. A manifold variety of paradigms of literary multilingualism has been produced in the modern and postmodern era: the simultaneist paradigm, combined with both futurism and primitivism, in addition to a new cosmopolitan Babelism, the onomatopoetic and the panlinguistic paradigm, with its experimental and its ludic, punlinguistic dimensions, the holographic and the zerographic paradigm, the conflictive paradigm of multilingualism in colingual areas, and finally the technologically based multilingualism of mass-media genres, such as the new *Internationale* of polyglot concept albums.

1. Introduction

Multilingual literature is the symbolic expression of cross-cultural movement or *Weltverkehr*, the manifest mark of a successful *translatio studii*, in the non-imperial sense of the term. Since the beginning of modern *Weltverkehr* (world traffic) in the 19th century, the works of world literature have become increasingly multilingual, due to the proliferating contacts between the different parts of the globe. The acceleration of the various means of transport and communication caused a universal co-presence of cultures and languages. In the course of globalization, providing humanity with the attributes of ubiquity and simultaneity, the agents of world literature tended to become polyglot and eventually *globoglot*. During the 20th century, multilingual literature established itself as an option concurrent with the monolingual literature that had dominated literary history since Greek and Roman antiquity. Even Voltaire's and Goethe's concepts of *littérature universelle* and *Weltliteratur* were basically monolingual and linked to linguistic patriotism and imperialism. The co-presence of foreign languages was a latent or translated one, as is still the case in today's monolingual literature, which continues to be a substantial stylistic choice. In any case, multilingualism is more present in contemporary literature, in both a denotative and a connotative form, due also to the worldwide transportation of foreign languages through the mass-media and their paraliterary genres, such as song/text albums and subtitled films.

The function of multilingual literature is not primarily a pragmatic, but an aesthetic and an ethical one. Its aim is more symbolic than realistic: it symbolizes the variety, the contact and the crossing of cultures and languages, but does not claim an overall linguistic hybridism in practical communication. Maintaining the diversity of languages implies the maintenance of a certain unity of every single language. Merging languages without any limits at all means submerging them.

2. Traditional Mono- and Multilingualism

2.1. Purism and Barbarism

Literary monolingualism is based upon aesthetic, political and mythic principles. It was first instituted by antique rhetoric and poetics, and was largely observed during the long tradition of the classical *translatio studii*, both in European and in American literature. Antique rhetoricians, such as Aristotle, Cicero, Horace and Quintilian, established the norms of *puritas* or *kathara lexis* (pure language) and *perspicuitas* (transparency).

In order to avoid stylistic impurity and obscurity these norms prescribed the use of native vocabulary and did not allow foreign words unless they had a 'license'. This license was only granted in special cases and in a very restricted form, as Quintilian put it in his *Manual of Rhetoric* (*De institutione oratoria*): "[verba] ut sint Latina [...], ut sint minime peregrina et externa" ("the words have to be Latin, foreign and external words have to be reduced to a minimum"). Foreign or "wandering words" ("verba peregrina") were regarded as *barbarolexis* ("barbarian vocabulary"). The term *barbarism*, designating a linguistic or stylistic fault, has survived until today. A clear limit was drawn between one's own territory and the territory of the stranger with the strangeness (*xenikón*) of his barbarian language. Xenophobia was the corollary of xenoglossia, and the mother tongue became the matrix of patriotism.

2.2. Babylonian Confusion

In addition to the aesthetic and political principles there was a mythic and religious argument against multilingual literature: the Babylonian confusion of languages regarded as a divine punishment for the construction of the Tower of Babel, an act of human hubris and rebellion against God. The obsession with Babylonian confusion and antique *obscuritas*, together with purism and xenophobia, were the main obstacles to an early development of multilingual literature.

2.3. Medieval and Humanistic Diglossia

The norm of monolingualism refers only to the mixing of various languages in a single work. Generally, most of the writers were bilingual or multilingual, but they distributed the use of different languages among different textual genres. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, for instance, there was a fundamental social and generic diglossia in Europe: Latin was the idiom of the scholar's discourse, whereas the *vulgar* Romance and Germanic languages, emancipating themselves from the cultural hegemony of Latin, became the prevalent idioms of literature. Thus, Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* (*On Vernacular Eloquence*, early 14th century), which, as a treatise in favour of the literary use of *vulgar* language, was written in Latin, whereas his main fiction *La divina commedia* was written in the *vernacular* idiom of his homeland, "il bel paese là dove il 'sí' suona" ("the lovely country where is to be heard the sound of *sì*"). The use of foreign words, mainly Latin quotations, in the *Divina commedia* is quite moderate, according to the prescriptions of classic rhetoric and under the impact of Babylonian confusion which the poet evokes in the *Inferno* as a monitory example (XXXI, 67).

