

Routledge Auto/Biography Studies

MULTILINGUAL LIFE WRITING BY FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE WOMEN

TRANSLINGUAL SELVES

Natalie Edwards



Multilingual Life Writing by French and Francophone Women

This volume examines the ways in which multilingual women authors incorporate several languages into their life writing. It compares the work of six contemporary authors who write predominantly in French. It analyzes the narrative strategies they develop to incorporate more than one language into their life writing: French and English, French and Creole, or French and German, for example. The book demonstrates how women writers transform languages to invent new linguistic formations and how they create new formulations of subjectivity within their self-narrative. It intervenes in current debates over global literature, national literatures and translanguing and transnational writing, which constitute major areas of research in literary and cultural studies. It also contributes to debates in linguistics through its theoretical framework of translanguaging. It argues that multilingual authors create new paradigms for life writing and that they question our understanding of the category of “French literature.”

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Introduction

How does a multilingual writer find the words to say “I”? In what language or languages do multilingual authors conceive of their identity, tell their story and develop their narrative of selfhood? How does the fact of being multilingual impact upon the process of life writing? This book is about life writing between languages: by people who live, speak and write in more than one language. It examines how multilingual writers negotiate between their languages, borrowing from both and drawing on their wide linguistic resources to write intimately, personally and self-reflexively. The early twenty-first century is witness to the largest wave of migration since the Second World War; as globalization expands, mobility is increasing and is propelled by a gamut of reasons from unforced to forced migration.¹ In this context, languages come into increasing contact with each other and the boundaries between them become gradually more porous and unstable. Individuals, moreover, often find themselves operating in more than one language and are faced with decisions over which language to use in which context – or more precisely, as this volume will show, how to combine them. Indeed, linguists now consider the majority of the world’s population to be multilingual (Grosjean 13).

This situation has important consequences for literary studies, which has long been organized around bodies of national literatures: American literature, German literature or French literature, for example. Most often, each of these monoliths is associated with a specific language and its canon is, for the most part, monolingual. While writers who have forsaken one language for another are welcomed into these canons, their success normally depends upon their ability to write monolingually in their chosen language. Throughout history, many writers have left their mother tongue behind them and adopted another language in which they write their literary works. Samuel Beckett, Julien Green, Franz Kafka, Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Conrad and Milan Kundera all forged their careers on writing in a language other than their native tongue. Contemporary French-language literature is marked by the success of several writers whose mother tongue is not French: Nancy Huston, Jonathan Littell, Hector Bianciotti, François Cheng, Rachid Boudjedra and

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André Makine, for example. Paul Ricœur denotes in such authors, “l’ambition de déprovincialiser la langue maternelle, invitée à se penser comme une langue parmi d’autres et, à la limite, à se percevoir elle-même comme étrangère” (17) [an attempt to deterritorialize the mother tongue, which they consider to be one language among many and, therefore, a foreign language itself] and refers to them as “des exilés qui auraient renoncé à la quête de l’asile d’une langue d’accueil” (18) [exiled people who have given up on the idea of finding asylum in another language].² Rainier Grutman notes, however, that “dans les médias parisiens, on aime bien les écrivains venus d’ailleurs mais qui se sont ‘convertis’ au français, illustrant du même coup l’universalité de cette langue, un peu comme au bon temps de Rivarol [...] A-t-on assez remarqué toutefois que ces auteurs ont tous eu la politesse de laisser leur langue maternelle au vestiaire?” (38) [The Parisian media loves writers who have come from elsewhere but who have ‘converted’ to French, illustrating the universality of the language, like in the good old days [...] Have they noticed, however, that these writers have all had the good manners to leave their mother tongue in the closet?].

What is particularly interesting about twenty-first-century literature in French is the number of writers who are not leaving their mother tongue in the closet but who are for the first time incorporating another language – or even other languages – into their literary writing. The French literary sphere presents particular barriers to the non-native speaker due to the highly codified French language and to the expectations of French literary style. Nevertheless, encouraged by the processes of globalization and of the “global turn” in literary studies perhaps, a number of French-language writers are using elements of their mother tongue in their French-language publications. By calling attention to their multilingual existence in their writing, they contribute to a change in the sensibility and in the status of the writer. Rather than being straight-jacketed into a model of France that is monolingual, monocultural or monoethnic, these writers lay bare the dynamic processes in language switching that many of the world’s inhabitants perform on a daily basis. This introduction contextualizes this multilingual writing, first examining the recent scholarship on transnational life writing before turning to the specificity of the French context. It then provides an overview of research into translanguaging and multilingual writers before introducing the corpus of this study.

Transnational Life Writing

This book focuses on texts of life writing in order to probe the ways in which multilingual literary writers achieve self-expression. It examines how writers who have knowledge of more than one language incorporate their languages into their narrative of self. By concentrating

on self-reflexive texts, it analyzes and compares the different narrative strategies multilingual authors develop to write about themselves. As sociolinguist Christian Lagarde writes, “parce que le ‘je’ mis en avant abolit de manière apparemment incontestable la distance du réel à la fiction, le récit autobiographique est le mode d’expression par excellence de la révélation de la nature et de la teneur de cette relation à la/aux langue(s)” (21–22) [because the accentuated ‘I’ apparently abolishes the distance between real and fiction, autobiographical narrative is the ideal mode of expression for the revelation of the nature and tenor of the relationship to language]. The term “life writing” is employed throughout this book in order to compare a spectrum of texts. Margaretta Jolly remarks that although this term has been used since the eighteenth century, it has gained transaction since the 1980s due to its “openness and inclusiveness across genre” (ix). As Marlene Kadar adds to the discussion of the term, not only is it “not a fixed term” that allows for fluid interpretation, “it may represent both a genre and a critical practice” (3). Life writing draws attention to the practice of reading and interpretation and to the position of the writer, the reader and the critic. It also includes nontraditional and nonwritten forms such as testimony, oral narrative, digital narratives and documentary. The adoption of the term “life writing” in this study is thus rooted in an inclusive approach to models of self-reflexive writing, including both “Western” and “non-Western” patterns. This is particularly important in the French context due to the array of literary writing emanating from the former French colonies and territories. While a definition of autobiography such as those advanced by Philippe Lejeune or Georges Gusdorf might be appropriate to certain texts in the European tradition, they are far less so to works that come from different understandings of selfhood. Models of postcolonial life writing are discussed in the analysis of Chantal Spitz’s work in particular. For now, the adoption of the term “life writing” is intended as a mark of openness to different approaches to the self and to self-writing and allows for rich comparison of a variety of texts that push the generic boundaries of autobiography.

Much recent research into life writing draws from the current global order in which national identities are unstable and local, national and global communities are in flux. One of the major developments in this field is the impact of the “global turn” in literary studies, which has encouraged critics to rethink the parameters of the scholarship of life writing. Titles of some of the major scholarly works on life writing from the 1990s reveal a thinking based upon bodies of texts emanating from national cultures: Paul John Eakin’s *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect* (1991), Michael Sheringham’s *French Autobiography: Device and Desires: From Rousseau to Perec* (1993), Gillian Whitlock’s *Autographs: Contemporary Australian Autobiography* (1996) and Graziella Parati’s *Public History, Private Stories: Italian Women’s Autobiography*

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(1996), for example. These major contributions to the field organized their material on the basis of national boundaries, locating their analysis within the literary history of a specified nation. By contrast, a significant strand of recent scholarship in this field has focused on texts written by writers between nations and cultures. Whitlock compares autobiographies written in the region of the Middle East in *Soft Weapons*, for example (2007). Kate Averis provides a comparative analysis of self-writing by women authors from the French- and Spanish-speaking worlds (2014). Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott examine biographies by transnational individuals, from the elite to the subaltern, in *Transnational Lives Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–Present* (2010). Eva Karpinski studies exchanges between host nations and migrant authors, arguing that through researching life writing and translation, “we can learn to read each other’s stories, listen to multiple voices, and find the possibility of plurivocal exchanges in cross-cultural, multilingual, globalized, and indigenized contexts” (227).

Perhaps the most salient example of this change in direction is to be found in Ricia Chansky’s *Auto/Biography across the Americas: Transnational Themes in Life Writing* (2016). In this ambitious volume, Chansky brings together scholars from North America, the Caribbean and Latin America and across disciplinary boundaries – literary studies, political science, history, sociology and anthropology – to examine texts of life writing through a transnational lens. The volume views the Americas as a locus of migration and mobility and, therefore, rather than separating them according to national or regional boundaries, places them side by side on a continuum. As Chansky writes in her introduction, the collection aims to open doors “to some of the possibilities introduced by reading beyond the multilayered boundaries constructed between auto/biographical narratives of the Americas” (4). While scholars in the Americas have been engaged in comparative work for some time, this volume brings together texts of life writing and approaches to the genre that have not previously been studied alongside each other. For example, in “Timescapes, Backpacks, Networks: Writing Lives across the Americas,” Sidonie Smith examines an exhibition held at the University of Michigan titled *State of Exception*, which amassed archaeological artifacts from people who have attempted to cross the U.S. border. Pointing to the work of the students who had curated the exhibition and the precarious position they occupied, Smith underscores that this transnational movement leads to multiple – and multilayered – acts of witnessing. Laura Beard’s contribution, “Mapping Out a Treacherous Terrain: Working at the Crossroads of Autobiographical Studies and Inter-American Literary Studies,” discusses as-told-to narratives in the Cree language as a means of exploring indigenous life narratives. Beard points up both the ethical dimension of interpreting work by individuals who may not feel a sense of belonging with any nation state and the danger of imposing

methodological frameworks upon their narratives. Gerardo Necochea Gracia in “Talking beyond Borders: Oral Histories of Becoming Politically Left in Latin America, 1960–1990” compares self-reflective texts by politically engaged individuals from across several nations, pointing to similarities between their stories of relationality despite their national differences. Importantly, while all of the essays are in English, the volume shows a strong awareness of the linguistic landscape of the Americas; abstracts of all chapters are available in both Spanish and English, some of the essays by contributors who write their scholarship in Spanish appear in English for the first time in this collection, and some of the contributions in English are being translated into Spanish or Portuguese (2). Taken together, these essays point to the instability of national borders and to the rich potential of reading life narratives beyond them.

Multilingual Life Writing by French and Francophone Women is thus rooted in this major direction within the field of life writing, aiming to compare texts beyond clearly demarcated categories of genre and national origin. While the literary works that form its corpus are all united by the French language, the authors emanate from different nations, engage with the French language differently and take different approaches to writing multilingually. This book is inspired, therefore, by the transnational and transcultural mode of inquiry in life writing research and aims to contribute to it by focusing on questions of language. It probes how authors write self-narrative that resists boundaries not just between nations and cultures but also between languages.

Transnational French Studies

As the example of Chansky’s work on the transnational Americas demonstrates, the changing global parameters of literary production have blurred the edges of many disciplinary boundaries, including that of “French Studies.” In this discipline, the distinction between “French” and “Francophone” is particularly acute. This is hardly a new phenomenon, since scholarship in the early 1990s began to question the transnational aspects of this field. Françoise Lionnet and Ronnie Scharfman’s 1993 special edition of *Yale French Studies*, “Post/Colonial Conditions: Exiles, Migrations, Nomadisms,” was instrumental in shifting the focus of the discipline from a model that had been centered upon “la métropole” [mainland France]. As the field of Anglophone postcolonial studies developed, this influenced the thinking of a significant strand of scholars in French Studies, who have contributed to pushing the discipline far beyond the national boundaries of France. Charles Forsdick and David Murphy’s edited volume *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*, a gently insistent call to question the monocultural and monolingual aspects of inquiry into the discipline, was chief among these.

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The year 2010 marked a turning point in this transnational trajectory, with the publication of two major works that recast French and Francophone cultures in a global framework and that emphasized the interactions between them and other regions and nations. Christie McDonald and Susan Rubin Suleiman's *French Global: A New Approach to Literary History* reevaluated the multiplicities inherent in the history of literature in French. The work is organized as an alternative literary history, based around the central question, "is it possible to reread the whole sweep of French literature in world perspective?" (xi). Rather than adhering strictly to a chronological framework that groups together texts and authors by century, McDonald and Suleiman's volume presents its material in three sections that exemplify their will to focus on interactions between places, peoples and ideas: "Spaces," "Mobilities" and "Multiplicities." They summarize their method, which they present as a roadmap or a GPS through literary history, as follows:

Transactions between and among cultures and peoples, both inside and outside France's national boundaries (which have changed over time) have been present in every period of literature in French. The approach we are proposing places, paradoxically, negotiations with otherness and boundary crossings at the very centre of French literary history (x).

Whereas the construct of "France" was the epicenter of French literature according to established histories of it, the very notion of a center is displaced in this approach and is replaced by a web of multinational, multicultural and multilingual networks.

In a similarly transnational vein but with a different focus, Alec Hargreaves, David Murphy and Charles Forsdick's *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde* also appeared in the same year. The titles of its three sections succinctly delineate the authors' interpretation of recent research in the field: "From World Literature to *Littérature-monde*: Genre, History and the Globalization of Politics," "Postcolonialism, Politics and the 'Becoming Transnational' of French Studies" and "Mapping *Littérature-monde*." Again insisting upon the interactions between places, nations and regions, the sixteen chapters all contribute to a central aim of decentering French Studies from a purely hexagonal focus and questioning the meaning of the "and" in "French and Francophone Studies." As is clear from its title, the focus of the collection is the 2007 publication of the manifesto titled "Pour une littérature-monde en français" [Manifesto for a World Literature in French]. The manifesto, published in *Le Monde* and signed by forty-four writers, with a follow-up volume *Pour une littérature monde* edited by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, called for a new formulation of a French-language world literature. Its strident call for recognition of the variety of

literatures in French declares the death knell of the term “Francophone”: “la francophonie est de la lumière d’étoile morte” (n.p.) [Francophonie is a light from a dying star], the signatories solemnly declare. Hargreaves, Forsdick and Murphy’s collection analyzes what a *littérature-monde* might mean in and between various places, nations and regions.

In addition to the political and cultural debates in the essays of Hargreaves, Forsdick and Murphy’s volume, questions of language predominate. This is apt, considering the consternation with which certain critics greeted the manifesto’s treatment of language. In particular, Jeanne Garane’s chapter, “*Littérature-monde* and the Space of Translation, or, Where is *Littérature-monde*?” raises the question of language, stating that “to pose the questions, ‘What literature?’, ‘What world?’, ‘In what language?’ is also to pose the question of translation, for it is an activity that is as central to the project of *littérature-monde* as it is to *Weltliteratur*” (227). In their introduction, the editors suggest the question of language will be a major focus of future scholarship on the notion of *littérature-monde* and of transnational studies – not just language itself but the “wider philosophical issues of translatability, untranslatability and the politics of cultural relationality” (9). As their remarks suggest, the term “en français” [in French] of the title of the manifesto is not discussed in any depth by its signatories. Kathryn Kleppinger criticizes the writers for not addressing their relationships to the French language, which is clearly a vestige of colonial domination for many of them (77). Françoise Lionnet adds her voice to the critique of the question of language in the manifesto, arguing that it “fails to address the nature of language as the hybrid medium that brings this world into being [and] is silent on the quality of the linguistic innovations that have served to anchor literature in specific landscapes and transnational critical geographies” (204). Jacqueline Dutton also suggests that the manifesto glibly invokes “the unity of the French language as a monolithic treasure of which all writers are invited to partake” but it does not go “beyond critiquing the monolingual French barrier to diversity” (414). This book is grounded in a similar stance, that more attention is needed to the role of the French language as a locus of writing in French and that more understanding of the interplay between French and other languages in cultural and literary production is required.

This book suggests that, alongside and inspired by transnational studies that emphasize interactions between regions rather than focusing upon a central axis, much could be gained from reading the interactions between languages rather than concentrating upon a central monolingualism. In this sense, translanguaging, understood as the interactions between languages, is a critical category that deserves far closer attention. In light of current inquiry into transnational and transcultural studies, attention to the translanguaging could nuance our understanding of literature and culture in French. Not only does it carry the potential

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to inform debates surrounding contemporary issues such as migration, mobility, exile and diaspora, it could also, through historicization of the concept, lead to renewed understanding of the history of literature in French.

The Monolingual Imperative in France

As we arrive at the question of language, it is necessary to pause to discuss the specificity of France's linguistic heritage. Since France was a major world trading power and more recently a major colonial power, the French language has spread throughout many parts of the world. As McDonald and Suleiman's work demonstrates, literature in French can be viewed as a web of interactions between regions and areas precisely because of the dissemination of the French language. Nevertheless, very differently from colonial languages such as Spanish and English, French is highly codified so that challenges to its hegemony are minimized. This is an important historical phenomenon, since it is the result of a series of policies adopted over centuries that aim to protect the French language. Most visibly, the *Académie Française* is housed in a grand building that features prominently on the bank of the Seine in central Paris. Established in the seventeenth century by Cardinal Richelieu at the behest of Louis XIII, the *Académie* is the standard bearer and the arbiter of the French language. The *Académie* continues to publish the definitive dictionary of standard French and advises on a legal framework that is charged with protecting the language. The members of the *Académie* are known as the *Immortels* [the Immortals] in a label that highlights their lasting influence and their ongoing purpose of upholding the uniqueness of the French language. While the *Académie* does not possess legal power, it continues to hold a prominent place in public life. It distributes, for example, over sixty prizes annually – in 2018, the number reached seventy-two – to literary works that uphold its standards.³ The most prestigious among them is the *Grand prix de littérature de l'Académie française*, which generally crowns an author for the ensemble of her or his work. Alongside celebrated authors such as Michel Butor (2013) and Marguerite Yourcenar (1977), notable winners are Milan Kundera (2001) and Julien Green (1970), both of whom are multilingual but who write in French. More than just a figurehead that offers recognition to literary authors, however, the *Académie* frequently intervenes in public and political debate. For instance, as part of a suite of initiatives aimed at modernization, the French government voted to amend the Constitution to include regional languages for the first time in 2008. France indeed has a significant linguistic heritage, including Breton, Corsican, Provençal, Occitan, Catalan, Picard and Basque, among others. The phrase in question was simply “les langues régionales appartiennent au patrimoine de la France” [regional languages belong to the heritage of

France]. The *Académie* issued a declaration remonstrating the government for its action, beginning with the phrase, “depuis plus de cinq siècles, la langue française a forgé la France” [for more than five centuries, the French language has been the foundation of France]. The declaration states that on the basis that the *Académie* “a reçu le mandat de veiller à la langue française dans son usage et son rayonnement, [...] elle demande le retrait de ce texte dont les excellentes intentions peuvent et doivent s’exprimer ailleurs, mais qui n’a pas sa place dans la Constitution” [has been given the mandate to safeguard the French language in its usage and its splendor, [...] it requests the retraction of this text, the intent of which is excellent and should be expressed elsewhere, but which has no place in the Constitution].

The declaration of the *Académie* is emblematic of the attitude taken by French institutions to the French language. In the case of regional languages, these have been actively discouraged and the French government forbade their teaching in schools until the 1950s. France has still not ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, developed in 1992 by the Council of Europe and adopted by twenty-five European nations.⁴ More broadly, the *Ministère de la Culture*, the French Ministry of Culture, is charged with developing and overseeing policies related to the French language. Specifically, in 1996, it created a *Commission pour l’enrichissement de la langue française* [Commission for the Enrichment of the French Language] to create words and expressions for new lexical items, such as technological or electronic terms, lest their English equivalent enter French parlance. One of their recent directives made international news, as it proposed the term “infox,” a melding of the two French words “information” and “intoxication” as the official word for “fake news.”⁵ In addition to the *Académie* and the Ministry of Culture, the rigorous French national education system has contributed to the preservation of the language – and not just in Metropolitan France. The importance accorded to the French language and the compulsory textbooks that are used to support the teaching of it in France and, crucially, in its overseas territories, have resulted in a clear notion of standard language, relatively free from regional or dialectal inflection; even in the former colonies, where the language is of course influenced by other lexical items, other pronunciation systems and other accents, it is still remarkably similar to standard French.⁶ For the last four to five centuries, therefore, the French state has practiced a language policy that has mandated and celebrated monolingualism, which has exerted a significant impact upon literary writing.

Translingual French Studies

In light of this linguistic heritage, translingual research in French Studies has concentrated on those writers who, to return to Grutman’s assertion

quoted above, adopt the French language and leave their mother tongue in the closet. This research follows a model of translingual writing that Steven Kellman theorized in a book-length study of largely Anglophone translingual writing in the year 2000. Kellman's study is broad, including case studies of writers from disparate areas of the Anglophone world, grouped together around their shared choice of the English language rather than a theoretical focus or rationale. Nevertheless, Kellman distinguishes between two groups of writers whom he labels "translingual" (12). The first, "ambilingual translinguals" (12), are those who have written important works in more than one language. Kateb Yacine writes in French and in Arabic, for example, while Rosario Ferré in Spanish and English and Antonio Tabucchi in Italian and Portuguese. By contrast, "monolingual translinguals" (12) are, in Kellman's theory, writers who have written in one language that is not their native tongue. In French Studies, research into translingual writing concentrates on these "monolingual translinguals": authors who write exclusively in French, such as André Makine, whose native language is Russian, or Julia Kristeva, whose first language is Bulgarian, and those who write predominantly in the French language, such as Vassilis Alexakis, whose native tongue is Greek, and François Cheng, an *Immortel* himself, whose first language is Chinese. In addition, studies have examined the work of writers from beyond France who represent the difficulty of writing in French but who do not generally inscribe their mother tongue into their writing, such as Assia Djebar and Tahar Ben Jelloun. For some of these writers, adopting French is a choice, whereas for others, it is the result of an imposition.

French-language scholarship makes a very strong contribution to understanding the work of "monolingual translinguals," which are also referred to as "exophonic" writers. French-language studies abound of authors who have adopted the French language in their writing, such as Agota Kristof, Elie Wiesel, Elsa Triolet, Emil Cioran, Hector Bianchotti, Samuel Beckett and Jorge Semprún. A number of book-length studies of the phenomenon have appeared in France in recent years. Robert Jouanny's *Singularités francophones*, published in 2000, takes a historical approach to the subject, pointing to the ways in which writers of the seventeenth century, such as Princess Palatine, used French in their texts in order to appear more sophisticated, before concentrating on those who wrote exclusively in French by choice. Anne-Rosine Delbart's *Les Exilés du langage: Un siècle d'écrivains français venus d'ailleurs (1919–2000)* narrows its focus by concentrating on the twentieth century and offering highly sensitive readings of the work of authors such as Huston, Green and Semprún. *Langue française, langue d'adoption: Une littérature invitée entre création, stratégies et contraintes (1946–2000)* by Véronique Porra (2011) takes a similar approach, examining the work of writers referred to as "les convertis" [the converted]. Most directly related to the

subject of this book, Alain Ausoni's study of translingual life writing, *Mémoires d'outre-langue: L'écriture translingue de soi* (2018), plays on the title of Chateaubriand's celebrated autobiography *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Organized by author rather than theme, as is the case in the three monographs mentioned above, this work considers the adoption of the French language as a major event in the life of an author, akin to autobiographical events such as Annie Ernaux's social mobility or Philippe Forrest's loss of a child. Interestingly, Ausoni includes a writer who does not write exclusively in French; the final chapter is devoted to the work of Hungarian writer Katalin Molnár. The other writers amassed in this study follow the monolingual translingual pattern: Makine, Bianchotti, Alexakis, Huston and Kristof. This is not to claim that other languages do not enter the prose of these writers or that Ausoni does not draw attention to this, as occurs most clearly with Huston's texts, but that the overall approach to translingualism conforms to the monolingual model. As Grutman summarizes, "malgré leur exotisme, les écrivains translingues sont des exceptions qui viennent confirmer la règle de l'unilinguisme" (39) [despite their exoticism, translingual writers are exceptions that confirm the rule of unilingualism].

Alongside this rich scholarship on what is labeled *écriture translingue*, recent French-language research advances different terms for the writing of multilingual authors. Olga Anokhina's *Multilinguisme et créativité littéraire* (2012) uses "multilingual" rather than "translingual" and contains some fascinating studies of the effects of other languages on the French-language writing of key authors: Valentina Chepigina's analysis of the impact of Yiddish, Russian and Polish on Romain Gary's writing in French, for example. While these studies concentrate on texts written entirely or predominantly in French, they add an important layer of understanding to the question of the translingual. In 2007, Axel Gasquet and Modesta Suárez published *Ecrivains multilingues et écritures métisses: L'hospitalité des langues*, the acts of a 2004 conference on multilingual writers. This rich collection uses the term "multilingual" to refer to writers who adopt the French language from a variety of national and linguistic backgrounds. Focusing on twentieth-century texts, the essays are grouped by geographical area: writers from America, Spain and Russia, for example. A particular innovation is a final section on self-translation, which is becoming a burgeoning area of scholarship.⁷ The list of writers studied shows that the volume concentrates on those who write predominantly monolingually – Semprún, Beckett, Makine, Cioran, for example – but the focus on other languages (indeed, several chapters are written in Spanish) and citations of other languages used within predominantly French prose, such as Alexakis's use of Greek, broadens the scope of *écriture translingue*. Despite the word "plurilingual" in its title, Olga Anokhina and François Rastier's work *Ecrire en langues: Littératures et plurilinguisme* (2015) also prefers the label

“multilingual” for texts that contain more than one language. This work is particularly innovative in that it studies literary works that incorporate more than one language into the prose; Marie Vrinat-Nikolov and Patrick Maurus examine poetry written in Korean and Chinese, and in Bulgarian and German, for instance. This intervention paves the way for further research into predominantly French-language multilingual texts.

One of the most innovative interventions in French scholarship in this field is Jean-Marc Moura’s concept of the “interlangue” [interlanguage] (2013). Moura, one of the principal theorists of postcolonial cultures in France, is in dialogue with Anglo-American criticism and his bibliographies are striking for their high number of English-language texts alongside his French-language sources. Inspired by postcolonial theories of language in the work of Bill Ashcroft et al, Moura probes the representation of language in a series of texts by Francophone African and Caribbean writers. Analyzing the work of Malinké author Amadou Kourouma, for example, Moura points to the ways in which the Malinké language enters Kourouma’s predominantly French-language text: through using Malinké words in the prose, creating neologisms combining Malinké and French, and through a web of Malinké cultural references (85). In its analysis of the power dynamics discernible in postcolonial writing, Moura’s work is a strong inspiration for this volume, which aims to probe the power dynamics of mingling literary languages in a range of cultures, some of which could be termed postcolonial.

In a slightly different vein, Rainier Grutman comes to the discussion of languages in literature from a different perspective: that of bilingual Quebec. Although written in French, therefore, his theorizations are noticeably different from those of his French counterparts. Based upon his doctoral thesis written at the Université de Montréal, Grutman’s first book *Des langues qui résonnent: L’hétérolinguisme au XIXe siècle québécois* advances another term, as opposed to *translingue*, *multilingue* or *interlangue: hétérolingue* [heterolingual]. Grutman defines this term as “la présence dans un texte d’idiomes étrangers, sous quelque forme que ce soit, aussi bien que de variétés (sociales, régionales ou chronologiques) de la langue principale” (37) [the presence in a text of foreign words, in whatever form, as well as of varieties (social, regional or chronological) of the main language]. He justifies his neologism in the following manner:

Contrairement au ‘bilinguisme,’ le terme ne souffre pas de connotations politiques. Faisant une large part à l’hybridité – il est lui-même composé d’un étymon grec (*heteros*: ‘autre’) et d’un étymon latin (*lingua*: ‘langue’) – le mot devient une *mise en abyme* du phénomène qu’il désigne. Enfin, il faut souligner le caractère littéraire de l’hétérolinguisme. A moins de les métaphoriser et donc de les vider de leur sens strict, tant le bilinguisme que la diglossie s’appliquent

aux sociétés et aux individus qui les composent, soit aux auteurs et aux lecteurs (37).

[Contrary to ‘bilingualism,’ the term does not suffer from political connotations. Emphasizing hybridity – it is itself composed of Greek (*heteros*: other) and Latin (*lingua*: language) – the word becomes a *mise en abyme* of the phenomenon it designates. Finally, it is important to underline the literary character of heterolingualism. At the risk of reducing their meaning by treating them as metaphors, bilingualism and diglossia relate to societies and the individuals of which they are composed, and to authors and readers.]

To recall Kellman’s theory of translingual writing above, an immediate difference between Kellman’s and Grutman’s projects are that the former concentrates on the person, the bilingual author, while the latter focuses on the text, the bilingual writing. Concentrating on the nineteenth century, although moving to the twentieth century in more recent works, Grutman uses the term “heterolingualism” to refer to texts that include a very wide array of literary works; as he writes in an English-language essay, heterolingual texts “can either give equal prominence to two (or more) languages or add a liberal sparkling of other languages to a dominant language clearly identified as their central axis” (2007: 19). Most, of course, belong to the latter category. Grutman’s notion of the “heterolingual” has had significant impact, especially in translation studies. Nevertheless, he himself calls for more exhaustive study of the phenomenon. Indeed, the “liberal sparkling” he mentions in this citation is not defined and, instead, Grutman gives examples as diverse as paragraphs of foreign languages in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* and Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, a short story of Nerval’s that is written entirely in French but that has a Spanish title, *El desdichado*, and the *patois* of peasant characters in works by George Sand and Maupassant. Several critics have taken up Grutman’s mantle, exploring the term he designated in relation to largely nineteenth-century works to other texts. For example, Myriam Souchet, in *L’imaginaire hétérologue*, applies Grutman’s theory to four texts that contain different languages. Her conclusions are open-ended, but her work responds to the call for greater definition and theorization of the term.

It is striking to note the different vocabulary used in Anglophone scholarship to discuss the same phenomenon. Indeed, Moura’s concept of the “interlangue” is closer to how many Anglophone critics consider the term “translingual.” Irene Gilson Nordin, Julia Hansen and Carmen Zamorano Llena in *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, for example, suggest that the catalyzing force of translingual literature might be “overcoming the limits of monolingualism” and argue for

a shift in emphasis “from a binary model tracing an author’s path from one discreet language to another, to a more dynamic model of the productive zone situated in between languages, where different linguistic media collide and intermingle” (xxiii). Whereas the French label *translingue* discussed above refers to writers who have adopted another language and have written predominantly within that other language, “translingual writing” in English also refers to texts written in more than one language; the suffix *trans* is the site of a transformation, although the nature of this transformation is generally not theorized. Dutton refers to “the translingual turn” in recent literary scholarship, for example, discerning a far greater attention to language in current criticism, particularly in the wake of the *littérature-monde* manifesto. Dutton suggests a refinement of Kellman’s approach to translingualism, commenting that “this is a broad and inclusive category that requires further descriptive refinement, including the idea that the translingual text represents a kind of contact zone for languages, and by extension the cultures they carry within them – a hybrid third space where the exchanges and modifications between languages are negotiated by the author to produce a text that is more than simply the sum of its parts” (415). Importantly, Dutton’s work calls for closer scrutiny of translingualism as a concept and as a potentially catalyzing force; as she comments, “whether French studies embraces translingualism as a conceptual framework, not just to examine creolization in African texts or stylistic devices adopted in post-Soviet writers in France, but to rethink the unity and diversity of the French language, remains to be seen [...] Perhaps translingualism will turn out to be the essential means for re-articulating modern languages studies more widely” (418).

A similar call for attention to overcoming monolingual ideology is found in Charles Forsdick’s expansive work in this area. Forsdick charts the language-based prejudice, which he names “linguaphobia” (2017: 14), that shackles a nation to a language. He suggests that this is particularly relevant to France and French, arguing that, although the French language will always be of primordial importance, “the traditional monolingual emphases on which the area was founded, with the various blind spots and even practices of epistemicide these entail, are increasingly untenable” (2017: 15). Forsdick argues that increased knowledge of the history of and the present interactions between monolingualism and multilingualism would improve our understanding of social, cultural, linguistic and literary spheres. He writes that “to evoke global France and global French is to develop forms of cultural literacy that challenge monolingual forms of analysis [...]: sensitive to cross-cultural and interlingual creativity, and willing to read backwards from the transnational and post-monolingual present to create connections with France’s always already transnational and multilingual pasts” (2017: 27). The term “post-monolingual” refers to Yasemin Yildiz’s important

contribution to this debate. In *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Post-monolingual Condition*, Yildiz points to “post-monolingualism” as a condition of contemporary culture. Yildiz theorizes what she refers to as a “monolingual paradigm” which has established a set of practices that have “not just obscured multilingual practices across history; they have also led to active processes of monolingualization, which have produced more monolingual subjects, more monolingual communities, and more monolingual institutions, without, however, fully eliminating multilingualism” (2–3). As Yildiz’s optimistic note at the end of this phrase suggests, multilingualism is remarkably resilient. Her term “postmonolingual,” she writes, “refers to a field of tension in which the monolingual paradigm continues to assert itself and multilingual practices persist or reemerge” (5).⁸ It is in this spirit of optimism that this book intervenes, suggesting that an openness to multilingualism carries the potential to change a paradigm in literary studies, as well as a broader potential for a greater understanding of individuals, collectives, societies and cultures.

Theorizing the *Trans*: Reading Translingualism through Translanguaging

Amid the different understandings of translanguaging and in addition to heterolingualism, multilingualism and plurilingualism, this book attempts to tease out what translanguaging writing is, how it functions in the work of several authors and how it challenges the monolingual paradigm of French literature. The way in which it attempts to theorize translanguaging writing is through a close examination of the *trans* in translanguaging. The theoretical approach taken by this book is rooted in linguistics and aims to bring literary and linguistic study together in order to understand translanguaging writing. Forsdick remarks that “Modern Languages has much to learn from an overdue dialogue with Applied Linguistics” (2017: 18), and this book aims to contribute to the lacuna Forsdick discerns. The discipline of Applied Linguistics and literary studies are often separated, not just by the methods and materials they use but also by academic structures that place them in different administrative units. Moreover, a hierarchy threatens to value one over the other due to the perception that one is more theoretical and therefore sophisticated than the other. This volume aims to bridge elements of linguistic and literary theory in order to probe literary texts in greater depth, using linguistic theories to analyze the interplay between languages and its effects upon literary creation.

The theory that forms the basis of this book stems from recent inquiry within Applied Linguistics into bilingualism. Traditionally, bilingualism has been considered according to a monoglossic view, the premise of which is that bilinguals have two separate linguistic systems. This theory is based upon a notion of a bilingual child growing up hearing two

languages and learning to speak both of them monolingually. That is to say that the child learns to speak both languages at a comparable level of fluency and develops the ability to switch between them. More recently, linguists have been questioning this premise and calling attention to the dynamic processes at work in bilingual and multilingual speakers. In 2009, applied linguist Ofelia García developed the term “translanguaging” to refer to what she considers to be a “dynamic bilingualism,” which brings languages together in the patterns of multilingual speakers (2009a). The term “translanguaging” is a translation of the Welsh word *trawsieithu*, an amalgam of “tra” (beyond) and “iaith” (language) and is transformed into a verb by the suffix “-u”. It was first used by applied linguist Cen Williams in 1992 to describe a pedagogical approach that asks language learners to alternate language, incorporating both the target language and the native language into tasks. It has been used as a pedagogical practice in Wales since the late 1990s and is currently a main feature of the high school examination (A level) in Welsh in which students are asked to use both English and Welsh, drawing on their knowledge of the two languages and cultures to respond to prompts, as opposed to curricula that aim to teach students to function monolingually in another language.

Translanguaging is thus predicated upon two languages functioning together and suggests that bilinguals practice a heteroglossic, dynamic system of language use. García summarizes that translanguaging is a practice related “not to two monolingualisms in one but to one integrated linguistic system” (120). She explains the theory of translanguaging thus:

Translanguaging is the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximise communicative potential. It is an approach to bilingualism that is centred, not on languages as has often been the case, but on the *practices* of bilinguals that are readily observable in order to make sense of their multilingual worlds. (2009b, 140, my emphasis)

Rather than using a restricted concept of bilingualism, namely, that only children who speak more than one language from the moment they learn to speak are bilingual, the concept of translanguaging responds to the reality of greater mobility and migration across the globe and the impact of this upon language and communication. Its contemporary relevance is perhaps the reason for its current popularity in Applied Linguistics. A series of scholars have contributed to defining, charting and analyzing translanguaging, including Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese, Suresh Canagarajah, Nancy Hornberger and Holly Link, Wei Li, and Gwyn Lewis, Bryn Jones, and Colin Baker. Suresh Canagarajah, one

of the main proponents of translanguaging, underscores the ability of bilinguals to transform the two languages they inhabit, suggesting that the term “conceives of language relationships in more dynamic terms. The semiotic resources in one’s repertoire or in society interact more closely, become part of an integrated resource, and enhance each other. The languages *mesh in transformative ways, generating new meanings and grammars*” (2013: 8, my emphasis). Canagarajah thus highlights the performative aspect of translanguaging, pointing to the creativity practiced by multilingual individuals who are able to draw upon a wide linguistic repertoire. It is this transformative aspect of the theory that differentiates it from code-switching, which views languages as discreet entities that are brought together by multilingual speakers. Interestingly for this study, Canagarajah examines life writing by multilingual language learners through the lens of translanguaging, demonstrating that they use their multiple languages interchangeably when they approach writing tasks in the language they are attempting to learn.

Canagarajah’s theory of translanguaging as a performative and transformational practice is echoed in the work of applied linguist Catherine Mazak. In a volume edited with Kevin Carroll, *Translanguaging in Higher Education: Beyond Monolingual Ideologies* (2016), Mazak suggests a definition of translanguaging that comprises five components. First, it is an ideology that posits bilingualism as the norm. Second, it is a theory that suggests that bilingual individuals have one large linguistic repertoire from which they draw to express themselves in both languages. Third, it is a pedagogical practice that empowers learners and teachers to draw on a wide linguistic repertoire. Fourth, it is a set of practices rooted in both linguistic and semiotic resources. Fifth, it is fundamentally transformational, in the sense that it transforms languages, the concept of language, and the lives of bilingual individuals (Mazak and Carroll 506). According to Mazak, then, translanguaging is an ideology, a theory, an approach and a practice. Most importantly for this study, which reads the translanguaging in literary creation, Mazak and Canagarajah’s theories accentuate the transformational aspect of translanguaging: the ability of multilingual people to create new forms of language, new ways of understanding and new patterns of expression. It is one of the central arguments in this book that multilingual writers engage in a process of linguistic creation that blurs the boundaries between languages within their literary writing, and especially within their life writing.

In addition to underscoring the importance of linguistic transformation, Mazak argues that translanguaging “captures the historical, political and social embeddedness of language practices and how these practices are and have been intertwined with ideologies” (3). What Mazak hints at in this citation, and what is surprisingly absent from much of the theory of translanguaging, is power. If we accept that

language is power and that language can be wielded in ways that talk back to power, that subvert power or that resist power structures, a practice that destabilizes individual languages and rejects monolingual ideology has a powerful potential. After all, this theory was developed in Wales, where there is a dominant language and an oppressed language, and it places these two languages on the same level, according them an equal status. Particularly in the case of the French language, which was not only a powerful colonial language but a very powerful national language that drastically reduced the status of its regional languages, translanguaging is a way of thinking through languages and the ideologies that support them as power structures.

Translanguaging thus has significant potential for our understanding of literature. It is one of the main contentions of this book that the category of the “translingual” has not been adequately theorized since Kellman’s initial proposal. By reading multilingual texts through translanguaging, this book attempts to theorize the *trans* in translingual. Translanguaging enables us to probe how and why authors incorporate multiple languages in their literary writing, how they transform languages to invent new linguistic formations and how they create new formulations of subjectivity within their self-narrative. For the study of life writing in particular, the practice of translanguaging has the potential to spur new conversations on the formation of identity in narrative. By reading literary texts through the lens of translanguaging, this volume highlights the transactional quality of these works, demonstrating that they are based upon transactions between languages that blur the boundaries between where one language ends and another begins. It also highlights the ethical stance of reading through translanguaging since this practice becomes a framework for viewing and for celebrating diversity, rather than of imposing homogeneity. In this sense, translanguaging is a means of valorizing creativity and side-stepping resistance to linguistic boundaries. Since multilingual texts break free of shared norms or conventions, they develop different practices to create meaning and accentuate how meaning is constantly being renegotiated between languages. Reading through translanguaging, then, fundamentally questions hierarchies between languages and the power accorded to some of them. In the context of a highly centralized, colonial language, such a reading practice is all the more necessary.

Multilingual Women Writers

This book reads the life writing of six female authors through this linguistic theory. The six women are all multilingual. Each of them writes predominantly in French but incorporates significant elements of another language – or other languages – into their work. For many of these writers, their first language is not French; they have moved to a

French-speaking nation, through either forced or unforced migration, and learned the French language, or they speak an indigenous language as their first language and have learned French due to the imposition of colonization. In one case, a writer speaks French as her native language but chooses to supplement this in her life writing with a second language – English. The authors have thus all developed a different relationship to the French language. They emanate from different areas of the French-speaking world and are connected by the French language but, importantly, not by the French nation. In this way, the study is not limited by a Franco-centric or a Paris-centric critical construction and instead takes an approach that might be termed transregional or, in another of Forsdick’s interventions, “transcolonial”; he suggests that “transcolonial methods [...] reveal both the enabling potential of comparison and the persistent presence of entanglements” (2015a: 7). In the case of these six writers, the French language enables comparison between their works and their multilingualism highlights their cultural and linguistic entanglements. Since one of the reasons for reading through translanguaging is to question power and power relations, this study also wishes to valorize the work of authors who write in the French language and who bypass the Metropole.

The choice to focus on women authors is two-fold. First, the study of women’s life writing constitutes one of the most vibrant areas of research in the scholarship of life writing. Numerous scholarly works appeared in the 1980s that celebrated female-authored texts and questioned autobiography as a genre dominated by male writers and masculine models of selfhood. Several decades later, this rich line of inquiry has grown to encompass a wealth of interventions that have moved our understanding of female-authored narratives far beyond early definitions of autobiography proposed by critics such as Philippe Lejeune and Georges Gusdorf. One of the recurring motifs of this scholarship is alternative models of subjectivity; critics point to relational, collective or fragmented selves and to nonlinear, cyclical or nonchronological approaches to self-narrative, for example.⁹ Against this backdrop of alternative versions of selfhood and self-narrative, this study analyzes whether translanguaging is another way in which female authors disrupt established models of subjectivity and of life writing. By comparing the literary work of multilingual women, this book aims to accentuate another manner in which women authors stage resistance to dominant trends – in this case, to the monolingual paradigm of literary writing, especially in the case of the French language. If translanguaging reveals hegemonic power structures and transformational strategies that individuals develop to subvert them, women’s writing is a fertile terrain for its exploration.

Second, the research undertaken for this book revealed a greater number of female writers who incorporate another language into their life writing. If we consider the celebrated exophonic writers – those who

have adopted another language in which to write their literary work – in the French tradition, the proportion of male writers is noticeably higher. Several male writers have adopted the French language and become highly acclaimed, prizewinning authors: Makine, Littell, Beckett, Boudjedra and Cheng, for example. Female writers who have reached the same levels of success are less numerous. While a number of high-profile male authors have incorporated another language into their writing – Alexakis, Joseph Zobel and Alain Mabanckou, for example – the relative paucity of such writing suggests that multilingual male writers may be more willing to discard their native language in their writing and demonstrate their command of literary French. By contrast, this study amassed a number of female writers who incorporate another language into their French-language writing. By comparing literary techniques developed by women writers to incorporate another language in their life writing, the book highlights the connections between gender, power and language. It accentuates the intimacy of female life writing compared to the traditionally male-dominated genre of autobiography and highlights another strategy of resistance to literary and gender norms.

The opening chapter discusses the work of Lydie Salvayre, whose family fled to France during the Spanish Civil War. Born in France, Salvayre could be termed a “French writer” but her relationship to France is complex since it is a result of forced migration. Raised in a family of Spanish refugees, Salvayre spoke Spanish at home and learned French when she started school. While her first language was Spanish, therefore, she grew up bilingually according to a traditional understanding of the term. Nevertheless, *Pas pleurer*, the focus of this chapter, is anything but a traditional French-language text. Even its title, *Pas pleurer*, is a literal translation of the Spanish *no llorar* (don’t cry), which would be translated as *ne pleure pas* in standard French. I show that Salvayre translanguages in this text by mingling Spanish and French into her prose in highly innovative ways. Not only does she pepper her text with Spanish words, phrases and passages, she brings the two languages together to develop new hybrid forms. This transformational act shows an irreverence toward both languages. It also empowers the writer to manipulate her two languages in order to write her and her forebearers’ stories from the position of a multilingual interpreter of language, memory, history and trauma.

Chapter 2 extends the discussion of language and migration by focusing on an author who writes in French due to forced migration. Kim Thúy’s first language is Vietnamese and she learned French mainly as a refugee in French-speaking Quebec. Thúy adopted the French language for her literary writing and shot to fame for *Ru*, her autobiographical account of her migration. Focusing on Thúy’s *Mãn*, a follow-up in many respects to the earlier international best seller, I analyze Thúy’s practice of translanguaging with the French and Vietnamese languages.

I examine Thúy's techniques that incorporate Vietnamese into nearly every page of her text, creating a visual reminder of the overlapping of languages. Highlighting the interplay between languages as a constant presence in the text, I show that the narrator underlines her dual linguistic heritage and the mixing that this necessitates. I also point to the inconsistent approach she takes to translating Vietnamese vocabulary in this work, reading her technique through theories of translation advanced by Roman Jakobson and Jacques Derrida. Her translanguaging thus stems from her dynamic shifting between the two languages, and the creativity it stages highlights the cultural specificity of Quebec as a site of transit and resettlement.

The third chapter moves the discussion of multilingualism from a situation of forced to unforced migration. It specifically questions the notion that authentic self-expression is only achieved in one's native language. It examines the work of Catherine Rey, who moved to Australia in mid-life. Rey speaks French as her native language but borrows from another language – English – in order to narrate her self. Contextualizing Rey's work in the history of Australian literature written in other languages, I note Rey's unique position as a French author in Australia who writes predominantly in French but who incorporates English into her writing. I show that Rey translanguages between French and English in order to represent her migration to Australia as the source of her liberation as a writer. In *Une femme en marche* (2007) and a series of autobiographical essays, Rey portrays France as a patriarchal, hierarchical space that prevented her from writing. By contrast, she presents the vastness of rural Australia as an idyllic source of inspiration. I underline her use of idiomatic expressions in English – and specifically of Australian English – and her strategy of switching between the two languages within her prose. Reading her bilingual inscriptions through the lens of translanguaging, I show that Rey does not merely switch back and forth between French and English as two separate languages but weaves them together in transformative ways. These expressions add another layer of meaning to Rey's texts and indicate her inability to express her selfhood within the confines of one language alone – and specifically, within the confines of her native language. Rey's innovation thus transforms the two languages, producing new meanings and creating a unique approach to narrating a self in words.

In Chapter 4, we turn our attention to the linguistic legacy of colonization. We begin with an analysis of the work of French-Caribbean author Gisèle Pineau. Pineau has a unique relationship to the French language. She was born and grew up in Paris, and French is her first language. Nevertheless, her parents are Guadeloupien, and she has spent much of her life moving back and forth between France and Guadeloupe, in addition to an extended period in Martinique. Pineau's linguistic heritage is thus heavily influenced by Creole, and this is particularly evidenced

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by her relationship with her grandmother Julia, a recurrent figure in Pineau's texts. Julia, also referred to as Man Julia and Man Ya, is a Creole speaker whose relationship with French is fraught. I analyze the narrative strategies Pineau develops to translanguage between French and Creole in three of her self-reflexive works: *Un papillon dans la cité*, *L'Exil selon Julia* and *Mes quatre femmes*. I show that, across the three life writing texts, Pineau uses different techniques with different narrative effects. Overall, her language use demonstrates her evolving relationship to her female lineage and to the legacy of colonization upon her as an individual and upon the collective of formerly colonized peoples.

The fifth chapter continues the discussion of multilingualism through colonization but moves to a different region and to a writer with a very different perspective. Chantal Spitz, from French Polynesia, was the first Ma'ohi writer to be published. *L'île des rêves écrasés*, published in 1991, was a groundbreaking text for Tahitian culture and language. Basing the analysis on this partially autobiographical text and shorter texts of life writing published in the literary magazine she founded, I show how Spitz translanguages with the Tahitian and French languages. I first analyze Spitz's use of extended passages in the Tahitian language within her predominantly French-language prose. I show that this author writes part of her work monolingually but in a nondominant language before discussing the strategies she uses to meld the two languages in the remainder of her prose. Spitz also incorporates Tahitian grammar and syntax into her French sentences, rendering the French inaccurate, incomplete or inappropriate. I show that Spitz writes in the language of the colonizer, therefore, but destabilizes it and subtly resists its hegemony. Extending the analysis to other ways in which Spitz subverts French literary conventions, I demonstrate that her texts rest between languages, between cultures and between literary regulations.

The final chapter also studies a writer whose linguistic repertoire emanates from colonialism, migration and trauma but in a different regional and historical context. Hélène Cixous's oeuvre has been interpreted through many different lenses, but little attention has been paid to her multilingualism. I focus my analysis upon *Une autobiographie allemande*, a conversation written between Cixous and fellow multilingual author Cécile Wajsbrot. This text constitutes a shift in Cixous's writing since it is her first sustained exploration of her multilingualism; as the daughter of a German mother and a Sephardic Jewish father living in Algeria, her first language was French and she also spoke, to varying degrees, German, Yiddish and Arabic. Significantly, this text was published shortly after the death of Cixous's mother, at the age of 103, and enables Cixous to return to the story of her mother and her German heritage. In this text, Cixous translanguages between French and German as she explores how the two languages have influenced the development of her identity. I show that she develops plurilingual neologisms,

for example, that become a unique literary language that enables her to perform her self-narrative. I explore her representation of the German language and the heritage of German culture, pointing to how she celebrates this plurality for the first time in her work. Referring to the writer's traumatic relationship to German culture, due to the legacy of the Holocaust and its impact upon her Jewish family, I show the change of direction she takes in her self-narrative through translanguaging. I extend the discussion of the plurality of her writing to the blending of visual and textual materials in her text, since it is written as a conversation between two voices and incorporates photographs into its prose. The book therefore ends with discussion of a multilingual writer who defies several conventions of autobiographical writing. By taking a non-unitary approach to language, voice and subjectivity, Cixous creates a new paradigm for translingual life writing.

Taken together, these writers have different relationships to language in general and to the French language in particular. While they all write predominantly in French, they all position themselves differently to it and develop a series of narrative strategies to demonstrate this in their life writing. While there are many examples of writers prior to the twenty-first century who were multilingual, who adopted another language, or who demonstrated the influence of another language in their writing, this book studies works that reveal a different approach to the monolingual paradigm. The specificity of this study is that it examines contemporary texts that foreground their authors' multilingualism and that, through the process of translanguaging, create new linguistic formations to narrate subjectivity. It is for this reason that several prominent multilingual authors are not part of this study. Assia Djebar, whose work I have examined in numerous other studies, wrote about her multilingualism but incorporated little of her other languages into her French-language prose. Nancy Huston has written fictional works multilingually and has self-translated her writing, but does not broaden this approach to life writing. By contrast, what brings these six authors together is their sustained representation of their multilingualism in their work and the narrative strategies they develop to incorporate another language into their life writing. By reading these literary texts through the lens of translanguaging, this book aims to theorize the *trans* of translingual writing, question the power, hegemony and hierarchical superiority accorded to certain languages, and point up the creative, transformational power of writing multilingually.

Notes

- 1 This is according to Amnesty International, in "Australia Takes First Step to Address World Refugee Crisis."
- 2 All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

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- 3 The full list of prizewinners and information about the awards can be found at <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/les-prix-et-fondations-prix-litteraires/les-laureats>.
- 4 For an explanation of the long and as yet unresolved process of ratifying the Charter in France, see <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/promoting-ratification-in-france>.
- 5 For more information on this, see the article “Terminologie : comment est né le mot ‘infox?’” on the government website, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/Actualites/Terminologie-comment-est-ne-le-mot-infox>.
- 6 For more on this, see Adrian Battyé, Marie-Anne Hintze and Paul Rowlett, editors, *The French Language Today: A Linguistic Introduction*.
- 7 See, for example, Sara Kippur’s *Writing It Twice*.
- 8 It is noteworthy that Yildiz’s work is focused on the German language. It is important to bear in mind that scholarship in this area is considerably less advanced in French Studies than in other language areas. In particular, the study of Spanish and English in North America has led to rich research in multilingual writing. Most famously, Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera* writes bilingually about her experience growing up on the U.S./Mexican border. She writes in English and Spanish, and importantly, in several versions of English and of Spanish. She theorizes what she refers to as “the new mestiza” as a rejection of binary categories of identity, including binary understanding of language. Since Anzaldúa’s landmark work, literature written in “Spanglish” has attracted considerable scholarly attention in North America.
- 9 See, for example, my explanation of the history of women’s autobiography from the 1980s onward in *Shifting Subjects: Plural Subjectivity in Women’s Autobiography* or Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson’s *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*.

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1 Lydie Salvayre

Translanguaging, Testimony and History

French literary prizes hold a revered place in the national culture. Alongside a variety of less prestigious prizes, a small number of highly distinguished prizes garner extensive media attention each year. Tim Unwin identifies them as the “big six”: the Grand Prix du Roman de l’Académie Française, the Prix Femina (selected by a jury of women but not necessarily awarded to a woman writer), the Prix Renaudot, the Prix Interallie, the Prix Médicis and, most prestigious of all, the Prix Goncourt (xxii). Awarded annually since 1903, the Goncourt has been bestowed upon writers such as Marcel Proust, Marguerite Duras, Simone de Beauvoir, André Malraux and Romain Gary. Importantly, the Goncourt has decorated works by writers for whom French is a second language: Andreï Makine and Jonathan Littell, for example. Prior to 2014, it had never been won by a writer whose prose could be described as multilingual. When Lydie Salvayre won the prize for *Pas pleurer*, Bernard Pivot announced tellingly, “nous avons d’abord couronné un roman d’une grande qualité littéraire, un livre à l’écriture très originale, même si je regrette qu’il y ait parfois trop d’espagnol” (quoted in *Le Nouvel Observateur*) [we wanted to award a novel of great literary quality, a very original book, even though there is sometimes too much Spanish in it].

As Pivot underlines in his critique, Spanish is prevalent in *Pas pleurer*. Benoit Filhol and Mar Jiménez-Cervantes have even taken the time to count the number of incursions of Spanish into the text – 284 (199) – and argue on this basis that “language is the real protagonist of the novel” (208).¹ This is, however, a recent development in Salvayre’s writing. Her numerous published novels correspond far more closely to the tenets of French literary style; so, they would ironically have been more likely contenders for the Goncourt. Equally ironically, Salvayre is a “French writer” through birth but not through mother tongue; she was born in France, but Spanish is her first language. She was born to a Catalan mother and an Andalusian father who fled to the south of France as refugees from the Spanish Civil War. Growing up near Toulouse, Salvayre spoke Spanish at home and began to learn French when she entered primary school. She studied medicine and became a psychiatrist before launching a literary career. Beginning in 1990 with *La Déclaration*,

Salvayre's work is concerned primarily with psychological portrayals of intimacy, with the workings of memory and with the figure of the writer. Much of her work corresponds to the genre of historical fiction, as her characters contend with the impact of historical events on their present situation or represent the meanderings of memories through their everyday lives. In *La Compagnie des spectres* (1997), for example, she presents an aging woman who believes she is still living under the Occupation and at the mercy of collaborators, and in *Portrait de l'écrivain en animal domestique* (2007), her protagonist is a writer who is employed to sell her soul by writing the biography of a fast-food magnate. As the latter example implies, Salvayre's writing is characterized by an irreverence; at times comical, at times confronting, her texts frequently depart from French literary conventions. Warren Motte contends that for Salvayre, literature "is a dirty word denoting a set of traditions and practices through which certain species of writers come to comfortable terms with power. She dances around that construct energetically in her fictions, attacking it from a variety of angles, never twice from the same position, relying on that very mobility for her own survival as a writer" (1021). Never before, however, has she danced around the construction of "French literature" by defying its monolingual imperative. Indeed, the 20 texts she authored prior to *Pas pleurer* all demonstrate a sophisticated, sensitive and poetic approach to the French language and French literary conventions. In this chapter, I offer a reading of *Pas pleurer*, examining how Salvayre extends her irreverence to the translanguaging that clearly ruffled Pivot.

It is important to note that the translanguaging Salvayre performs in this text is not the only major shift in her writing. Readers with knowledge of Salvayre's work will be struck by two elements of *Pas pleurer*: not just the frequent incursions of Spanish into the narrative, but also the turn toward life writing. As we will see, these two shifts coalesce, since the appearance of her native tongue in her turn to self-reflexive writing is not coincidental. In this text, Salvayre personalizes her exploration of history, memory and psychology, writing an autofictional account of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War from the perspective of a first-person narrator named Lidia. Literary critic Joanny Moulin even suggests that the choice to award the Goncourt to *Pas pleurer* demonstrates that life writing is enjoying unprecedented popularity in France (611). *Pas pleurer* is a dual narrative, as it intersperses two separate but interweaving strands. The first is narrated by Montse, the narrator's mother. Montse is 90 years old and suffering from Alzheimer's. She is aware of her failing memory and imminent death, and wishes to recount her recollections in her final days. Much of the text is recounted from Montse's point of view as she recounts her memories of her glorious summer in 1936 when she was 16 years old. In the other strand are quotations from George Bernanos. Lidia reads *Les Grands Cimetières sous la lune*

(1938), in which the devout Christian Bernanos denounces fascist activity, nationalist violence and the collusion of the Catholic Church in the events of 1936. Juxtaposing the exuberant memories of Montse and the accusatory remonstrations of Bernanos, Salvayre creates a text that, as Marianne Braux identifies, is based upon “d’un côté, un excès de vie, de l’autre, un excès de mort” (70) [an excess of life, on the one hand, and of death on the other]. In *Pas pleurer*, we read Salvayre reading Bernanos. We also read her interpreting her mother’s speech. Rather than interpreting from one language into another language as discreet units, Salvayre represents the two languages of her mother’s memories. In this chapter, I analyze the ways in which Salvayre incorporates Spanish vocabulary and grammar into her text, creating a multilingual tapestry that borrows lexical items from her two languages. Reading this author’s reflections upon memory, trauma and intimacy through the lens of translanguaging, I argue that she transforms both languages, creating a hybrid grammar that creates a textual space for her to narrate her subjectivity. Her self-narrative thus challenges French literary norms and paradigms of life writing as she creates a new linguistic marker with which to express her hybrid identity.

Language and Irreverence in *Pas pleurer*

The first of Salvayre’s techniques of translanguaging in this text is the way in which she peppers her narrative with isolated words and expressions in Spanish. A striking example of this is the titles accorded to sections of the text. The narrative is not divided into chapters; there are three numbered, untitled sections that denote major breaks in the storyline. Within these three sections, there are a small number of segments that are each introduced by a title in bold type or in capital letters. Some of these are in French, and others are in Spanish. One example reads simply “¡QUEREMOS VIVIR!” (45) [“WE WANT TO LIVE! ¡QUEREMOS VIVIR!” (47)], which introduces a memory recounted by the mother’s brother, the revolutionary José.² In this example, the Spanish phrase is a quotation from José as he incites revolutionary feeling in the villagers around him. This quotation also introduces a diacritical mark – ¡ – that stands as a visual reminder of the differences between the primary and secondary languages of the text. Interestingly, some of these titles appear in French, such as “IL N’EST DE BON ROUGE QU’UN ROUGE MORT” (18) [“THE ONLY GOOD RED IS A DEAD RED” (19)]. This is again a quotation from a character in the text, whose speech is recounted by Montse in her reminiscences. The text is thus peppered with titles in the two languages with no justification or explanation of the choice of language – and, importantly, with no translation. One particular title exemplifies this. On just the second page of the text, the title “A mis soledades voy/De mis soledades vengo” (12) [“A mis soledades

voy/De mis soledades vengo. I go to and from my solitudes” (12)] appears mid-page.³ In this instance, the title signals a change in the narrative; the previous section discussed Bernanos’s engagement with the Spanish Civil War and the Spanish title denotes a shift to the story of the narrator’s mother. The Spanish words of the title are the first two lines of the poem entitled “A mis soledades voy” by the seventeenth-century poet and playwright Lope de Vega. This poem, about solitude, love and humility, is a celebrated text in the Spanish tradition but may not be known to a French reader. Salvayre does not identify the source of the words, gives no justification of its inclusion and provides no translation of it. Some readers will understand the reference and others will not, but Salvayre makes no accommodation for their lack of linguistic or literary knowledge. Moreover, by referring to the Spanish literary tradition within a predominantly French-language text, she highlights the multiple national and linguistic traditions that influence her writing. In this text, the main literary reference from the French tradition is Bernanos, who was writing in the post-war period; the reference to a Spanish writer from the Baroque period suggests that Spanish also has a long and rich history that should not be overlooked.⁴ These titles serve as an early visual reminder of the two languages of which this text consists and of the author’s clear and unapologetic message – delivered on the second page of the prose – that another language will make incursions into the primary language of this text and that the reader will have to accept and develop strategies to deal with this.

One of the main reasons why the reader is forced to acknowledge and work with the two languages is that, as the examples above indicate, Salvayre does not provide French translations of the Spanish titles. In the case of Vega’s poem, this would have been easy to do since this very well-known text in the Spanish literary tradition is readily available in translation. Nevertheless, Salvayre does not include any such translation: no footnote, glossary or parenthesis offers a translation for the non-Spanish speaking reader. Isolated words and expressions in Spanish are to be found throughout *Pas pleurer* – both in the titles and the prose itself – and these are rarely translated. These isolated incursions of Spanish into the text occur mostly during dialogue and the principal voice who translanguages is Montse, as she recounts her memories of the past. Salvayre calls attention to the importance of the Spanish language to Montse’s story, since her dialogue frequently contains Spanish vocabulary that is rarely translated. This vocabulary often serves to express the emotional charge of Montse’s speech, such as when she exclaims, “mais pour qui il se prend ce cabrón! [...] On va lui fermer la gueule à ce bourgeois!” (19) [“he’ll regret it, the barefaced cabrón! I’ll teach that bourgeois to think twice before opening his mouth again” (19)].⁵ The writer thus accentuates the multilingual background of her characters and the differences between their Spanish and French usage. She even points up

the differences between the two languages by pausing to allude to the specificities of Spanish; she writes in relation to the word *facha*, for example, that “*facha* est un mot qui, prononcé avec le tcheu espagnol, se lance comme un crachat” (18) [“When the word is pronounced with the Spanish *ch*, it is accompanied by a spit” (19)] in a phrase that distinguishes the plosive “ch” of the Spanish sound (*facha*) and the soft “ch” of the French (*crachat*). The text therefore places a secondary language in a prime position from its outset. By including it in the dialogue, calling attention to it in her prose, and rarely translating it for the non-Spanish speaking reader, Salvayre stages a resistance to the monolingual imperative of French literary style.

Salvayre uses a variety of narrative techniques to explain these words and expressions in Spanish – or not. Sometimes Spanish words appear in italics, and sometimes not; sometimes, they are translated and sometimes not; and sometimes, they are explained in parentheses and sometimes not. In certain cases, she provides French translation in parentheses following the Spanish vocabulary, such as in the phrase “des exactions perpétrées par el terror azul (la terreur bleue, de la couleur de l’uniforme phalangiste)” (110–111) [“the violations carried out by *el terror azul* (“the blue terror”), the colour of the Falangist uniform” (120)]. As this example demonstrates, Salvayre frequently adds an explanation when the Spanish indicates cultural as well as linguistic knowledge – here, a reference to the uniform of the extreme right nationalist sympathizers, which will likely be unknown to a contemporary French reader. Salvayre occasionally provides historical or cultural information such as this, therefore, but refuses to atone for a lack of knowledge of the Spanish language on the reader’s part. As we will see, many multilingual writers adopt a specific system to convey the words of the second language to the reader, such as footnotes, a glossary or italicized words followed by a translation. Salvayre, however, refuses to adopt any such consistent approach. Applied linguists Patricia Velasco and Ofelia García find that “bilinguals possess only one complex linguistic repertoire [...] Bilinguals do not have simply an L1 and an L2, but *one* linguistic repertoire with features that have been socially assigned to constructions that are considered ‘languages’” (8). Salvayre’s text proclaims that it is perfectly appropriate, expected and normative to have one large lexical resource that consists of two languages, as opposed to two separate resources in different languages, and that literature has the potential to create a textual space to reflect this. She refuses to reduce her linguistic repertoire through the obligation of literary monolingualism and, instead, obliges the reader to take responsibility for translating, where necessary.

This approach, of course, subverts many of the tenets of highly standardized French literary language. Such transgression of literary mores and linguistic regulations form a rebuttal of authorities such as the

Académie Française, to which Salvayre alludes. One of her characters comments that French and Spanish literature reflect their people eminently:

l'espagnole faisant la part belle aux choses égrillardes, il suffit de lire *El Buscón* de Francisco Quevedo, aux côtés duquel son contemporain français a des allures de prof de catéchisme, et la française (littérature) qui, après la fondation de son Académie en 1635, met fin à la gaudriole telle que Rabelais la pratiquait avec génie, car Rabelais était espagnol, camaradas, espagnol en esprit, claro, hermano de Cervantes, claro, et qui plus est, libre-penseur, pour ne pas dire libertaire, A la salud de Rabelais, fait-il en levant son verre (95).

[*Spanish literature loves to stress bawdiness, you only have to read El Buscón by Francisco Quevedo to realise this, while French writers of the same period come across as strait-laced teachers of catechism. French literature, after the establishment of a national academy in 1635, put paid to the sort of lewdness beloved by Rabelais, who writes with such genius, because Rabelais, my friends, was actually Spanish in spirit, for sure, claro, a brother to Cervantes, his hermano, and what's more a free-thinker, if not an Anarchist. So, to Rabelais' health, all those present shouted, a la salud de Rabelais! (104)*]

The isolated words and expressions in Spanish – claro, hermano de Cervantes, a la salud de Rabelais – point to the orality of Salvayre's text, serving to remind the reader that what she or he is reading is recollections of lived experience: testimonial narrative, of sorts. Furthermore, Salvayre's irreverent and ironic humor points to the longstanding interaction between languages in French literary history – whether Rabelais was Spanish or not – and positions the Académie as the monolingual straitjacket that restricts them. As we saw in relation to the reference to Lope de Vega above, Salvayre points to earlier times when writers were not delimited by national borders. Figures such as Vega, Cervantes, Quevedo and Rabelais were writing before the advent of the nation state, which is an important construction in the history of monolingualism. Yasemin Yildiz identifies the late eighteenth century as the advent of what she names the “monolingual paradigm” (2). She argues that this paradigm elides the vastness of multilingualism since it has become “a key structuring principle that organizes the entire range of modern social life, from the construction of individuals and their proper subjectivities to the formation of disciplines and institutions, as well as of imagined collectives such as cultures and nations” (2). By referencing literary writers from before this crucial time period, Salvayre nods to the recent advent of monolingualism in literature. By mentioning the precise date of 1635, the founding of the Académie française, Salvayre adds another layer of information

to France's monolingual imperative. Literature from before this period, her character hints, was not subject to the same constraints as that since. The French of Rabelais, for example, with its inflections from other languages, is vastly different from the French of nearly all the winners of the Prix Goncourt. Salvayre, by contrast, uses translanguaging to free herself from the constraints of French literary language and to write her self and the stories of her forebearers from the position of a multilingual interpreter of language, memory, history and trauma.

Interpreting the Information Gap

In addition to incorporating isolated words and expressions into her prose, a key element of Salvayre's translanguaging in this text is her practice of quoting lengthy sections of text entirely in Spanish. These are not just one or two isolated words, as in the examples discussed above, but several sentences that appear as blocks of text among the predominantly French paragraphs. While this technique is not used as frequently as the isolated words of Spanish discussed in the previous section, it constitutes an important facet of Salvayre's translanguaging in this text. Examples range from two sentences (107) to four or five lines of prose (35, 48) and indented citations of songs (118, 188). These passages appear with no translation or interpretation. In the midst of one of the mother's reminiscences of her brother, for instance, complete Spanish sentences interrupt the text. This memory is introduced in very correct, erudite French without the usual isolated words of Spanish that pepper the mother's speech, which testifies to the range of her linguistic proficiency. In the context of her memory of José listening to men vaunting the number of murders they have accomplished, the French is suddenly interrupted by "*No os arrodilléis ante nadie. Os arrodilláis ante vosotros mismos*" (107) [*"No os arrodilléis ante nadie. Don't betray yourselves"* (117)]. These two sentences are italicized and separated from the French prose through a paragraph break but are not translated, paraphrased or explained. The interruption reminds the reader of the multilingual nature of these memories and underscores that the incident took place through the medium of another language. The mother's proficient French of the previous sentences reads like a work of fiction: standard, conventional and expected. The Spanish serves to remind the reader that she is clearly able to communicate in both languages to a very high level and function in the two languages separately before Alzheimer's affected her semantic memory. The monologues are not merely the ramblings of a demented woman but the recollections of someone whose linguistic repertoire is vast and whose communicative competence should not be dismissed.

Furthermore, this practice of including several untranslated sentences in the secondary language adds an important layer of

incomprehensibility to the text. The narrative strategy of peppering the text with isolated words and expressions in Spanish, as discussed above, will not necessarily impede a reader's understanding of the sense of a sentence or a paragraph. Longer incursions of the secondary language almost certainly will. To take an example that is short enough for discussion here, the narrator reproduces a song Montse remembers from her youth: "Las naran las naranjas y las uvas/En un pa un un palo se maduran/Los oji los ojitos que se quieren/Desde le desde lejos se saludan" (118) [The oran oranges and grapes in a buck in a bucket are ripening/The eye little eyes that love each other/From af from afar they greet each other].⁶ No translation of this verse appears in the text. Significant elements of Spanish can be readily understood by the French speaker, but this quotation contains examples of lexical items that are not necessarily comprehensible. Salvayre's technique thus presupposes a reader who either has the linguistic knowledge or who will suspend judgment of the language that she or he does not understand. This narrative strategy indicates that it is not the responsibility of the writer to communicate meaning to the reader but that of the reader to work to understand that meaning by guessing at the gaps that lie between their knowledge of one language and of another. The reader is in this way drawn into the process of creating meaning directly, and with the understanding that the guesses that she or he makes may lead to misinterpretation or the "wrong" meaning. One may argue that any literary text may elicit a range of meanings and that a monolingual reader may not be familiar with the full range of lexical items in her or his language. This multilingual text, however, with its long passages in the secondary language, adds another layer to the question of textual interpretation. The meaning generated by readers will necessarily depend upon the multiple levels of access they have into this text. It is easy to label an individual – especially a multilingual individual – as "a Spanish speaker" or "a French speaker," but this may obscure the level of the language she or he speaks. The process of learning any language, especially an additional language, is clearly a long-term process that is based upon multiple encounters with that language; a French reader who briefly encountered Spanish in school, for example, will have a different level of access to this text compared to somebody who encounters the language on a daily basis. The level and purpose of the linguistic encounter will also affect the individual reader's understanding. Salvayre thus removes any stable point of access into her text and creates a process in which the incursions by the Spanish language into the predominantly French-language text will be interpreted differently according to each reader's individual experience with the language. The reader is therefore obliged to enter the text and play a more significant role in the creation of meaning, and the text is simultaneously opened up to a multitude of possible interpretations.

Interpreting the Information Source

In addition to the role of the reader in creating meaning, Salvayre's text points to an array of sources that have contributed to its writing. *Pas pleurer* is a work of historical fiction that rests upon readings and interpretations of both written and spoken materials. Through translanguaging, Salvayre weaves multiple written and spoken sources into her narrative. The primary source that structures the tale and provides its factual input is the spoken material of the mother's recollections. *Pas pleurer* is akin to an oral history project as the daughter aims to capture as much of the subject's data while it is still possible to do so. Montse's speech is often presented in paragraph-long sentences with no punctuation, mirroring the breathless speech of someone who is rushing to voice their ideas while opportunity remains. Importantly, however, the mother is suffering from a degenerative neurological condition that affects her use of language. It may seem that the mother's language is inflected by Spanish because she has never attained a high level of French, but the narrator explains that the mother's experience is more complex:

Elle qui s'était tant évertuée, depuis son arrivée en France, à corriger son accent espagnol, à parler un langage châtié et à soigner sa mise pour être toujours plus conforme à ce qu'elle pensait être le modèle français (se signalant par là même, dans sa trop stricte conformité, comme une étrangère), elle envoie valser dans ses vieux jours les petites conventions, langagières et autres (66).

[This is the same woman who has done her best, since arriving in France, to weed out her Spanish accent, to speak in a refined way, who has done her utmost to alter her appearance so as to fit in with what she imagined was the French way of being (and by dint of this over-conformity she has merely proved to everyone that she is still a foreigner). Yet in old age she has begun throwing convention to the wind, linguistics and all (72).]

The text therefore performs the language patterns of a multilingual individual whose competence in her second language is deteriorating and who is steadily returning to her native tongue. Montse clearly strove to learn perfect French – so much so that she accentuated her status as a learner, according to the narrator – and only as Alzheimer's takes hold of her does this process begin to unravel. The impact of neurodegenerative diseases upon multilingual speakers has long been a focus of research in neurolinguistics, primarily because conditions such as Alzheimer's affect semantic memory, as well as long-term memory, very early (Calabria et al.). Some research in this field has found that bilingual speakers who suffer from Alzheimer's show parallel deterioration in both of their languages (Calabria et al.). A greater number of studies suggest, however,

that the two languages may deteriorate asymmetrically. According to these findings, the nondominant language and/or the more recently required language (which are not necessarily the same) deteriorate sooner (Ivanova et al.). Moreover, patients who experience asymmetrical deterioration of two languages may display greater cross-language interference or “word intrusions” (Mendez et al.). In *Pas pleurer*, Salvayre stages this asymmetrical linguistic deterioration. Montse’s language use is presented as adhering to the pattern discerned by Ivanova and Mendez, since the more recently learned language, French, degenerates more quickly. The narrator insists that Montse had enjoyed a high level of competence in both languages and that dementia has impacted upon her linguistic repertoire. The narrator writes her mother’s doubt over her second language, as the aging woman frequently calls upon her daughter not just for physical assistance but also for linguistic support. When speaking of the man she married, for example, the mother comments, “d’ailleurs, je me demande comment j’ai pu, on dit pu?, passer avec lui tant de jours, tant de nuits” (96) [I even wonder how I could, do you say could?, spend so many days, so many nights, with him].⁷ In this instance, the mother questions her knowledge of a past participle, which, although irregular, is in very common usage. She also asks her daughter for vocabulary. In some instances, she retrieves this herself, such as when she comments, “Don Jaime me payera des, comment tu dis?, des clopinettes” (13) [“It means don Jaime will pay me, how do you say it? clopinettes, peanuts” (13)]. In others, she demonstrates her lack of familiarity with the second language by waiting for her daughter to provide the word: “une rue en côte comme ça, dit ma mère en inclinant sa main, un raidillon, dis-je, tu inventes des mots maintenant? dit ma mère que ce mot amuse” (43) [“A road like that, my mother says, tilting her hand upwards. *With a steep gradient?* I say. *Is that what you mean?* My mother laughs: *Steep gradient? If you like – you’ve started making up funny words now, haven’t you?*” (45)]. Filhol and Mar Jiménez-Cervantes suggest that Salvayre uses these techniques in order to show Montse’s “insufficient linguistic level,” in addition to representing her identity and staging a literary transgression (209). This reading finds, by contrast, that the representation of Montse’s speech is highly strategic, conveying that her French was – and still can be – extremely competent, but is used by the writer to make larger points about testimony, history and monolingualism. This technique reminds the reader of the subjective perspective of the source of much of the historical information on which this text is based. It also highlights that the information provided by this source is incomplete, fractured and unstable. Nevertheless, it proclaims that this information is valid and valuable, and that the voice that describes them deserves to be heard.

Through this representation of translanguaging, the text proclaims that the “incorrect,” “impure” or “inaccurate” language of this multilingual speaker is a source of freedom for her. Montse’s translanguaging

enables her to uncover a crucial episode of her history. As the example of the daughter's suggestions for vocabulary indicates, the text demonstrates that the speech of a degenerating language learner sometimes requires input from others, but this input is minimal. It is noteworthy that the narrator describes the physical deterioration of her mother and suggests that this leads to a parent-child reversal: "Ma mère à qui je donne à manger comme à un enfant, que je lave et que j'habille comme une enfant, que je promène comme une enfant car elle ne peut marcher qu'accrochée à mon bras, ma mère se revoit en train de grimper d'un pas alerte la calle de Sepulcro" (26) ["I feed, wash, dress and walk her, like a child, since she can only move when gripping hold of my arm. Yet my mother can still see herself, once again, hopping in anticipation, running up the calle del Sepulcro" (27)]. While the mother's physical state has deteriorated, it is striking that her linguistic repertoire has altered, but has not necessarily deteriorated. While she is reliant upon her daughter for physical support, she needs minimal linguistic support since she is able to communicate effectively through translanguaging. The daughter's speech frequently interrupts the mother's to correct her Spanish vocabulary or grammar, such as when Montse exclaims, "je me mets à griter (moi: à crier), à crier" (13) [I start to griter (me: to scream), to scream] or when she comments "je me raccorde (moi: je me rappelle), je me rappelle brusquement" (13) [I raccorde (me: I remember), I suddenly remember].⁸ In these instances, the daughter's voice offers a small correction and is not strictly necessary for the mother to communicate; "je me raccorde" is similar to the French expression and, in the context of a sentence, would be understood by the French speaker. In a more comical example of the mother's language change, especially among reflections of the tragedy of neurological deterioration, the mother develops a passion for swearing. The narrator explains that "ma mère éprouve un réel plaisir à traiter son épicier de connard, ses filles (Lunita et moi) de culs serrés, sa kiné de salope et à proférer con couille putain et merde dès que l'occasion se présente" (66) ["my mother definitely enjoys telling her grocer he's a *bastard*, calling her daughters (Lunita and I) *tight-assed bitches* and describing her physiotherapist as a *slapper*, then there's her love of words such as *cunt*, *balls*, *putain* and *merde*, all of which she bandies about at the first opportunity" (72)]. The narrator does not interrupt the mother to correct or atone for her language and repeats the explanation given by Montse's doctor: that this is a common phenomenon, especially among patients who were raised in strict environments. The mother thus removes the linguistic censorship that had been imposed upon her and, as part of this, translanguages. She frees herself from the norms of French monolingualism that she had attempted to emulate and instead speaks in her translingual idiom. The consequence of this move is that the narrator hears her mother's memories of 1936 for the very first time. Lidia comments that "ma mère me raconte tout ceci dans sa

langue, je veux dire dans ce français bancal dont elle use, qu'elle estropie serait plus juste, et que je m'évertue constamment à redresser" (89) ["My mother tells me all this in her language – I mean in that French of hers, a form of the language only she knows how to handle, or rather how to cripple, and which I constantly try to repair" (98)]. Although the narrator is drawn to correct the mother's language, it is highly unlikely that she would ever have heard these recollections had Montse continued to speak in her "proper" French. Audrey Lasserre points out in relation to Salvayre's earlier texts that they aim to preserve historical memory; *Pas pleurer* continues in a similar vein but also aims to preserve historical voices. Montse's memories are scattered, fragmented and partially rendered, but they demonstrate that translanguaging is perfectly normal and hint that it should be an acceptable form of communication. After all, Montse's translanguaging restores voice to this woman whose story is overlooked by history, it adds a further layer of understanding to this complicated historical period and it shows that knowledge is not just produced in dominant languages.

In addition to spoken materials that provide historical information on which the text is based, Salvayre also incorporates data from written materials. Montse's translanguaging is juxtaposed with citations from Bernanos, who, of course, wrote perfect French. His voice even opens Salvayre's text: "Au nom du Père du Fils et du Saint-Esprit, Monseigneur l'évêque-archevêque de Palma désigne aux justiciers, d'une main vénérable où luit l'anneau pastoral, la poitrine des mauvais pauvres. C'est Georges Bernanos qui le dit. C'est un catholique fervent qui le dit" (11) ["*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.* A ceremonial ring on his venerable hand, the Most Reverend Archbishop of Palma pointed at the chests of the 'guilty poor,' singling them out to the vigilante firing squads. This is how the writer Georges Bernanos reported it; a fervent Catholic told it this way" (11)]. Just as is Salvayre's practice with her citations of Montse and other family members, there are in this instance no quotation marks to designate where Bernanos's voice ends and the narrator's voice begins. The plurivocal text becomes a testimony to different memories from different sources with little to distinguish between them. Claude Duée finds that the segments of Bernanos's writing "servent de contrepoints antagoniques aux autres récits en ce sens qu'il décrit l'horreur et le pessimisme d'une réalité vécue en contrepoint du bonheur et de l'optimisme de Montse" (82) [serve as antagonistic contrasts to the rest of the narrative since he describes the horror and pessimism of his lived reality, as opposed to the happiness and optimism experienced by Montse]. By incorporating the voices of both Bernanos and Montse into the narrative, Salvayre highlights the differences between their experiences of and perspectives on the same historical period. To extend Duée's argument, Salvayre places the two voices in an equal position, proclaiming that both are valid and important.

Furthermore, Bernanos wrote monolingually and was celebrated for his highly poetic language. By juxtaposing the two witnesses, the mother and Bernanos, Salvayre invites a comparison between one who uses “correct” language, whose writing is read and whose ideas receive an audience, and one who lived the experiences that she recounts but who is not accorded the mechanism with which to voice them. The contrast between the standard French of one character and the translanguaging of the other is not simply a representation of the power accorded to white French men but also a comment upon the validity of historical narratives. Both historical accounts are incomplete – Bernanos wrote subjectively from a geographical distance (Mallorca), while Montse speaks subjectively from a temporal distance – and both benefit from the perspective of the other. *Pas pleurer* proclaims that knowledge comes in different languages and from different voices and that ideas communicated in “incorrect” expression are no less valid than those of standard language.

Salvayre’s technique of incorporating written materials into her text is not confined to Bernanos. Indeed, she cautions against blindly believing her mother’s reminiscences or Bernanos’s subjective writing in the following manner:

Afin de ne pas m’égarer dans les récits de Bernanos et dans ceux de ma mère, pleins de méandres et de trous, je suis allée consulter quelques livres d’histoire. J’ai pu ainsi reconstituer, de la manière la plus précise possible, l’enchaînement des faits qui conduisirent à cette guerre que Bernanos et ma mère vécurent donc simultanément (84).