2.4. Intertextual Multilingualism

Together with Humanistic diglossia the principle of literary *imitatio* produced a special kind of intertextual bi- or multilingualism. Through the imitation of antique models, for instance Homer's and Vergil's epics the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, there was a co-presence of Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Portuguese and Spanish in Medieval and Renaissance epic poetry, such as Dante's *Divina commedia*, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, Camões' *Lusíadas*, Ronsard's *Franciade* and Ercilla's *Araucana*, especially in cases like *exordial topoi* that were almost heteroglot quotations alluding to each other. This procedure started in antiquity where it produced a Latin-Greek bilingualism, and continued in Medieval and Humanistic times with an intertextual contact between the modern and the antique languages, and finally between the modern languages of the epopees of that time.

2.5. Intratextual Colingualism

There was also an important form of intratextual colingualism between antique and modern languages, based on the imitation of Greek and Latin linguistic structures in the morphological, syntactical and lexical field, for instance the transfer of compound word formation from Greek into French. This linguistic transfer also extended toward the imitation of modern languages, for instance the transfer of the Italian suffix *–issimo* into other Romance and Germanic languages, where it was generally adapted according to the rules of the adoptive idiom. The French *Pléiade* group (16th century) is the most conspicuous example of such an interlinguistic mimesis in its poetic theory and practice.

2.6. Macaronic Mixtilingualism

In spite of the basic norm of monolingual purism, multilingual literature had a stylistic license within certain literary genres and discourses. Its principal dominion was the comic genre. Multilingualism as such was even defined as a ridiculous phenomenon. Comic discourse developed a specific subgenre, the 'mixtilingual' *macaronic* genre, which first was a mix of Latin and Italian, conceived as a parody of the humanistic style, its prototypes being Tifi degli Odasi's *Carmen Maccaronicum* (1493) and Folengo's *Maccaronee* (1517). Soon it extended to any ludic compounding of both classic and modern idioms, as in Rabelais' *Gargantua et Pantagruel* (1534-1564), in the *Commedia dell'Arte* (Vergilio Verucci, *Li diversi linguaggi*, 1619) or in Molière's *Le malade imaginaire* (1673). The ground for the macaronic tradition was cleared by the medieval scholar songs, some of which were inserted into the collection of the *Carmina Burana* (13th century). It continues up to the 20th century, though taking a new turn toward experimental style, both in poetry and in fiction. Even the macaronic metaphor is used, becoming an essentially *mac-ironic* one, as it is the case with "Miccheruni's Band" in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), the "micmacaroni" ("macaronic mishmash") of Julián Ríos' novel *Larva* (1983) or the "macarroníada em malalíngua", the "malicious macaronic pasta tongue" of Haroldo de Campos' prose poetry *Galáxias* (1963-1974). The postmodern leveling of sublime and trivial, of tragic and comic discourse is a further condition for the general promotion of multilingual literature in the 20th century; thus the meta-macaronic style of contemporary literature is no longer a merely ridiculous phenomenon. Against this background Rabelais' macaronic epopee

has been re/discovered as a paradigm of contemporary multilingual literature, because it often presents seriousness as ridiculous and ridiculousness as serious.

2.7. Occidental and Oriental Multilingualism

There have been some more enclaves of multilingual literature within the hegemonic monolingual space of former centuries. One of the most important ones was the tricultural zone of Islamic, Christian and Hebrew Spain in the Middle Ages, based on the principles of tolerance and renewal through intercultural contacts. The creation of the combined poetic genres of *jarcha* (*harǧa*) and *moaxaja* (*muwaššaha*), mixing Arabian, Mozarabic Spanish and sometimes Hebrew sequences, was its main contribution to literary multilingualism, besides the numerous ingredients of foreign languages (Arab, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Catalan, Euskera, Occitan, Portuguese, German, English) in one of the canonical texts of Medieval Spain, the *Libro de buen amor* (*The Book of Good Love*) by Juan Ruiz.