[In order not to be led astray by Bernanos’ own chronicling of events, and by my mother’s meandering, impaired memories, I consulted several history books. I hope I have been able to reconstitute faithfully the sequence of events that led to war, the outbreak of which Bernanos witnessed in a state of horror, his heart in his mouth, while my mother was thrown into a state of unforgettable sunny joy, black flags fluttering in the sky above her (92).]⁹

As the narrator clarifies here, published works of historical research form a crucial backdrop to this text. She writes of how she has consulted a range of historical sources and incorporates their information into the text. She even represents these data in list form in a lengthy section introduced by “voici ces faits” (84) [here are the facts], which contrasts with the subjective perspectives of Montse and Bernanos.¹⁰ This list contains verifiable information with dates and factual events. Salvayre again defies literary convention by refusing the standards of prose fiction, depicting information in list form with incomplete sentences and no punctuation. Moreover, in addition to published works of history, the narrator frequently refers to journals and periodicals from the period she is depicting. She quotes their titles in Spanish with no

translation: *Acción Española* (16), *Solidaridad Obrera* (22, 45, 48) and *El Mundo Obrero* (31, 52), among others. She recounts tales from these publications, such as how they affected her uncle José's revolutionary thought and how Montse heard slogans from them repeated in the streets. These tales and phrases, which were originally written and published in Spanish, are rendered in French, however. This maneuver highlights that translation is a necessary part of the backdrop to this work. Works of history, literature and journalism from both French and Spanish are brought to bear upon this text and are translated, in various degrees, for the purpose of communication. *Pas pleurer* thereby insists that knowledge is produced in a variety of languages and that translation and interpretation of multilingual sources are integral to understanding the past and the present.

In this manner, Salvayre's text also points to the *process* of writing as opposed to the final product of the text. Her craft is to consult multilingual sources and render the information she garners from them for a monolingual audience. Motte notes in relation to the characters of Salvayre's previous works that "almost all of them are readers, and some of them write, too" (1013). In *Pas pleurer*, Salvayre extends this representation of readers and writers to encompass the work of the translator and the interpreter. The narrator Lidia is a reader, a writer, a listener, a translator and an interpreter. By refusing the monolingual imposition of the national literature, Salvayre's text becomes a reflection upon the role of the reader and the writer not just between cultures and nations but also between languages. Through a multilayered process of translating and/or interpreting speech, historical texts, literary work and periodical materials, Salvayre demonstrates that translation is part of the multilingual writer's imperative. Translation is a key element of translanguaging, since it brings languages together in transformative ways, and Salvayre uses this motif to reinforce her position as the multilingual interpreter who orchestrates this text from a variety of sources.

Translanguaging and Testimony

Through these narrative techniques, Salvayre draws attention to the role of the writer in mediating multilingual memories. As we have seen thus far, Salvayre's text translanguages by incorporating scattered words that refuse a monolingual imperative, including longer passages that introduce a layer of incomprehensibility, and calling attention to the fact that translation is the backdrop to this text. Another technique that Salvayre develops is to mingle the two languages within the individual sentences. As opposed to the isolated words and the longer sentences/blocks of text written in Spanish, this usage brings the two languages together within the same sentence. These utterances fall into two categories. Occasionally, a French sentence develops into a Spanish one, such as when the mother states, "je crois qu'il faut l'avoir vivi pour comprendre

la commotion, le choc, *el aturdimiento, la revelación que fue para nosotros el descubrimiento de esta ciudad en el mes de agosto 36*” (88, my emphasis) [I think you had to have lived it to understand the commotion, the shock, *el aturdimiento, la revelación que fue para nosotros el descubrimiento de esta ciudad en el mes de agosto 36*].¹¹ This example demonstrates a traditional understanding of bilingualism as two separate languages, as the speaker moves from one to the other as discreet units. The more common practice in Salvayre’s text is, however, the movement from one language to another and back again within the same sentence. Comparing her brother and her husband, for example, the mother comments, “A la différence de Diego, qui a, comme tu dirais, les dents longues, et dont les *palabres* et les actes semblent servir un *gol* secret, José est un cœur pur, ça existe ma chérie, ne te ris pas, José est un *caballero*, si j’ose dire, il aime régaler, est-ce que régaler est français? Il s’est *dédiqué* à son rêve avec toute sa *juventud*” (64, my emphasis) [As for Diego, who had, as you would say, long teeth, and whose *palabras* and whose acts seemed to serve a secret *gol*, José’s heart was pure, that does exist, ma chérie, don’t laugh, José was a *caballero*, I think, he liked to regale others, is regale a French word? He *dédiqué* himself to his dream with all his *juventud*].¹² These examples contain lexical items from Spanish that are readily understandable to the French speaker, so they do not impede comprehension. They also stage a more dynamic view of multilingualism that insists upon two or more languages coming together to form one complete linguistic repertoire.

Importantly, this representation of multilingualism as a dynamic state serves to transform the languages in question. Montse’s utterances are readily understandable but are in no means “accurate” according to the agreed standards of either language. To take two items from the text cited above, the mother uses the words “dédiqué” and “vivi.” These examples are grammatically incorrect but demonstrate the mother’s knowledge of French grammatical structures; she knows that the past participle for regular verbs is formed through the suffixes *é* or *i* for regular *-er* and *-ir* verbs, respectively. However, she has replaced the French verb with the Spanish version – *dedicar* and *vivir* in these instances – and proceeded to change their forms through removing the verb ending and adding the regular past participle French suffix. In other examples, Montse melds the French and Spanish verbs, such as when she comments, “j’ai appris” (62) when trying to say “j’ai appris” [I learned]: a mixture of the French perfect tense *j’ai appris* and the Spanish preterit *aprendi*. Elsewhere, she substitutes a Spanish verb for a French one and conjugates it according to French grammatical standards: “Diego est là qui me *mire*” (26), when trying to say “Diego is looking at me,” from the Spanish verb *mirar* [to look at], the third-person present tense conjugation of which is *mira*. This transformation is not confined to verbal constructions either, since Montse also modifies adjectives to align with French grammatical

norms: the Spanish adjective *obediente* becomes *obédissante* (13), following the rule of the French adjectival construction – *obéissant* – and correctly conjugated with the feminine adjectival agreement. In this way, the translanguaging changes the shape of lexical items in both languages. Rather than speaking both languages incorrectly, this character transforms them both while maintaining meaning and communication. The dynamic process of melding the two languages leads to creation rather than incomprehension and reflects the full linguistic repertoire of this multilingual speaker.

Importantly, the multilingual speaker of this tale, even though she speaks “incorrect” language, is given center stage since her voice narrates most of the memories recounted. As José Luis Arráez demonstrates, *Pas pleurer* contains a narrative frame narrated by Lidia and an intradiegetic level of the story that is narrated by Lidia and Montse together (189). In this sense, while Lidia provides the main motor to the text, she frequently relinquishes the narrative voice to Montse. Brigitte Louichon contends that Salvayre writes in order to give voice to the voiceless and Motte writes that much of Salvayre’s writing is concerned with the process of finding one’s voice; she depicts characters who have difficulty finding their voices, who struggle to find the words they need and who need their voices to be heard and understood (1013). In *Pas pleurer*, Salvayre continues this experimentation with voice by awarding the primary voice to an old, demented woman who experienced the historical events in question individually but whose story is overlooked by official accounts. By giving the major narrative voice to a character who speaks “incorrectly” by dynamically melding the two languages of her linguistic repertoire, Salvayre’s text highlights the need for greater understanding of individuals whose speech departs from linguistic norms and a greater textual space for those who are able to present knowledge in nonstandard linguistic forms.

Moreover, an important way in which Salvayre raises awareness of the validity of the speech of dynamic multilingual individuals is to meld the narrators’ voices. Indeed, a striking feature of *Pas pleurer* is that the voices are melded so deeply that it is difficult to discern when the narrative voice changes between character and narrator. The mother’s recollections often include a phrase that signals that she is narrating: “ma grand-mère le remercie comme s’il la félicitait, mais moi, *me dit ma mère*, cette phrase me rend folle” (12, my emphasis) [“my grandmother thanked him as if he were congratulating her, *But that comment*, my mother says, *throws me into turmoil*” (13)]. The narrative continues with the mother speaking in the first person, recounting successive memories at length. Salvayre does not, however, use conventional signals such as quotation marks or dialogue markers to distinguish between when Lidia’s narration ends and the mother’s narration begins. Lidia’s voice interrupts periodically, with markers such as “me dit ma

mère,” reminding the reader of the frame in which this narrative is staged. Sometimes, however, these markers disappear for large portions of the text, often several paragraphs or even pages at a time. As Braux pinpoints, these instances blur the boundary between the narrator and her mother (74). As this blurring suggests, Montse sometimes speaks in very correct French that is indistinguishable from that of Lidia. Although the principal difference between their voices is Lidia’s correct French and Montse’s translanguaging, the translanguaging sometimes disappears; indeed, the incidences of translanguaging are conspicuous in their presence and, as the text progresses, equally so in their absence. There are several sections of historical narrative that are narrated in perfect French, with no incursions by the Spanish language. Montse recalls, for example, her first few days in Barcelona with José and her friend. This episode covers nearly two pages and the third-person narrator positions the point of view through phrases such as “elle découvre la mer. Elle a peur d’y entrer” (99) [“she discovered the sea. She was frightened to touch it” (109)]. The narrator provides details of the streets and thumbnail sketches of people. This episode is presented, then, as historical fiction, narrated by an omniscient third-person narrator. The memory ends, however, with “c’est ce que je voudrais que tu *comprends* et qui est *incompressible*” (100, my emphasis) [this is what I want you to *understand* and which is *incompressible*].¹³ As the translanguaging in this example signals, the narrative voice has moved from the third to the first person and Montse is again narrating. The place at which the voice changed is unclear. During the long passage recounting the memory according to the standard tropes of historical narrative, the reader could easily forget that the text is based upon a deathbed confession of memories being voiced for the first time. The highly accurate French that Montse used to speak before Alzheimer’s impacted upon her semantic memory is therefore deployed strategically throughout this text. The result is that the reader is frequently wrong-footed over who is speaking. Critics have pointed to the ways in which Salvayre blends voices in this text. Duée considers *Pas pleurer* as a way for Lidia, in the position of the second generation, to “récupérer sa propre histoire, une partie d’elle-même” (86) [recuperate her own story, a part of herself], for example, and Arráez writes that Salvayre “soustrait au néant l’histoire de sa mère, victime de la guerre, dont le témoignage aurait, ainsi, pu tomber de toute autre manière dans l’oubli” (195) [brings to light the story of her mother, victim of the war, whose testimony could very easily have been forgotten]. While these interpretations are certainly true, we may also add that the blending of voices makes an important point about multilingualism. The voices of Lidia and Montse are given equal importance in the telling of this story. Montse’s speech may be frowned upon by those who uphold literary convention but it is creative, communicative and effective in relating recollections of her individual lived experience. By putting both

voices side by side, rather than relegating one to an inferior position, Salvayre's text proclaims that monolingual snobbery is divisive. By enforcing monolingualism, Salvayre hints, we remove important voices and consequently important knowledge from public discourse.

Furthermore, Montse's is far from the only voice who enters the narration and translanguages. In addition to the mother, several other characters displace the voice of Lidia, often at length. The voice of Montse's mother is embedded in Montse's narration, for example, when she remarks, "je me mets à griter (**moi: à crier**), à crier Elle a l'air bien modeste, tu comprends ce que ça veut dire? *Plus doucement pour l'amour du ciel*, implore ma mère qui est une femme très éclipsée. Ça veut dire, je bouillais ma chérie je bouillais, ça veut dire que je serai une bonne bien bête et bien obédissante!" (13, my emphasis) [I start to griter (**me: to scream**), to scream: "'She seems quite humble!' Do you realise what he meant? Keep your voice down, your grandmother implored me; she was a woman who liked to keep a low profile. What don Jaime means – I was boiling, my darling, ma chérie, I was boiling with rage – is that I will make a good maid, sweet and thick, and obedient with it" (13)].¹⁴ In this example, the voices of three generations of women: Lidia (in bold type), her mother Montse and Montse's mother (in italics) are all heard in the same episode. The text hints through this inclusion that historical events impact upon generations and that generational memories of the Spanish Civil War reverberate even among those who did not live through it. It is surely no coincidence that Salvayre insists upon matrilineal heritage, inscribing the voices of three women who were all impacted by the Civil War in different ways. Other characters who displace the narrator include Montse's brother José, her husband Diego, her father-in-law Don Jaime and her childhood friends, who enter the narration through comments such as "*quizás*, lui rétorque Rosita [...] c'est la seule occasion pour toi de rencontrer ton *novio*" (26, my emphasis) [*"if you like, Rosita said [...] it may be the only opportunity you're going to get to see your boyfriend"* (27)]. As this example indicates, all of these characters translanguange in their speech, mingling Spanish and French as their voices enter the narration. In this sense, this polyphonic text proclaims that multilingualism – and, in particular, a dynamic form of multilingualism – is practiced by large numbers of people. This nonstandard use of language is very standard for much of the world's population, and it would be erroneous to overlook this. Moreover, the characters have different memories and different interpretations and, taken together, demonstrate multiple perspectives over historical events. A paucity of awareness of multilingual practice leads to a paucity of knowledge of world events, the text hints.

Moreover, the passing of the narrative voice from one character to another raises an important point about the connections between their disparate voices. Alongside memories recounted by Montse, for

example, several passages recount events at which she was not present. These instances serve to question the credibility of the narrative voice. In one example, the text recounts José's return to the village after his departure from Barcelona. This episode is recounted in detail, including his arrival, his walking through the streets and his meeting with his old friend Manuel. Montse could not have witnessed this, however, since she had stayed with her friend in Barcelona. Similarly, as the text draws to a close, Montse arrives at the end of her recollections and Lidia writes that "ma mère a oublié l'année 1938 et toutes celles qui ont suivi" (216) ["my mother has forgotten 1938 and the years that followed" (226)]. Two pages later, the narrator recounts, "elle partit le matin du 20 janvier 1939" ["my mother left on the morning of January 20, 1939" (228)] and the third-person narrator tells the tale of Montse's journey on foot into France (218). The reader has just learned that the mother no longer remembers anything from this period, which forces a reappraisal of the events recounted. It is important to note that Lidia's first-person narration vanishes at this point and is replaced by this unnamed third-person narrator. Either the narrator is piecing together memories she has heard from her mother over the years or she is fictionalizing them. If the first is true, there is clearly a temporal shift between the time(s) at which the memories were recounted and the daughter's retelling of them, which necessitates the narrator plugging the gaps between them; this tale is not told in a haphazard, disjointed manner but in a fluid way that implies knowledge of the complete story. If the second is true, the narrator is necessarily fictionalizing this episode. In either case, the text is consciously fictional and draws attention to the fact that it is, in these episodes, operating within the genre of historical fiction rather than the testimonial narrative at play elsewhere. The reader may be tempted to believe that she or he is reading a testimonial narrative when reading Montse's voice, but instances such as this reveal the extent of the fictionalization in the text. There are thus several layers of mediation as the narrative point of view passes through several characters and narrators. The voices seep into each other to the extent that they read superficially as a simple historical narrative, but reading with an attention to the different voices poses questions as to who is speaking, about whom and what really happened. Salvayre thus draws attention to the literary quality of this work, suggesting that the translanguaging voices are valid and important to hear, but underscoring that this is a literary work that weaves together layers of fiction in order to make such voices audible.

Tying together these layers of testimony and fiction is the voice of Lidia. The first-person narrator provides the thread that connects the voices of the mother, her friends and family who are heard in her reported speech, and of Bernanos. Hers is the voice of authority, who can move seamlessly between the two languages of the text, who has mastery of French literary convention and who is the reader-writer with

knowledge of canonical figures, such as Bernanos, Rabelais, Vega and Cervantes. Hers is also the voice of compassion, since she remains beside her mother in her final days, with no mention of her life outside of her mother's room, her other commitments, or her familial situation. Lidia mentions that she has a sister, who accompanied Montse on her exile from Spain, and that she is presently 76 years old (186). Lunita is alive but her whereabouts are not mentioned, and she is not at her mother's deathbed. Lidia is therefore the faithful mediator who charges herself with the role of caring for her mother and transmitting her memories. It is not just her memories but also her voice that could have been forgotten, but Lidia as the transgenerational, transnational and translingual mediator is the catalyst for their preservation.

The position of Lidia as the reader, writer and mediator begs another question, which is the role of Salvayre herself in this text. Herein lies the conundrum of *Pas pleurer*, which plays with multiple layers of language, memory and voice. Motte writes in relation to *Les Belles Ames* that Salvayre develops a female narrator through which she "plays roundly upon the notion of authority, tempting her reader to imagine that she is for once speaking in her own voice, rather than through a fictional proxy" (1017). This is an astute reading of Salvayre's approach to self-revelation and is equally applicable to *Pas pleurer*. In this later text, the question of truthfulness is raised early on, when we read, "dans le récit que j'entreprends, je ne veux introduire, pour l'instant, aucun personnage inventé" (14) ["I don't want to introduce any invented characters into my account" (15)]. As Motte's point suggests, the reader may be tempted to take this proclamation of truth as Salvayre's motive and guiding principle in writing this text. It is the first-person narrator, Lidia, however, who proclaims this desire. Conflating the voices of Lidia and Salvayre would be to fall into the trap that Motte discerns. Salvayre has written elsewhere of the desire to know about the life of the writer. In *Sept femmes*, published just one year before *Pas pleurer*, she pays homage to seven women whose writing she finds inspirational and writes of their lives in the following manner¹⁵:

J'avais, jusqu'ici, tenu dans le plus grand dédain tout savoir sur la vie d'un auteur. J'avais bien appris ma leçon. Le *Contre Sainte-Beuve* de Proust tenant lieu pour moi de référence canonique, j'accordais mon crédit à l'idée selon laquelle les écrivains pouvaient garder tranquillement l'incognito lorsque les exégètes s'attaquaient à leur œuvre puisque leur moi d'écrivain était aussi éloigné de leur moi dans le monde que la Terre l'était de la Lune. J'étais convaincue, pour résumer, que les making of ne nous apprenaient rien. (10)

[Previously, I had no interest in knowing about an author's life. I had learned my lesson well. Proust's *Contre Sainte-Beuve* was, for me, a canonical reference. I believed in the idea that writers could

comfortably hold on to their *incognito* when the exegetes attacked their work, since their writerly “I” was as far from their “I” in the world as the Earth from the moon. I was convinced, then, that the “making of” taught us nothing.]

Although she later came to realize, she writes, that for the seven women whom she selects, “*écrire et vivre étaient, selon elles, la même chose*” (10) [writing and living were, for them, the same thing], she hints that this is because the women are “*sept folles*” (7) [seven crazy women]. For most writers, including herself, the reader surmises, the cloak of authorship allows them to remain “*incognito*.” In *Pas pleurer*, Salvayre tempts the reader to conflate her and Lidia, and her and the third-person narrator. As we have seen, this text stages a clever weaving of several voices and subtly draws attention to the fiction that forms the bedrock of the text. By calling attention to the fictionalization of the narrative, Salvayre foregrounds the role of the writer who is orchestrating these multiple voices. Lidia is a reader, writer, translator and interpreter. By extension, Salvayre functions as the mediator who brings this reading, writing, translation and interpretation to a public audience. Her role is that of a multilingual mediator who moves not from one discreet language to another but who weaves the two languages into her prose. In so doing, she blends the genres of historical fiction and testimonial narrative to produce a ventriloquized, interpreted testimony on behalf of not just her mother but the characters who experienced the trauma of the Civil War. She renders their voices through translanguaging in a way that is clearly not their speech – this is Salvayre’s writing, which she is cleverly orchestrating to make it seem like their voices – but the text that this produces restores the stories of the forgotten, the overlooked, the illiterate and the linguistically “weak” to the public domain.

Overall, Salvayre’s multilingual text fuses French and Spanish in a productive contamination. Reading the translanguaging in Salvayre’s text points up her use of multilingual phrases, her transformation of the two languages of the text and her presentation of multilingualism as rooted in one large linguistic repertoire. The role of Lidia, the central narrator, is that of the interpreter between competing forces, not just languages but recollections and the truth of historical events. By placing the two languages next to each other in a way that interweaves them and highlights their mutual influence, the text develops a new lexicon with which Salvayre develops her self-narrative. It challenges our understanding of the concept of “French literature,” highlighting through the comparison with Bernanos that French has been restricted by a series of policies over centuries that downplay not only the everyday reality of multilingualism in France but also the long-standing influence of other languages and cultures on “French literature.” Salvayre in her position as a multilingual author translanguages in her life writing in order to bring the text into the realm of the credible, reminding us that this is

her family's story. This is not just an individual account of a life but a solidly collective one. The reader hears the voice of Montse throughout this text, but the plurivocal nature of Salvayre's writing gives insights into the voices of other characters too. As opposed to the unitary model of conventional autobiography – based upon the concept of a unitary author, character and narrator – *Pas pleurer* widens the generic constraints of such a paradigm.¹⁶ This text thus constitutes a collective, multigenerational recollection of the effects of the Spanish Civil War on individuals and groups. Salvayre's text is therefore predicated upon a refusal to accommodate the monolingual reader and, in so doing, she writes her self and the stories of her forebearers from the position of a multilingual interpreter of language, memory, history and trauma.

Notes

- 1 My translation of the Spanish, "El lenguaje es el verdadero protagonista de la novela."
- 2 All of the translations are taken from the published version, translated by Ben Faccini. Translating a multilingual work is particularly challenging. Faccini writes in his Translator's Note that he added a glossary to make the "warring political and military organisations as clear and distinct as possible" (5). As this suggests, his translation departs in certain ways from Salvayre's original text. For further analysis of the translator's choices and their effects, see Marianne Braux's article, "Traduction et hétérolinguisme: une étude comparative de trois traductions de *Pas pleurer* de Lydie Salvayre." For my part, I find this translation to be an excellent rendering of the tone, style and humor of the original text. I offer alternative translations on a few occasions, with an explanatory note, to underscore the usage of Spanish in the predominantly French prose.
- 3 As is clear from the translated version, the published English translation includes both the original Spanish citation and a translation of it, accompanied by a footnote that provides the name of the author, poem and year.
- 4 Motte points out that intertextual references are a key feature of Salvayre's work and that her texts mention a large number of writers from different cultures, nations and languages: Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Pascal, Samuel Beckett and Robert Louis Stevenson, for instance. Motte notes that very few of these references come from recent decades, indicating that she is "extremely sceptical about contemporary literature and its uses" (1011).
- 5 The English translator elects to maintain "cabrón" but changes the Spanish word "burgués" to its English equivalent, "bourgeois."
- 6 This is my translation, since it is not translated in the published translation. This is a children's song that includes fragmented words and repetitions.
- 7 This is my translation, since the published translation does not include Montse's question about the word "pu" ["could"]; it simply reads, "I even wonder how I could have spent so many days with him, so many nights" (105).
- 8 These are again my translations, since the published translation does not include the narrator's corrections; it simply reads, "I start to shriek, to griter" (13) and "I remember it clearly, I do remember" (14).
- 9 While this translation shows considerable embellishment of the original French text, it proves the point that the narrator incorporates information from historical sources into her narrative.

- 10 This is my translation, since the published translation is slightly, but significantly, different: “The sequence of events was as follows” (92).
- 11 This is my translation, since the published translation reads, “I think you had to have lived it, to understand what we experienced, it was such a shock, I was stunned. It was a total *aturdimiento*, a bewilderment, a *revelación* for us to discover the city that month of August in 1936” (97).
- 12 This is my translation, since the published translation is different: “As for Diego, now he had long teeth, les dents longues, as you say, he was very ambitious, and all he said and all he did seemed to serve only one aim, one precise goal, but José’s heart was puro, and let me tell you, chérie, don’t laugh, such a thing as a pure heart does exist, believe me. José was a real gentleman, a caballero, you could say. He knew how to give to others, how to regular, how to régaler, is that a word in French too?” (69).
- 13 This is my translation, since the published translation is slightly, but significantly, different: “*This is what I want you to understand, ma chérie*” (110).
- 14 As we saw in note 6, the narrator’s voice does not appear in this phrase in the published translation. I have thus translated the first line myself, containing her voice, and have reproduced the published translation for the rest of the citation.
- 15 The seven women are Emily Brontë, Marina Tsvetaeva, Virginia Woolf, Colette, Sylvia Plath, Ingeborg Bachmann and Djuna Barnes.
- 16 For more on the concept of unitary autobiography and the challenge issued to it by female writers, see my introduction to *Shifting Subjects: Plural Subjectivity in Contemporary Francophone Women’s Autobiography*. Newark, DE: U of Delaware P, 2011.

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2 French-Vietnamese Translanguaging in the Work of Kim Thúy

Kim Thúy achieved fame for her first published text, the partially autobiographical *Ru*, in 2009.¹ This work recounts the tale of her departure from Vietnam at the age of ten as one of the “boat people,” headed for Canada. The main protagonist narrates in vignette style memories of her childhood, her mastery of the French language and her growing personal and professional success in Quebec; she rises from a seamstress to an interpreter to a lawyer to the owner of a highly successful restaurant. Although far from an exclusively happy, optimistic tale of leaving Asia and thriving in a Western state, *Ru*, which has been translated into several languages, has been criticized for what some interpret as glossing over the trauma involved in forced migration.² Thúy’s subsequent text *Mãn*, which appeared four years later, is notably more sombre. As literary critic Lidia Menéndez points out, this text is not as autobiographical as *Ru* but is presented as a continuation of the earlier text (182). In both texts, the protagonist is given another name: Nguyễn An Tịnh in the earlier text and, in the latter, Mãn is the name of the narrator, the protagonist and the restaurant she owns. Both texts are first-person narratives and are clearly predicated upon a *récit de soi* that is intimate, personal and confessional.³ In *Mãn*, the story is again of a young girl from Vietnam who migrates to Quebec and contains echoes of tropes of the first work such as the importance of the mother figure, the separation from her homeland and the narrative of professional success. Yet, also discernible in this text is a more poignant sense of loss, as the narrator becomes involved in a doomed multinational love affair and the tone of the text becomes more intimate, more confessional and more melancholy.⁴ The text begins in Vietnam, with the narrator’s memories of her childhood, growing up with Maman, who adopted her after she was abandoned by her birth mother. The story moves forward at a rapid pace, as the main character leaves Vietnam during the Communist period, moving to Canada as a refugee and settling in Montreal. She has a calm, passive relationship with her husband, who is respectful but not amorous toward her. We follow her through her journey as a chef, beginning in a small shop serving soup to local Vietnamese migrants, to the opening of a restaurant with her friend Julie, from which the pair

enjoy unprecedented professional and financial success. The tale of a calmly successful family life is disturbed, however, when Mãn falls in love with a Parisian chef, Luc. When Luc's wife discovers their affair, she is obliged to return to her regular life with her husband and two sons, supported by the quiet understanding of her mother.

What is most interesting about this later text is its sustained reflection on the subject of language and of living, loving and writing as a multilingual person. This is not to say that the Vietnamese language was absent from *Ru*. The title itself is an example of bilingual wordplay, as “ru” is a word in both languages: “lullaby” in Vietnamese and “small stream” in French. Several of the vignettes in this earlier text allude to language or to multilingualism. Language is foregrounded by the narrator's work as an interpreter for the New York Police Department, for instance; indeed, she makes her living through being a polyglot. She writes in this text that “ma mère voulait que je parle, que j'apprenne à parler le plus rapidement possible le français et aussi l'anglais, puisque ma langue maternelle était devenue non pas dérisoire, mais inutile” (29) [my mother wanted me to speak, wanted me to learn French and English as quickly as possible since my mother tongue had become not derisory but useless].⁵ In a later reminiscence that points to the pain of language loss and the consequences of privileging another language over one's mother tongue, she laments that “j'ai dû réapprendre ma langue maternelle, que j'avais abandonnée trop tôt. De toute manière, je ne l'avais pas vraiment maîtrisée de façon complète parce que le pays était divisé en deux quand je suis née [...] Comme au Canada, le Vietnam avait aussi ses deux solitudes” (87) [I had to relearn my mother tongue, which I had abandoned too early. In any case, I hadn't completely mastered it because the country was divided in two when I was born [...]. Like Canada, Vietnam also had its two solitudes]. While *Ru* contains references to multilingualism, language learning and the connection between language and identity, these do not translate into a sustained reflection on the narrator's language use or choices but remain in the background of the text. Consequently, scholarship on *Ru* has focused on the text's representation of forced migration, dislocation and exile. Valérie Dusailant-Fernandes views the text as an oscillation between an “ici” [here] and a “là-bas” [over there], Ching Selao argues that its positive portrayal of migration stages a realization of the “American dream,” and Tess Do and Alexandra Kurmann find it uses the figure of a child “as a means to recuperate a personal narrative from which the subject has become disassociated,” for example (219).

In *Mãn*, by contrast, linguistic variation becomes an integral part of the narrative. This later work is marked by a rich tapestry of languages – English, French and Vietnamese – and by extended discussion of the differences between them. Gabrielle Parker views Thúy as part of “une nouvelle génération pour laquelle la langue d'écriture est tout

simplement la langue d'arrivée, exonérée de tout passif colonial" (241) [a new generation for whom the language of writing is simply the language of arrival, exonerated from any colonial debt]. While this may be partially true, Thúy's complex interweaving of languages within her writing deserves closer attention. Indeed, while critics have analyzed the hybridity in Thúy's work, they focus on aspects of her writing other than its linguistic hybridity. Pamela Sing underscores Thúy's rendering of the sensorial aspects of migration, and Marie-Christine Lambert-Perreault points to how she uses food to "investir le présent montréalais de couches de sensations, de significations et de souvenirs connus dans d'autres contextes temporels ou géographiques" (88) [inscribe in present Montreal layers of sensations, meanings and memories from other temporal or geographical contexts], for instance. In this chapter, I analyze Thúy's language practice in *Mãn*, arguing that she develops a rich form of translanguaging to disrupt traditional understandings of bilingualism. As we have seen, translanguaging is a theory of language use that "is centred, not on languages as has often been the case, but on the *practices* of bilinguals that are readily observable in order to make sense of their multilingual worlds" (García 2009: 140). In this chapter, I examine how Thúy practices translanguaging in her writing, arguing that French and Vietnamese are not presented in this text as two discreet entities in a monoglossic system but as a dynamic, productive dialogue that emphasizes the practices of the contemporary multilingual individual. I demonstrate that Thúy develops strategies to meld her languages (mostly French and Vietnamese) into a dynamic form of language use to achieve a language-focused self-narrative. I focus on three narrative strategies that Thúy develops: her bilingual inscriptions in the margins of each page, her interweaving of French and Vietnamese, and her differing approaches to translation. Taken together, these strategies move her text beyond the blending of discreet languages to the invention of a new form of self-narrative in transit.

Bilingual Inscriptions in *Mãn*

Among the many narrative strategies Thúy develops to "translanguage" in *Mãn*, the most striking is the bilingual inscriptions that appear on every page. The text is written in vignette style as the narrator recounts isolated, often disjointed, memories of growing up in Vietnam and moving to Canada. This style of writing has become a key element of Thúy's work, which resists the pattern of telling a complete, coherent and conclusive story. The vignettes move forward chronologically, beginning in Vietnam and giving snippets of the narrator's story as she moves from her home country and settles in Canada. One tells of how she met the man who became her husband, for example, and another tells of her discovery that Maman had become a spy in order to survive. There are

no transitions between them, which obliges the reader to imagine the gaps between the stories they recount. Most of these vignettes are less than one page long. Jenny James analyzes this narrative technique in *Ru*, interpreting it as part of the “bricolage” that reflects the fragmented nature of experience in diaspora (2016: 43). In *Mãn*, the same technique is evident but with the addition of a bilingual element. The title of each vignette appears in the margin and, crucially, is presented bilingually: both the Vietnamese title and its French translation are displayed. While the vignettes in *Ru* have monolingual titles, all of the vignettes in *Mãn* open with this bilingual inscription. Most interestingly, the Vietnamese is on top, followed by the French below: an ironic reversal of the power relationship between the two languages, perhaps, especially since the text itself is written predominantly in French. The text thus becomes a visual representation of the mixing of languages in literature, as the two languages appear next to each other and are foregrounded at the top of almost every page of the text. On the rare pages with no title, since the vignette is more than one page long, there is an example of the Vietnamese language within the writing, so that there is barely a page in the text in which the two languages are not visible. This is a strikingly innovative narrative technique. Thúy’s approach to incorporating her native tongue into her predominantly French writing stands in stark opposition to the monolingual literary tradition. Moreover, in *Mãn*, the Vietnamese language is recorded in *Quốc-Ngữ*, the Romanized script developed by missionaries and mandated by the French to record the Vietnamese oral language. This script was initially used in indigenous schools to support the teaching and learning of the French language and was appropriated by the Vietnamese people as their national written language. This script thus originated through French colonization and was developed by the French but became a way for the Vietnamese to reclaim power over their language. The visibility of this language and script on every page of *Mãn* – especially with the Vietnamese inscribed above the French language – stands as a reminder of this reappropriation.

Furthermore, the two scripts serve as a visual representation of the intertwining of the two linguistic systems in Thúy’s self-narrative. The titles of the vignettes are typically short: either one word or a short expression. They offer pithy, straightforward labels of the experience each vignette recounts. Matching the style of Thúy’s prose, they are clear and undescriptive, almost bare and reductive. Interestingly, some of the titles draw attention to the differences between the two languages, including linguistic nuances and cultural signification that only the astute learner or native speaker would likely discern. For example, in a poignant example of a culturally specific term that separates the two languages, the title “tiễn đưa” is translated as “dire adieu, accompagner quelqu’un jusqu’au point de départ” (52) [to say goodbye, to accompany somebody to their point of departure].⁶ The short Vietnamese phrase with its

much longer French translation indicates the specific context in which the departures were taking place. Many Vietnamese people emigrated at this time, during which Communist Vietnam was isolated from the rest of the world due to the American embargo. The Vietnamese who emigrated during this time were thus departing with no hope of return, hence Thúy's use of "adieu" rather than "au revoir." In this vignette, the narrator recounts her own departure from Vietnam. In contrast to the other passengers, who were accompanied by emotional family members who assumed their departing relatives would never return, the narrator departed alone and on instruction from her mother to forget her past. She was clearly not granted access to the important cultural practice of "tiễn đưa," and this is presented as a source of regret for her, especially since the vignette ends with the admission that, on the subject of forgetting, "c'était impossible" (52) [it was impossible]. A further example of a title that plays with linguistic and cultural nuances is in the vignette that presents the character Hồng, a Vietnamese woman who works in the narrator's restaurant and who is the victim of domestic violence. The title of the vignette is "hồng/rose ou parfois rouge" (75) [hông/pink or sometimes red]. The non-Vietnamese speaking reader can only imagine that the name is also a color and that this color has a wider spectrum than simply "rose," alluding to the differences between languages in discerning concepts such as colors. The reader with some knowledge of languages of the region will recognize that Quốc-Ngữ is a phonetic script for both Vietnamese and Sino-Vietnamese words and that Thúy uses elements from both languages in her writing; "hồng" means "pink" or "rose" in Vietnamese but "red" in Sino-Vietnamese. Thúy's text thus demonstrates the multilingual layering of Vietnam and reinforces its impact upon her narrative of identity. The multilingual presentation of the titles thus serves as a visual reminder of the overlapping of languages and of how this narrator brings languages and scripts together in order to achieve self-expression. While any French-speaking reader can engage with her text, Thúy brings Vietnamese into her titles in a way that not only highlights her multilingual story but also points to the cultural specificities that only advanced speakers of Vietnamese will comprehend. There are numerous ways of understanding this multilingual text, therefore, which reflects the complexity of this multilingual writer's identity.

The bilingual inscriptions that form the titles to each vignette highlight cultural differences but also serve to nuance the writer's unique self-narrative. The titles are usually related to the subject of the text and consist of one or two key words taken from the vignette. For example, in the vignette that recounts the narrator's visit to New York, the only one in which the titles are the same in Vietnamese and French, the vignette is simply entitled "New-York/New York" (64). It is interesting to note that Thúy did not use the Vietnamese word for New York – *Nữu-Uớc* – in

this instance, preferring to Anglicize her title and thereby refusing any consistent approach to the representation of multilingualism in the text. Elsewhere, the narrator recounts an episode of her journey from Vietnam to Canada and the short keyword title is “Thuyền nhân” (14). The translation that appears beneath it is not in French but in English: “boat people” (14). The Vietnamese term is a literal Sino-Vietnamese translation of the term “boat people,” which was widely used to refer to the Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s and 1980s who landed in countries where English is spoken rather than French. Although the accepted French term “*réfugiés de la mer*” exists, the English usage refers to this specific history and the way it was widely reported at the time. This phrase succinctly points to the harrowing experiences of the Vietnamese refugees of the time, positioning the author as one of this group, but does not dwell on, describe or explain their suffering. It also hints at the unsuitability of the French language to recounting her story in this instance and reminds the reader that this author lives between several languages, not merely French and Vietnamese.

Equally intriguingly, there are several vignettes in which the bilingual titles are not clearly linked to the subject of the text. In these instances, the reader is obliged to plug the gaps in the narrator’s story, interpreting its meaning and its significance to the self-narrative this author is staging. For example, one vignette recounts Maman’s practice of giving her daughter dictations in the evening in order to improve her French. Her multilingualism was therefore encouraged early on and, while her knowledge of French was not advanced, she was surrounded by multiple languages from a young age. The narrator remembers dictations from Maupassant’s *Une vie*, a book they had to hide to avoid it being confiscated by the Communist authorities during a time in which books were forbidden. The title of the vignette is “lỗi,” which is translated as “fautes” (24; 45) [mistakes]. The word “fautes” does not appear in this vignette, which succinctly summarizes the mother’s nightly instruction in dictation and “analyse logique, grammaticale et syntaxique” (45) [analysis of logic, grammar and syntax]. The “fautes” may refer to the mistakes that the narrator must have made in the process of learning French and testify to her difficulties in learning the language. Alternatively, the allusion to a “faute” might also refer to the illegal action of owning a book at this time, especially a French book. The fact that the illegal book is *Une vie*, the tale of a solitary, abandoned mother whose child leaves, is telling. Or more broadly, the writer could be accusing the Vietnamese authorities of “faute” for their repressive regime. While the title of the vignette does not appear in the text, then, it points to the wider semantic field of vocabulary items, which will be different in different languages. A fault, an error, a mistake or being at fault are all linguistically and culturally specific terms, which hints at the way in which one language is not sufficient for this writer; the

subtle differences between them are necessary for her to explore and narrate her selfhood, and this is a process she welcomes rather than represses.

One specific usage of the bilingual inscriptions of the titles deserves more exploration. The vignette that appears on the third page of the text incorporates a list of words in both French and Vietnamese, as opposed to the one-word or one-phrase titles elsewhere. Here, the narrator describes the way in which her mother learned the word *lundi* and how she taught it to her daughter. The title presents the days of the week in Vietnamese followed by the French beneath each one: from “*thứ 2/ lundi*” to “*chủ nhật/dimanche*” (11) [Monday to Sunday]. The days in Vietnamese follow the pattern of day 2 for Monday, day 3 for Tuesday, day 4 for Wednesday and so on, since the language does not have words to express the days of the week, apart from Sunday.⁷ This will immediately strike a note of unfamiliarity in the French reader who has no knowledge of Vietnamese. Moreover, the narrator’s mother learned the French word *lundi* by conjoining two Vietnamese words and linking them to an action; the narrator explains *lon* means *canette* and *đi* means *partir*; thus, the mother taught her to point to a can and kick it away, saying *lon-đi* at the same time. The two languages are thus not treated in a way that isolates them as discreet systems but as ways of imagining different meanings and of calling attention to the ways in which languages are built of the same phonemes but imbued with different meanings. In this case, the two phonemes of the French word, *lun* and *di*, form a different expression in the Vietnamese language and are infused with a different meaning on a general level – to any speaker of Vietnamese – and on a personal level; the narrator refers to the fact that her mother learned this from her mother, who died before teaching her the remaining days of the week. This particular word is therefore imbued with the loss experienced by the narrator’s mother and the rupture in maternal legacy – even more acutely since *di* in Vietnamese can also mean “to die,” as can “*partir*,” used metaphorically. By isolating the phonemes of one language – Vietnamese is a monosyllabic language – and translating these phonemes literally into French, the text shows the intermingling of two languages in the practice of the bilingual; French and Vietnamese are not presented as separate phenomena that exist in different realms or are employed in different circumstances or for different purposes. Instead, the two are presented in terms of the heteroglossic, dynamic view of bilingualism proposed by García. The two languages of this multilingual author appear on every page as a visual reminder of the constant presence and interweaving of the two systems and of the different meanings they produce when brought together. The fact this text is loosely autobiographical emphasizes how this author’s two languages come together to form a complex story of a self in words – not words in one language, but in several upon which her self-expression relies.

Transcultural Imaginings

Within the vignettes, the two languages are frequently interwoven to highlight the cultural differences between Vietnam and Canada. Discussion of language itself is constantly foregrounded in this text; language becomes more important than plot or characterization and the narrator devotes more time to discussing language than she does to telling her story or sketching her characters or events. The tale moves quickly in a chronological, forward movement, but she skips over vast amounts of time. Much is left unsaid, therefore, and many questions remain about the narrator's character and the experiences she undergoes. We follow her through her time in Vietnam, the early stages of her marriage in Quebec, the opening of her restaurant and her love affair, for example, with little detail of any of these events. Indeed, discussion of language is often the only thread that ties the vignettes together. For example, as early as the seventh vignette, the narrator discusses the morphology of Vietnamese and its cultural significance. This episode introduces the narrator's future husband, one of the "boat people" who settled in Canada. Returning to Vietnam in search of a wife years later, his knowledge of several significant Vietnamese customs is inconsistent. His hesitation in addressing the family, particularly the narrator's mother, is immediately apparent: "il l'appelait pêle-mêle 'grande sœur' (*Chi*), 'tante' (*Cô*) et 'grande-tante' (*Bác*). Personne ne lui en a tenu rigueur parce qu'il venait d'ailleurs, d'un lieu où les pronoms personnels existent pour pouvoir rester impersonnels" (15) [He called her indiscriminately 'older sister' (*Chi*), 'aunt' (*Cô*) and 'great-aunt' (*Bác*). Nobody insisted because he came from elsewhere, from a place where personal pronouns exist in order to remain impersonal]. The language-culture nexus is accentuated in this instance, as this episode presents a situation in which language use should be determined by a speaker's knowledge of cultural matrices. What is most interesting about this meeting is that the man is a native speaker of the language but that his linguistic errors are forced by his lack of cultural knowledge. The narrator writes in this quotation that he comes *d'un lieu*, from a place, in which pronouns are different, although he originally comes from the geographical space of Vietnam and from the linguistic background of the Vietnamese language. Time and space have thus combined to create lacunae in his knowledge of his mother tongue. The language, Thúy hints, is a complex system of foreignness that can be impenetrable even to the native speaker. She foregrounds discussion of such linguistic difference throughout the text, instructing her French-speaking reader about the intricacies of the language and, crucially, about its importance to her self-narrative. The interplay between languages is a constant presence in this text as the narrator underlines her dual linguistic heritage and the mixing that

this necessitates. Rather than negating, downplaying or eliding the two languages, therefore, she underscores linguistic difference and elevates it to an integral part of her narrative of identity.

As the interplay between the two languages is foregrounded, the Vietnamese language peppers the text. In addition to the Vietnamese titles discussed above, Vietnamese vocabulary frequently interrupts the prose. Often, Vietnamese appears as a way of providing additional information about a character, a place or an event that cannot be accurately expressed in French. Such occasions highlight the gaps between languages – not just in words but also in the world views and perspectives that are imbued in different languages. For example, the narrator points out that Vietnamese people do not refer to their hair or eye color as a distinguishing feature since there is minimal variety between them: “les Asiatiques n’ont qu’un ton: brun très foncé jusqu’à noir ébène” (88) [Asians only have one tone: very dark brown to ebony black]. As a result, when she attempts to express accurately the color of her French lover Luc’s eyes, she struggles to do so in her native language. She uses the word *xanh*, green, but feels obliged to nuance this, explaining that “son *xanh* ne représentait pas le bleu mais bien le vert, un vert des eaux de la baie de Hà Long ou un vert jade foncé et vieilli; celui des bracelets portés par les femmes pendant des décennies” (88) [his *xanh* was not blue but green, green like the waters of the bay of Hà Long or a dark, old jade green; the green of bracelets worn by women for decades]. Lexical items such as this call attention to the specificity of language and to the fact that this text is written by a multilingual author who approaches language in a different way to a monolingual person; the narrator claims to experience colors and numbers more readily in Vietnamese than in French, for instance, and records these colors and numbers in her native tongue. She hints that her experience of the world is mediated through different languages at different times and that the melding of both – in her own specific use of translanguaging – is essential to her understanding of her self.

The Vietnamese language is inserted into the text even on the level of the sentence, producing changes in syntax that reflect the interweaving of languages in the practice of a multilingual person. Thúy develops a number of strategies to accomplish this. Since the narrator is a cook and becomes a restaurant owner, as is the case in the more consciously autobiographical *Ru*, she frequently refers to culinary terms in Vietnamese. Cooking is the backdrop to the narrator’s story and is the skill that enables her to settle in Canada, cooking in a small café that her husband buys before increasing the size and scope of the business. Indeed, the final section of the text is a sample list of traditional Vietnamese recipes and is titled “des mots et des mets” (145) [words and dishes] in a telling example of the two things that tie the book together. Literary scholar Eileen Lohka examines the representation of food in *Ru* and *Mãn*, highlighting that food functions as a way for Thúy to inscribe herself in her

female lineage, as a metaphor for her hybrid position and as a reflection of her attachment to her native land. Lohka argues that “la cuisine vietnamienne déclenche la réaction des sens et, de là, un travail de mémoire et de recomposition du pays natal, d’une part, et de l’identité clivée par l’Histoire et l’exil, de l’autre” (184) [Vietnamese cuisine triggers a reaction of the senses and, subsequently, a process of remembering and reconstructing her homeland, on the one hand, and her identity, split by History and exile, on the other]. As noted above, Sing also discusses the sensorial aspects of food in this text, arguing that Thúy “mondialise les goûts culinaires des Montréalais en même temps qu’elle québéçise les traditions culinaires vietnamiens” (287) [globalizes the culinary tastes of Montrealers at the same time as she imbues Vietnamese culinary traditions with a Quebecois influence]. While Vietnamese cuisine is represented as a metaphor for the author’s cultural hybridity, as these critics pinpoint, it is also used as a means of furthering the translanguaging *Mãn* stages. The names of Vietnamese foods and dishes are frequently included among Thúy’s French sentences, the Vietnamese names interrupting the French prose to call attention to their difference. Sometimes, the French comes first but the Vietnamese is always included; the narrator refers to the traditional preparation of “piments vicieux” (12) [hot chilli peppers], for example, but includes the Vietnamese immediately in parentheses in italics: “ớt hiểm” (12). The two languages may exist side by side, then, but French cannot replace the use of Vietnamese for this narrator. Sometimes, these terms are not translated due to the impossibility of an equivalent, such as when she mentions that there are dozens of varieties of bananas but “seules les bananes *chuối xiêm* peuvent être aplaties sans se briser et glacées sans noircir” (13) [*chuối xiêm* bananas are the only ones that can be crushed without breaking and frozen without turning black]. In this instance, the Vietnamese term features in the French sentence easily as she glides from one language to the other without a footnote, a parenthesis or any break in the language. The narrator thus melds the two languages seamlessly, showing a usage that corresponds to the notion of dynamic bilingualism. This is all the more surprising, since the example demonstrates that there are always elements in one language that cannot be replicated in another, and while these examples relate to food items, the hint is that there are pockets of untranslatable words and expressions running through languages. Nevertheless, this multilingual individual manipulates the languages of her wide linguistic repertoire to create meaning that is authentic and expressive of her own identity.

In addition to using Vietnamese words in French sentences in a way that creates a seamless meaning for her, the author brings together the two languages in ways that create new formations. For instance, referring to her early practices in Montreal of making simple Vietnamese dishes for the local population of Vietnamese heritage, she writes

“les jours les plus occupés, les clients amis se contentaient d’une boule de riz recouverte d’un œuf *óp la* (au plat) salé à la sauce de soja” (42) [on the busiest days, the customers/friends were happy with a bowl of rice with a (fried) egg on top seasoned with soy sauce].⁸ As is the case with many of Thúy’s vignettes, this example shows both a culinary and linguistic mixture, since food and languages come together to produce hybrid formations. Most interestingly, the French phrase is written phonetically according to Vietnamese script. Rather than simply state that it was an *œuf au plat* within the French sentence, the author insists upon the Vietnamization of a French expression: *óp la*. She still uses the French word rather than a Vietnamese equivalent, but she presents it according to Vietnamese standards. By writing French words in Vietnamese script, Thúy reverses the hierarchical power relationship between the dominant and the dominated language; rather than representing Vietnamese as conforming to the rules of the French language, here the French language is modified by the Vietnamese. In a similar example, in a vignette titled “Đông-Tây/Est-Ouest” [East–West], the narrator recounts that she employs a French patisserie chef to reinvent Vietnamese desserts, which lack the sophistication of French dishes. She explains, “les Vietnamiens appellent les gâteaux d’anniversaire ‘*bánh gatô*’ alors que le *bánh* veut déjà dire ‘pain-gâteau-pâte.’ Nous devons importer ce mot parce qu’il s’agissait d’une tradition culinaire inusitée. Il fallait apprendre à utiliser le beurre, le lait, la vanille, le chocolat ... des ingrédients qui nous étaient aussi étrangers que les méthodes de cuisson” (69) [the Vietnamese call birthday cakes ‘*bánh gatô*’ although *bánh* already means bread-cake-pastry. We had to import that word because it referred to an unusual culinary tradition. We had to learn to use butter, milk, vanilla, chocolate ... ingredients that were as foreign to us as the cooking methods].⁹ The absence of certain ingredients and cooking methods in Vietnam thus leads to the importing not just of these ingredients but also of the words to denote them.¹⁰ *Gâteau* becomes *gatô* in a transliteration of the French language, again producing a Vietnamization of the French expression and, although still relying on the French language rather than using Vietnamese vocabulary, relegating the French language to a secondary position. The French word enters the Vietnamese language but is subject to a spelling change and to the position of a suffix, an addendum to the original Vietnamese word *bánh*. This is not presented as a contamination of the Vietnamese language but as an addition to it that solidifies Vietnamese as the dominant language in this context. This example thus represents cultural and linguistic movement as a two-way process, not a simple, one-directional development in which a more powerful language corrupts the purity of a less powerful one. As we have seen, linguist Suresh Canagarajah underscores that multilingual individuals have the ability to transform the languages they inhabit.

And that their languages mesh in transformative ways, generating new meanings and grammars” (2013: 8). Thúy’s text thus presents her two languages as necessary to her self-expression in certain circumstances and demonstrates the ways in which they work together to produce meaning for her highly individual narrative.

Thúy’s use of translanguaging when discussing foods and culinary items necessitates another linguistic dimension, which points up an important element of her text. She refers to *smoothies* (16) and to local Québécois foods, such as when she writes of “*smoked meat à la tourtière*” (54) [smoked meat pie]. As can be seen in these phrases, English impacts upon the narrative of Thúy’s experiences in Montreal. This usage highlights something that is never discussed in her text but which is necessarily a backdrop to her life writing; she is living in a multilingual environment. The linguistic reality of life in Montreal adds a further dimension to the background of her text. English rarely enters the narrative but the instances in which it becomes visible remind the reader of Thúy’s multilingual lived experience: she lives her life not just in French and Vietnamese but also in English and in an environment in which multilingualism is a feature of the everyday linguistic landscape. To Quebecois authors, translanguaging is certainly not a new phenomenon, as they frequently incorporate English and French into their literary writing.¹¹ Translanguaging in the context of Quebec is clearly more complex than in France given the historical and linguistic conflict between French and English. Thúy refers to this context indirectly when the narrator mentions her linguistic experiences with French and the way in which “*Québécoisismes*” (77) [local, Quebecois expressions] had started to inflect her vocabulary. In contrast to many Quebecois authors, however, Thúy complicates Quebecois literary practices by melding not two but three languages and concentrating upon two (French and Vietnamese) that depart from the standard French–English couplet. The particularities of Montreal as a site of transit and resettlement mean that Thúy’s text is not an expression of a decontextualized French but one that reflects, intervenes in and complicates a particular multilingual context.

Translation and Translanguaging

In addition to moving between the two languages within sentences and thereby emphasizing the necessary place that both of them occupy in Thúy’s self-narrative, the text develops innovative approaches to translation. Scholars have long questioned a view of translation that views languages as neatly separated, discreet entities. Roman Jakobson famously suggested that there are three types of translation: interlingual, between two different languages; intralingual, between signs in the

same language; and intersemiotic, between linguistic and nonlinguistic signs (Jakobson 1959: 239). Jacques Derrida, by contrast, criticizes such a view as primarily monolingual, suggesting that translation is more than the passage from one language into another (Derrida 1985: 72). Purity of language is a fiction, he indicates, as there are always many languages, many signifiers and many deferrals at work in any linguistic system. In Thúy's text, the narrator moves back and forth between her two languages – along with incursions into English – in a way that demonstrates that in her own linguistic system, there is no purity of language but a constant, productive linguistic contamination that enables her to develop innovative literary techniques to convey her experience.

This is perhaps most apparent in Thúy's references to literature, which occupies a central role in *Mãn*. As we have seen, Maupassant's *Une vie* is a significant text in the narrator's learning of the French language and an important representation of the cultural restrictions in Vietnam at the time. These restrictions, and particularly the impact they had on the narrator, come to light when her friend and business partner, Julie, makes a library in their restaurant space and fills it with literary works. This serves as a catalyst for the narrator to recount the difficulties she and Maman encountered in obtaining literature during her childhood in Vietnam. She explains that books in French and English were confiscated and that sometimes isolated pages were recovered: "on ne saurait jamais par quel chemin étaient passées des pages entières pour se retrouver entre les mains de marchands qui les utilisaient pour envelopper un pain, une barbotte ou un bouquet de liserons d'eau ... On ne pourrait jamais me dire pourquoi j'avais eu la chance de tomber sur ces trésors enfouis au milieu de tas de journaux jaunis" (57–58) [we would never know where whole pages had traveled to arrive in the hands of merchants who would use them to wrap a loaf of bread, a catfish or a bunch of Chinese spinach ... No one could ever tell me why I had been lucky enough to happen upon one of those treasures buried among a pile of yellowed newspapers]. The narrator isolates specific words she retained from these individual pages, such as "lassitude" [weariness] from Françoise Sagan, "languueur" [languor] from Verlaine and "pénitentiaire" [penitential] from Kafka. These words are not translated into Vietnamese but are retained in the original French. She explains that her mother frequently did not know the French words on the page, so they had to appeal to the "dictionnaire vivant" [walking dictionary]: a local man who had a French dictionary, which was confiscated but which he had memorized. The act of translation is thus personified, as this individual becomes the guardian of multilingualism. He is considered mad by the neighbors who see him reciting his absent dictionary aloud, but he underscores the need to meld the two languages – isolating each word and explaining it in his own language – to preserve linguistic diversity. What is particularly interesting about this image is that the man attempts to preserve the language of

the colonizer. French was under threat in the former colony at this time but the neighbor wished to preserve its presence. This passage and the references to literature throughout the work point to the importance and the value of individual words, of books and of linguistic diversity more generally. The walking dictionary, with his warning against the loss of language, could be interpreted as a metaphor for the central message of this overtly multilingual text.

Aside from the references to French literature that permeate *Mãn*, the narrator also refers to several literary works in the Vietnamese language. She uses various techniques to present these to a French-speaking reader, taking a variety of approaches to the question of translation. She alludes to a poem, for instance, as she is describing her mother's life. The narrator gives the title as *Truyện Kiều* in italics, without a French title, then inscribes the entire poem in French translation, rather than in the original Vietnamese (25). She explains that her mother would recite the poem to her father when he was unable to sleep and that it has a wider, collective resonance; the poem, which has over 3,000 verses, tells the story of a young girl who sacrificed herself for her family, and it is said that as long as the poem exists, Vietnam will be protected. Even illiterate Vietnamese, she tells us, can recite several of its stanzas. This poem and its presentation in the text are particularly pertinent to this author's approach to translanguaging. *Truyện Kiều* is the most well-known poem in classical Vietnamese literature and its author, Nguyễn Du, wrote it in Nôm, an ancient Vietnamese script. The poem thus points to the literary and linguistic heritage of Vietnam, demonstrating that a literary tradition in the Vietnamese language continues to resonate with Vietnamese people. It also highlights the linguistic tradition of Vietnam in two ways. First, it refers indirectly to a script that predates the Quốc-Ngữ developed by the French, thus emphasizing the history of the Vietnamese language and its written systems that predate the colonial period. Second, it reinforces the oral tradition of the Vietnamese language. The narrator and her compatriots are more familiar with the spoken than the written form of the poem, since it travels across time, across generations and across nations in oral form. The text appears to claim that there are many different ways to preserve a language, including written scripts and oral forms. Thúy's varied approach to translating examples of Vietnamese literature thus points to a nuanced representation of the history and diversity of the language.

In other examples of literary texts cited in *Mãn*, the original Vietnamese is foregrounded. One such example is when the mother again teaches the narrator a poem that all Vietnamese people know by heart. The title is absent but the opening lines of the poem are included, first in Vietnamese in italics, followed by a French translation by Thúy herself (81). The poem describes the lotus, its flowers and colors, and emphasizes its sensory aspects. As we have seen, Thúy pauses to reflect upon the ways in

which the two languages present sensations differently. One may assume that the translation is provided here to point up these differences and also to personalize the account; the translation that she gives is her own, as the sensation that she experiences in her own language is unique to her. This is also an unauthored folk poem as opposed to the classic poem *Truyện Kiều* that has been translated many times by well-known translators. Thúy thus wavers between using published translations and her own knowledge of the language, changing her strategy depending upon the instance and not conforming to a singular, rigid model throughout the text. Moreover, the narrator prints this poem in both Vietnamese and French translation on pieces of paper that she gives to customers in the restaurant as a means of starting a literary space. Students of literature start to congregate in the restaurant garden and write, in order to “échanger un mot contre un autre ou rassurer ceux qui paniquaient devant la page blanche” (81) [exchange a word for another or reassure those who are panicking in front of a blank page]. The text thus proclaims the importance of individual words and emphasizes how individual language users will engage with them differently. In another example of literary citation, Thúy quotes two poems in English and provides translations of them in French but not in Vietnamese (86, 123) and selects an epigraph that is a French translation of a German text with no Vietnamese translation. The decision to omit the Vietnamese translation does not relegate the importance or position of this language but highlights Thúy’s nonstandard approach to translation; sometimes, she includes translations, and sometimes, she does not, and she weaves between using published translations and her own. She thus refutes any linguistic conformity or standardization, instead inscribing her experience in language that makes sense to her, regardless of the highly codified language in which she mainly writes.

The different approaches to translation that are discernible within the text emphasize the individual multilingual’s range of linguistic practice and the dynamic shifting between languages. Multilingualism is represented as a dynamic, moving process that insists upon instability, rather than existing as a static, unwavering system. Translation is presented in the same way. The author insists that translation is not a simple matter of substituting one word for another but is instead a moving process that points up the plurality of meaning within languages and cultures. The narrator recounts teaching her friend Julie to pronounce the tones of Vietnamese, for example: “elle prononçait les ‘*la, là, lả, lã, lã ...*’ en distinguant les tons même si elle ne comprenait pas les différentes définitions: crier, être, étranger, évanouir, frais” (65) [She would pronounce ‘*la, là, lả, lã, lã ...*’ distinguishing between the tones even though she didn’t understand their different meanings: to scream, to be, foreign, to faint, cool]. By drawing attention to this monosyllabic language’s individual

syllables, phonemes that are each imbued with different meanings, the author draws attention to the intricacy of the Vietnamese language and to the different web of signification in which it operates. Most interestingly, she applies this perspective to the French language, breaking down the words into phonemes that create different signification. She describes her father's second wife as her "*Mẹ Ghê*" (23), for instance, and gives the literal translation into French of "une mère froide" [a cold mother]. Nevertheless, she adds that "il faut dire que *ghê* signifie aussi 'gale'" [I should say that *ghê* also means 'scab'] and proceeds to nuance her description of this character from the perspective of two translations of the word. Such attention to the plural signification of individual phonemes in Vietnamese further nuances her French-language text. Rather than downplaying or oversimplifying the language, Thúy writes in a way that brings the complexity of the two languages into dialogue with each other, using narrative strategies and approaches to translation that enrich rather than contaminate them both.

Furthermore, by taking an external perspective on the French language, she uses a less powerful language to undercut a dominant one. The power that a colonial language has over the languages of its former colonies emanates from a web of social, economic and cultural relations that serve to reinforce the legitimacy of one over the other. Pascale Casanova states in *La Langue mondiale: traduction et domination* that languages are "socialement hiérarchisées selon leur proximité au pouvoir et à la légitimité ou (ce qui revient au même) selon les profits symboliques qu'elles procurent" (11) [socially hierarchized according to their proximity to power and to legitimacy or (which is the same thing) according to the symbolic benefit they procure]. In *Mãn*, however, Thúy refuses a hierarchical approach to languages and subverts the traditional power relationship between a colonial and a colonized language. She explains her very personal approach to language in the following manner:

Il y a plusieurs de ces mots que je tente de comprendre par leur sonorité, comme 'colossal,' 'disjoncter,' 'apostille,' et d'autres par la texture, l'odeur, la forme. Pour saisir les nuances entre deux mots cousins, par exemple pour distinguer la mélancolie du chagrin, je pèse chacun d'eux. Quand je les tiens dans mes paumes, l'un semble planer comme une fumée grise alors que l'autre se comprime en boule d'acier. (91)

[There are several words that I try to understand by their sound, like 'colossal,' 'short-circuit,' 'annotation' and others by their texture, smell, shape. To understand the nuances between two similar words, such as melancholy and chagrin, I weigh each one of them. When I hold them in my hands, one seems to wisp away like gray smoke while the other constricts into a ball of steel.]

This sensual approach to words rejects any sense of power, hierarchy or superiority. Words are important, the text proclaims, due to the possibilities of signification that they constitute and these possibilities are increased through intermingling with other languages. By breaking down the French language into individual words and phonemes, Thúy thus underlines the similarities between the two languages and points up the added layers of meaning that they can produce through coming into contact with each other.

It should be remembered that the two languages come into contact with each other within a multilingual environment – not the Vietnamese and French of the text but the English and French of Francophone Canada. This chapter stands apart from the other chapters of this book, then, due to the position of the French language in Quebec. Most of the chapters of this study examine authors for whom French is the dominant language – Pineau’s and Spitz’s French is the language of the colonizer, for example, and Cixous and Salvayre write in France for a French audience. In Quebec, however, French is the dominated language that struggles to maintain its position against the onslaught of North American English. Authors in this province are highly aware of language practices and policies and are obliged to position themselves linguistically. Quebec more than many other places demonstrates the impossibility of pure language; in multilingual spaces such as Montreal, people inhabit the two languages and switch between them as necessary. It may be the case that the linguistic environment of Quebec is the ideal space for Thúy to experiment with translanguaging and inscribe another language – Vietnamese – into this literary landscape. As Jenny James points out, although Vietnamese American literature has been growing for 25 years, “the subject of the Vietnamese refugee emerged in Canadian literature only recently” (42). Thúy’s is a new voice and part of a new development, therefore. This irruption into a space that is already multilingual and in which French is in a precarious position is striking and complicates this already multilingual environment.

Overall, then, *Mãn* proclaims the importance of multilingual writing for expressing subjectivity in diaspora and for exploring the possibilities of self-expression. French and Vietnamese do not merely brush up against each other in this text but join each other in this author’s individualized practice of translanguaging. The text pluralizes the notion of translation, subverting the idea that one word in one language signifies one word in another by insisting upon the dynamic processes of movement between languages. Crucially, moreover, Thúy does not chide the French or the French language for linguistic domination, but merely gives a different perspective on it. She hints that the French language can be viewed differently, as a product of other linguistic encounters over time, and that it will continue to be adapted by individuals for their

own communicative purposes. By calling attention to her multilingual existence in her writing, and specifically in a way that complicates the multilingual environment of Quebec, Thúy makes an innovative contribution to multilingual literature. Her resistance to monolingual and monocultural writing forges a self-narrative that celebrates multilingual, multicultural and multinational life.

Notes

- 1 I thank Tess Do for the significant linguistic and cultural insights from which this chapter has benefited.
- 2 For an analysis of the migrant “success story” and of the narrative of gratitude that this text stages, see Nguyen, Vinh. “Refugee Gratitude.” *Canadian Literature*, vol. 219, 2013, pp. 17–36. Alexandra Kurmann argues convincingly that Thúy deploys textual diversions – based on Edouard Glissant’s “penser du détour” – to undermine superficial, optimistic reading.
- 3 It is all the more surprising, therefore, that the English translator of *Ru* gave the work the title *Ru: A Novel*. ‘Roman’ is not mentioned in the original French version.
- 4 Ching Selaio quotes two journalistic reviews of *Mãn* that focus on its optimistic, uplifting moments. While these are certainly apparent, the text is also marked by solitude and loss, especially following the end of the love relationship (150).
- 5 In the absence of a published translation, all translations of this text are my own.
- 6 Thúy’s spelling is incorrect, which is a mistake commonly made by speakers from the South. It should be spelled “tiễn.”
- 7 This pattern follows not the French but the Portuguese days of the week (Monday is *lundi*, which is *thứ 2* in Vietnamese and *segunda-feira* in Portuguese). In fact, as Pierre Brocheux and Daniel Hémerly state, the Quốc-Ngữ script that the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes perfected was initially created by Portuguese missionaries (221).
- 8 Thúy uses several other words throughout this text that are borrowed from French and subjected to Vietnamization, such as *min/mine*, *xich-lo/cyclo-pousse*, *cao-su/caoutchouc*, *ca-phê/café*, *va-li/valise*, thereby underscoring the ways in which the two languages have melded to create meaning.
- 9 Thúy’s definition here is selective, since she omits to mention that “bánh” also means “wheel.”
- 10 Except for “lait” (milk), all the Vietnamese names of the other ingredients are borrowed from French: “bơ”/beurre, “va-ni”/vanille, “xô-cô-la”/chocolat.
- 11 See for example Deborah Saidero’s chapter, “A Many-Tongued Babel: Translingualism in Canadian Multicultural Writing.”

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3 “En Australie, je parle une langue minoritaire”

Catherine Rey’s Franco-Australian Life Writing¹

This chapter is a rebuff to the notion that one can only narrate oneself authentically, truthfully or candidly in one’s mother tongue. It would be facile to assume that the intimate, personal, confessional genre of life writing can only be accomplished within one’s native language. There are many people whose lives are necessarily multilingual due to their lived reality; indeed, multilingualism is not always an expression of privilege, fortune, economic success or intellectual elitism, but is frequently the result of poverty, trauma, exile or forced displacement. Narrating oneself in a language other than one’s native tongue is a choice for some but a necessity for many. Moreover, it would be simplistic to assume that one’s native tongue enables a more direct, personal or intimate point of entry into self-narrative. The difficulty inherent in narrating one’s self in words is surely the most fascinating element of life writing. For literary writers, the desire to narrate the self in words can be the catalyst for creativity and inspiration, as well as a locus of complexity and struggle. For the writer who has access to another language, their wider semantic knowledge may exert a significant impact upon the process of narrating the self in words.

The writer who forms the topic of this chapter, Catherine Rey, approaches life writing through the French language but, as this chapter demonstrates, needs the support of English in order to achieve self-narrative. As we shall see, her native tongue is insufficient to her as she attempts to write her self. Furthermore, Rey represents an unconventional model of bilingualism. As discussed in the introduction to this book, traditional models of bilingualism are predicated upon children who grow up surrounded by two languages, who are fully competent in both languages and who speak both languages at the same (native or near-native) level. Rey’s position is quite different. Her native tongue is French, since she grew up in France in an environment that was essentially monolingual. She learned English subsequently and, as we shall see, learned it most thoroughly after moving to Australia at the age of forty-one. While she lives her life in two languages now, her bilingualism is a choice she made as an adult. Her trajectory does not therefore correspond to the stereotype of the bilingual individual who speaks two

languages monolingually. Indeed, as her writing demonstrates, her two languages are indispensable to her writing and, in particular, to her life writing. It should also be pointed out that her two languages – French and English – are not in a position of dominated and dominating in terms of the global hierarchy, as is the case for several of the writers under discussion in this book. Whereas several writers whose work is analyzed here perceive French as the colonial and dominant language that restricts, oppresses or threatens their native tongue, Rey speaks two of the most powerful languages in the world. This is an important factor, since it demonstrates that bilingualism constitutes a vast array of linguistic possibilities and subject positions. Rey’s work is thus positioned linguistically very differently from that of the other writers in this study.

Rey’s writing is also uniquely positioned due to her geographical location. Australia is the setting of Rey’s life writing, since she left France for Western Australia in mid-life. It is from this position that Rey authored her self-reflexive works: an Anglophone country in which English dominates to the extent that leading linguists describe Australians as having “a monolingual mindset.”² Even in the case of life writing written in English, these texts reveal a variety of *Englishes*. Prominent contemporary Australian writer Maxine Beneba Clarke, for example, demonstrates in her recent work *Foreign Soil* that different Englishes, comprised of different accents, inflections and sounds, exist across Anglophone countries, including Australia. It would be an oversight to dismiss the multilingual literatures of Australia, however. Recent research calls attention to Australian literature written in languages other than English. Australian scholar John Gatt-Rutter, for example, shows in *The Bilingual Cockatoo: Writing Italian Australian Lives* that many Italian migrants have written autobiographies using a hybrid form of Italian, inflected by the grammar, vocabulary and accents of Australian English. Likewise, Yuanfang Chen demonstrates the range of Chinese-language life writing in Australia in *Dragon Seed in the Antipodes: Chinese-Australian Autobiographies*. Christopher Hogarth and I are currently researching French-language life writing in Australia in a project funded by the Australian Research Council.³ Indeed, literature in the Asia Pacific region has a significant French tradition due to France’s colonization of islands such as Tahiti, New Caledonia and Wallis Futuna. French writing about Australia dates back to 1676, with the publication of Gabriel de Foigny’s *La Terre australe connue*, and several more examples appeared in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.⁴ More has been published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which testifies to the long-standing presence of Australia in the French literary sphere. Moreover, this seems to be a reciprocal movement, as Australians are moving to France and publishing travel memoirs in higher numbers than ever before. Juliana de Nooy assembles 32 examples of such texts published since 2000, including

commercial successes, such as Sarah Turnbull’s *Almost French* (2002), Margaret Ambrose’s *How to be French* (2005) and Vicki Archer’s *My French Life* (2006). De Nooy demonstrates that this phenomenon is curiously gendered; approximately three quarters of these travel narratives are written by women (1). Nonetheless, life writing in languages other than in English within this region has received little critical attention. As I hope to show in this chapter, such narratives exist and deserve scholarly attention for the addition that they bring to the texture, breadth and sound of self-narrative in the region.

This chapter analyzes a series of life writing texts by Rey. Interestingly, she wrote seven novels in French before embarking on self-reflexive writing. All of her novels were released by Parisian publishing houses and several were published to critical acclaim, especially *L’Ami intime* (1998) and *Ce que racontait Jones* (2003), which was translated as *The Spruiker’s Tale* and shortlisted for the Prix Renaudot and Prix Femina. This chapter focuses upon her first overt self-narrative, *Une femme en marche* (2007), which translates literally as “A Woman Walking” and which was published in English as *Stepping Out* (2008). Rey identifies this text as “un ouvrage à caractère autobiographique” (2011: 342) [a work of autobiographical character]. In this first-person narrative, the author recounts her journey to and her subsequent life in Australia. Rey was born in 1956 in Western France to a working-class family. Her father and grandparents had lived in Australia and she grew up hearing exotic stories of this faraway land. She notes that her father’s native tongue was English, since he was born in Australia and lived there until the age of ten, yet Rey was raised by her grandparents.⁵ While they had learned some English while living in Australia, the language of their home and of Rey’s schooling was French. In *Une femme en marche*, she begins her self-narrative at the age of eighteen, situating herself as a rebellious teenager who was intent on escaping a difficult childhood; her mother had given her to her grandparents for them to raise her when she was just three weeks old. The eighteen-year-old narrator recounts having run away from home, hidden in friends’ homes, begged for money on the streets and squatted with her boyfriend in vacated buildings. As the tale progresses, the boyfriend becomes her husband, her daily activities become studying, then teaching, the squats become apartments and houses and her life becomes a stereotypical vision of the professional middle-class. At this point, however, the rebellious streak of her youth resurfaces, and she finds her surroundings unbearably stifling. As she writes, at the age of forty, “un rêve grandit en moi. Il se nomme Australie” (122) [a dream is growing inside me. It’s called Australia (90)].⁶ Rey refashions her life, leaving her husband, moving to Perth, writing about Australia, and becoming an academic in an Australian university. Since this landmark text in her writing career, Rey has published a series of self-reflexive texts that contribute further layers to her self-narrative. In “Est-ce que vous écrivez toujours?”

[Are you still writing?], which appeared in 2011, Rey discusses her trajectory as a writer in Australia. The title is a question asked of her by a fellow writer who was snidely suggesting that her rate of publication had slowed. In her essay, Rey uses this exchange as a springboard to discuss the limitations she encountered when publishing in French and in France. Another essay, “To Make a Prairie it Takes a Clover and One Bee,” was published in an anthology of writings by Australian authors in 2013. Interestingly, Rey wrote this in English. The final source of this chapter is a bilingual interview Rey carried out with me, published as “Ecrire entre deux langues/Writing Between Two Languages” in 2018. In this conversation, Rey broaches questions of cultural and linguistic transformation throughout her life and work, and ends with a discussion of her most recent novel, *The Lovers* (2018), which she wrote in English. While this novel is not analyzed in this chapter since it is beyond the realm of life writing, it marks an important stage in Rey’s bilingual journey. Sadly, scholarly attention has not yet been extended to Rey’s work. It is hoped that her inclusion in this book will contribute to changing this, since her voice represents an iconoclastic and innovative approach to multilingual fiction and to life writing. In this chapter, I first analyze Rey’s narrative of self-invention in a foreign space. I focus on the role of writing in her changing approach to selfhood. Second, I examine the translanguaging Rey performs in this text, arguing that her modified, hybrid French becomes a means of refashioning her narrative of self.

Cultural Self-Reinvention

Une femme en marche is a curious blend of life writing and travel narrative, as it foregrounds the narrative of discovering a self through travel rather than that of discovering unfamiliar places or spaces. Gillian Whitlock theorizes how to read the autobiographical in travel narrative, stating that, “to read travel writing in terms of autobiographics is to sharpen the focus on the production of the self in these texts, to think about how the writer might invent herself in relation to place” (77). Here, I read *Une femme en marche* in a similar way, analyzing how Rey represents the reinvention of her self in the space of rural Australia. Although she grew up surrounded by stories of Australia, Rey presents France and Australia as discreet, disconnected spaces. She writes of her traumatic young adulthood and difficult marriage to a man of North African descent, then propels the reader into the narrative of her life in Australia. Her decision to move overseas, her preparations, her journey itself and her process of adaptation are all curiously absent from the text. In this way, she constructs a portrait of herself as “at home” in both places. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan note that some travel narratives function as “travelogues that work to *erase* their ‘travel’ status, both by establishing a foreign base that assumes the properties of home and by

reversing the conventional traveller’s distinction between the temporary guest and the permanent host” (41). Rey’s text performs a similar move, insisting upon a sense of belonging in both places. Although she states that there will always be things that elude her and that make her aware of her unfamiliarity, Rey insists upon the permanence of Australia as her host country and rejects any notion of temporary status. In this way, she makes passing references to her travel and to the most traumatic parts of her story – domestic violence, misogyny, abandonment by her mother and rejection by her family, for example – but represents Australia as her permanent home and as the site of her transformation.

Although she clearly feels a sense of belonging in both places, she criticizes France and Australia as she writes the tale of her developing selfhood. France, in particular, is portrayed especially negatively in *Une femme en marche*, a representation that is echoed elsewhere in Rey’s life writing. France is described in this text in a way that defies many stereotypes about the people, the country and the language. Rather than portraying France as intellectually stimulating, politically committed, socially engaged and historically democratic, Rey points to the lacunae in the Republican ideal. While France may be viewed as a Republican model of liberal thought and expression, it has been criticized for its emphasis upon adherence to a set of values that work to exclude outsiders.⁷ Rey points specifically to the practices of exclusion of minorities orchestrated by French society. Rey’s depiction of France is most poignant when she writes of her experiences as a woman: a poor woman, an abandoned woman, a victim of sexism at work, a victim of domestic violence at home, and as a woman who struggles to find independence through writing. In particular, she recounts how her husband, born to Algerian migrants, insists upon her subservience in a way that resists any stereotypes of sophisticated, elegant and liberated French women. She underscores that she comes from a social class that is far from the moneyed, educated, comfortable stereotype of the French that is often propagated abroad. For women of her social class, she asserts, “dès qu’une femme ne veut plus chanter comme au temps jadis ils se marièrent et eurent beaucoup d’enfants, sa marge de manoeuvre est terriblement entravée” (160) [“as soon as a woman no longer feels like singing along to the tune of ‘and then they got married and had lots of children,’ her room for manoeuvre is terribly hampered” (124)]. With an emphasis on the experience of women, Rey’s writing appears to be intent on displaying the inequality and injustice ingrained in French society and pointing to the intersection of gender and class prejudice at its heart.

Rey avoids an excessively positive representation of Australia, however. While she criticizes French society for its prejudice and its lack of opportunities accorded to minorities, she does not draw a facile contrast between her country of origin and her country of immigration. She recounts positive aspects of her experience, such as the welcoming nature

of working-class Australian neighborhoods and the warm, open-minded attitudes she finds toward foreigners there. Simultaneously, she points to the inequalities in Australian society, particularly the huge amounts of wealth to be found in certain privileged parts of the country. For example, she describes the young people of Western Australia in the following manner: “dans leurs vastes maisons logeraient vingt familles soudanaises. L'eau de leur piscine arroserait deux acres d'une terre sèche La jeunesse? Quand elle ne se bronze pas à Cottesloe, elle vérifie le mouvement de ses actions boursières pour revendre entre deux baignades” (240) [twenty Sudanese families could live in their vast homes. The water from their swimming pools would water acres of dry land. When the youngsters are not sunbathing on Cottesloe, they're following the stock market and selling their shares between dips in the ocean].⁸ Although she does not refer specifically to racist attitudes, the reference to Sudanese families in this citation points to an underlying exclusion in Australian society. By alluding to structural and societal problems such as these, Rey subverts superficial comparisons that are sometimes found by travel writers who, by their own choice, leave one nation for another on a permanent basis. The undertone of *Une femme en marche* suggests that its writer is trying to escape something, but she does not explicate this fully, nor does she claim to have found a panacea in Australia. Instead, she carries the trauma with her and finds ways of adapting and living with it in her new home.

Two elements of her Australian narrative stand out as particularly fortuitous to Rey's trajectory. First, a close reading of the text suggests that Rey finds a female community in Western Australia that she had not experienced in France. This is not overtly discussed by the writer but is discernible in the characters she chooses to describe. While she finds a sense of acceptance, community and belonging among the working-class people around her, she makes particular reference to the female characters in her new environment. Rey describes the women around her – the female students in her classes, the female colleagues with whom she teaches and the female immigrants with whom she shares houses – as inspirational figures of liberation. This is particularly ironic since Western Australia is known for its rugged environment, its vast wilderness and its primary industries, such as mining and farming. In a space that is dominated by activities and exploits that are stereotypically characterized as male and masculine, Rey's recollections are striking. Mary Louise Pratt, in her work on travel writing, theorizes what she names “feminotopia”: moments in travel narratives that appear as “episodes that present idealized worlds of female autonomy, empowerment, and pleasure” (163). Pratt's theorization relates more strongly to more strictly defined female communities, but her notion points to the subtle irony at work in Rey's text. Although she is critical of aspects of Australia in *Une femme en marche*, Rey also takes an open-minded attitude to the people and the

experiences she encounters there, many of which resist the stereotypes attached to them. By engaging in communities from the perspective of an outsider, Rey paints them differently. Moreover, she represents herself as an evolving entity through her involvement with them.

Second, Rey describes the space of Western Australia as something entirely new and different for her. Her descriptions of life in France consist of navigating small towns, shuttling between home and school and being confined in hostile family homes, both hers and her husband's. Space is represented as a constant source of struggle in the environment of the low social class in which she was raised. Whereas most European migrants head for the metropolitan cities of Sydney or Melbourne, Rey selects to make her home amid the vastness of rural Australia. This choice is, of course, partially influenced by her grandparents, who had lived in such a community. As Rey commented in an interview with literary journalist Sally Blakeney, “the idea of this nothingness was very appealing, with people stuck in the middle of nowhere with no escape. I can see myself reproduced in this landscape” (74). For Rey, a regional, rural segment of Western Australia becomes a place in which she is able to reflect, to question, and, most importantly, to write. She points out that, in Western Australia, football is more important than politics and *Home and Away* blares from her neighbor's television set, but she is able to carve out a space for herself to write, read and teach unfettered by the individual men and the collective patriarchy that controlled her in France. Ironically, therefore, while she is not blind to the systemic equalities of Australia, she finds a permanent home amid rural life in its western territory.

This striking representation is best understood when read in conjunction with Rey's article, “Est-ce que vous écrivez toujours?” [“Are you still writing?”]. As can be surmised from this article, she still writes predominantly for a French-speaking audience, but not necessarily a French one: This was published in the *Australian Journal of French Studies*, the primary academic journal in French Studies in Australia. Such a choice of outlet is emblematic of her in-between position: neither fully French nor Australian. In this piece, Rey discusses her literary trajectory, reflecting upon the way in which her writing has changed since she moved to Australia. The fellow writer who obsequiously asks her the question embodies, she hints, the superior, ungenerous and conceited attitudes of French writers who are, she claims, “toujours persuadés que Paris est le centre du monde” (337) [still certain that Paris is the center of the world] and of the French publishing industry which is “toujours majoritairement masculin” (337) [still mostly male]. In this essay, she criticizes the French literary establishment for what she views as its inherently restrictive quality that demands subservience to dominant literary trends. She identifies the most important trend as the realist novel, which she practiced in her earlier writing but which no longer corresponds to her desires.