2.8. Courtly Multilingualism

Another multilingual enclave was to be found at the European courts, often linked to each other by international marriages that produced a multicultural milieu around them, in addition to the itinerant minstrels who wandered from one European court, country and language to the other. Under certain circumstances, heteroglot or polyglot poetry and theatre plays were performed, though without creating a generic tradition. Some of the outstanding examples are the pentaglot *descort* poem of the Provençal troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras (12th to 13th century), with its single stanzas respectively in Provençal, Italian, French, Gascon and Portuguese-Galician, summed up in the final pentaglot *tornada*, and the songs of the South-Tyrolean poet and composer Oswald von Wolkenstein (14th to 15th century). The latter traveled widely through Europe and compounded up to ten idioms in his *œuvre*, including Dutch, Hungarian and Slovenian elements; benefiting from both his linguistic and musical skill he produced a highly sophisticated polyphony with subtle onomatopoetic, heteroglot and neologistic effects. Among the most distinguished examples of multilingual court theater are the comic *Auto das Índias* (*Play of the Indies*, 1509) and the religious *Autos das Barcas* (*Boat Plays*, 1517-1519) of the Portuguese poet Gil Vicente, switching naturally from Portuguese to Spanish and to Latin, parallel to the frequent shifts of queens, kings, courtiers, clergymen and captains between Spain and Portugal, and against the background of the nautical adventures of the Iberian monarchies. A similar dialogue, though much more limited, between native and foreign languages in a courteous milieu is to be found in Shakespeare's theatre. In the historical drama *Henry V* (1599) the evocation of the future union of England and France through the marriage of King Henry V and the French Princess Katherine after the battle of Agincourt, in the larger context of the long-term relations between the two countries and its languages, is expressed by the concrete contact between the English and the French tongue in this drama. The linguistic deficits of this dialogue are the mark of the historic failure of the intended political union.

Between the 14th and the 17th century, the productions of Petrarchan poetry spread all over Europe and Latin America and formed an extended multilingual intertext,

consisting of single monolingual texts in Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, English, Dutch and Latin. Owing to the remarkable coherence of that Petrarchan corpus, even in its baroque extensions, the intertextual multilingualism occasionally became an intratextual one, concentrated in a single text or in a cycle of poems by an individual author. One of the rare examples of the first case is Góngoras sonnet "Las tablas del batel" ("The planks of the ship"), consisting in alternate verses of Spanish, Latin, Italian and Portuguese, omitting the Latin verse in the tercets. The most characteristic example of the second case is the Brazilian poet Manuel Botelho de Oliveira) who even specified in the subtitle of his *Música do Parnaso* (*Music of the Parnassus*, 1705) the languages he used in the poems of this polyglot and polyphone collection: *rimas portuguesas, castelhanas, italianas, e latinas*.

Moreover, Góngora's and Botelho de Oliveira's multilingual poems are a manifestation of the baroque style that emerged largely under the impact of the discovery of the New World and its manifold hybridity. The baroque rhetorician Emmanuele Tesauro tried to conciliate antique and modern principles in his treatise *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* (*The Aristotelian Telescope*, 1654). He opened a space for occasional heteroglossia, where "parole forestiere" or "pellegrine" ("foreign or wandering words") might form an ingenious rhetorical figure ("figura ingeniosa"), and where barbarisms, if gently handled, could even take an elegant turn, as he stated in a daring paradox: "un Barbarismo [...] gentilmente inserito, divien' *Eleganza*". Hence, multi- or mixtilingualism became a part of baroque hybridism, although controlled by classical rhetorical principles.

2.9. Pentecostal Multilingualism

The largest volume of multilingual literature and paraliterature was accumulated by the Catholic Church. Its Holy Spirit, according to the Biblical account of the Pentecostal miracle, provided the apostles with polyglot competence, in order to qualify them for the evangelization and salvation of the whole world. The miraculous polyglossia of the Pentecostal event was conceived as the Christian revision of the catastrophic Babylonian confusion; the 72 languages the apostles learnt through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost corresponded to the 72 Babylonian languages created by God in order to confound humanity. The Pentecostal competence was applied in missionary activities all over the world, according to a dual 'glocal' system: on the one hand, the use of the many local languages in the basic communication of evangelization, catechesis, confession and sermons, on the other hand the use of Latin as a global language for the ritual and erudite communication within the Church, and also as a symbol for the future return to the universal - monolingual - language of the divine *Logos*. The Jesuits were the most efficient representatives of the religious globalization realized by the 'universal' Catholic Church. The Portuguese missionary and scholar António Vieira regarded the polyglossy of the Jesuits as even superior to that of the apostles, because as a collective they mastered more than 72 languages only in the Amazonian area (*Epiphany Sermon*, 1662), besides Latin and the modern European world languages.