Recalling that while in France she adopted the realist model “par crainte de franchir le pas vers mon inconnu” (345) [out of fear of taking the step toward my unknown], she claims that Australia offers her the opportunity for literary innovation: “vivre en Australie m’a enfin permis de lâcher les amarres du classicisme auxquelles je me raccrochais” (346) [living in Australia finally enabled me to leave the moorings of classicism that I had held on to]. Her self-invention in Australia is therefore primarily an invention of literary genre, as she finds a new form of self-expression, free of the shackles of French literary convention. There is no self-reinvention for her without literary invention; she hints that her writing and her self-development are inseparable. She elucidates in her article that “de texte en texte, je découvre celle que je fus, celle que je suis et celle que je voudrais devenir. [...] Dans chaque texte je suis entrée avec un certain visage. J’en suis sortie chaque fois transformée. Ecrire m’a forgée et m’a construite” (338) [from text to text, I discover who I was, who I am and who I would like to become. [...] I entered each text with a certain face. Each time, by the end, I was transformed. Writing has forged me and constructed me]. The crucial element in this process of self-invention through writing is her new homeland, as she identified more recently in her short text “To Make a Prairie it Takes a Clover and One Bee”:

I enjoy the challenging but rewarding solitude of being far away from my peers. Being cut off from influences means no trend. No judgemental look over my shoulder. No superego. No questions like ‘What will they think of me?’ Being far away from one’s native country allows you to be stripped of the old self (241).⁹

Importantly, she wrote this piece in English, which demonstrates the way in which this writer is able to attain a new form of expression and understanding through the support of another language. Crucially, she claims in the last sentence that her distance from her birthplace allows her to find liberation from her previous sense of self. Given her comments in this essay and the writings referred to throughout this chapter, it may be surmised that the process of writing in a foreign land, inflected by a foreign language, is the main catalyst for her self-reinvention in her writing. As we have seen, she cannot move continents and leave all of the trauma behind her. She alludes to the fact that she carries pain with her, but she develops the ability to write it and its place in her story differently. The most important part of this reinvention is, I argue in this chapter, her use of translanguaging.

Linguistic Self-Reinvention

For Rey, the linguistic play that characterizes her literary writing in Australia is a key element of her self-narrative. As we saw in the

introduction to this book, French is a very standardized language, partly due to its highly centralized education system and partly due to its institutional history. This standardization has evidently influenced Rey's literary language. She obtained the highly competitive teaching qualification, the *Certificat d'aptitude au professorat de l'enseignement du second degré* (CAPES), in France and taught French literature in the French education system for many years. She is thus well acquainted with French literary norms and, in her earlier work, she follows French literary conventions closely. Her first texts are highly poetic, lyrical and descriptive works that manipulate the French language in subtle and nuanced ways. Rey's first published work, *L'Ami intime*, appeared in 1994 and is a sensitive, poetic reminiscence written in the voice of a male narrator. The short novel has very few characters – a father approaching death and his son's subsequent reappraisal of their relationship – and is written in eloquent, lyrical and understated French. *Les Jours heureux* and *Eloge de l'oubli*, published in 1995 and 1996, respectively, show a similar style despite their different subject matter. Rey's style changed after her migration to Australia, as *Lucie comme les chiens* (2001) and *Ce que racontait Jones* (2003) are comprised of not just darker topics and nebulous characters but also a more pronounced linguistic play. Andrew Riemer, the former chief book review editor at the *Sydney Morning Herald*, translated the latter novel and underscored Rey's propensity to invent words and expressions. He is cited by a reviewer of the book as having commented, “It's wonderful to see her let rip. Her extravagance and wildness are very unusual for French writing, which tends to be ordered, rational, precise and very much in control of the emotions” (in Susan Wyndham, “Emotional Acrobatics”).

An important development in Rey's language play is to be found beyond her literary writing. Between the literary texts *Ce que racontait Jones* and *Une femme en marche*, Rey also wrote a doctoral thesis. Her thesis, completed at the University of Western Australia in Perth in 2005, is titled *La Nouvelle Babel: Langage, identité et morale dans les œuvres de Emil Cioran, Milan Kundera et Andréï Makine*. In this work, Rey analyzes three writers who chose to forsake their native tongue to write literary works in the French language. Cioran's native tongue is Romanian, Kundera's is Czech and Makine's is Russian. Interestingly, these writers follow French literary convention closely in terms of their language use. All three write in pure, poetic French that shows no inflection by another language. All three have enjoyed success in the French literary market, especially Kundera, who has achieved fame in France and beyond, and Makine, who was decorated with a range of prizes, including the Goncourt. As we saw in relation to Lydie Salvayre, this is the most prestigious of France's six literary prizes and has traditionally been reserved for highly poetic, lyrical writing. Rey's choice of authors is interesting, therefore; her authors wrote in French by choice and

they wrote exclusively in French, as opposed to the translinguaging she practices in *Une femme en marche*. Rey had, of course, elected to leave France when she wrote this thesis – in French, moreover – but continued to write her literary works in French. She claims that when she wrote the thesis, she had no idea that she would one day choose to write in English, which she did in her most recent novel, *The Lovers* (2018); in her published interview with me, she remarks that, “lorsque j’ai commencé ma thèse en 2011, je n’avais aucune idée que j’écrirais un jour en anglais. L’idée d’abandonner ma langue maternelle me faisait horreur. [...] Vivre loin de mon pays a tout changé” (94) [when I began writing my thesis in 2011, I had no idea I would write in English one day. I hated the idea of abandoning my mother tongue [...] Living far from my country changed everything]. Rey’s argument in her doctoral thesis is that these three writers are able to realize a process of self-reinvention through inhabiting and experimenting with a new language. As she writes in the English abstract that prefaces the thesis, “for Cioran, Kundera and Makine the French language provides a foil to their own ruptured, fragmented, traumatised or guilt-ridden native identities. In each case the adoption of French with its concomitant stereotypical qualities and values constitutes a dialectical process of coming to a clearer sense of self” (9).¹⁰ More recently, she claims that she would like to nuance this thesis since the experience of writing in another language has brought her to the realization that this process entails significant pain.¹¹ In this chapter, I argue something very similar in relation to Rey’s work; she reinvents her self-narrative through translinguaging in her life writing and proclaims the multilingual identity of literary writing in Australia; yet, she carries with her the effects of the painful familial, geographic and linguistic situation she inhabits.

A Translinguaging Trajectory

As Rey’s comment cited above suggests, it was not her intention to become an English-language writer. What is discernible in her work is, however, a linguistic play that uses several narrative strategies to break free of models of literary writing, including translinguaging. As somebody who was schooled in – and, indeed, schooled others in – French literary history and convention, Rey’s irreverent literary experimentation is all the more striking. From the outset of *Une femme en marche*, Rey writes with a disregard for the standards of French literary style. She persistently uses expletives, slang, sentence fragments and grammatical subversions. Her irreverent, ironic style has almost nothing in common with the styles of the French-language writers whose work she studied in her thesis, therefore. Rey’s style ranges from small-scale subversions to evident irreverence – sometimes playful, yet sometimes angry. Smaller elements of subversion – are, for instance, her frequent use of grammatically

incorrect fragments, such as “Ma mère. Née en 1922” (195) [“My mother. Born in 1922” (150)]. Such non-sentences interrupt the narrative flow, often pointing to a sense of unease or pain, such as is the case in this example, since the problematic relationship between the narrator and her mother is the central motif of the text. Rey’s descriptions of her mother are often presented in clipped, fragmented language that show a marked difference from the fluid poetry she has written in previous texts. Elsewhere, Rey expresses a more explicit flouting of linguistic and literary conventions, such as when she quotes a fellow migrant to Australia who describes his working-class suburb thus: “cette piaule de merde, même un clébard en voudrait pas! C’est quoi qu’il fout le proprio? Le proprio, il s’en fout des cloches comme nous!” (225) [“This shitty place, even a mongrel dog wouldn’t come near it! What the hell’s the landlord doing? The landlord couldn’t give a toss about derros like us!” (172)].¹² Such street vocabulary, especially the vulgar terms, is hardly the stuff of a typical Goncourt winner; nor are the grammatically incorrect negations (the missing “ne”) or interrogative forms (the nonstandard syntax of “C’est quoi qu’il fout?”). Rey has clearly developed her own inimitative style based upon a version of French that is closer to a vernacular, oral language that was likely spoken by individuals in her working-class background. The trajectory from the standard, literary French of her earlier work is starkly apparent in this self-referential text, therefore.

What renders this trajectory even more acute is the author’s use of translanguaging. One of the main ways in which Rey translanguages in *Une femme en marche* is by peppering her text with isolated words in English. These isolated words and phrases mingle into the French sentences, unannounced and unexpected. For instance, when the narrator depicts the two women who raised and influenced her, her mother and grandmother – she even calls them “deux mères” (112) [“two mothers” (83)] – she underscores the contrasts between them. She portrays the younger woman as more rebellious, impetuous and exuberant. Her grandmother, however, is described thus: “Ma grand-mère était une femme pudique voire puribonde avec un petit côté austère, mais rien d’une femme efface [...] Elle était du style *behave yourself*. La reine Victoria était son idole” (112) [“My grandmother was modest, indeed, a prude, with a bit of an austere side, although she was no wallflower. [...] She was of the ‘behave yourself’ kind. Queen Victoria was her idol” (83)]. In this example, the English phrase “behave yourself” has a more concise, pithy locution that encapsulates the grandmother’s personality. The use of the imperative voice offers a glimpse into the voice in which the grandmother would have spoken to her grandchild and chastised her daughter. Rey underlines the grandmother’s strictness and uprightness by alluding to an English Victorian style, the connotation of which is absent in the literal French translation, *tiens-toi bien* or *sois sage*. In this instance, then, Rey incorporates English into the narrative in order

to bring something to the description that would not have been easily encapsulated in the French language. Her use of English also points to the grandmother’s experience in Australia, in which she would have had to cope at least minimally in the English language. This implicitly underscores an important point of connection the narrator shares with her grandmother that does not include her mother. Importantly, the English expression is not translated into French. While the French/Francophone reader does not need to be familiar with the English phrase in order to follow the sense of the paragraph, the absence of translation is striking. The original French text is peppered with such English phrases that appear in italics, thus standing out from the principal language and signaling the places where Rey considers it to be insufficient to convey her experience concisely or accurately. These create a sense of unknowability to Rey’s narrative: an element of the text that not all readers will fully comprehend but which is clearly imperative to her sense of self-narrative. The translator’s choice, to place these English phrases in inverted commas, as in the example above, is the simplest and clearest way to render the meaning but loses some of the linguistic texture of the original writing. It is difficult to imagine a suitable alternative technique, however; after all, Rey is pointing to the limits of language and the need to borrow from others to represent one’s individual, intimate experience accurately.

Rey’s writing shows a similar preponderance with the limits of and the lacunae in languages. Her broad linguistic lexicon enables her to draw on her two languages dynamically, according to the theories of translanguaging. She frequently borrows words and phrases from English to act as an addition to her French prose. In the bilingual interview she undertook with me, she interchanged languages from question to question, answering questions in English and in French in turn. English still seeped into her French-language responses, however. Explaining her choice to write in English, for example, she claimed that, “la solitude est devenue très cruelle et lourde avec les années. C’est aussi pourquoi j’ai changé de langue, pour ‘reach out,’ comme on dit ici, pour renouer des liens, pour être 100% qui je suis, c’est-à-dire, un écrivain” (94) [the solitude became very cruel and burdensome over the years. This is also why I changed language, to reach out, as you say here, to renew my ties, to be 100% who I am, that is, a writer]. The expression “reach out,” indeed, has no equivalent in French, and further demonstrates the ease with which Rey appropriates idiomatic, slang phrases to assist her French prose. She pushes this usage still further by substituting words from English into French. In her article, “Est-ce que vous écrivez toujours?,” for example, this occurs when she reflects upon her writing process. She claims that the characters come to her first when a text is taking shape and states that “ils proviennent du miracle de la *serendipity*. Ce mot n’a pas d’équivalent en français sinon ‘synchronie’ qui en réduit le sens” (343) [they come from the miracle of serendipity. This word has no equivalent

in French apart from ‘synchrony,’ which reduces its meaning]. In this instance, then, the English language proves more useful for expressing her literary writing – all the more ironically, since her literary writing is in French. As she explains the word “serendipity,” Rey uses the support of the Webster dictionary, which is one of the oldest and widely consulted dictionaries in the United States. She translates its definition into French herself: “le don de trouver des choses précieuses et agréables qu’on ne cherchait pas” (343) [the gift of finding precious or pleasant things unexpectedly]. As this translation of an English-language dictionary demonstrates, working in two different languages, borrowing from both of them and translating between them are standard elements of this multilingual writer’s work. She underscores the differences between the individual words of the French and English languages, suggesting that, “la *serendipity* va de pair avec l’état d’inspiration, d’attente, de réception. Et je dirai que c’est la synchronie des deux qui fait émerger le texte” (344) [serendipity goes together with the state of inspiration, expectation, reception. And I would say that the text emerges from the synchrony of both]. In this sense, Rey shows that two words come together for her in her task of writing, one in French and the other in English. This is perhaps the perfect metaphor for her writing trajectory, as it demonstrates the intimate character of her multilingual writing that rests upon a large lexical field rather than upon two distinct monolingual systems.

The technique of borrowing from English within her French prose is also evident when Rey discusses more confessional elements of her self-narrative. In particular, Rey is candid about her spirituality, some of which emanates from the impact of her grandmother, who was Protestant and who bequeathed her Bible to Rey upon her death. In her self-reflective essay, Rey notes that the French word *esprit* has two translations in English: mind and spirit. She writes that the root of the word *esprit* is the Latin *spiritus*, which means breath, and which she interprets as referring to the breath of God. In Rey’s opinion, the fact that English has two words that encapsulate the breadth of meaning of this nuanced, abstract concept creates the potential for a more accurate representation. In French, the fact that only one word is available reduces the semantic field of the Latin root, removing the distinction between mind and spirit and placing the emphasis on the former: the rational process of the mind. “Alors comment décrire le *spiritus* puisqu’il n’a pas de nom?” (345) [how can one describe the *spiritus* when it has no name?], asks Rey. Ironically, then, Rey demonstrates that the language of Descartes, Voltaire and Sartre is associated with philosophy, elegance and rationality; yet, it can occasionally be an impediment to accurate representation of complex thought. The English language therefore sometimes enables the writer to understand and narrate her literary writing, as in the above example of serendipity, and at other times enables her more accurately to narrate her intimate self.

In addition to borrowing from one language to supplement another, a further technique Rey develops to translanguage in her life writing is her melding of the two languages within sentences, moving from one language to the other and back again. In addition to using English as a substitute that enables her to represent her experience in more nuanced ways, Rey thus melds the two languages into new forms that underscore her process of self-reinvention in Australia. In a telling example, she claims that her experiences in Australia have led her to develop “l’absence de peur doublée d’une capacité à faire des réserves d’espoir. C’est le désir d’y croire qui fait dire au *true blue* même dans les pires moments: ça va aller. *No worries. She’ll be right. She, c’est la fatalité, la vie, la destinée*” (107) [“Lack of fear, coupled with an ability to hold hope in reserve. It’s the will to believe that makes the true-blue Aussies say even at the worst moments: It’ll be OK. No worries. She’ll be right. She, that’s fate, life, destiny” (79)]. In this passage, the author is engaged in a process of multilingualism that moves beyond translation from one language into another. Instead, the grammar and vocabulary of the two languages meld into a reflection of the spirituality that Rey finds for herself in her new home. The two languages come together most clearly in the final sentence, as the subject of the previous English sentence, “she” becomes the subject of the French sentence and adds another layer of meaning to it: The feminine subject “she” in English refers to the feminine nouns *fatalité*, *vie* and *destinée*, which further accentuate her depiction of a uniquely female experience in Australia and her individual approach to spirituality. The two languages thus function not as two discreet systems but as one hybrid form that interact to provide a more nuanced reflection of this author’s self-narrative.

Rey’s work thus demonstrates the dynamic process of translanguaging at work in the development of an individual identity. By using translanguaging as a narrative strategy, this author creates a new textual space for the expression of her self-identity and takes ownership over her narrative of self. She alludes to this in “Est-ce que vous écrivez toujours?,” quoting Mario Vargas Llosa who, after having left Peru, declared that “lorsqu’on ne baigne plus dans sa langue, on perd contact avec le langage de la rue et son langage peut devenir obsolète, mais la langue littéraire devient plus riche, plus inventive” (346) [when one is no longer immersed in one’s language, one loses contact with everyday language and one’s language can become obsolete, but one’s literary language becomes richer and more inventive]. Rey thus inscribes herself in the lineage of writers who have melded their native tongue with other languages and whose writing has transformed as a result. This citation from Vargas Llosa underscores the push and pull between the liberation writers may experience through adopting another language and the loss that may accompany it. Rey’s writing appears to echo this, since it reveals a reverence and a nostalgia for the French language, at the same time

as it signals its lacunae, shortcomings and inadequacies – at least for the task of establishing this author’s self-narrative. Rey even refers to her literary language in two nomenclatures: “ma troisième langue” [my third language] and “ma langue créole” [my creole language] (“Est-ce que vous écrivez toujours?” 346), highlighting how this individual linguistic formation is personal to her and her story. While the mixture of languages known as Creole has become a lingua franca in certain parts of the world, as we shall see in greater detail in our discussion of Gisèle Pineau’s work, Rey uses the term in its purest sense as a mingling of disparate languages, thus appropriating it as a highly unique concept. Interestingly, she describes her literary language as not just the result of her migration to Australia but also “une quête mêlant la gouaille de Rabelais aux patois que j’entendais dans mon enfance” [a quest mixing the banter of Rabelais and the dialects I heard as a child] (346). In this sense, Rey locates the origins of her translanguaging in the social class of her childhood and hints that this later developed into an irreverence for conventional French literary language. As she writes of the influence of Australia on her language of writing, “vivre en situation d’exil volontaire, c’est s’offrir la possibilité de redécouvrir sa propre langue” (“Est-ce que vous écrivez toujours?” 346) [living in the situation of voluntary exile gives you the possibility to rediscover your own language]. It is through mixing languages that new subject positions are formed for this author, and ultimately, how she escapes her patriarchal environment and becomes a writer: not in the country of Voltaire, Rousseau or Proust, but through melding Australian English with her own French language, which enables her finally to establish a literary style in which she can convey her own self-narrative.

A key element of Rey’s mixing of languages is the way in which she uses English and French to respond to the trauma of her upbringing. Throughout her self-reflexive texts, Rey subtly refers to her difficult childhood and suggests that her migration to Australia was a result of her desire to escape both the painful memories of the past and the difficulties of her current situation. As we have seen, her relationship with her mother is the major trauma at the heart of this text. Rooted in the mother’s abandonment of her when she was only three weeks old, the relationship between the two women was perpetually tense. Their relationship was never fully resolved, and Rey wrote *Une femme en marche* shortly after her mother’s death. Set in this context, Rey’s translanguaging may be interpreted as a means of responding to the tension with her mother and the relationships she had with both her mother and father. After all, the mother is emblematic of the traditional French mores Rey aimed to subvert. She was a pillar of “Frenchness” to her daughter and, since she was monolingual, is closely connected for Rey with the French language. Rey even mentioned in a recent interview that her mother hated the English language (in an interview with

ABC radio Sydney). Her father, by contrast, spoke English as his native tongue. Rey’s relationship with him was far less problematic, and she writes of her sympathy for this man who was always nostalgic for his lost past. She understood that Australia was for him the site of his greatest happiness, and he experienced his separation from his birthplace as a constant source of loss. A psychoanalytic critic would perhaps interpret the intermingling of French and English in Rey’s texts as an attempt to meld the two traditions associated with her mother and father. By melding French, associated with her mother, and English, associated with her father, this writer finds her own in-between language that awards her the freedom of self-expression. By translanguaging between the two distinct languages of her parents, using the wide lexicon of language in a dynamic form of multilingualism, Rey does not necessarily overcome the trauma of her childhood but arrives at a place where she is empowered to establish a renewed version of her key relationships and narrate her individual story in light of them.

It is all the more interesting, then, that Rey recently took the step of writing her first text entirely in English. *The Lovers* was published in 2018. In my interview with her, Rey claimed that the reason for this change of language was her survival as a writer (92). She had submitted work to publishing houses in France and, despite having published eight full-length works in addition to shorter pieces, her attempts had proven fruitless. She speculated in this interview that her distance from her homeland may have been a factor in the publishing houses’ decisions – “est-ce qu’on me fait payer le fait d’être partie?” (92) [are people making me pay for having left?] – and suggests her style may have appeared too risky for French publishers. She concluded that in order to continue as a writer, “il me fallait tenter d’ouvrir d’autres portes, atteindre d’autres lecteurs, partager avec mes amis australiens le monde intérieur qui est le mien” (92) [I had to try to open other doors, reach other readers, share with my Australian friends the interior world that I inhabit]. *The Lovers* is a fictional text – indeed, Rey identifies it as a novel in her acknowledgments – set in New South Wales, Australia. There are numerous French characters, however, and some of the plot takes place in France. The main character, Lucie Bruyère, disappears and the plot centers around the police’s attempts to trace her. In the course of their investigation, the reader learns Lucie had migrated from France to Australia following a difficult upbringing and had strained relationships with many of her family members. While some of the motifs of Lucie’s story are familiar to the reader who knows Rey’s work, much is new, original and innovative. The structure allows multiple characters’ voices to be heard, since a succession of people take over the narrative voice to recount their memories of Lucie and the night she disappeared. Each chapter is narrated by a different character (some of whom narrate multiple chapters as the police investigation progresses), so that the reader

hears the voices of several distinct individuals. This interesting literary technique allows Rey to play with language, melding it to fit multiple voices. Moreover, each chapter is highly confessional; although it is implied that each character is talking to the police as part of the investigation, Rey has stated that she wrote them as if they were speaking to a psychiatrist (Edwards 2018: 96). In terms of the language in which these characters speak, the translanguaging of Rey’s self-reflexive writing is almost entirely absent from this text. There are very few incursions of French into this English-language prose. Small, isolated expressions remind the reader of the French characters, such as when Lucie reportedly calls her family “petits bourgeois” (24), a French friend calls her “ma mignonne” (31) [sweetie], a French mother says “arrête-toi” (94) [stop] and “bonne nuit” (91) [good night] to her daughter and a character exclaims “Mon Dieu!” (115) [My God!] amid his testament to the police. All of these French expressions are printed in italics and none are long enough to warrant translation; they merely add to the character of the prose, reminding the reader of the multinational nature of its story and of its writer. Rey’s English prose is not just correct but innovative, poetic and varied. In particular, her technique of passing the narrative voice through a succession of characters means she can experiment with different styles. For example, she incorporates nonstandard English into the prose as a character from rural New South Wales makes statements to the police, such as “Am I dreamin or what?” and “Nah, she isn’t my sister” (171). Rey’s playful, ironic and irreverent approach to language is once again in evidence, then, even though the translanguaging of her life writing is not.

Rey’s life writing is therefore marked by its narrative of self-reinvention through geographical and linguistic migration. The translanguaging she practices enables her to meld her two languages into a creative lexicon that allows her to atone for the past and narrate her renewed identity. The pain of her difficult upbringing is fully acknowledged in her writing, lest her reader be tempted to assume her new-found Australian identity has healed her trauma. Nevertheless, her reinvented literary style, marked by its translanguaging, are the ultimate consequences of her migration; as she writes in “To Make a Prairie it Takes a Clover and One Bee,” “I don’t think I would have become entirely myself if I hadn’t left my country” (92). This phrase hints at the self-invention she has fashioned, suggesting that her “becoming” herself has been a process and that she was in some sense not herself beforehand, while in France. As *Une femme en marche* reaches its conclusion, Rey resists providing a coherent narrative of self or a history of the development of her personality. Instead, she simply insists that she will continue to write, from which we infer that she has developed her literary framework, found an alternative identity formation and escaped the male domination that she described so poignantly in the sections relating to her life in France.

Overall, then, she has reinvented herself as a woman writer with her own style and her own language by refusing discreet models of culture and discreet models of language. She mentions early in the text that her father was born in Perth and never lost his French accent; thus, he pronounced the city as *perte*, which translates to ‘loss’ in English. It is evident from this narrative of female self-reinvention through a unique approach to travel, culture and language that Rey has gained, not lost, from her Australian translocation. The “*langue minoritaire/minority language*” that she claims to speak is not a reference to the fact that she speaks French in Australia but to the fact that she has fashioned her own unique language with which to practice life writing. In this sense, Rey adopts her own, individual subject position created by contemporary multilingualism. As is the case with some, but not all, of the writers studied in this book, she is a native speaker of French. Unlike them, she adopted her second language later in life and only then came to realize the lacunae in her native tongue. As a result, the French language remains her linguistic home but is supplemented by another language, which is indispensable to her as she narrates her self in these life-writing texts. For other writers studied here, French is the language that has dominated their experience and is a source of power, oppression and trauma. The use of the French language as a tool of colonial domination is a recurring theme in this book, as we will now see as we turn to the work of Gisèle Pineau.

Notes

- 1 This quotation is taken from Rey, “Est-ce que vous écrivez toujours?” The English translation is “In Australia I speak a minority language.” All translations in this chapter are my own, apart from those of *Une femme en marche*, which are taken from the published version.
- 2 John Hajek and Yvette Slaughter, *Challenging the Monolingual Mindset*.
- 3 This is “Transnational Selves: Narratives of French Migration to Australia,” Australian Research Council Discovery Project, 2019–2021.
- 4 For more on this, see Dutton, “From *Littérature voyageuse* to *Littérature-monde* via Migrant Literatures: Towards an Ethics and Poetics of *Littérature-monde* through French-Australian literature.”
- 5 Rey made this statement in an interview with ABC Radio Sydney, 9 September 2018.
- 6 All translations of *Une femme en marche* are taken from Julie Rose’s published translation *Stepping Out* (2008).
- 7 See, for example, Swamy, *Interpreting the Republic: Marginalization and Belonging in Contemporary French Novels and Films*.
- 8 This translation is my own since this passage is omitted from the published translation.
- 9 This essay, “To Make a Prairie it Takes a Clover and One Bee,” is included in an anthology of autobiographical pieces by writers who have migrated to Australia from twenty-seven different countries. It is published in English and no mention is made of the original language of each piece or whether any were translated.

- 10 I should point out that the reason for the English-language prose is not Rey’s translanguaging; it is a requirement of Australian universities that theses written in languages other than English must be prefaced by an abstract in English.
- 11 Comments made in a public lecture given at the University of Adelaide, “Ecrire entre deux langues/Writing Between Two Languages,” 29 May 2018.
- 12 As is evident from this citation, the translator of this text, Julie Rose, used significant poetic license to render its nonstandard prose. The cover of the published translation even states, “an earlier version of *Stepping Out* was published in France in 2007 as *Une femme en marche*,” which suggests a distancing from the standard concepts of original text and translation.

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4 Gisèle Pineau's Evolving Translanguaging

From *Un papillon dans la cité*
to *L'Exil selon Julia* to *Mes quatre femmes*

The Caribbean, situated at the crossroads of nations, histories, seas and languages, is the source of a rich literary heritage. Writers in French, English and Spanish have represented their islands in ways that have revised understandings of the history of the Atlantic, the heritage of slavery and colonization and the advent of globalization. In this chapter, I turn to an author who writes at the confluence of legacy and language. Gisèle Pineau was born in 1956 and thus belongs to a different generation to some of the most celebrated French-language writers of the Caribbean, such as Maryse Condé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant. These authors are well known for their eloquent evocations of the cultural and linguistic specificities of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Pineau, writing in the wake of their success, continues to complicate narratives of the Caribbean and its relationship with its former colonizers through her highly personal, intimate texts. Her own life is marked by frequent mobility between France and Guadeloupe. Born in Paris to Guadeloupian parents, she visited Guadeloupe as a child but was schooled in France until 1970. Her first language was French, but she grew up hearing Creole in her family and her surroundings. She completed her high school studies in Martinique and Guadeloupe before returning to study in France. She qualified as a psychiatric nurse, a background that strongly informs her writing, and has lived between France and Guadeloupe in her adulthood. Her writing, which includes to date ten novels, a cluster of shorter texts for young audiences, short stories and three more overtly self-reflexive works she refers to as “*récits*,” have garnered a number of literary prizes and have been translated into English, German and Spanish. Her works are subtle evocations of life in France and the Caribbean and portray characters whose lives reflect the everyday experience of linguistic, cultural and racial tension. As Bonnie Thomas writes, her works “focus on the personal and show how social and personal histories affect the individual [and] interrogate the ways in which past traumas may either burden or liberate the victim” (139–140).

In this chapter, I focus upon Pineau's incorporation of the Creole language into her self-reflexive texts. Creole differs from the other languages used by authors in this book; as opposed to distinct languages, such as

German, English, Spanish, Tahitian or Vietnamese, Creole is a hybrid. Furthermore, it is a hybrid that is formed partially from French. Linguistically, a creole is a natural language developed from several different languages. Many creoles are spoken throughout the world, including (but not limited to) French-based, Portuguese-based and English-based creoles. Some of these creoles have a recognized status, such as Haitian Creole, which is an official language of Haiti. In the case of Guadeloupean Creole, which is related to Antillean Creole, this language is formed of French, English, Bantu languages and Amerindian languages.¹ French is therefore part of this language but, importantly, and as we shall see in this chapter, French and Guadeloupean Creole are often not mutually comprehensible.² Several Caribbean writers have represented this linguistic difference within their work, often attempting to subvert the stereotypes of Creole that associate it with social deprivation, blackness and marginalization. Jean Bernabé et al's famous *Eloge de la créolité* sought to create a textual space for the celebration of Creole, and writers such as Patrick Chamoiseau, Maryse Condé and Joseph Zobel have all incorporated isolated words and expressions of it in their work.

In the case of Pineau, her linguistic exploration conjoins the individual and collective, speaking to collective experience within a highly intimate, confessional narrative. As part of the individual, personal histories Pineau writes, her choice of language is an important element of her work. She writes very personally of her own linguistic influences while also portraying the language of different generations of Creole speakers. In this chapter, I contend that the evocation of her individual relationship to Creole and her collective portrayal of it have changed throughout her work. Here, I trace the evolution of her approach to the Creole language in three of her seminal, self-reflexive works. *Un papillon dans la cité* appeared in 1992 and its intended audience is young adults. As opposed to her fictional works, in which the label "roman" [novel] appears on the title page, and her lyrical, self-reflexive writing, which is labeled "récit" [narrative], no genre appears on the cover of this text. It tells the tale of the protagonist Félicie's childhood between France and Guadeloupe and contains pointed reference to her grandmother Man Ya/Julia. While not autobiographical, therefore, the text has clear resonances with life writing. I contrast the usage of Creole in this early text with that of *L'Exil selon Julia*, published in 1996. Rather than being aimed at a young audience, this work is labeled "récit" [narrative] and is a more overtly autobiographical account of the narrator's childhood experiences of Guadeloupe and France. Finally, I explore the linguistic play at work in the more recent *Mes quatre femmes*. Published in 2007, this is perhaps Pineau's most consciously self-referential work, although her voice is mostly superseded by the voices of others. Telling the story of four of her female ancestors, she traces the legacy of slavery and colonization on successive generations. Her representation of the Creole

language evolves throughout these texts. I argue that each involves different approaches to translanguaging that, in turn, denote a different approach by this author to her linguistic, cultural and racial heritage.

Un papillon dans la cité

Pineau's very first published work is clearly partially autobiographical. The tale is evidently recognizable; a child moves from Guadeloupe to France, albeit in the opposite direction from that of the author who moved from France to Guadeloupe, with two Guadeloupean parents living in Paris and a grandmother named Man Ya/Julia living in Haute Terre. The child experiences racism, prejudice and oppression, and the narrative presents, couched in terms suitable for a young adult audience and told through the first-person narration of a child, the harrowing lives of disenfranchised migrants in the outskirts of Paris. As Njeri Githire succinctly writes, France is represented in this text as "a run down locus of utter, insurmountable despair and hopelessness for immigrants" (76). While the text reflects elements of Pineau's own experiences, it clearly also incorporates fictional elements, such as the child's abandonment by the biological mother, her first years spent in Guadeloupe raised by the grandmother and the appearance of a stepfather due to the absence of a biological father. Nevertheless, its resonance with aspects of the author's life and its exploration of tropes she distinguishes elsewhere in relation to her own experience bring this text into the broad category of life writing.

In this first text, there are significant elements of Creole. This is apparent in the first-person narration of the child narrator, Félicie. She speaks with a very simple vocabulary and grammar that highlight the innocence of her point of view. Moving between the two countries, Félicie compares her environment in Guadeloupe and France from the perspective of a nonjudgmental observer who does not fully comprehend what she observes. This technique serves to broaden and deepen the critique of France as a hostile, unwelcoming land that fails to provide essentials such as adequate housing, basic education and a safe working environment to its overseas workers. Félicie, who is between the ages of ten and thirteen as the novella progresses, speaks in an innocent voice, and she occasionally uses isolated words and expressions from the Creole language. These elements often express cultural phenomena, such as when she refers to the mythical spirits of Guadeloupe, the "nég-mawon," the Guadeloupean tradition of the party, known as the "zouk," or the traditional instrument of the drum, the "ka" (13). These phrases are translated into French through footnotes on the same page; all the French-speaking reader has to do is glance to the bottom of the page to understand the meaning and continue reading. These cultural artifacts expressed in the Creole language at once call attention to the hybrid linguistic and cultural identity of this young protagonist. Her childlike

expressions demonstrate that she is unaware of how to understand, express or theorize her liminal identity, yet her Creole vocabulary expresses this succinctly. Her French is advanced for her age, since she is a very able student whose French teacher praises her and places her at the top of the class. Marjorie Salvodon points out astutely that Félicie's academic success is also presented as the "negative consequence of failure by hordes of foreigners – or to be more precise, their children – who lower the quality of the education" and stages "a reversal of roles that places a student from an overseas department as the star student in the French metropolitan system" (29). Furthermore, Félicie's competence in French also demonstrates that her use of Creole is always a choice, not a result of a lack of knowledge or understanding. Although she is fully competent in the language of the colonizer, she occasionally resorts to Creole to express important elements of her hybrid self. This is all the more poignant since her mother restricts her use of Creole in Paris. Aurélie, the mother who abandoned her when she was born and called her to Paris unexpectedly when she was ten years old, insists that French is the language of the household and that Creole belongs to a former life. Although Aurélie's husband, Félicie's step-father Papa Jo, is also Guadeloupean and a Creole speaker, this household of native Creole speakers is banned from communicating in Creole. Nevertheless, the subtle evocations of Creole vocabulary in Félicie's first-person narration serve to remind the reader of her hybridity and her need to maintain both the linguistic and cultural connections to her homeland and to the grandmother who raised her there.

Creole expressions also enter the narration when the narrator and the characters are discussing the highly important recurrent metaphor of food. References to food are apparent throughout the text and, as several scholars have highlighted, they constitute an important site of cultural representation and critique.³ Pineau pauses to describe foods the Guadeloupians eat, and food is closely bound up with Félicie's relationship with Man Ya. Man Ya's work is in the food trade – in the banana export industry, which ships fruit from the Caribbean to France, in an unobvious nod to the lasting impact of colonialism and the unequal power and economic relations it engenders – and she is a highly skilled cook. Indeed, her cooking recurs in other of Pineau's texts, such as *L'Exil selon Julia*, in which the grandmother comes to visit the family in Paris, cooks vibrant Guadeloupean dishes for them, then leaves, obliging them to return unhappily to their soulless, bland, factory-produced meals. Food is therefore presented as a cultural and affective tie for the child narrator with her home space: both with the culture of Guadeloupe more broadly and with the maternal figure who raised her before she was called to Paris. This is exemplified in an episode in which Félicie's suitcase is inspected by her mother's friend, who accompanies her to Paris, and is found to contain large, heavy yams and sweet potatoes, placed there by

Man Ya for Félicie to eat in France. The yam, a traditional, poor food, is central to Guadeloupean cuisine and, in this instance, the importation of the yam to France serves as a metaphor for Félicie's hybrid identity; she introduces a traditional piece of Guadeloupean culture into France and, by consuming it, as Man Ya intends her to do so, she keeps something of her home culture and ingests both French and Guadeloupean cultures together.⁴ Brinda Mehta discusses the representation of food in *Un papillon dans la cité* and *L'Exil selon Julia*, pointing to the cultural and national hybridity it denotes and arguing that "by valorizing the cultural appropriateness of food and culinary practice as an enabling matrix to inscribe subaltern subjectivities within an energized cosmopolitanism, Caribbean culinary creolizations mediate the global and the local in a distinctly collaborative hybridization of expression" (49).

Mehta alludes to the languages in which food is represented in this text, but it is worth delving more deeply into the linguistic hybridity the food stages. Creole names of foods and dishes are frequently incorporated into the French language sentences. Félicie tells her friend Mohammad, from North Africa, about Man Ya's *doukoun* (cake), for example, and, following an unhappy Christmas in which Aurélie imposes French staples such as turkey on the family, the young girl delights in eating Man Ya's *kalalou matété*, *colombo* and *dombré* during Christian festivities that take place during a visit she makes to Guadeloupe (119). Mohammad and his grandmother also use Arabic words to describe their food, and these are inscribed in the text with footnoted translations; *makroude* and *baklawa* are both referenced and translated as "pâtisseries orientales" (57) [Eastern pastries], for example.⁵ These expressions appear in italics to set them apart from the French-language prose and are always explained in the footnotes. This enables the reader to follow the meaning of the sentence, creating a seamless reading process in which the reader simply glances down at the French equivalent and continues. On occasion, a sentence or two is required to explain the Creole word in French, such as the explanation given of *kalalou*: *plante dont les feuilles sont potagères*" (119) [plant whose leaves are vegetables]. Nonetheless, this is a simple technique that renders the text easily understandable to a young adult reader. It also serves to incorporate something of the authentic quality of the cultural artifact into the French-language prose in a way that mirrors the way the characters speak to each other, moving back and forth between the two languages in the same sentence. Food is not simply a representation of foreignness or exoticization, therefore, but an important marker of linguistic hybridity.

In addition to food, Creole is also incorporated into the text through dialogue between key characters. This is mostly confined to Man Ya and Papa Jo, since Félicie's mother Aurélie has chosen to forsake her native tongue and forbid it from her home. Creole makes an earlier appearance in the dialogue, thus signaling its presence in the prose to come, through

the voice of Man Ya. The grandmother has already been presented as lacking in knowledge of the French language, since she speaks in non-standard French from the very first page: “Pas de nouvelles, bonnes nouvelles! On se porte bien, pas vrai?” (5) [No news, good news! We’re okay, not true?]. The reader also learns of her illiteracy, as she requires the letter Aurélie sends to Félicie – written in perfect, standard, formal French with no interruption by Creole – to be read aloud to her. Man Ya frequently mingles Creole into her French-language dialogue, such as when she comments “Ouvé-y! Ne nous cachons plus. Sa ki la pou-w, larivyè pa ka chayè-y ...” (8) [Open it! Let’s not hide what it says. The river won’t wash away what is destined for you. Nobody can escape their destiny]. Such an interjection would unlikely be understood by the French-speaking reader, who might be able to guess that *ouvé* is a cognate of *ouvrir* [open] but would probably not follow the final sentence. These interjections in Creole at once prove the authentic, exotic flavor of the text, since they show examples of sounds, word forms and syntax that are unfamiliar to those of the French language. This is reminiscent of the way in which nineteenth-century writers such as Maupassant, Zola and George Sand used *patois* or regional languages in their texts, incorporating it into the dialogue of provincial characters to inject a regional flavor into their work. Yet, Pineau’s usage of Creole goes beyond this simplicity. Her life writing highlights that ordinary people use the two languages interchangeably, including the uneducated, illiterate, multilingual majority. The Creole used in the voice of the grandmother reinforces the intimate connection between language and self-expression, since Man Ya’s speech incorporates the language, especially when representing emotion, most commonly affection for her granddaughter. Moreover, the usage of Creole and French in the voices of the Guadeloupean population also demonstrates the power and pervasiveness of French in the colony, since even the least educated can function partially for everyday communication in it. It also shows, however, that French does not have the power to eradicate the national language. While French is widespread among this section of the Guadeloupean population, Creole is still widely used, which suggests that national languages will survive, albeit in oral form, despite the colonial, administrative and educational dominance of another tongue.

The tactic Pineau uses to communicate the meaning of these Creole interjections into the prose – in cultural phenomena, food and dialogue – is the same throughout the text. A footnote appears on the same page as each of these interjections, which provides a direct translation of the Creole phrases. In the quotations above, for example, the French footnotes read: “ouvre-là!” (8n1) [open it] and “ce qui t’est destiné, la rivière ne l’emporte pas. Nul n’échappe à son destin” [the river won’t wash away what is destined for you. Nobody escapes their destiny] for the last. As we see throughout this book, multilingual writers use a variety of

techniques to inscribe and translate their secondary writing language in their work. Some use translations of words in the secondary language in parentheses following their usage. Others use footnotes, which provide immediate translation on the same page for the reader who is only familiar with the dominant language. Others use nothing at all, and others still combine several approaches. It is worth pausing to compare Pineau's strategy to that of her compatriot, the celebrated writer Maryse Condé. Condé belongs to an older generation of Caribbean writers, many of whom wrote primarily in the dominant language, French or English, and made only scant references to their local language(s). To take the example of Condé's major work of life writing, *Contes vrais de l'enfance* [*Tales from the Heart*], this earlier writer also incorporated Creole into her dialogue. For example, she quotes her mother interdiagetically within the recollection of her childhood, remembering that "elle avait beau ajouter en me couvrant de baisers que sa kras à boyo était devenue son petit bâton de vieillesse" (12) ["she would always tell me this story covering me with kisses, saying that her *kras a boyo* had become her staff in old age"].⁶ An asterisk appears following the Creole expression *kras a boyo*, and a footnote directs the reader to the glossary at the end of the text. In this glossary, a list of Creole words used in the text appears with French translations. This creates an information gap that obliges the reader to enter the text, moving from a predominantly French page to the back of the text, where a series of Creole expressions are grouped together. The reader is obliged to act, to do something in order to find meaning. These phrases appear in the glossary in a way that emphasizes their differences from French, not only linguistically but also culturally; some items are literal, direct translations, and some are cultural concepts that require a phrase of explanation in French. The swear words, for example, are merely described as "l'injure suprême" (121) [the supreme insult], in a nod to the untranslatable quality of certain lexical items.

The two authors' strategies represent two contrasting answers to the question of how to incorporate a dominated language into prose written in the dominant tongue.⁷ In the case of Condé, the uninterrupted weaving of the two languages in the prose, especially since this occurs in reported speech, brings the work closer to the orality that forms an important part of the history of Caribbean literature. Oral storytelling has been the subject of several studies, which underline the multilingual nature of literature from this region.⁸ Condé's strategy of separating the prose from the glossary could therefore be interpreted as an important element of her situating the text in the Caribbean tradition. Moreover, the glossary places the onus upon the reader to engage actively with the multilingual prose. The reader is obliged to make a choice: to look up the word in the glossary or to continue reading without the linguistic knowledge, merely accepting the Creole incursions as a sign of the text's "foreignness" without understanding its meaning. While this strategy may be viewed as

increasing the authenticity of the text, it may also create an exoticization that reinforces the distinction between the two languages. It also sets up a dichotomy between them that reflects the unequal statuses of the two languages. Condé's strategy makes a clear distinction between the two languages; although they intermingle in the sentences, as in the example above, the prose is the textual space of the French language and the glossary that of Creole. French is thus presented as the main language and Creole as an addendum to it – literally, in the form of an appendix that appears after and separate from the prose. While Creole interrupts it in a way that asserts its presence and its power and its range of meanings, as is clear from the lengthy descriptions required for certain words in the glossary, it is still relegated to a secondary position.

Pineau's strategy of footnoting the language on the same page creates a different effect. She clearly distinguishes the two languages, since the Creole words and expressions appear in italics and are identified by numbers that refer to footnotes. While she reinforces the distinction between them, however, the fact that they both appear on the same page is a statement about their status. The presence of French and Creole together on a page is significant, especially in contrast to the way in which they are spatially separated in Condé's text. Although the French language is clearly dominant, Pineau's prose incorporates Creole into her writing and asserts the significance of it for her life writing. The fact that Creole mainly appears in dialogue, through the characters of Man Ya and Jo, gives voice to the people whom Pineau is depicting, whose voices would not be heard in traditional, monolingual literary works. Furthermore, Creole is not confined to the dialogue but is also used by the narrator in her first-person prose, which serves to alter its position in the text: not just the local color of Maupassant or Sand, but something that is integral to the texture and the representation of identity this text stages. As Félicie continues to grow through this bildungsroman text, her Creole is a constant presence within her narration. She adapts to life in Paris, succeeds in school, makes friends and returns to visit Guadeloupe and Man Ya with a note of reconciliation from Aurélie to her mother – again in perfect French – but does not forget her Creole language, even using it when speaking to her infant brother. Katherine Rudolph correctly notes that there is more Creole in the earlier sections of the book than in the latter (3), but it does not disappear; indeed, in the last section of the text, at which point the narrator has returned temporarily to Guadeloupe, the Creole language is still heard in the voices of Man Ya and her neighbor (120). This early text of life writing thus shows that, although used sparingly, Creole is an important element of the identity this narrative represents. The footnotes and translations render the text simple to follow for the reader, especially a young adult reader, without dismissing the significance of the Creole language or nullifying the differences between the dominant and dominated languages.

L'Exil selon Julia

Published four years later than *Un papillon dans la cité* in 1996, *L'Exil selon Julia* strikes a note of departure from the earlier text. Pineau's reputation as a literary writer was assured by the time of the later text due to her two early literary successes: the novels *La grande drive des esprits* (1993), translated into English by the eminent scholar Michael Dash, and *L'Espérance-Macadam* (1995). The word "récit" [narrative] appears on the title page of *L'Exil selon Julia*, thus immediately proclaiming its distinction from the earlier, more fictional works. Most notably, the narrator has the voice of an older, more reflective protagonist looking back over her early years between Guadeloupe and Paris. Githire describes this text as "highly autobiographical and self-revealing" (77), Ernest Pépin, Kathleen Gyssels and Dominique Licops define the text as autofictional, and Louise Hardwick notes its preoccupation with psychology, emotion and memory (Pépin 2; Gyssels 175; Licops 248; Hardwick 142). As the title suggests, this work focuses more squarely on the experiences of the narrator's grandmother. The relationship between grandmother and granddaughter is the crux of this tale and is represented as a nexus of nostalgia, affection and melancholy to the narrator; as Hutcheon puts it, Man Ya represents "the palpable link with Guadeloupe and Antillean culture and is simultaneously the culturally dislocated figure whose guileless ingenuity actually enables her to destabilize the supposed superiority of metropolitan France" (148).

In this later work, Pineau focuses on the narrator's experience of marginalization – racial, social and linguistic. Differently from *Un papillon dans la cité*, and mirroring the author's own circumstances, the narrator of the later text is born in Paris, along with her siblings, to Guadeloupian parents. They later move to Martinique and on to Guadeloupe, as did Pineau's family. The narrative of her early years is centered around her memories of racism. While Pineau frequently represents such incidents in a comical way, her overt denunciation of racist ideologies is clear, direct and confronting. The racism and prejudice that Pineau denounces emanate from a cross-section of society: from individuals whom she comes across in the street to French children and families she sees regularly to overtly institutionalized racism. Local people scream at her to return to where she came from – which is, of course, Paris – for example. Although the cosmopolitan *cité* [housing project], which mirrors the homespace in *Un papillon dans la cité*, houses inhabitants from many different backgrounds, the narrator mentions that the family is surrounded by white people, aside from a few other Caribbean military families (12). Describing a school photo, she comments, "j'étais la seule négrillonne parmi tous les petits Blancs en tablier gris" (77) ["I was the only little black among all those little whites in gray smocks" (39)]. Pineau's narrative is shot through with stereotypes, prejudice and threats.

The school environment Pineau painted in the earlier text is also mirrored in the latter. A teacher in the primary school claims disparagingly in *Un papillon dans la cité* that the pupils would be learning English the following year when many of them – inhabitants of the cité from a variety of linguistic backgrounds – hardly knew French.⁹ In the latter text, one teacher cries to the class, gesturing to the narrator, “les enfants! La Noire a déjà fini sa copie! Alors vous pouvez le faire aussi!” (80) [“Children! The black girl has already finished! So you can do it too! (41)]. Another forces her to sit under a desk as punishment for perceived disobedience, which Githire interprets as “direct ostracism” (78). This racism is also experienced by other family members, including Man Ya when she visits France from Guadeloupe; throughout the significant time she spends with the family, the grandmother is subjected to racist slurs and, despite her attempts to learn to read and write French and to acclimatize to French culture, she finally returns, relieved, to Guadeloupe.

Against this backdrop of the denunciation of racism, the language of the migrant family is important. The French language takes precedence as Pineau’s prose is significantly more lyrical and descriptive than the earlier text, which was aimed at a younger readership. Nevertheless, Creole enters the narration in subtle yet important ways. This is despite the interdiction of the language in the family home, which is reminiscent of the mother’s restriction of it in *Un papillon dans la cité*. In the later text, the source of the interdiction is faceless; it is merely issued by “les grandes personnes” (36) [“the grown-ups” (16)]. The narrator records their reasoning thus:

Enfants! Rien, il n’y a rien de bon pour vous au Pays, disaient les grandes personnes. Antan, ce fut une terre d’esclavage qui ne porte plus rien de bon. Ne demandez pas après ce temps passé! Profitez de la France! Profitez de votre chance de grandir ici-là! Au Pays, la marmaille parle patois. Profitez pour apprendre le français de France ... Combien de Nègres vous envie, vous n’en avez pas idée. (36)

[‘Children! There is nothing, absolutely nothing good for you Back Home,’ the grown-ups would say. Long ago it was a land of slavery, which no longer has nothing good in it. Don’t ask about the past! Take advantage of France! Take advantage of the luck you have to be growing up here! Back home, children speak patois. Take advantage of the opportunity to learn French French ... You have no idea how many blacks envy you. (16)]

Creole is dismissed as “patois,” a bland descriptor of any nonstandard, regional dialect, rather than being accorded the status of a language. Tellingly, however, the narrator notes that “parfois, songeant à l’île, des reflets merveilleux scintillaient dans leurs yeux” (37) [“sometimes, thinking of the island, wonderful lights glint in their eyes” (17)] and one of the

elements that she lists as a source of their nostalgia is “la manne du parler créole” (37) [“the godsend of Creole speech” (17)]. The Creole language is clearly a crucial element of the identities of the characters portrayed in this text, as Pineau’s subtle incursions of it into her prose demonstrate.

What is interesting about these incursions is the different way Pineau handles them in *L’Exil selon Julia* compared to *Un papillon dans la cité*. Creole is again used to convey culturally specific phenomena, including food items. For example, when Man Ya’s son tells her that he is taking her to France to escape her abusive husband, she complains that there are things she cannot do without, ranging from clothing to her garden to “huile *karapat*” (47) [“castor oil” (22)]. Elsewhere, the narrator nostalgically describes watching the actions of a Guadeloupean cook as she prepares a meal and refers to “une part de *doukoun*” (58) [“a share of *doukounnu*” (29)]. The Creole is again italicized, which highlights its difference from the French and points to the exotic and untranslatable quality of local cuisine – although the translator chooses in the first example to remove the Creole word *karapat*, thus explaining the item clearly to the reader but losing the linguistic texture of the original. Unlike her strategy in *Un papillon dans la cité*, Pineau does not include footnotes to explain these food items to the reader. There is no glossary, and no translations are offered within the prose.¹⁰ An understanding of the items themselves is clearly not necessary to understand the later text. While it was not essential to the reader of *Un papillon dans la cité*, a younger audience may have appreciated the explanations, or have been intrigued by them. In the later text, Pineau’s inclusion of such items, merely marked with italics, makes a gesture toward the authenticity of her experience and stands as a marker of unknowability. There are certain items that cannot be translated and others that do not need to be translated for comprehension by a non-Creole speaker, but it is clearly important that they are featured in the text.

The strategy of including Creole in italics within the text without the use of footnotes becomes more complicated than the authentic rendering of food items, however. As is the case in *Un papillon dans la cité*, Creole is included primarily in dialogue and reported speech, such as when she writes, “des enfants qu’on appelle *ti moun*” (81) [“children who people call ‘Ti moun’” (41)] or when the father exclaims, “*Ou pa té ka gadé lè Man Ya té ka pozé sé vantouz-la!*” (200) [“*Ou pa té ka gadé lè Man Ya té ka pozé sé vantouz-la!* Didn’t you look when Man Ya was putting on the cupping glasses!” (109)]. This latter citation appears in a letter, since the text contains one chapter that consists of letters written by the narrator Gisèle to Man Ya. The narrator uses Creole in three of these letters, clearly attempting to write to the grandmother in her own language and signaling the limits of French in their relationship. It is Man Ya who speaks Creole most frequently. Jacqueline Couti highlights the importance of Man Ya’s stories in *L’Exil selon Julia*, suggesting that

she shares “son héritage mémoriel, culturel et historique avec ses petits-enfants sans aucune honte, le beau comme le laid, ce qui les empêche ainsi d’aller à la derive” (85) [her cultural and historical heritage with her grandchildren with no shame, the good and the bad, which prevents them from drifting off course]. This observation is very apt, and the cultural and historical legacy Couti pinpoints can be extended to a linguistic legacy. Some of Man Ya’s utterances are understandable to the French-speaking reader, such as when she comments, “oui, oui, *an konprann* ... J’ai compris!” (112) [“yes, yes, *an konprann* ... I understand” (58)], which sounds similar to the French verb *comprendre* and the meaning of which is highlighted through the following explanatory phrase “j’ai compris” [I have understood]. In these instances, the Creole serves as a reminder of the foreignness of Man Ya, of her different perspective on France and Frenchness and of her difficulties in achieving assimilation. In other episodes, the way in which her speech is reported in Creole but without footnotes or translation is less comprehensible. For example, when advising her son to leave Guadeloupe in order to prevent him from reacting violently to his abusive father, she exclaims, “*Foukan De Gaulle! A yen pé ké rivé-w!* Tu reviendras vivant dans la gloire du Seigneur” (21) [“*Foukan De Gaulle! A yen pé ké rivé-w!* Go join de Gaulle! Nothing will happen to you! You will come back alive, crowned in the glory of the Lord” (8)]. As can be seen in the citation of the original French text, there is no translation or explanation of the meaning of the Creole words. The French clause that follows it is a different sentence and does not translate the Creole words. It is unlikely, moreover, that a French-speaking reader would easily understand such an utterance. (The English translator of the text has, by contrast, opted both to reproduce and to translate the Creole phrase into English.) The fact that phrases of Creole are present and not translated, especially when Pineau has previously devised a strategy to present the two languages on the same page of her writing, is intriguing. By changing her approach, moving from footnotes to no explanation or translation, Pineau places the reader in a position of ignorance. The French-speaking reader may attempt to understand isolated Creole words by guessing at the phonetics – a word such as *kwa* can be identified as *quoi* [what], for example – but generally the non-Creole speaker will not understand the meaning of the utterances. This ignorance mirrors the position of the narrator Gisèle as a child, who did not understand her grandmother’s Creole and who only came to understand it later. Furthermore, Pineau’s strategy of using untranslated Creole serves to reinforce the notion of ignorance of other cultures and languages and the different viewpoints they necessarily contain. Read in light of the critique of racism that is foregrounded in this text and the denunciation of the ignorance of French policies in this area, Pineau’s approach to Creole makes an important statement about our approach to understanding “the foreign.”

There is one notable exception to this strategy of including a smattering of Creole expressions without translation in *L'Exil selon Julia*. After struggling unsuccessfully to adapt to life in France, Man Ya leaves for Guadeloupe. Her departure is presented as a source of immense sorrow for Gisèle and her family – sorrow both for themselves and for the fact that Man Ya was never able to find happiness in her new home. Man Ya, however, is overjoyed. She dances around the family home singing a song, the lyrics of which are reproduced in Creole with the corresponding French translation recorded opposite each line. The first stanza appears thus:

Dépi mwen kontré vou Depuis que je t'ai rencontrée
Dépi ou ran mwen fou Depuis que tu m'as rendu fou
Dépi sé vou tuo sèl Depuis que tu es la seule
Mwen ka touvé ki bèl Que je trouve belle. (188)

[Dépi mwen kontré vou Since I met you
Dépi ou ran mwen fou Since you drove me mad
Dépi sé vou tuo sèl Since you are the only one
Mwen ka touvé ki bèl Who I think is beautiful. (101)]

This is the only time at which an extended passage of Creole is used in *L'Exil selon Julia*; elsewhere, isolated phrases or sentences are incorporated into the French-language prose, mainly into the dialogue, as discussed above. The information contained in these isolated phrases is not essential to understanding the overall meaning of the sentences or paragraphs in which they appear. The example of the song is different, however; first, because it represents an extended usage of Creole, and second, because it is pure Creole, rather than the mingling of French and Creole that Pineau writes elsewhere. Whereas Pineau does not translate isolated words and phrases in her prose, she provides a translation of this song in order to convey the meaning that cannot be surmised. Moreover, the translation of the love song accentuates Man Ya's unique bilingual and bicultural experience. The song conveys the emotion she feels at the prospect of returning to her native land after the failed experiment with France and French. As is the case in *Un papillon dans la cité*, Creole is again integral to the representation of intimacy, emotion and beauty. Furthermore, the inclusion of a song in Creole also points to the powerful cultural traditions in this language, including oral literature, poetry and song. The inclusion of the translation serves to foreground this poetic tradition, underlining that it is distinct from French but no less valuable. In these subtle ways, Pineau uses Creole to underscore the importance of the language to individuals from the region, the intricacies it contains, its differences from – and its incomprehensibility from – the French language from which it partly derives, and the long

cultural tradition it represents. These relatively few, subtle inclusions of Creole serve to highlight the distinctive quality of this language: not just a dialect, an amalgam, a derivation or a bastardization of French, but a language in its own right on which many rely for authentic, intimate, personalized expression. It is noteworthy that Pineau foregrounds the Creole, placing this first and the French translation to its side, proclaiming the power and the status of the language.

The text ends on an optimistic note, however. In the final section of the text, a character refers to children of Caribbean origin who are interested in learning Creole:

Voilà qu'à présent, le *pale a vyé nèg* intéresse ces enfants qui sont nés en France. Ils mettent le créole haut comme ça, en font une affaire d'honneur et respect. Ils butent sur les mots qui partent bon ballant et puis passent à la trappe. Perdus dans le mystère des paroles – qui portent sans fatigue cinquante sens, dièses, gammes, et bémols – les enfants peinent. Ils demandent à mi-voix des traductions quand tout le monde rit et ils restent bêtes, bouche ouverte, suspendus à une explication, toujours en retard d'un rire. Ils sont d'ici sans en être vraiment mais ils s'y essaient, chaque jour, passionnément, avec la volonté de ces gens de la ville qui font un retour à la terre. (293)

[Look at how nowadays the *pale a vyé nèg*, the old people's language, interests these children who were born in France. They put Creole high up there, make it a thing of honor and respect. They stumble over words that start off bravely and then end up tripping. Lost in the mystery of words – that easily carry fifty meanings, scales, sharps and flats – the children struggle. They ask for translations in an undertone when everybody is laughing, and they remain there stupidly, mouths open, waiting in suspense for an explanation, always one laugh behind. They are from here without really being from here, but they have a go at it, every day, passionately, with the determination of city dwellers who are going back to the land. (159)]

As she points to the descendants of Guadeloupians born in France who show a renewed commitment to learning Creole, despite the long-term struggle it becomes, Pineau reflects upon her own linguistic situation. She also places herself among a growing number of individuals who are engaged in learning the language of their ancestors. By highlighting the fact that young people – “les enfants” [“the children”] – are engaged in this process, the text points toward a future of linguistic change. This is a strikingly optimistic conclusion. Given Pineau's clear commitment to denouncing the overt racism she witnessed in France, this sign of possible linguistic harmony is surprising. Pineau is clearly intent on making a point about the conflation of language with concepts such as nation and

race, hinting that linguistic harmony may foster harmony more broadly. As Samy Alim, John Rickford and Arnetha Ball demonstrate in their seminal work on the relatively new field of “raciolinguistics,” language use is a crucial element in understanding attitudes toward race and ethnicity. Pineau shows in this text that language cannot be separated from understandings not just of nation and national belonging but also more acutely of racial and ethnic identity.

Overall, Pineau writes a narrative of self in *L'Exil selon Julia* that renews the terms of her subjectivity. Moving from a third-person, partially fictionalized account aimed at young adults to a first-person memoir that she names, for the first time in her writing, “récit” [narrative], she portrays a different version of her self. The indirect allusions to institutional racism and social inequality from the earlier text become overt denunciations of the lived experience of marginalization in the latter. The place of the Creole language in her writing contributes to this development and augurs an important change in the writer's self-narrative. While Creole is present in both texts, the way in which it is presented to the French-speaking reader differs. While the two languages intermingle in both texts, showing the importance of their interaction in Pineau's self-narrative and particularly in her expression of intimacy, the way in which they are handled alters the tone of the prose. The strategy of incorporating Creole and adding footnotes provides a full explanation that facilitates the reading process while maintaining the authenticity of the expression. Their removal adds a foreignness to a text that is already confronting in its representation of the other. The fact that Creole is present and unexplained in *L'Exil selon Julia* maintains the authenticity of the earlier work but removes its comprehensibility. The text hints overall that the French are largely ignorant of policies that marginalize its racial, linguistic and ethnic minorities – although it does not merely point to ignorance but also pinpoints consciously racist attitudes, opinions and behaviors. Read in relation to this overall aim, the persistence of untranslated elements from a foreign language serves to call attention to what is not known about the inhabitants of France's overseas territories, especially those who reside in France. The final optimistic section about the children who wish to increase their knowledge of Creole hints that they may use their agency to counteract such ignorance in the future.

Mes quatre femmes

To date, in addition to her extensive corpus of fiction, Pineau has published only three works she qualifies as “récits” [narratives]. Although she has published reference works, such as *Guadeloupe, découverte* (1997) and *Guadeloupe d'antan: la Guadeloupe au début du siècle* (2004), only *L'Exil selon Julia*, *Mes quatre femmes* (2007) and *Folie, aller simple* (2010) share the “récit” title. The last of these texts, *Folie, aller simple*

is an account of working in psychiatry; Pineau divides her time between her two careers, as she is both a writer and a psychiatric nurse in Paris. The earlier two are both consciously self-reflective and tell the tale of the author/narrator and her close family members. As we have seen, *L'Exil selon Julia* has strong resonance with *Un papillon dans la cité*. Similar characters, stories and incidents recur in *Mes quatre femmes*, which Susan Ireland calls “a highly personal text” and “an innovative form of life writing” (78) and which Thomas describes as an “autofictional narrative” (136). As Ann-Sofie Persson comments, “bien plus complexe qu'un ordinaire récit autobiographique à la troisième personne fait par un narrateur omniscient, *Mes quatre femmes* fait place à une narration dialogique et plurivocale, fondée sur la fiction et prise en charge par des personnages littéraires correspondant à des personnes réelles dans la vie de l'auteure” (240) [much more complex than an ordinary autobiographical narrative written in the third person by an omniscient narrator, *Mes quatre femmes* employs a dialogic and plurivocal narration, based upon fiction and carried by literary characters who correspond to real people in the author's life]. This later text tells the tales of four key women from Pineau's family: again, we see her grandmother Julia and her mother Daisy, and in addition we read the stories of Gisèle, the great aunt after whom Pineau was named, and Angélique, her great-great-grandmother. The four women are enclosed in a room, akin to a prison, in which they recount their stories to each other. The voice of each woman, in turn, is heard telling her life story in her own words, as the others interrupt to question, nuance and respond to the memories. The focalized narrative enables the reader to hear the voices and the points of view of all four women and the occasional incursions by a third-person narrator identify the writer's relationship to them; the narrator writes of Gisèle, for example, “Elle est toujours là, dans ma tête, à se balancer sur sa berceuse. Mystérieuse Gisèle que le chagrin emporta. Si grand chagrin. Tant lourd prénom” (58) [She is always there, in my head, rocking on her rocking chair. The mysterious Gisèle who could not overcome her suffering. So much suffering. Such a heavy name].¹¹ Furthermore, although this structure clearly foregrounds the fictionalization of the text, the fact that the stories of the four women are grounded in lived experience is highlighted by a narrative frame. A short introductory section explains that “une parenté les lie” (11) [family relations connect them] and identifies the four women as “des mères lointaines” (11) [distant mothers]. A concluding section speaks to the stories rather than to the women themselves, pointing to their legacy for generations to come and asserting that “elles tracent leur chemin à l'encre de la vie, réelle ou rêvée” (185) [they trace their way through the ink of life, real or imagined]. Whereas the main thrust of *L'Exil selon Julia* was the denunciation of racist policies and practices in contemporary France, *Mes quatre femmes* represents the impact of slavery and colonization upon women in history and its legacy

upon contemporary identity and memory; as Bénédicte André aptly asserts, it is marked by “un inexorable besoin de verbaliser le passé afin de conjurer la honte, la colère et le mépris qui s’y rattachent” (120) [an inexorable need to articulate the past in order to avert the shame, anger and contempt that are rooted in it].¹²

The Creole language also appears in this later text of life writing. The introductory section includes examples of the language, which sets the reader’s expectation for more linguistic hybridity in the ensuing pages. As we have seen in relation to the two earlier texts, food items are again used to highlight the cultural and linguistic singularity of the region. The narrator refers to recipes the four women mention during their conversation, such as “igname à l’eau salée, cassava-manioc, salade de pawoka amer” (12) [yam in salted water, cassava, bitter pawoka salad]. This list emphasizes the unique quality of Guadeloupean food, its regional ingredients and its differences from French culture. Differently from Pineau’s previous texts, the Creole word – *pawoka*, which refers to a leaf commonly used for culinary and medicinal purposes – is not highlighted, italicized or explained. This practice is evident elsewhere in the introductory section. On the second page of *Mes quatre femmes*, amid the explanation of the four women recounting their memories, Pineau writes “Elles se rappellent tous les sanglots versés avec la pluie. Chaque sanglot. Et puis les rires aussi. Les rires grelots des enfants, les rires cymbales des négresses amoureuses, les rires gwo-ka des hommes” (10) [They remember all the tears shed with the rain. Each tear. And the laughter as well. The tinkling laughter of the children, the cymbal laughter of Black women in love, the gwo-ka drum laughter of the men]. The term *gwo-ka* is the traditional drum that is a major element of Guadeloupean music. Moreover, *gwo-ka* is also used to refer to a style of traditional music combining song, dance and drumming. Significantly, the drum and this musical style were developed in the seventeenth century amid the slave trade and constitute an amalgam of European and African elements. In this way, this usage of a Creole phrase serves to reinforce the central motif of this text, which includes the memories of an enslaved woman, Angélique, and passages from French legal documents concerning slavery. The reference to the *gwo-ka* thus accentuates the historical phenomena that have led to such creolization of culture. It also highlights the amalgam of languages that come together to form Creole. Furthermore, as we saw in the example of *pawoka* above, the term *gwo-ka* is not italicized, translated or explained, which differs from Pineau’s practice in *Un papillon dans la cité* and *L’Exil selon Julia*. The Creole and French are thus presented in the same way, with no separation or distinction made between them. The writer once again calls attention to the importance of Creole in her self-narrative, but this time presents them both as intrinsically linked, on equal footing and, for her narrative of identity at least, of equal status.

Following the introductory section that highlights the multilingual landscape of the author and the four women, the reader may expect to read more examples of Creole in this new format. Nevertheless, few incursions of Creole into the French prose follow. Read in the light of *Un papillon dans la cité* and *L'Exil selon Julia*, the absence of Creole is striking. Following the Creole vocabulary in the introductory section, fewer than twenty phrases in the language are used in the text. This is significantly less than in the two earlier works analyzed here and renders the few usages of the Creole language all the more striking. Creole is used in isolated sentences by incidental characters, such as when neighbors exclaim, "Hé! Man Pineau! Ou rouviwé" (182), and the text contains occasional reminders of cultural assignations, such as when people refer to others using abbreviated forms, such as "Misyè Pineau" (77) or "Man Julia." These usages add an important texture to the work, reminding the reader of the multilingual environment in which the tales take place. Yet, Creole is firmly in the background of this work. This change may denote a desire to emphasize other aspects of the women's identities, focusing more squarely on the legacy of oppression they have suffered, and on the historical and archival material the text presents. Historical documents play a far greater role in *Mes quatre femmes* than in the earlier texts; dates, in particular, are repeated throughout the text and refer to numerous major events in the history of the inhabitants, from slavery, colonization, world wars and others. Much of the text is written with the support of archival documents the author has uncovered, such as the *Gazette officielle de la Guadeloupe*, in which Angélique's name is printed to announce her marriage to le sieur Pineau.

This change also draws attention to the differences between the women's relationship to language, highlighting the different approaches they take to Creole and to French. Predictably, perhaps, the character who uses the most Creole is Julia. In the chapter devoted to her story, several phrases in Creole are incorporated into the prose. Sometimes, this character uses phrases of affection, as we have seen in previous texts, such as when she recalls saying to a child, "un jour, pitit an mwen, tu retourneras en Guadeloupe" (133) [one day, darling, you'll go back to Guadeloupe]. As is Pineau's practice in the introductory section, the Creole is not in italics, is not translated and is not explained. Such is the pattern of this text, as Julia's voice speaks several phrases in Creole that are presented in the same way. For instance, as is the case in *L'Exil selon Julia*, we hear her encouraging her son to join the army and fight for France. As she entreats him to depart, she repeats the phrase "Foukan de Gaille! A yen pé ké rivé-w!" (92) [Go join de Gaille! Nothing will happen to you!]. This phrase appears several times in the section devoted to Julia's story and is neither italicized nor translated. Furthermore, the untranslated Creole also points to the French practice of enlisting individuals from its colonies to fight in their army, including people whose family members

spoke French falteringly. Read in the context of a representation of the legacy of historical oppression upon contemporary memory and identity, this use of language to express intimacy is insightful and instructive regarding the impact of colonization upon individuals whose voices are seldom heard in official historical accounts.

This technique also serves to distinguish Julia from the other three women of the text. As we have seen in the previous works, the special relationship between grandmother and granddaughter is a recurring motif across this author's autofictional writing. The distinction made by the Creole language between Julia and the other women is most obvious in the comparison between her and Daisy, the narrator's mother. Julia's language use is subtly but directly contrasted to that of this character. Daisy is presented as the more communicative, more educated woman who takes pride in her knowledge of French and her eradication of Creole. This dichotomy mirrors the representation of the two women in *Un papillon dans la cité*, in which the grandmother speaks in incorrect, nonstandard French mingled with Creole and the mother forbids the speaking of Creole in the family home. Julia occasionally retreats from the conversation in the face of Daisy's seemingly superior experience, such as when the narrator comments, "Julia n'a plus envie de causer. Elle laisse la parole à Daisy qui raconte la vie à bord, les diners à table du commandant, les bals et les toilettes chics" (103) [Julia no longer wants to talk. She lets Daisy take over, talking about life at sea, dinners at the commander's table, balls and chic toilets]. In one episode, their language use is juxtaposed thus:

"An té di zot sa! An té di zot sa! Je vous avais bien dit que vous alliez revenir dans votre pays Guadeloupe! Je vous l'avais bien dit!

Daisy reprend son livre. Elle se sent légère. Elle a raconté son histoire. Et c'est comme si elle s'était lavée de ses années de mariage. [...] Heureusement que j'avais mes enfants, se dit à elle-même. Heureusement que j'avais mes romans ..." (142).

[An té di zot sa! An té di zot sa! I told you you'd come back to your country, Guadeloupe. I told you so!

Daisy picks up her book. She feels relieved. She has told her story. It's as though she'd cleansed herself of her years of marriage. [...] I was fortunate to have my children, she says to herself. I was fortunate to have my novels ...]

The contrast between the two women is stark, as Julia expresses herself in her national language and her daughter-in-law haughtily looks away in silence. The book to which Daisy returns is significant. Each woman is permitted to bring one object into the jail-like room, and Daisy elects to bring a work of French literature. This mirrors the representation of Daisy in *L'Exil selon Julia*: an avid reader, who sometimes weeps

as she reads and who is presented as finding solace in her books (78). Licops suggests that Daisy inspires her daughter to read, which enables the child to find an “imagined inclusion” (257).¹³ In *Mes quatre femmes*, Daisy is represented as idolizing French culture and the French language, which her daughter implicitly criticizes. Daisy, in her focalized narration, speaks in eloquent, lyrical French that underscores the differences between her and Julia. Nevertheless, as Thomas notes, Julia is presented as the far happier character who has adjusted to her life and found a connection to people and to the land from which she hails, whereas Daisy’s educational advantage has led to a generalized dissatisfaction. Thomas demonstrates that whereas Daisy and Gisèle look back over their lives with melancholy, dissatisfaction and nostalgia, Angélique and Julia are presented as finding fulfillment through a more positive attitude toward understanding and preserving their identities (2012: 144). Moreover, the character of the grandmother is presented as the only one who preserves the link between the Creole identity and the Creole language. She is thus distinguished from the three other women of the text and celebrated as the one who is most true to her language, culture and land. In this work that reflects upon individual and collective memory, the other women appear to have relinquished the memory of their language and are presented as in some sense lacking as a result. While there is less Creole in this text, therefore, it is employed strategically not only to nuance the representation of the women but also to make a point about the importance of language to cultural memory and legacy.

The way in which Creole is handled in this text also differs from the narrative strategies developed in the earlier texts. Whereas *Un papillon dans la cité* signaled Creole words through italicization and translated them in footnotes and *L’Exil selon Julia* merely italicized them, the Creole phrases in *Mes quatre femmes* receive no such treatment. Instead, they merely appear amid the French prose with no italicization or translation. In this sense, they are presented as perfectly intermingled, logical and mutually comprehensible to the character who uses them most frequently. Pineau’s technique of focalization allows each character, in turn, to speak in her own voice and highlights Julia’s way of weaving the two languages seamlessly into her speech. Whereas other characters choose to eradicate the language from their linguistic repertoire, Julia uses Creole as an addition to her French vocabulary. The absence of translation and explanation signal this large, intermingling linguistic repertoire as an important element of Julia’s expression of her heritage. Pineau’s inclusion of the Creole language nuances the approach she takes to legacy, ancestry and memory in this text, therefore. As Thomas writes of the four women of *Les quatre femmes*, “these women each help to liberate Pineau from her own transgenerational traumas by constructing a narrative of the past that helps her create her own sense of identity” (2010: 35). The importance of Creole to Pineau’s sense of identity is

solidified through its inclusion in Julia's focalized narrative and the way in which it is presented as a crucial element of Caribbean subjectivity: not separated from French, not relegated to a footnote or a glossary, but a normal, expected part of everyday life that needs no justification.

Overall, then, this comparison of the three texts points up an evolution in Pineau's approach to incorporating Creole in her French-language life writing. In all three texts, the importance of the Creole language is evident, both to her own sense of identity and to her rendering of collective Guadeloupien identity. The translanguaging she employs takes different forms in each of her texts, with different consequences for the narrative. What ties the three texts together is the intricacy of the grandmother's bilingual expression and the narrator's intimate connection to it. What separates them is the way in which Creole is highlighted and explained – or not – for the French-speaking reader. While Creole is occasionally instructive, such as in teaching a young adult audience about aspects of Caribbean culture, it is elsewhere a more forceful assertion of individual and collective Guadeloupien identity. The focus of the Creole expressions in *Un papillon dans la cité* is the reader, the recipient of the instructive phrases. In *L'Exil selon Julia*, it is the writer herself, who emphasizes the place of Creole in her upbringing and her key relationships. In *Mes quatre femmes*, it is her ancestors and, perhaps more resolutely, her compatriots upon whom the legacy of slavery and oppression impacts. And finally, as the last text demonstrates in particular, Pineau's incorporation of Creole in her life writing is closely linked to gender. She shows that women especially have an intimate and intricate relationship to the language of their foremothers. The grandmother's language resonates most clearly in all three texts and signals both the lasting impact of this upon her granddaughter's development and of the generations of women whose multilingual voices have not garnered the audience they deserve. Pineau's texts thus demonstrate an important representation of multilingualism in colonial and postcolonial contexts. While Pineau's writing evidences how languages come together through colonization – despite the tension and pain this occasionally causes – in the lives of individuals in postcolonial situations, the writer to whom we now turn represents postcolonial multilingualism as far more conflictual.

Notes

- 1 For more on Guadeloupean Creole, see Charles Pooser's "Creole in the Public Eye: Written Instances of Creole in Public Spaces in Guadeloupe."
- 2 For purposes of clarity, I refer to Guadeloupean Creole simply as Creole throughout this chapter.
- 3 See, for example, Louis Hutcheon, Brinda Mehta and Njeri Githire.
- 4 Félicie does not, in fact, consume the Guadeloupien foods, since the mother's Guadeloupien friend removes them from the suitcase. This friend has made her home in France and, as her action suggests, believes that Félicie should do likewise.

- 5 In the absence of a published translation, all translations of this text are my own.
- 6 This is my translation, since the published translation does not reproduce the Creole phrase; it reads, "however much she showered me with kisses, saying that her little 'latecomer' had become her walking stick in old age" (4).
- 7 It should be pointed out that Condé has a specific relationship to the French language, as she refers to in this text. Since she hails from a well-educated family, French is her native language and she identifies with this language much more than with Creole. This has been identified as one of the reasons for her lack of popularity among her compatriots. She is, moreover, reluctant to make pronouncements about the language in which she writes, stating famously that "je n'écris pas en français, je n'écris pas en créole, j'écris en Maryse Condé" [I don't write in French, I don't write in Creole, I write in Maryse Condé].
- 8 See, for example, Serafin Roldan-Santiago's "Thematic and Structural Functions of Folklore in Caribbean Literature: The Case of the 'Written' and the 'Oral'" and Hanétha Vété-Congolo's *The Caribbean Oral Tradition: Literature, Performance, and Practice*.
- 9 This is not to say that all teachers are portrayed in the same manner; Made-moiselle Bernichon, who organizes a mysteriously free trip to Guadeloupe for Félicie's class in *Un papillon dans la cité* is an obvious exception.
- 10 It is interesting to note that while Pineau's original text does not contain a glossary of the Creole expressions used, Betsy Wing's English translation of it does. The two-and-a-half-page list of Creole expressions gives detailed linguistic and cultural descriptions for the Anglophone reader – including French language expressions such as "métis(se): A person of mixed race" (168). According to this reading of *L'Exil selon Julia*, the addition of this glossary may help the non-Creole speaking reader but alters the message of the text.
- 11 In the absence of a published translation, all translations of this text are my own.
- 12 This is not to say that slavery is absent from the earlier works; Maeve McCusker, in particular, highlights references to it in *L'Exil selon Julia*.
- 13 Licops also suggests aptly that there are two sources of imagined inclusion for the daughter in *L'Exil selon Julia*: "books and *her grandmother's stories* provide her with examples of tactics to resist racist exclusion and, by enabling her to develop a syncretic imaginary world, eventually allow her to overcome its trauma" (261, my italics).

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5 Staging Resistance to the Language of the Colonizer

Chantal Spitz's Translanguaging

The Pacific region, a territory of islands, archipelagos, seas and mountains, is the site of many crossings: linguistic, cultural, religious, racial and ethnic. The region comprises over one hundred islands whose history is marked by a succession of waves of colonization that has often sought to separate them. Vanuatu, independent since 1980, was an Anglo-French condominium. New Caledonia has been an official “pays d’outre mer” [overseas country] since the Nouméa accords of 1998 and, at the time of writing, has just narrowly voted against independence in a referendum. French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna were “Territoires d’outre-mer” [Overseas Territories] until 2003, when they became “Collectivités d’outre-mer” [Overseas Collectivities]. A rich linguistic landscape adds to the complexity of the region. Although French is the only official language of French Polynesia, inhabitants of this territory also speak Tahitian, Marquesan, Mangareva, Rapa, Ra’ivavae, Pa’umotu and Austral languages. Indeed, one quarter of the world’s languages are found in Melanesia (Crocombe 2001). Over two thirds of the population of French Polynesia lives in Tahiti, and the Tahitian language is the second most widely spoken language of the region. An oral language until the arrival of the European colonizers in the late eighteenth century, Tahitian was transcribed into a written form by the colonizers in the early nineteenth century. Approximately one quarter of the population of French Polynesia speaks Tahitian as a main language today.

This diverse landscape has fostered an innovative literary culture. High poverty rates and low literacy rates have restricted the access of the indigenous population to writing. Moreover, most texts from the region have been published and disseminated in their nation of origin and, until recently, very few publishing houses existed in the Pacific. This stands in stark contrast to the publishing practices of a growing number of Francophone African authors, so many of whom have been publishing in Paris that critics have labeled the movement “Afrique sur Seine” [Africa by the Seine].¹ Nevertheless, writers from the region are making their presence felt, as steadily more texts are being published and more literary magazines, groups and associations are being promoted online. Michelle Keown in her work on Pacific Islands writing

asserts that “burgeoning dialogues and collaborations between Francophone and Anglophone Pacific writers” have been discernible since the year 2000 (2010: 242). Indeed, authors such as Déwé Gorodé, Louise Peltzer, Titaua Peu, Flora Devatine, Michou Chaze, Claudine Jacques, Vaitiare and Chantal Spitz are gaining traction in the region, despite the fact that they remain virtually unknown in France.