The genres of Pentecostal polyglottism were predominantly of the paraliterary kind: sermons, missionary theater and church songs, basically oral performances. A lot of them were published, such as the religious plays (and poems) in Tupi, Portuguese,

Spanish and Latin by the Jesuit Father José de Anchieta who died in the Brazilian province of *Espírito Santo* (*Holy Ghost*) at the end of the 16th century, and the polyglot church carols or *villancicos a lo divino*, ingeniously mixing Spanish, Portuguese, Náhuatl, Afroamerican and Latin, by the Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (17th century). Both authors belong to the pioneers of a cross-cultural concept of American identity. The 'glocal' dualism of the Catholic Church used a specific polyglot genre, the so called *ensalada* (*mixed salad*), originally a chant of various melodies and idioms that eventually became a pentecostal equivalent of macaronic mixtilingualism. In spite of its trivial denomination, it has been devoted to religious purposes, its polyglossy symbolizing the many peoples praising God, according to the *Arte poética española* (1606) of the Spanish author Juan Díaz Rengifo. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz adopted the name of *ensalada* or *ensaladilla* for her multilingual religious *villancicos*. A medieval example for the crossing of a universal language with various local languages is the multilingual cycle of *Marienlieder* (*Songs of Our Lady*) by Brother Hans (14th to 15th century), compounding Dutch, French, English and Latin verses, in order to manifest the unity and diversity of Christian faith.

A contextual form of Pentecostal polyglossy is the synoptic translations of canonical religious texts. A polyglot pictogram in the form of a cosmic rose, comprising the manifold names of God in all 72 Babylonian and Pentecostal idioms located around the invariant center of Jesus' name, illustrates the syncretic *Oedipus aegyptiacus* (1652-54) of the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher. The polyglot editions of the Bible - the *Biblia poliglota Complutense* (1517) being one of its prototypes - and the polyglot editions of the Paternoster assembling up to 500 languages (Johann Christoph Adelung, *Mithridates*, 1806; Gernot Bühring, *Vaterunser polyglott*, 1984), are the most conspicuous manifestations of Christian multilingualism in its translational form.

2.10. Modern Diglossia

In the era of secularization and modernization beginning with the Enlightenment, a new form of diglossia gradually replaced the dual system of the universal Latin and the various vernacular languages that characterized both Humanism and the Catholic Church. From the early 18th century (Treaty of Rastatt, 1714) up to the early 20th century, French became the official language of international politics, before English took its place after the First World War (Treaty of Versailles, 1919). The hegemony of French, based on the Sun King's (Louis XIV's) *translatio imperii et studii* and on the following era of the Enlightenment, produced the ideological concept of *l'universalité de la langue française* (Rivarol, 1784) that included linguistic, cultural and political arguments and targets. Not only were international treaties drafted in French, but French invaded the European cultural discourse. Even the Prussian king Frederick the Great wrote poetry, plays and essays in French, for instance the essay on German literature *De la littérature allemande* (1780). Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767) contains long passages in French that apparently do not need a translation, whereas its Latin passages do. Outstanding examples in Anglo-American, Russian and German literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries are the French ingredients of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) with its universal "Salut au monde!", of Tolstoy's historical novel *Vojna i Mir* (*War and Peace*, 1868/69) and of Rilke's diary novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (*The Notebooks of Malte Laurids*

Brigge,1910). These ingredients connote the cultural hegemony of modern French, even if they are limited, as in *Leaves of Grass*, or express a critical position, such as the anti-Napoleonic tendency of Tolstoy's novel suggests.

Besides the hegemony of a single universal language like French, Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, in spite of a certain linguistic patriotism similar to the French one, intensified the feeling for heteroglossia in foreign literature that was supposed to influence and diversify the structure even of the national language. But basically, Goethe did not conceive his own work as a multilingual one, apart from quotations, mainly Latin, or uses of foreign words, mainly French.

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Biographical Sketch

K. Alfons Knauth is professor of Romance Literatures at the Ruhr University of Bochum. Since 1998 he has been collaborating in several Research Committees of the ICLA/AILC. His research is centered upon literary multilingualism, intertextual and intercultural processes between Europe and Latin America, the theory of interpretation, literary symbolism, the theory and history of literary genres, classical traditions, modernism and creative writing. Among his publications, besides numerous articles in various international journals and miscellanies on the above mentioned subjects, are Invarianz und Variabilität literarischer Texte (1981), Literaturlabor - La muse au point (1986) and Mutierende Tiere (1989). In 1981 he founded the literary group and review Dichtungsring.