Scholars of Francophone cultures are also taking increased interest in the Pacific region. This represents a recent phenomenon, since scholars of postcolonial studies – and more recently of global and transnational studies – have tended to focus upon other areas of the Francophone world, such as Africa and the Caribbean. Jean Anderson, a leading scholar of French Pacific literature, discerns a double bind for Francophone writing of the Pacific: not only are texts from this region frequently overlooked by scholars of Francophone cultures, they are also rarely included in scholarly studies of Asian Pacific literature, which concentrate upon Anglophone writing (2013b, 179). Part of the reason for this is clearly the lack of translation of these works, a problem Anderson herself is attempting to resolve.² Nonetheless, as the scope of Francophone literary studies has expanded in recent decades, Anderson’s call for greater scholarly attention has been answered by literary critics such as Keown, Robert Nicole, Kareva Mateata-Allain and Julia Frengs. Their book-length analyses of this literature augur well for its future presence.

Chief among writers of the Francophone Pacific region is Chantal Spitz, author of the very first Tahitian novel to be published. Born in Pape’ete in 1954, Spitz studied in the South Pacific before working as a teacher, writer and advisor, including for the Ministry of Culture. She has been a prominent figure in Pacific literature, primarily through the Mā’ohi literary journal *Littéramā’ohi*, which she established along with several other Mā’ohi writers in 2012. The journal aims to promote Polynesian literature in all its forms, and Spitz has written passionately in it of the need for Polynesian writers to come together beyond categories of “Anglophone” and “Francophone” writing.³ In addition to four novels to date, she has published poetry and essays. Keown refers to her first novel, *L’Ile des rêves écrasées*, as “stridently anticolonial” (2010: 244) and Anderson calls her “the most innovative Pacific author writing in French” (2013b: 177). Underscoring her refusal to adhere to any specific genre and her resistance to act as a representative, Nicolas Cartron argues that “par la radicalité de son propos, par son franc-parler corrosif, par son refus de toute compromission, Chantal T. Spitz n’est pas ‘représentative’ des autres voix qui s’élèvent à Tahiti ou dans les îles voisines. Mais cette absence de ‘représentativité’ ne doit pas s’entendre comme une limite ou un défaut; bien au contraire, se refusant à parler ‘pour’ ou ‘au nom’ de son peuple, elle exprime en toute son acuité la singularité polynésienne” (n.p.) [by the radical nature of her speech, by her corrosive frankness, by her refusal of all compromise, Chantal T. Spitz is not ‘representative’

of other voices from Tahiti or its neighboring islands. But this lack of 'representation' should not be considered a limit or a fault; on the contrary, refusing to speak 'for' or 'in the name of' her people, she acutely expresses her Polynesian singularity]. Spitz's aesthetic of resistance is evident in her writing not only in terms of its searing content but also in its nonstandard form. She refuses to conform to the limitations of genre to such an extent that prose and poetry intermingle in her work. Further intermingling is occasioned by her multilingual writing; Tahitian and French co-exist in this author's work and she uses a variety of techniques to incorporate the indigenous language into her texts.

In this chapter, I examine Spitz's translanguaging in several of her texts, focusing upon *L'Île des rêves écrasées*, translated by Anderson, the first Francophone Tahitian novel to be translated into English, as *Island of Shattered Dreams*. This text tells the tale of the impact of the French nuclear testing program on the inhabitants of the fictional isle of Ruahine.⁴ While the text foregrounds its fictional aspects, therefore, much of it resonates with lived reality – most obviously in its recounting of the historical event of the French nuclear testing program. The text concentrates on one family: Tematua and his half-English wife Emily/Emere, who have three children. One of their sons, Terii, falls in love with Laura Lebrun, a Frenchwoman who is part of the team organizing the testing program. Although the text focuses on the period from the Second World War to the late twentieth century, Spitz sets the story of this family in the context of the entire history of the territory, beginning with its creation and referring to a host of other characters and events from its past. Spitz's ire is evident; as Julia Frengs writes, the text "was considered scandalous by many, as it both scolds the indigenous Tahitian community for allowing their culture to be so easily effaced, as well as denounces colonialism and the Demi community that welcomed Europeanization" (10). While I focus on this text, I also draw comparisons with Spitz's second text, *Hombo: Transcription d'une biographie* [Hombo: Transcription of a Biography]. This appeared in 2003 and again revolves around the members of one family from the territory: a local couple have a child but, after living in a traditional idyll with his grandparents, he struggles to find his place in contemporary bilingual and bicultural society.

I have selected these texts because they display similar and complementary strategies of translanguaging and because they together constitute an innovative approach to life writing. These texts are clearly not autobiographical according to any prescriptive definition of the term; no autobiographical pact is discernible, for example, and no consciously fictional material is built into the story of a principal character, as would be expected in a work of autofiction. Nevertheless, Spitz's writing contains two elements that align it with the category of life writing. First, her texts contain characters who have clear resonance with the lives of real-life people. This includes Spitz herself; in *L'Île des rêves écrasées*, for

example, the character Tetiare is a Mā'ohi woman who becomes a writer and is engaged in writing the history of her homeland. More broadly, her characters are acknowledged to be based upon verifiable individuals. As Anderson writes in the Translator's Note that prefaces the volume, "initial reactions ranged from acclamation to death threats: in basing her narrative on real events and real people, Spitz was sailing too close to the wind for some" (1). Spitz herself writes in the Author's Note that appears after its epilogue, "my thanks to every character in my story, for having existed. Some have left us, but those who are still living will recognise themselves. All I had to do was draw them out from my suppressed memory to make them come alive again" (159). Second, Spitz's work speaks to broader issues related to the category of life writing. Scholars of life writing have long been concerned with the exclusivity of Western approaches to selfhood and, as a consequence, to models of autobiography. Scholars of women's life writing, in particular, have pointed to understandings of male subjectivity that create restrictive patterns of self-writing. The now long tradition of scholarship of women's life writing, of which I aim to be part, does the crucial work of highlighting alternative modes of living, being and writing that break away from these molds of self-narrative. In postcolonial studies, critics have likewise called our attention to Western models that inhibit our understanding of life writing from other locations. Bart Moore-Gilbert in *Postcolonial Life-Writing* points to what he views as the "customarily parochial geo-cultural focus" of the early scholarship of life writing (xii). Arguing for a more inclusive approach to reading non-Western life writing, Moore-Gilbert calls for more awareness of alternative understandings of selfhood and self-writing, suggesting that in postcolonial life writing, "decentred subjectivity is often represented as one effect of the material histories and relations of colonialism, in which new and occasionally radically conflicting identities are inscribed in palimpsestic fashion on the subaltern, sometimes by force" (xxi). I include Spitz's work in this study in order to take an inclusive approach to life writing, to forms of subjectivity and to ways of understanding self and story. Both of the texts in question here are concerned with telling the story of Spitz's land, focusing on specific decades but alluding to the history of the land and its people from creation to the present day. Spitz's writing is thus akin to a biography of her homeland and may be interpreted as an alternative version of the official written history of the territory. This work of life writing therefore consciously explores the boundaries of this term. In this chapter, I first discuss the ways in which Spitz practices monolingualism in her writing, using blocks of monolingual Tahitian and French that stand out from the predominantly bilingual prose. I then analyze the ways in which she translanguages in her texts by intermingling the two languages. I finally discuss Spitz's representation of the relationship between language and identity in characters across her works.

Defying Bilingualism

L'Île des rêves écrasées has the most striking opening of all the texts discussed in this book. This bilingual author opens her text not bilingually but monolingually – but not in French. The first chapter is titled “Omuara’a parau” and consists of five pages written exclusively in the Tahitian language.⁵ The standard transcription of the Tahitian language is used: Roman script, with diacritic marks that denote the length of vowels and glottal stops, as was established by the French missionaries of the early nineteenth century. The words thus have a different shape entirely from the French language prose. The opening lines, for example, read:

Na tamanui
 Na tepaiaha
 Na teuruari’h
 Mā’ohi no inanahi
 Mā’ohi no ananahi
 Mā’ohi no a muri a’e (9)

What is immediately apparent is that this language has no clear resonance with the French language. As we saw in the chapter devoted to Pineau’s work, elements of Guadeloupean Creole are recognizable to the French speaker, since French is one of the languages from which this creole is derived. Tahitian, by contrast, is in no way comprehensible to the Francophone reader. Whereas Salvayre incorporates extended passages of Spanish that are not translated for the French speaker into her text, Spitz pushes this technique further; this is not just a paragraph or an excerpt from a song, but five pages of the text – and the first pages, furthermore. The text is predicated upon an aesthetic of incomprehensibility, therefore.

This opening raises important questions about the politics, the message and the intended audience of this text. The non-Tahitian speaker will be thrown into disarray, since no amount of guesswork leads to an understanding of the meaning of the pages. She or he is obliged to skip over the meaning of the poem, pausing to note the unfamiliar sounds and shape of its words, perhaps, but unable to grasp its meaning or its relevance to the text that follows. This technique obliges the reader to maintain an attitude of curiosity, openness and tolerance; one may imagine that some readers would cease reading the text or, preempting the opening pages, never even begin reading it. Whereas authors such as Salvayre and Pineau, in her later work, refuse to atone for the ignorance of the monolingual reader, Spitz aggressively stipulates that her text caters only to readers who are open to linguistic variety. Spitz unequivocally places the Tahitian language first – not in the same way as Thúy, who places the Vietnamese title above the French translation on the first page

of each chapter, but in a far more sustained way. Spitz's sympathy with the plight of the Tahitian people and the impact of colonization upon them is unsubtly communicated in this linguistic act. The opening pages become a performance of othering the non-Tahitian-speaking reader, confronting them with their ignorance of at least this language and possibly also the culture from which it emanates. The intended audience must be readers who are sympathetic to the plight of the Tahitian population, therefore. Alternatively, of course, they must be Francophone Tahitians. Spitz's text was published in Tahiti by a small, local press. The author could perhaps have followed the example of Francophone authors from elsewhere in the former colonies and approached a Parisian publisher. Such a move would have likely led to greater international presence, greater sales and greater attention within metropolitan France. By insisting on publishing in Tahiti and partially in Tahitian, Spitz appears to be writing primarily for the local audience of her compatriots which, given literacy rates in French Polynesia, is limited. This strategy therefore reaffirms the presence of the Tahitian language and culture, proclaims the relevance of a Tahitian literature to a local audience and rebuffs the practice of publishing in Europe for overseas consumption and commercial advantage.

Furthermore, this prose text begins with poetry, as this chapter is a poem written in verse. As we will discuss further, poetry frequently interrupts the text, most of which is written in prose. By opening her work not just in the Tahitian language but also in a non-prose style, Spitz doubly defies her readers' expectations. The Western reader is confronted by a rejection of both European language and European literary mores. Instead, Spitz inscribes her text in the Tahitian literary tradition, which, as can be deduced from the story of the Tahitian script, is not written; this is, after all, the first Tahitian literary text to be published. Spitz is careful to acknowledge the oral literature of the territory and to refer explicitly to this oral literary tradition of which her writing forms part.⁶ As a result, the word "roman" [novel] on the front cover is revealed to be misleading, since it denotes a certain set of standards to which the text itself does not conform. The work immediately looks different: visually, it is presented in a different format and in a different language, which directly asserts its difference from the literary conventions of Western, and particularly French, culture. Such a technique again raises the question of audience, since Spitz may be writing primarily for a Francophone Tahitian audience, however limited that may be. In any case, it is clear that she is determined to defy the canonical, generic and linguistic boundaries that French literature may impose.

What is all the more surprising about the monolingual opening of *L'Île des rêves écrasés* is that the monolingual Tahitian pages are followed by monolingual pages in French. After several pages of Tahitian, we read several pages of French, with no Tahitian vocabulary. The stark

juxtaposition creates a jarring experience of moving from one language to another. The content is even more jarring, since the French pages tell the biblical creation story. In very correct, even lyrical French, the prose tells the tale of the creation of the Earth, with formal phrases such as “Qu’il y ait des luminaires au firmament du ciel pour séparer le jour et la nuit” (14) [“Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night” (10)] and God’s voice exclaiming, “Soyez féconds et prolifiques, remplissez la terre et dominez-la” (15) [“Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it” (11)]. As the latter citation demonstrates, the allusion between Western religion and human control of nature and land is evident. The text also clearly sets up an opposition between a local tale, told in Tahitian, and the imposed Christian story, told in French, to emphasize the differences in the values and belief systems. This critique of the introduction of Christianity into the territory recurs throughout Spitz’s work. In a poem published in *Littera’mā’ohi*, for example, she likens the impact of the arrival of Christianity to that of alcohol and pox and criticizes the 2004 decision to hang a crucifix in the Assembly of French Polynesia.⁷ As opposed to the writers assembled in this book, who mingle two languages within their writing, this author embarks upon a distinct separation between them. This opening thus sets up an opposition between two mutually exclusive systems that are each embodied by one language. Ironically, then, Spitz’s writing conforms to the monolingualism of standard literary creation – but does so in strikingly innovative ways.

Moreover, Spitz’s innovative appropriation of monolingualism is not confined to the opening pages. Although much of the text is bilingual, as we will discuss in the next section, this technique of using passages of monolingualism in both languages is repeated throughout Spitz’s writing. In *L’Ile des rêves écrasés*, short poems written entirely in Tahitian interrupt the prose, and several longer poems written entirely in French are also included. The same pattern occurs in *Hombo*, in which poems in Tahitian are more frequent, and are never translated. In *L’Ile des rêves écrasés*, one of the most striking usages of monolingual writing within this predominantly bilingual prose is in a diary written by one of the main characters. Laura Lebrun, the Frenchwoman who is in Ruahine as part of the nuclear testing team, typifies Frenchness in more than just her name; she is white, monolingual, unaccustomed to foreign cultures and, although she is eager to learn, frequently shows an astounding ignorance of the people and land she is there to damage. As is presaged from her initial meeting with Terii, their love is doomed due to their national, linguistic and ethnic differences, and Laura returns broken hearted to France following the nuclear testing. Her death many years later, alone and from cancer, is a nod to the potentially noxious effects of her work. The most interesting function of this character is her diary writing. The third-person narration of the text is frequently interrupted by sections

titled “le journal de Laura” [“Laura’s Journal”] in which this monolingual Frenchwoman writes in a confessional style about her overseas experience. The first-person narration provides an insight into her Western perspective of the culture, language and mores of the island, and does so in perfect, standard French. She writes, for example, of the family’s conversations that “leur analyse du monde est si originale que je me suis sentie parfois bête” (135) [“their analysis of the world is so original that I sometimes felt stupid” (114)] and, describing the half-English Emily/Emere, exclaims, “quel étrange pays que celui-ci. J’ai rencontré aujourd’hui un couple extraordinaire. Elle a la peau presque aussi claire que la mienne, mais habituée à la lumière locale” (120) [“What a truly strange country this is. I met the most extraordinary couple today. Her skin is almost as light as mine, but used to the sunlight here” (101)]. Although Laura’s observations are frequently trite, clichéd and reminiscent of the gushings of heroines in romantic fiction, they demonstrate the stark contrast between two opposing belief systems. As Frengs writes, “effectively, the intimate diary of the French woman aids in the valorization of the Mā’ohi way of life, culture, compassion, and especially Mā’ohi communion with the land” (99). The monolingual interludes in this bilingual text thus emphasize not just the difference in language, culture and perspective but also the exclusivity of the two cultures. Furthermore, of course, they remind the reader that Spitz is perfectly capable of writing standard, correct French, but that she chooses not to.

The monolingual passages, especially those in Tahitian, raise the question of translation. As we have seen in all of the chapters of this book, authors who incorporate more than one language into their writing are obliged to negotiate the need for translation. This is particularly interesting in the case of *L’Île des rêves écrasés*. The text was first published in 1991. Subsequent editions appeared, such as in 2008 and in 2015. In the original publication, no translations were provided of any of the Tahitian language. The opening five-page poem was therefore presented in its entirety for the reader to decipher unaided. By the later editions, however, a glossary had been included at the back of the text. In the 2015 edition, a final section titled “Glossaire des mots tahitiens (et autres)” [Glossary of Tahitian (and other) words, simply translated as “Glossary” in the published version] had been added. This glossary begins with some description of the language:

Dans la transcription usuelle de la langue tahitienne, les voyelles se prononcent comme en espagnol (a, é, i, o, ou) et elles se prononcent toutes.

Aue: a-ou-é.

Les voyelles doubles sont le plus souvent séparées par un coup de glotte (apostrophe) qui ne se note pas toujours: Fa’a devrait s’écrire *Fa’a’a* et se prononcer Fa-a-a. *Popa’a*: popa-a.

Le h est fortement expiré, comme en anglais ou comme la jota latino-américaine.

Les mots tahitiens ne prennent pas de s au pluriel. (185)

[In the usual transcription of the Tahitian language, vowels are pronounced as in Spanish (a, é, i, o, ou) and they are all pronounced.

Aue: a-ou-é.

Double vowels are most often separated by a glottal stop (an apostrophe) that is not always written: Fa'a should be written *Fa'a'a* and pronounced Fa-a-a.

Popa'a: popa-a.

The h is strongly aspirated, as in English or like the Latin-American jota.

An s is not added to plural Tahitian words.]⁸

This glossary thus attempts to explain the language, including the discrepancy between its written and oral forms, to the nonspeaker. It also implicitly criticizes the writers of the original transcription of the language when it suggests that a specific word, Fa'a, is written incorrectly, according to the norms of pronunciation. This description emphasizes the differences between Tahitian and French and underscores not just their mutual incomprehensibility but also their different roots, far from each other in terms of history, geography and development. There is no attribution given to the glossary; so, it is not clear whether it was written by Spitz or someone else; since it was not present in the original, one assumes it was added later by the publisher and not written by the author. Some of the words in the glossary are simply word-for-word equivalents, such as *motu* [low lying island] (186) or *tebera'a* [circumcision] (187). Yet, the glossary also demonstrates the cultural differences inherent in language, since some words necessitate explanation due to their cultural specificity. Hence, *marae* is defined as “temple à ciel ouvert; plateforme en pierres sèches où se déroulait le culte ancien, souvent associé à des cérémonies à caractère social ou politique” (186) [open-air temple; dry stone platform where the ancient religion was practiced, often associated with social or political ceremonies] and *tumu butu* as “arbre typique des bords de mer, reconnaissable à ses grosses baies anguleuses et pyramidales; l'amande était utilisée en médecine traditionnelle en usage externe; et, râpée, par les pêcheurs pour endormir les poissons; *butu* ou *hotu*” (187) [tree typical of the seaside, recognizable for its angular, pyramid-shaped berries; the almond was used in traditional medicine for external usage, and grated by fishermen to calm fish, written *butu* or *hotu*].⁹ As is clear from this selection of examples, the entries in the glossary move beyond more simplistic markers of cultural difference, such as food items, to include vocabulary related to religious belief, history, political organization and the landscape and its importance. The approach taken by this glossary is

therefore to educate the reader on the major characteristics and specificities of the Tahitian language and to call attention to the complexity of the cultural difference between France and Tahiti.

The inclusion of this glossary in a later edition of the text changes the parameters and the intended audience of Spitz's work. A text that opens with five pages of Tahitian with no translation may appear at first glance to be inaccessible to a French-speaking reader, but the addition of a glossary shows an openness to the non-Tahitian-speaking reader. Nevertheless, it is hardly a panacea. The task of reading poetry in another language is always challenging and can often result in a partial loss of understanding, of subtlety, of metaphor or of sound, for example. The decision to leave a lyrical, five-page poem in the Tahitian language and to offer merely a glossary of its words at the end of the text does little to help the non-Tahitian-speaking reader to decipher it. It would be almost impossible to consult the glossary to understand every word, one by one, and engage in the process of making sense of the meaning of each stanza. Of all the ways of handling a poem in a different language to the main text, this has to be the least useful way of presenting it to the reader who has no knowledge of the secondary language. The only way to ensure comprehension of the poem would be to offer a translation of it, either side by side as does Pineau with Man Ya's Creole song, or below the text, or in an extended footnote. While the glossary is useful for interpreting the meaning of sentences that incorporate one or two words of Tahitian, as we shall see below, it proves to be almost futile for understanding the opening pages. The opening is thus written in a way that emphasizes a specifically Tahitian perspective on their culture and their history – especially given that it stages a creation story that fictionalizes the creation of the Pacific territory – and that sets up a mutually exclusive juxtaposition between the French and Tahitian languages, cultures, histories and belief systems. As a striking rejection of bilingualism and an ardent defense of the Tahitian language and the culture from which it emanates, it is an aesthetic and political statement that rejects the colonial apparatus. By resisting the monolingual and generic constraints of Western, especially French, literature, Spitz writes Tahitian literature into existence, with her own stipulations and her own approach to individual and collective identity. Such an innovative approach to monolingualism sets a defiant tone for the text to follow.

Defying Monolingualism

The opening passages of *L'Île des rêves écrasés* and isolated passages in this text and *Hombo* each demonstrate this extended and innovative use of monolingualism. The majority of Spitz's writing, however, incorporates her two languages. While her writing is predominantly in French, her prose is marked by frequent incursions by the Tahitian language. This is immediately evident in *L'Île des rêves écrasés* in the very first section

following the two monolingual passages. After a poem entirely in Tahitian and a prose section entirely in French, the “prologue” tells the history of Ruahine, and does so bilingually. The fantastical tale opens with the goddess of the moon, Tetuamarama, shining light upon the land and Tematua, god of the eternal Earth, singing his premonition of the painful impact of colonization, while the people watch on: “assis sur les *pe’ue* que les mains usées des femmes ont tressés finement, ils attendent” (17) [“sitting on *pe’ue* finely woven by the work-worn hands of the women, they are waiting” (13)]. The significance of the word *pe’ue* can be surmised from the sentence and, furthermore, its exact meaning is not essential to understand the story. The reader who wishes to know the precise meaning will find “*natte de feuilles de pandanus tressées*” (186) [mat of woven pandanus leaves] in the glossary – in the later edition, of course, since the glossary was not available to readers of the first edition. Nevertheless, its inclusion on the first page following the monolingual sections denotes an important change in tone. This practice of including Tahitian vocabulary within the predominantly French prose continues, moreover; the French colonizers are compared to the “*marara* qui arrivent en grappes sur la plage de sable fin” (19) [“the *marara* that wash up in clusters on the fine sand of our beaches” (14) – *marara* are flying fish] and the poems incorporate lines such as “*Vahine mā’ohi* à la peau dorée” (19) [“*Vahine mā’ohi*, golden-skinned woman” (15)]. As is evident in these examples, the Tahitian is italicized in the original text, which calls attention to its difference from the main language of the prose, but it is not explained. In most cases, the meaning of the Tahitian words can either be derived from the context of the tale or does not need to be understood to grasp the train of the sentence or paragraph. Their presence is highly significant, however. In this section, explaining Tematua’s premonition that the colonizers would arrive and cause devastation to the people and to the land, the Tahitian language is employed strategically as a reminder of the precariousness of the culture and the potential for its loss. As Tematua’s section presages, “Nous avons alors commencé à nous entretenir: canons contre *’omore*, fusils contre *toi*, acier contre *’aito*” (24) [“And thus we began to kill one another: cannon against *’omore*, rifle against *to’i*, steel against *’aito*” (19)]. Such usages of the language demonstrate that this is not a simple use of one language to add local or regional color to the French-language prose or to contextualize the story in a particular culture or environment. This text therefore turns from the monolingual accounts of the two separate histories to the story of how the two cultures combine through the use of the two languages. The way in which they combine is a locus of tension, conflict and destruction, however.

Spitz incorporates the Tahitian language into her texts in the dialogue, the narration and the poetry that frequently interrupts the prose. Turning first to the dialogue, it is striking in all of her texts that there is comparatively little dialogue in Spitz’s writing. Characters, including the gods

mentioned above, sometimes speak in short soliloquies, yet the text is mostly narrated by a third-person omniscient narrator. Although comparatively rare, the dialogue and reported speech often incorporate the Tahitian language, however, and with important effects. For example, when a group of young people request an audience with their local representatives to voice their concerns regarding the nuclear testing, only to have to camp outside an office until after nightfall in order to gain access to one, a member of their group asserts, “Monsieur le Conseiller, nous nous excusons de vous importuner. Nous sommes de Ruahine et nous venons vous demander d’empêcher la construction du centre sur le *motu* Maeva” (98) [“Sir, we apologise for disturbing you. We’re from Ruahine and we’ve come to ask you to put a stop to the construction of the centre on Maeva motu” (84)]. The government official, a Tahitian who represents the local population, replies in perfect French, assuring them that he will be “la porte-parole du bien-être de nos populations” (98) [“I will personally speak for the well-being of our population” (84)] but predictably does nothing. The *motu*, translated as “ilot” in the glossary, is an important inclusion in the speech of two local individuals who speak predominantly in French. The fact that the Tahitian word interrupts their speech calls attention not just to the discrepancy between two men speaking the language of the colonizer but also to the importance of the land. As the creation story and the prologue to *Les Iles aux rêves écrasées* emphasize, the land is of primordial importance in Pacific culture. The fact that it was poised to be irrevocably damaged in perhaps the most noxious way possible is emphasized here through the use of the Tahitian language. Likewise, the grandmother Toofa asks her grandchildren who went to protest, “Dieu, avons-nous tant péché pour que les larmes de nos *mo’otua* coulent aujourd’hui?” (99) [“Dear Lord, were we such sinners that our *mo’otua* must weep today?” (85)]. The glossary simply gives “petits(s)-enfant(s)” (186) [“grandchild, grandchildren” (162)] as the translation of *mo’otua*, with the optional plural since, as the introduction to the glossary explains, Tahitian nouns are not pluralized by adding an s. This usage emphasizes legacy, ancestry and the lasting impact of previous populations and of colonization upon the contemporary inhabitants, especially the young people. It is all the more ironic that Toofa had an affair with an Englishman, Charles Williams, and gave birth to a mixed-raced daughter, Terii’s mother, and that Charles Williams owns the land that will be destroyed. Toofa recognizes that Williams will indeed sell the land and buy more elsewhere. Her use of Tahitian emphasizes the legacy of the colonial expansion and the pain that it causes for her and her progeniture. In this way, Spitz incorporates Tahitian vocabulary into the dialogue in order to call attention to colonial injustice, oppression and legacy.

One of the reasons for the minimal dialogue in Spitz’s work is that one of the main mechanisms through which characters speak in Spitz’s writing is in monologues. These interludes are presented as poems that

are voiced by individual characters and which normally include both French and Tahitian. These monologues interrupt the prose and are presented as poems with stanzas, similarly to the five-page poem in Tahitian that opens the text. For example, the third-person narrator recounts that when Tematua, father of Terii, was born, his father went alone to a temple and uttered a prayer that begins, “esprits bienfaisants du *marae*” (30) [“Benevolent spirits of the *marae*” (23)]. The *marae*, as noted above, is the natural rock formation used as a temple by the local people. The use of the Tahitian word thus highlights the landscape of the territory and the local people’s belief system, and emphasizes the relationship between the two. At the conclusion of the prayer, the narrator writes, “puis, conformément à ce qu’on lui a appris, il termine par la vraie prière du vrai Dieu: ‘*Notre père qui es aux cieux ...*’” (30) [“Then as he has been taught, he finishes with the real prayer to the real God: ‘*Our Father, who art in Heaven...*’” (24)]. Earlier in the text, Spitz has discussed the imposition of Catholicism upon the people of the region, suggesting that they had lost something of their own traditional belief system as a result of its introduction. This reference to praying to God “conformément” [“as he has been taught”] highlights this imposition and again sets the two cultures in opposition to each other. As Tematua’s father continues his soliloquy to the gods, asking them to protect his child, the third-person narrator states, “parce que depuis l’aube des temps, le Verbe a toujours été l’expression de son peuple, Maevurua puise au fond son âme des paroles à offrir à son fils. [...] Des paroles choisies parmi les innombrables de leur langue pour faire vivre en lui ce monde qu’il s’apprête à quitter pour un lointain ailleurs” (36) [“because since the beginning of time his people have always expressed themselves through the word, Maevurua searches deep in his soul to find words to offer his son. [...] Words chosen amongst the multitudes of words in their language to make this world live in him, this world he is preparing to leave to go to distant parts” (29)]. The Tahitian language thus forms an integral part of the performance of these monologues, and the orality links the people to their language and their land. When Maevurua exclaims in his monologue, “j’ai confié ton *pito* à ta terre” (37) [“I entrusted your *pito* to your land” (30)], referring to the practice of offering the umbilical cord, the *pito*, to the land, he conjoins the traditional belief system, the land and the language as a triptych that form a primordial element of the identity of the Tahitian people. As the separated monolingual pages presage from the very beginning, this triptych is soon to be disrupted through the imposition of colonial power.

In addition to bilingual soliloquies uttered by the characters, Spitz’s narratives often contain poetry that incorporates both French and Tahitian. This poetry interrupts the prose and does so in two languages. Occasionally, this is just a word or two, such as in a poem written by Terii’s mother Emere. As we shall see, writers and writing

are important features of this text. Emere's poem is mainly in French but refers to "*Maeva Terre mā'ohi*" and "*le sang mā'ohi*" (89) ["*Maeva Mā'ohi land*" and "*Mā'ohi blood*" (75)]. These examples highlight how the poems sometimes appear in italics to distinguish them from the prose they interrupt, which is why the French words are in italics but the Tahitian words are not. Some poems are presented in italics and others are not, which again defies the reader's expectations, preventing any stable pattern of reading in this resolutely non-Western text. Nonetheless, in these examples, the Tahitian vocabulary is minimal and is clearly comprehensible to the French-speaking reader. Its presence merely calls attention to the local culture and the close connection between the people and the land that is about to be irrevocably damaged. In other poems, the Tahitian is less comprehensible to the nonspeaker. For example, Terii writes a poem to his friend Christian upon his return to the island. Spitz insists upon the fact that Terii has spent seven years in France studying archaeology and that when he returns to the island, "*il désire encore marier les deux mondes*" (90) ["he still wants to bring the two worlds together" (76)]. Yet, he writes disappointedly to Christian, still in the metropole, decrying his false expectations and realizing that:

*Enfants, tamari'i 'afa, gâtés des dieux
 Qui n'avions jamais souffert du manque
 Qui avions réussi toujours et partout
 Sans effort et sans mérite.
 Ne suffisait-il pas de vouloir? (92)*

[Children, tamari'i 'afa, spoiled by the gods,
 We had never lacked for anything
 We had always succeeded in everything, everywhere
 Effortlessly, undeservingly.
 Didn't all our wishes come true? (77)]

In this instance, the Tahitian language interrupts the French-language poetry in a far less simple way, since the Tahitian phrase "*tamari'i 'afa*" will not be understood by the nonspeaker. In the glossary, which again only appeared in a later edition, the adjective *'afa* is translated as half, and *tamari'i 'afa* as "*enfant métis, demi*" (187) [children of mixed race].¹⁰ While comprehension of the phrase is not necessary to understand the sense of the poem, the phrase emphasizes the liminal identity of many of the young generation of Tahitians. Many will have some European descentance – Terii's grandfather was English, for example – and many, including Terii, will have believed in the prospect of a better life through a French education and the process of melding the two cultures into something more progressive. As his poem suggests, the disappointment

they experience when they realize the impossibility of this dream is crushing. Once again, Tahitian is used to deny the possibility of fusing the two languages, belief systems and cultures into a durable, progressive and livable identity.

The representation of bilingual poetry is extended in *Hombo: Transcription d'une biographie*. As noted above, there are several extended poems entirely in Tahitian in this text. In addition, there are many that include significant portions of Tahitian mingled with French vocabulary. For example, the grandfather Mahine recounts a poem telling the story of the island thus:

Marotetini et Tevaearai sont leurs enfants
 Tefatu et Marotetini son fils
 Viennent offrir à Huahine
 Le 'aute simple et le 'aute double
 Pour grandir ombrager fleurir
 Viennent dédier à Huahine
 Son obstination
 Désormais légendaire
 Huahine *te ti'ara'a*
O te mata o te to'erau
 Huahine
Hu'abu'a te aru
Marama pupu fatifati
Maro te heiva (44)

[Marotetini and Tevaearai are their children
 Tefatu and his son Marotetini
 Come to give to Huahine
 The simple 'aute and the double 'aute
 To grow shadow flower
 Come to dedicate to Huahine
 Its obstinacy
 Henceforth legendary
 Huahine *te ti'ara'a*
O te mata o te to'erau
 Huahine
Hu'abu'a te aru
Marama pupu fatifati
Maro te heiva]

Importantly, this is in the context of a larger history of the territory, which includes poems entirely in Tahitian, in addition to poems that include both languages. As Mahine recounts the history of his people, Tahitian enters the poem progressively more until the final lines are

entirely in Tahitian. It is noteworthy that the poem does not incorporate one language into another in a way that creates meaning. We have seen writers such as Salvayre and Thúy move from one language to another and back again in the same sentence, incorporating both languages into sentences that make sense, albeit for different literary purposes. In Spitz's poems such as the one cited above, Tahitian interrupts the French vocabulary not in a way that moves seamlessly toward the creation of meaning. This is not, then, the case of two languages mingling together, or of borrowing from one language to add local color or a sense of a local culture. The two languages here are like water and oil, side by side but separate. The contrast between the two languages is rendered all the more stark by the lack of glossary in *Hombo*. As opposed to the later edition of *L'Îles des rêves écrasées*, there is no glossary, nor are there footnotes or translations of the Tahitian vocabulary within the text. The non-Tahitian speaker is thus confronted by several monolingual Tahitian poems and others that contain large sections of untranslated Tahitian. In addition to creating an othering of the non-Tahitian-speaking reader, this usage of the two languages in poetry, song and prayer remind the reader of the oral tradition that forms the backdrop of literature from this region. Much of this is in Tahitian and the text suggests that it should not be overlooked simply because it does not conform to Western literary standards or Western monolingualism.

In addition to the dialogue and the poetry, the third-person narration also contains significant elements of bilingual writing. The third-person narrator is situated outside of the time of the story, omniscient and with an understanding of the entire history of the territory. Spitz's narration moves forward at lightning speed, most notably in *L'île des rêves écrasées*, in which the text opens with the creation myth and ends with an epilogue situated twenty years after the nuclear testings, moving the time frame into the twenty-first century. She pauses to focus on a small number of characters and events that are significant to the impact of foreign exploitation upon the region, thus pointing to the influence of colonization and neocolonization upon both individuals and the collective. As she does so, Spitz frequently uses Tahitian vocabulary to refer to specific elements of the local culture. As we have seen in previous chapters, such as those that discuss Thúy and Pineau's work, chief among these is food. The narrator refers routinely to locally grown ingredients and to traditional dishes prepared by the local people, using the Tahitian names for them within the French sentences. Anderson notes Spitz's preoccupation with food and remarks specifically that "Spitz differentiates between traditional foods of a more self-referential past and a metropolitan diet and lifestyle" as a metaphor for the harmful impact of the colonizers' culture (2013b: 14). To build upon Anderson's analysis, Spitz's usage of Tahitian vocabulary to represent

food further accentuates difference. She refers within the French prose, for example, to *miti ha'ari*, [coconut milk], *mei'a* [banana] and *tarao*, translated in the glossary as “poisson, regroupe plusieurs espèces de loches ou mérours de petite taille (genres *Cephalopholis* et *Epinephelus*) [fish, including several small species of loach and grouper (*Cephalopholis* et *Epinephelus*)]” (187). This strategy adds an important local dimension to the tale, contextualizes the story and calls attention to the push and pull between the colonial and the indigenous languages. In a particularly salient example, the narrator recounts the preparations the local people make for a celebration of a visit by a foreign dignitary. The prose mentions a list of food items in Tahitian that the people use over the course of the day's preparatory work. For example, “les hommes, bien sûr, tuent le cochon, attrapent crabes, poissons et langoustes, déterrent taro, *ufi*, *'umara*, cueillent *mei'a*, *fe'i*, *'uru* et enfournent le tout dans le *ahima'a*, four traditionnel” (32) [“of course the men kill a pig, catch crabs, fish and crayfish, dig up taro, *ufi*, *'umara*, pick *mei'a*, *fe'i*, *'uru* and put it all in the traditional oven, the *ahima'a*” (25)]. Taken together, the Tahitian vocabulary reminds the reader of the local context and of the differences between French and Tahitian cultures. More than that, however, they also set up an opposition between the two. The foreign dignitary who appears with the local priest, after the long preparations and anticipation from the local people, is in military uniform. He speaks curtly to the assembled people: “je suis venu vous annoncer que la Mère Patrie est en grand danger. L'Allemagne nous a déclaré la guerre et notre Patrie a besoin de tous ses enfants pour la défendre. C'est pourquoi, je suis venu à vous, confiant, car je sais que tous les enfants de notre grande Nation se lèveront ensemble pour la défendre et chasser l'envahisseur étranger de notre sol” (33) [“I have come to inform you that the Motherland is in grave danger. Germany has declared war against us and our Motherland needs all her children to defend her. That is why I have come to you, full of confidence, for I know that all the children of our great Nation will rise together to defend her and to chase the foreign invader from our soil” (26)]. In perfect, formal French, therefore, the military official informs the local people that some of them will be forcibly conscripted to fight for the French war effort. Tematua, Terii's father, is one of these and later alludes to the atrocities he witnesses on the battlefields. This points up an important element in French colonial history that is all too easily overlooked; just like the *tirailleurs sénégalais* [Senegalese Riflemen], the Senegalese infantry corps in the French Army, many young men from colonies were enlisted to fight for France in Europe and North Africa, regardless of where their home nation lay. Spitz emphasizes the injustice of this arrangement through laboring the words “Mère Patrie” [“Motherland”] and “la grande Nation” [“the great Nation”], by referring to the collective in front of him as “nous” [“us”] and “les

enfants” [“children”] and, most obviously by referring most ironically to “l’envahisseur étranger” [“the foreign invader”] and “notre sol” [“our land”]. The contrast between this French vocabulary and the Tahitian words used to convey the populations’ excitement at the prospect of welcoming an overseas visitor is stark. Again, the French and Tahitian languages do not come together as a mingling of a single subjectivity but serve to create a clear division between two opposing systems and to highlight the oppression and injustice perpetrated by one on the other.

Although the Tahitian language is frequently used by the omniscient narrator to refer to food and cultural items, it is more often invoked when referring specially to the land and its nature. The narrator describes the land at length, beginning with its creation in the early, monolingual sections of the text. The lyrical depiction of the land is frequently noted by critics, who highlight the uniqueness of Spitz’s style; Anderson refers to her subtle evocations of the beach as a sacred space and as the locus of a complex belief system, for example (2011: 9); Frengs notes the way in which the land is represented as physically and metaphorically violated by colonization (78); and Keown underscores that Spitz “anchors her polemical attack upon French military imperialism firmly within Polynesian spiritual beliefs in the sanctity of the natural environment” (2007: 98). The text pauses to refer to landmarks, mostly natural formations that often have a specific resonance or meaning with the population. It also includes references to the natural habit, the flora and fauna of the territory. Spitz uses words such as *mou’a* [mountain], *purau* [tree] and *motu* [low-lying island]. These may at first appear to be an exoticization, a reminder of the faraway, strange island territory that is not readily understandable or conquerable to the European. Yet, this usage is not just one or two words to render the text exotic for a foreign consumer but an extended, repeated presence that reminds the reader of the importance of the land to the people, of the link between nature and language, and to the metaphorical rape of the land through colonization and its extension, the nuclear testing. Moreover, the way in which the Tahitian language is incorporated into the French prose emphasizes the complexity and the multilayered meanings of vocabulary that relates to the land. For example, the two-word phrase “tumu māpe” (45) is explained with a particularly long entry in French in the glossary: “grand arbre au feuillage sombre, à la base du tronc marqué de contreforts très saillants, et qui pousse près des rivières; son fruit, la châtaigne de Tahiti, se consommé bouilli ou rôti” (187) [large tree with dark foliage, with trunk that has prominent buttress roots, which grows near to rivers: its fruit, the Tahitian chestnut, is eaten boiled or roasted]. Rather than using a simple, concise but inaccurate French vocabulary, such as *un grand arbre* [a large tree], the text points up the specificity of this land that is so vastly different from the language in which she is writing. Spitz in this way insists

upon the primordial link between the land and the language and suggests that it is necessary to use Tahitian to encapsulate this land and to represent it accurately in words.

In addition to using Tahitian vocabulary to emphasize the natural landscape of the region, Spitz also uses Tahitian to foreground the indigenous population and the differences between them and the colonial outsiders. First, the names of her Tahitian characters are often long, unfamiliar and unclear to the French reader: Eritapeta, Tetuamarama and Teraimateata, for example. As we saw in the discussion of Emily/Emere, naming is a significant cultural phenomenon in this region and is shot through with notions of power, ideology and influence. This is best exemplified in the text *Hombo*. In this work, the central character changes name – not once but multiple times. The text opens with a traditional naming ceremony at which his father explains, “Vehiata c’est vrai est son nom choisi, imposé par la tradition de notre terre, de notre peuple” [It is true that Vehiata is his chosen name, imposed by the tradition of our land, of our people] but, having lived on the “la grande île” [the big island] for several years, “je veux pour lui la tradition nouvelle. Yves est son nom. Son unique nom” [I want the new tradition for him. His name is Yves. His only name (16)]. Although tradition dictates the child should be called Vehiata, his father gives him the classically French name Yves in order to bring him closer to the Europeanized culture of the main island. Despite his traditional and European names, however, the protagonist becomes known as Ehu, explained as the color of fair individuals, in another reference to nature. All goes well for Vehiata/Yves/Ehu while he lives on a remote island with his grandparents. When he leaves for the main island, however, and enters the French school system, from which his native language is forbidden, he becomes gradually more traumatized until he comes to be designated a “hombo.” This word is used both as his individual name, capitalized as Hombo, and to describe a group of disaffected teenage and young people: “ils sont désormais ‘*hombo*’ nouveau mot pour une nouvelle réalité, jeunes gens à la lisière de la société que la société renie” (83) [they are known from now on as ‘*hombo*,’ a new word for a new reality, young people on the edges of society that society disowns]. This is not a localized incident, therefore, but a generalized one that is common to a generational group, and Hombo and his fellow hombo suffer as a result of it. The way in which Spitz names her characters and portrays the culture surrounding naming is significant, therefore. She reinforces Tahitian linguistic and cultural practices, highlighting their differences from European protocols and hinting, in her characteristically unobtrusive way, that any mingling of the two can lead to disastrous consequences.

In addition to the Tahitian names that carry an important significance, the Tahitian language is often employed to emphasize the people themselves. People are referred to by the word for their family position: ‘aiu

(grandchild/young child), ari'i (prince/king), māmā (mother, grandmother, mature woman), tavana (village chief). Even the simple labels of tāne (man, husband, male lover) and vahine (woman, wife, partner) are used to describe the various characters. This emphasizes the cultural specificities of Tahitian lore and traditional patterns of family and kinship. By contrast, all white people are referred to as Papa'ā. For example, in *L'Île des rêves écrasés*, the mother Teuira voices a soliloquy about her son who is departing to fight for the French and opens it thus:

Je hais ce *Papa'ā* sans nom et sans visage
Maigre oiseau blanc porteur de douleur (40)

[I hate this nameless faceless Papa'ā
This skinny white bird who brings suffering (32)]

The differences between the French, on the one hand, and the local population, on the other hand, could not be more stark. The Tahitian language is part of a separation between the two cultures and is emblematic of the stance that the two nations, lands, peoples and languages will never fully mix.

The third way in which the narrator uses the Tahitian language is to represent elements of the traditional belief system. This technique is foreshadowed in the opening monolingual pages that tell the story of the mythical creation and the history of the land. As the narration moves forward at a startlingly quick pace, covering decades in mere paragraphs, the omniscient narrator pauses to refer to traditional values and beliefs of the Tahitian people, often emphasizing them through the use of Tahitian vocabulary. Sometimes, this is a simple allusion to the names of Tahitian gods, such as 'Oro, Tane and Ta'aroa. Each of these has a specific significance, which is explained in the glossary; 'Oro is the god of war and fertility, Tane is the god of beauty and one of the principal Tahitian gods, and Ta'aroa is the supreme god and creator of all things. The narrator also uses Tahitian vocabulary to refer to sites or practices of religious belief. We saw that *marae* is used to designate the temple site, for example, and that *pito* refers to the practice of leaving the son's umbilical cord in a significant place and offering a prayer to the gods that will protect him and his land. Such usage emphasizes the cultural practices that predate colonization, point up the differences between the ancient and modern cultures, and testify to the limits of the colonizer's language to designate cultural individuality. This is perhaps best exemplified in the phrase *hiro'a tumu mā'ohi*, translated as "conscience de sa différence culturelle *mā'ohi*" [awareness of one's cultural difference as a Mā'ohi]. Rather than give an approximative translation or an explanation of the cultural phenomenon, the narrator merely alludes to this

practice and does so in the Tahitian language. The significant usage of Tahitian in Spitz's work thus presents the two languages, cultures and histories as completely separate: the source of difference, trauma, ill health, damage to the land and to the psyche, and intergenerational conflict.

Defying Biculturalism

The way in which the Tahitian language is incorporated into the dialogue, the poems and the omniscient narrator's observations suggests a crevasse between the language of the indigenous population and that of the colonial power, therefore. Spitz further emphasizes this stance through her representation of cross-cultural relationships. A series of Tahitian characters are included in her works who form affiliations with France, but all of these are ultimately unsuccessful. This is perhaps most clear in the relationship between Laura and Terii. The romantic attachment between the Frenchwoman who writes of the depth of her love in her monolingual diary entries and Terii, the Tahitian man who has returned to his homeland after extensive study in France, is presented as doomed from its beginning. When Terii announces Laura's impending return to France alone after the nuclear explosions, the narrator comments of Terii's mother, "Emere s'est préparée à ce jour depuis longtemps déjà" (156) ["Emere has been ready for this day for a long time" (133)], and his father Tematua gives a soliloquy in which he states, "Laura doit se rendre à sa Terre/Terii appartient à la sienne/Les racines de l'Amour finissent par mourir/Sans les racines de la Terre" (158) ["Laura must return to her Land/Terii belongs to his./The roots of Love in the end must die/Without the roots of the Land" (135)]. The references to the land, capitalized for added emphasis, clearly suggest that belonging to one's territory is a stronger bond than to one's romantic partner. They are thus separated by their land, their cultures, their histories and their languages. Language is a central part of their relationship, since Laura marvels at Terii's Tahitian vocabulary and his knowledge of the French language, and she is aware of her status as the outsider when the family speaks their native tongue. This bicultural relationship is not represented as a means of existing together, therefore, but emphasizes the rigidity of cultural difference. Too much harm has been done to resolve the gulf between the two characters, the narrator suggests, both in the present through the nuclear explosions and in the past through the legacy of colonial domination.

The character of Terii's mother Emere adds to this representation. She is first presented as a bicultural individual, since her father is the eminently English Charles Williams and her mother the Tahitian woman Toofa. The reason for the presence of the Englishman in French Tahiti is never explained but he is a wealthy landowner who is presented with few

scruples, since he commits adultery with the teenaged Toofa and insists their daughter takes his mother's quintessentially English name, Emily; "il n'est pas question que mon enfant soit affublé d'un de ces prénoms à coucher dehors. Je veux qu'il sache, dès sa naissance, qu'il n'est pas n'importe lequel de ces *Mā'ohi*" (48) ["There's no way my child will have one of those weird and wonderful names. I want it to know from the day it's born that it's not just some *Mā'ohi* kid" (39)]. Just as damningly, he later sells the land he owns to the French for the purposes of the nuclear testing. Nevertheless, his daughter Emily resists an easy assimilation between the two heritages. She soon becomes known as Emere, a Tahitian version of Emily, and, after studying in the capital, returns to Ruahine where she feels more at ease: "quelle reculade, elle qui a eu la chance de naître à demi papa'ā" (56) ["what a backward step, for a girl lucky enough to be born half Papa'ā!"], thinks her mother Toofa. Despite her mother's misgivings, Emere/Emily lives contentedly in the remote island community with her Tahitian husband Tematua, teaching the local children in the school. While she does not actively repress her European roots, she lives like a Tahitian woman of her locality and is reluctant to assume her European identity. For instance, in the episode alluded to above, Laura, freshly arrived from France, observes Emere/Emily with Tematua and immediately assumes she is "une compatriote" (119) ["a fellow Frenchwoman" (100)]. With no hesitation, Laura approaches her and asks, "vous venez aussi de métropole?" ["are you from France too?" (100)], to which Emere/Emily replies, "non Madame. Je suis *Mā'ohi* comme mon époux et mes enfants" (119) ["no, I'm not. I'm *Mā'ohi* like my husband and children" (100)]. Emere/Emily's English heritage and bloodline are thus clearly of secondary importance to her Tahitian roots, to the extent that she is prepared to deny her European origin to onlookers. It is interesting that the European culture in question in Emere/Emily's identity is English, not French, which suggests a broadening of the dichotomy between insider and outsider; Europeans are presented in a generalized manner as the interlopers in this land, rather than any specific national culture. Emily/Emere's story is thus one of forsaking her European culture, which includes the potential for riches, education, marriage and luxury for her Tahitian origins. Spitz's subtext is that the two cultures are not mutually beneficial but necessarily incompatible. Interestingly, Emere/Emily's identity is not presented as a rational decision arrived at through her own agency; she is simply tied to the land and to her people and is obliged to stay there, in exactly the same way as her son Terii, a quarter English, educated in France and in love with a Frenchwoman, has no choice but to stay on his land and watch his lover return to hers.

The futility of attempts at forging successful, harmonious bicultural identities is perhaps best exemplified by the metaphor of writing that runs through *L'Île des rêves écrasés*. A series of writers appear in this text. As we have seen, Terii writes letters and Laura writes a diary.

The monologues voiced by the characters may not be formed in the written word but constitute an important element of Tahitian literature; as Keown remarks, Spitz's work "conveys an acute sense of the ways in which writing can enhance, rather than erode, the centrality of oral traditions to contemporary Indigenous Pacific cultures" (2014: 159). The most significant writer is Tetiare, Terii's younger sister. Her intellectual and political commitment develops as the nuclear testing progresses, and as she observes its impact upon Terii and Laura's relationship. She decides to channel this commitment into writing. Specifically, she chooses to write the history of her land and people as an alternative to the official history of the colonial power. The parallel between Tetiare and Spitz herself is evident; as Frengs comments, "writing [...] provides an outlet through which Tetiare, undoubtedly the porte-parole for the author, may rupture the silences threatening the oral traditions of the community" (159). The narrator explains Tetiare's (and possibly also Spitz's) decision thus: "peu explorée par les *Mā'ohi*, l'écriture est restée le domaine des étrangers par lesquels a perduré le mythe jadis créé pour offrir un alibi à de nouvelles théories philosophiques du vieux monde" (182) ["writing is a domain little explored by the *Mā'ohi*, left to the foreigners who have perpetuated the same myth that was created in the past to provide a justification for the old world's philosophical theories" (156)]. Her alternative history is thus a means of recuperating Tahitian history and culture and giving voice to those who have been silenced by colonialism and its aftermath. Importantly, Mateata-Allain underscores that Tetiare doubts her writing as she nears completion of her manuscript and locates the reason for this in the "institutionally conditioned fears related to writing. A major reason French scholars as well as many local Polynesians (who have internalized French prescriptions of writing quality) do not consider *Mā'ohi* literature to be up to par is because French standards of grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure are technically rigid and intimidating" (77). It is clear that Spitz's intention in this work is to write back to such stereotypes and prejudice, asserting her version of Tahitian culture in the language she wishes to. Her writing is therefore not a symbiosis, an amalgam or a melding of the two cultures into one, harmonious narrative, but a metaphor for the impossibility of bicultural resolution.

Overall, then, Spitz's bilingual writing operates in a very different way from the writers studied in the other chapters of this book. This work is shot through with resistance – to monolingualism, to bilingualism, to colonialism, to neo-colonialism and to literary genre. The translanguaging she practices is perhaps the most striking of all the writers studied here. The monolingual passages, especially those that open the text, provide a stark, visual representation of her bilingualism. The glossary that only appeared later in the life of this work emphasizes the differences between French and Tahitian, in terms of the shape and sounds of the Tahitian words, and of the cultural references they describe. The way

in which the writer incorporates Tahitian vocabulary into the dialogue, the narration and the characters' monologues emphasize the contrasts between the languages rather than the ways they might come together as a way of expressing bilingual identity. Whereas Catherine Rey's work evidences a writer who needs to supplement her native language with her secondary tongue in order to write her self, and Lydie Salvayre's text shows individuals whose identity is formed by the conjoining of two languages, Spitz's work reveals a chasm between her two languages. Since her text refers to generations of Tahitians, including young people who find themselves alienated from contemporary society, this representation is broadened from one individual's experience to a collective stance. The colonial language that was forced upon this people is, in this portrayal, the source of emotional and psychological turmoil that cannot be reversed and no amount of translanguaging can atone for it.

Notes

- 1 This is the title of a scholarly work by Odile Cazenave, a reference to the title of a 1955 film of the same name, that investigates the phenomenon of African writers who live, write and publish in France. Cazenave shows that since the 1950s, a large number of writers of African origin have forged their lives and careers in Paris, and through Parisian publishing houses, some of whom specialize in African literature, such as L'Harmattan and Présence Africaine.
- 2 In addition to publishing scholarly articles in academic journals, Anderson is also engaged in translating works of Francophone Pacific literature. Most notably, she translated Spitz's *L'Île des rêves écrasés*, as *Island of Shattered Dreams*, the first Tahitian text to be translated into English, in 2007. All translations of *L'Île des rêves écrasés* in this chapter are taken from this work.
- 3 See, for example, her article "Francophonie – À toi Autre qui ne nous vois pas – Remontons les filets."
- 4 While there is no island of this name, Spitz herself lives on an isle called Huahine.
- 5 Anderson's translation is faithful to the original; this title and the five-page poem in Tahitian that follows it are reproduced and remain untranslated in the English version.
- 6 As numerous critics have pointed out, *la Parole* is a central aspect of Mā'ohi culture and, as Keown writes, "is used to refer not just to the spoken word, but more specifically to the oral traditions that connect all facets of spiritual, materials and social life" (Anderson 2013b; Keown 2014: 149; Ramsay 2011).
- 7 These comments were made in a speech Spitz delivered at the General Assembly of Polynesia, 25–26 June 2008, in 'Ara'ara. The piece was published as a poem entitled "Des mots pour dire les maux" in *Littéramā'ohi* and translated by Jean Anderson as "The Words to Speak our Woes" in *Huihui*.
- 8 My translations, since this introduction to the glossary is not reproduced in the published translation.
- 9 My translations, since the glossary gives "temple consisting principally of an open space and a stone platform" (161) and "fish poison tree" (163).
- 10 This entry does not appear in the glossary of the English translation.

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6 H el ene Cixous’s Franco-German Translanguaging in *Une autobiographie allemande*

The final chapter of this book studies the work of a writer whose multilingualism also emanates from colonialism and migration, but from a different part of the world and a different linguistic context. H el ene Cixous is a well-known “French feminist” whose oeuvre has been interpreted through many lenses. Thus far, however, little scholarly attention has been paid to her multilingualism. Cixous is the daughter of a German Ashkenazi Jewish mother and a Sephardic Jewish father and was born and spent her childhood in Algeria. The linguistic variety of Algeria meant that Cixous was surrounded by languages from an early age. Although Arabic is now spoken by 73% of the Algerian population, Berber holds an important presence. The status of Berber, the language of the original inhabitants of Algeria, was fraught during Cixous’s childhood; it was only recognized as a national language in 2002 and was named an official language alongside Modern Standard Arabic in 2016. In addition to Algeria’s now two official languages, several forms of Berber are spoken, such as Kabyle, Chenoua and Tamahaq. Among these multiple languages, French had a significant presence during Cixous’s formative years. Significantly, literary critic Brigitte Weltman-Aron highlights that, as the French language has gradually become the native tongue of Algerian Jews, the North African Jewish community has slowly lost their Judeo-Arabic language. Weltman-Aron contends that this loss impacted upon the young Cixous, leading her to feel removed from this linguistic community (115).

Not only did Cixous grow up in the multilingual society of Algeria, her family was also highly multilingual. Her mother and her grandmother were from Osnabr uck, as Cixous famously identified in the book of the same name, and they spoke German in the family home. German could literally be called her mother tongue, therefore. Her father, Dr. Georges Cixous, was born in Algeria but had lived in Morocco, where his family spoke Spanish at home (Penrod 137). Cixous’s multilingual father also began to teach her Arabic and Hebrew before he died from tuberculosis when she was ten years old (Penrod 139). Significantly, her father sent the young Cixous to a French-speaking school, which began her long schooling in the French language and the French education system.

Later, her mother sent her to England to learn English (Penrod 139) and much of Cixous's academic study was in Anglophone literature, culminating in her doctorate on James Joyce. She was thus exposed to a range of languages from a young age, as she identifies in "Mon Algérie":

On jouait aux langues chez nous, mes parents passant avec plaisir et adresse d'une langue à l'autre tous les deux, l'un depuis le français l'autre depuis l'allemand, en sautant par l'espagnol et l'anglais, l'un avec un peu d'arabe et l'autre avec un peu d'hébreu. [...] Cette agilité, ce sport translinguistique et amoureux m'abrita de toute obligation ou velléité d'obéissance (je ne pensai pas que le français fût ma langue maternelle, c'était une langue dans laquelle mon père m'apprenait) à *une* langue materpaternelle. [...] Longtemps j'assurai – mais je n'y croyais pas – que ma langue maternelle était l'allemand – mais c'était pour conjurer le primat de la langue française, et parce que l'allemand, à jamais éloigné de la bouche de ma conscience par l'épisode nazi, était devenu la langue idéalisable de ma parenté morte. Ces circonstances excluantes firent que la française comme l'allemande me parurent toujours venues à moi charmantes comme la fiancée étrangère. Mais à l'école je voulus toujours être la meilleure "en français" comme on disait pour honorer mon père, le chassé (73).

[We played at languages in our house, my parents passed with pleasure and deftness from one language to the other, the two of them, one from French the other from German, jumping through Spanish and English, one with a bit of Arabic and the other with a bit of Hebrew [...] That translinguistic and loving sport sheltered me from all obligation or vague desire of obedience (I did not think that French was my mother tongue, it was a language in which my father taught me) to *one* mother-father tongue [...] For a long time I asserted – but I did not believe it – that my mother tongue was German – but it was to ward off the primacy of French, and because German, forever distanced from the mouth of my conscience by the Nazi episode, had become the idealizable language of my dead kin. These excluding circumstances made French and German always seem to be coming to me charming like the foreign fiancée. But at school I always wanted to beat the French in French, to be the best "in French" as they said, to honor my father, who had been driven out. (Cixous 169)]

As is clear from this citation, Cixous experienced her family's multilingualism as tense and uncomfortable but also as something she associated with playfulness and irreverence, which is borne out in the linguistic play of her literary writing. She has claimed, however, that her multilingual

childhood has had little influence on her literary writing; reflecting on this briefly in an interview with Françoise van Rossum-Guyon in 1990, she stated that she emanates from three or four languages but that this multilingualism has only impacted upon her poetic ear.

Cixous's relationship with the French language is, unsurprisingly given this linguistic and geographical heritage, complex. As the quotation above demonstrates, her view of the French language is forged not only by the multilingual environment of her childhood but also through the family's tense relationship with the French state. The family lost their status as French citizens temporarily during the war, since the Vichy government revoked the French citizenship of Jews in Algeria in 1941. In "Mon Algérie" ["My Algeriance"], Cixous reflects upon this delicate situation and its long-term impact on her identity, commenting, "d'un côté affirmer 'je suis française' est un mensonge ou une fiction. De l'autre dire 'je ne suis pas française' est un manquement à la politesse. Et à une gratitude due pour l'hospitalité. Hospitalité houleuse, intermittente de l'Etat et de la Nation. Mais l'hospitalité infinie de la langue" (72) ["On one hand 'I am French' is a lie or a legal fiction. On the other to say 'I am not French' is a breach of courtesy. And of the gratitude due for hospitality. The stormy, intermittent hospitality of the State and of the Nation. But the infinite hospitality of the language" (127)]. Her attempt to separate the French language from the French nation is revealing. As a crucial element of her identity and of her writing, the French language has become an intellectual home for her, especially when understood against the backdrop of a pervasive sense of lack of belonging. The lack of belonging she felt as a child in Algeria is a topic she has discussed extensively in recent years. She writes that, despite having lived physically in Algeria, she was never wholly there and cannot return to where she never was.¹ She also has a difficult relationship with France, as exemplified in the citation above. She may not have a readily identified homespace, and the discomfort of this situation seems to be unresolved and unresolvable, but the French language has become akin to a home instead. Laurie Corbin points to the way in which the French language is foundational to Cixous's identity, yet her separateness from it allows her to establish her self and her writing; Corbin claims, in particular, that "the 'foreignness' of French allows Cixous to always be inside and outside of the language simultaneously" (816). Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller draws a similar conclusion but for a different reason. She asserts that, at least partially, the separation Cixous felt from the French language is rooted in the legacy of her father. Whereas she learnt German from her mother, her father is associated with the French language due to his decision to send her to a French school. Debrauwere-Miller argues that the loss of the father resonates throughout Cixous's work and represents the loss of *la patrie* (849). It may be the case that Cixous's practice of writing in French goes

some way to atoning for this loss; after all, she calls French her “langue materpaternelle” (“Mon Algériance” 73; “mother-father tongue,” “My Algériance” 138). This phrase is significant since she conjoins the traditional concept of a mother tongue with her own unique notion of a father tongue, suggesting that this language did not merely come to her through birth but is the result of circumstance and of specific people. She is careful to emphasize, moreover, that the adoption of French is for her a choice; she writes in an English-language essay “The Names of Oran” that “in the end I took up French as a foreign language” (191). As is clear from the comments from Cixous quoted thus far, her relationship with the French language appears to be a felicitous but unstable one; her remarks reveal a changing, even at times contradictory, attitude toward the language and this inconsistency will presumably never be fully resolved.

Surprisingly, perhaps, Cixous’s multilingual background is not readily apparent in much of her work. Her literary output is prodigious; her first work appeared in 1969 and she has since published over fifty novels, over twenty plays, several volumes of poetry and several essays. Especially in the twenty-first century, her output includes several partially autobiographical works (although ironically *Dedans* [*Inside*], her first novel, was one of her most self-reflexive). In many of these works, she occasionally refers to Arabic names for places or for people, and to isolated German words used by her mother and grandmother. Throughout all of her writing, however, from her fictional works to her life writing, she uses the French language almost exclusively. She is, of course, highly innovative within that language, as her theoretical writing demonstrates. In her most famous essays from the 1970s, such as “Le Rire de la méduse” [“The Laugh of the Medusa”] and *La Jeune Née* [*The Newly Born Woman*], she bases her theories on a belief that gender discrimination is rooted in psychoanalytic processes that are rendered visible through language. Her desire to explore language, analyzing individual words and sounds and exploding meaning, is evident throughout her writing. In her novels, in particular, her language play is continually one of the leitmotifs of her work. She uses techniques such as inventing neologisms, placing words in unfamiliar contexts and inserting puns (such as *Si près* [*So Close*], the title of one of her partially autobiographical works in which she returns to Algeria and sees the cypress – *cyprès*, homonym of *Si près* – that grew in front of her school and that became a lasting image among her memories of Algeria). Indeed, Mireille Calle-Gruber claims that Cixous is more innovative in her fictional writing than in her theoretical work, for which she first achieved fame (41). Corbin, moreover, finds that the wordplay of Cixous’s French-language writing is directly related to her multilingual background and the perspective this gives her on the syllables and phonemes of individual words (816). This innovation has, however, centered thus far on the French language.

Yet, in 2016, Cixous published *Une autobiographie allemande* [*A German Autobiography*], a conversation written between her and fellow multilingual author Cécile Wajsbrot. Wajsbrot was born in Paris and lives between France and Germany. She is an acclaimed novelist in French and has also translated a large number of both English and German novels into French. In *Une autobiographie allemande*, Wajsbrot opens the path to Cixous to explore her German heritage and the effects of the language of her mother and grandmother on her identity. The epistolary text, formed of letters Cixous and Wajsbrot wrote to each other, reveals a renewed interest on Cixous's part in exploring her multilingual past. The two authors each write a short introductory text that contextualizes the work. In her introduction, Wajsbrot explains that the idea for the text was hers. After having been introduced to Cixous by a mutual friend and striking up a friendship with her that revolved around their mutual interest in German, Wajsbrot became struck by Cixous's overt allegiance: "Lorsque Hélène me parlait de sollicitations diverses, d'invitations à des rencontres, des colloques autour de l'Algérie, la Méditerranée, je ne pouvais m'empêcher de penser, et l'Allemagne, pourquoi jamais l'Allemagne?" (9) [When Hélène used to tell me about various offers, invitations to events, conferences on Algeria and the Mediterranean, I couldn't help thinking, 'What about Germany? Why never Germany?'].² Clearly, Cixous has represented her links with Algeria much more because this is her place of birth, where she spent her childhood and the land that she left abruptly and with uncomfortable, even traumatic, memories, at a young age. In recent years, these traumatic memories and her metaphorical and physical return to Algeria have become a focus of her work. Wajsbrot is correct to assert that Cixous's links with Germany have become somewhat eclipsed by this emphasis on Algeria. Wajsbrot therefore suggested writing an interview with Cixous about her German heritage for a German literary journal, *Sinn und Form*. Cixous agreed to correspond with Wajsbrot with no schedule or insistence, the letters arriving like "une bouteille à la mer qui serait un jour recueillie" (10) [a message in a bottle that would one day be found]. Following the publication of the interview, the conversation continued, and the publisher Dominique Bourgois suggested publishing it as a complete volume. The resultant text is, Wajsbrot suggests, a record of exploration of "l'Allemagne, la langue, le passé, la mémoire et ses corollaires d'oubli, et tous ces verbes, appartenir, demeurer, revenir, partir, et ces noms, exil, nom, archive" (13) [Germany, the language, the past, memory and its corollary, forgetting, and all of those verbs, to belong, to reside, to come back, to leave, and those nouns, exile, name, archive].

Cixous, for her part, introduces the text with a meditation upon the plurality that is the hallmark of her identity. She writes that "je suis le résultat de plus d'un pays natal" (16) [I am the result of more than one native land] and further explains: "chaque fois que je vais dire: Al – Algérie

et Allemagne, mes deux pays se lèvent. Ils sont si dissemblables si associés, ils se mêlent de moi et ne s'entendent que par leurs expériences de la souffrance et de la haine vaincues par l'amour" (17) [each time I go to say Al: *Algérie/Algeria* and *Allemagne/Germany*, my two countries arise. They are so dissimilar and so associated, they mingle and only get along through their experiences of suffering and hatred overcome by love]. She remembers a time in which her two countries were both discernible in her environment, as German could be heard in Oran, her place of birth: "une Allemagne demeura en Algérie: l'Allemagne des fugitifs, des réfugiés. [...] Je suis peut-être la seule survivante de cette halte africaine dans l'odyssée judéo-allemande" (16–17) [A Germany resided in Algeria: the Germany of fugitives, of refugees. (...) I am perhaps the sole survivor of that African halt in the Judeo-Germany odyssey]. As she hints, she has fond memories of hearing German in Algeria and, despite what she must have lived through as a child in the 1940s, writes of Germany, "je l'ai tenue en respect, en estime, au-dessus, au-delà du nazisme" (15) [I respected her, esteemed her, above and beyond Nazism]. In an explanation of her reasons for accepting Wajsbrot's offer, she writes that, "Cécile m'a halée, conduite, rendue, à la fois à ma ville et mon histoire prénatales. Et à ceux de mes propres textes engendrés par la langue allemande, ma mère, que moi-même j'avais laissés endormis de l'autre côté du Léthé" (16) [Cécile hauled me in, led me, brought me simultaneously to my town and to my prenatal history. And to those of my own texts that were conceived through the German language, my mother, that I had left sleeping on the other side of the Lethe]. It was therefore Wajsbrot's gentle encouragement, at a significant time in Cixous's life, that led the writer to explore this unexamined aspect of her self in writing. The significant time in Cixous's life was the demise of her German mother, Eve. Cixous writes in her introduction that "ma mère s'en allait en emportant l'allemand avec elle" [My mother was departing and taking the German language with her] in the imperfect tense, signifying an ongoing action in the past. Eve was 103 years old and, following a period of ailing health, died during the period in which Cixous was corresponding with Wajsbrot in the letters that would form *Une autobiographie allemande*. The impact of the mother's demise upon Cixous's relationship with Germany and specifically with the German language is tangible in this text. While the mother has been a recurrent figure in Cixous's writing, this is the first time Cixous has reflected in a sustained way upon her mother tongue.

The main text under discussion in this chapter, therefore, differs from those analyzed in the previous chapters. As has become clear throughout this book, each of the writers discussed develops a different relationship with life writing. Some of the writers pen self-reflexive texts that are closer to the concept of autobiography, a term that is often now shunned due to its perceived restrictiveness. Others incorporate

significant elements of fiction into their texts, deliberately blurring the lines between truth and fiction in the style of autofiction. In *Une autobiographie allemande*, our subject matter is an epistolary narrative. This short text – barely over one hundred pages – consists mainly of questions from Wajsbrot, with occasional personal reminiscences of her own, and longer answers from Cixous. This form of writing is unusual for Cixous, since she has published prolifically in fiction, theatre and poetry, but rarely in epistolary form. This genre permits a new perspective on Cixous's story, therefore, offering glimpses into a different version of her self-narrative. The lyrical quality of her published prose is very evident – this is writing, after all, not an oral interview – but her writing differs from her other self-reflexive texts. Cixous's prose life writing – texts such as *Les Rêveries de la femme sauvage*, *Si près* or *Osnabrück* – are examples of literary autobiography that stage a highly innovative, stylized approach to self-narrative. The “I” that Cixous develops is a shifting, unstable concept and her development of a literary self takes cues from self-reflexive writers such as Rousseau, Montaigne and Saint Augustin. This epistolary text, by contrast, is more consciously and straightforwardly autobiographical. Due to the directness of the medium, some of Cixous's writing in this text is among some of the most confessional and intimate she has penned. This last chapter takes a different approach to life writing and permits a different understanding of a well-known writer whose other forms of life writing are well acknowledged. In this chapter, I analyze the translanguaging apparent in this text, looking first at the ways in which Cixous incorporates German expressions into her childhood memories, then at the language play in which she engages with the German language. I then discuss her representation of the concept of a mother tongue and the place of the mother herself in this text.

Multilingual Usage and Authority

One of the most significant ways in which Cixous incorporates German into *Une autobiographie allemande* is her citations of the German she spoke as a child. She recounts a series of memories that caused her to reflect upon her nascent plural identity and particularly upon her multilingualism. Several of these refer to the conflict between the German she spoke at home and at school. Her German classes at her French school in Algeria, and particularly her German teachers, are frequently represented as a source of unwelcome authority. She portrays one episode thus:

Une petite altercation: je me lance en allemand en classe dans la description d'un personnage qui, dis-je est *ganz meschugge* (*meuchougue*). Me voilà arrêtée par la police. C'est quoi, ça? Ce n'est pas de

l'allemand! Comment! m'écriai-je, indignée. Un mot sanctifié par l'usage chez nous. C'est comme si on m'avait dit qu'Omi n'était pas allemande. Je me révoltai. (28)

[A small altercation: I launch into a description in German in class of a character who, I say, is *ganz meschugge* – completely crazy. And here I am arrested by the police. What's that? That's not German! What? I cried, indignant. A word sanctified by usage in our house. It was like someone had told me Omi wasn't German. I was outraged.]

The teacher, and more broadly the institution of the school that imposes the linguistic restriction on her, is in this instance compared to the police force. The teacher's voice is heard in the exclamation that Cixous's phrase is simply not German; no dialogue or negotiation is possible, as the teacher merely dismisses Cixous's speech as misplaced. The allusion between Omi, the German maternal grandmother, and the language is evident; the child feels that the dismissal of her German language is equivalent to the dismissal of her grandmother's German heritage, as the language is personified in the image of Omi. The child views the teacher's limitation as an attack on her personal identity, which of course it is. The way in which German is incorporated into the French sentences demonstrates the differences between the versions of German Cixous learned at home and at school, proclaims the correctness of both and denounces the injustice of the systems that separate languages into neat packages of standardization.

As Cixous reflects upon her childhood use of German, the text reveals that translanguaging has always been a part of her linguistic strategies. As the example in the previous paragraph hints, Cixous's often nonstandard German is influenced by a range of other languages. She writes of how she was obliged to alter the version of German she spoke at home since it was influenced by Yiddish: “Voilà que ces vocables entraient sur le tableau noir masques, méconnaissables: *chap* n'était plus *chap* mais *ich habe*” [This is how these terms entered the black canvas, masked, unrecognisable: *chap* was no longer *chap* but *ich habe* (27)]. In a further example that underscores her multilingual influences, she remarks, “ce mot un peu arabe: *Oum Forchèmt* était changé en *unverschämt*” [this slightly Arabic word: *Oum Forchèmt* was changed to *unverschämt* (27)]. The multiple languages around her are thus presented as seeping into each other, resonating with each other due to their similar sound systems despite their differences. The young Cixous understands implicitly that the straitjacket of monolingualism is being placed upon her through the imposition of authority. She explains:

Je dus me convertir mot à mot, changer mon allemand-de-la-maison en cet allemand qui dressait ses forêts étymologiques dans les livres. En vérité je me suis retrouvée avec deux langues: l'allemand parlé,

dont je goûtai des lors les incroyables opérations de condensation, d'ellipse, de syncope, et l'allemand écrit, l'aristocrate, antique. C'était à la fois amer et délicieux. (27)

[I had to convert word by word, changing my German-from-the-house into that German from which etymological forests grew in books. In truth I found myself with two languages: spoken German, in which I tasted the incredible mechanics of condensation, ellipsis and syncope, and written German, aristocratic and ancient. It was at the same time bitter and delicious.]

The two languages to which Cixous refers here – spoken German and written German – are clearly two among many languages in her repertoire. Of course, Cixous did not speak just two languages; she spoke French, was influenced by Arabic, Spanish and Yiddish, and soon added English. Her distinction between these two versions of German proclaims that each individual's point of access into the same language can be different; she has two forms of German and other learners will have different versions again. Even monolingualism, it follows, is not as simple as it sounds. Through representing her German teachers and their restrictive, monolingual approach to language, Cixous emphasizes that multilingual speakers will use languages in different ways in different circumstances. As the theory of translanguaging suggests, the linguistic repertoire of multilingual speakers is vast: not just two monolingual systems but a large, dynamic bank of language that can be manipulated by the individual. Cixous demonstrates here that she has – or at least had, as a child – such a linguistic repertoire but that it was subject to the mechanisms of authority. Here, Cixous hints at the impact of such mechanisms of control in language use, as she lists several examples of how she had to change her nonstandard, spoken language to appease her German teachers. As is clear from the personification of the language in the figure of Omi, this is something she felt very acutely. Cixous's translanguaging in this text therefore works not just between several languages but between several forms of languages, pointing to the usage of multilingual speakers and to the control to which they can be subjected.

Finally, as Cixous reflects upon the way in which her German was subjected to the control of authority figures, she explains the strategy she developed to subvert their power, which comes as no surprise to the reader familiar with her work: “j’entrai dans la clandestinité, je ferais de l’allemand avec les miens, avec Goethe, Kafka, Kleist” [I went into hiding, I would do German with my own, with Goethe, Kafka, Kleist (28)]. This phrase at once demonstrates the intimacy Cixous enjoyed with these authors, whom she calls “les miens” [my own] and whom she positions as her saviors in a hostile environment. Reading German literature constituted a clandestine activity for her, then, and something she did from a young age in a time and a place where such an interest

was not encouraged. To these three authors whom she designates as “les miens,” she later adds Bernhard, Döblin, Gracq, Freud and Wilhelm Busch. Many of these names will be expected by the reader who knows Cixous’s work; she has quoted many of them intertextually, pausing to refer to their work within her own to the extent that the reader reads her reading many of them. Wilhelm Busch, however, may be a new name in Cixous’s list of inspirational sources. When Wajsbrot asks Cixous if she can recall the first book she read in German, she answers *Max und Moritz*, the children’s story told in rhyming couplets and with illustrations, written by Busch in 1865. In this manner, the epistolary genre with its direct questions, answered by Cixous with candor, allows a different perspective on this writer who has long written of her admiration for celebrated, accomplished and innovative literary writers. Alongside these is a children’s author who holds a specific place in her memory. Cixous writes, “le premier texte que j’aie, à grande joie, lu relu, lurelu, hurluberlu – ah c’était *Max und Moritz*, lu à haute voix par la voix grave de ma mère et par la suite *dévoré*, comme les bretzels volés par ces deux petits diables. [...] J’avais six ans. A côté de ces antihéros, aucun personnage des mondes voisins, sauf Alice, n’a pu tenir un rang” (35, emphasis in original) [The first text I, with great joy, read reread, readreread – yes, it was *Max und Moritz*, read aloud to me in my mother’s deep voice, then *devoured*, like the pretzels the two tearaways stole. (...) I was six years old. Compared to these antiheroes, no character from the neighboring worlds, apart from Alice, could hold any status]. At the age of six, therefore, Cixous was introduced to German literature – and at the same time as she was exposed to British literature in the guise of *Alice in Wonderland*, which happened to be published the same year as *Max und Moritz*. Crucially, moreover, this first experience of German literature was mediated through the voice of her mother. The importance of literary influences on Cixous cannot be underestimated. As she states in this text, it is through literature that she has returned to Germany, particularly to Osnabrück, the birthplace of her mother: “Osnabrück, c’est le paradis perdu, mais pas pour moi: je ne peux donc pas le retrouver. Irai-je, y aurai-je été, y aurai-je jamais été? Je m’y suis rendue par la littérature, dans et par *Osnabrück*, le livre-de-ma-mère” (31) [Osnabrück was paradise lost, but not for me: I can’t go back to it, therefore. Shall I go, will I have been there, will I ever have been there? I went there through literature, in and by Osnabrück, the book-of-my-mother]. Literature is, for this author in particular, a way of knowing, seeing and traveling, and a means of exploring and perhaps making sense of her hybrid identity. It is also a way for her to keep the German language close to her and to continue the proximity she felt with written and spoken German from her early childhood. Moreover, by fostering her knowledge of standard German through reading literature, she subverts the power of those who believe her German to be erroneous.

German Wordplay

In her letters to Wajsbrot, Cixous translanguages on the level of both sentences and also in individual words. Interestingly, the episodes in which she incorporates German often refer to her maternal grandmother. She quotes passages from her grandmother in German, at times just a word or two, and in other instances for several phrases. For instance, she remembers that her grandmother used to write her letters, “tantôt [...] dans un étrange français, tantôt dans son allemand si idiomatique” [sometimes in a strange French, sometimes in her very idiomatic German] and that the family’s German was “soulevé des indignations et admirations qui animaient Omi” (36) [rippled with the indignations and admirations that animated Omi]. She claims to have made a list of her grandmother’s phrases: “Ça allait de: *Es ist ja wunderbar!* à *Es ist zum kotzen!* *Ich bin ganz erstaunt!* *Es ist doch unmöglich!* J’ai toujours eu la nostalgie des accents toniques. *Man kann doch nicht nicht leben!* (on peut remplacer *leben* par *lesen*, *lieben*, etc.) (36) [It went from: *This is wonderful!* To *This is shitty!* *I’m completely astonished!* *This is just impossible!* I’ve always had a yearning for the tonic accent. *You absolutely can’t live!* (*leben* can be replaced by *lessen*, *lieben* etc.)]. As is evident in this citation, Cixous italicizes the German words to emphasize their difference from the predominant French language of her prose. Interestingly, however, she does not offer any translations of these passages. The reader who is unfamiliar with German is obliged to make a choice: to skip over these passages, accepting a gap in the reading process, to guess at the words, thus creating a meaning that may or may not be linguistically accurate, or to interrupt the reading process to consult an information source, such as a dictionary. The writer at these instances moves to the side of the text as she relinquishes an element of control over the narrative to the reader. One may argue that such a process is a standard element of the authorial role, but the translanguaging that Cixous performs pushes this to its limit. She multiplies the possibilities of interpretation of her text, since each individual reader – at least those with insufficient knowledge of German – may create a web of meaning from it, depending upon their point of access.

In addition to using passages of German without translation, Cixous creates new words comprised of her various linguistic influences. These multilingual neologisms become a unique literary language that enables her to perform her self-narrative. Words like “chapzonnenimherts” are inventions of her own, or of her family’s, to encapsulate their liminal identity. Much of this nonstandard language emanates from Omi. As Cixous reflects upon her German background, she even refers to herself, her mother and her grandmother together as one linguistic unit: Eve-Omi-moi (106). Omi becomes the embodiment of German to Cixous: “Je dis *Allemagne* et ce *nom* chante pour moi

depuis ma plus petite enfance, comme s'il était l'autre nom d'Omi, ma grand-mère et donc ma mère par Allemagne" (21) [When I say *Allemagne* – Germany – this *name* has sung for me since I was a small child, as if it were another name for Omi, my grandmother and therefore my mother through Germany]. Nonetheless, the German that she embodies is nonstandard and the result of the influence of several languages, such as is clear when Cixous recalls "il y a eu des petits décalages, avec mes amis berlinois, ce que nous (Eve-Omi-moi) appelons les *Kartoffelpfannkuchen* – nous n'étions pas d'accord – on ne dit pas *Käse* avec un *a* ouvert, disent-ils, ça c'est du *hochdeutsch* me dit-on, moi je défends maman, avec ma faible obstination" [There were small discrepancies with my Berlin friends. What we (Eve-Omi-me) called *Kartoffelpfannkuchen* – we disagreed – you don't say *Käse* with an open *a*, they say, that's *hochdeutsch* they tell me, I defend my mother with feeble obstination] (106, emphasis in original). Cixous identifies Omi as the origins of her connection with the German language and simultaneously as the source of her struggle with "correct" forms of the language. Such an understanding shifts the boundaries of correct versus incorrect language and allows a margin of maneuver that leads to more effective and more intimate expression. In this confessional first-person text, Cixous provides a new perspective upon her self-narrative, revealing elements of her narrative of identity upon which she has not previously dwelled. The way in which the German language interrupts, nuances and mingles with her French for the first time in her life writing allows her to resolve some of her identity at a particularly difficult time in her life (as she is mourning her mother), and allows the reader a renewed perspective on her story.

Multilingual Reflections

Another way in which the German language enters Cixous's French prose is on the occasion of her reflections on her linguistic heritage. Wajsbrot asks her pointedly about her mother tongue, about the distinction she makes between her first and second language, and about her affective responses to German and French. Cixous frequently incorporates German into her answers. For example, she writes in response to a question from Wajsbrot about her concept of home:

Heimat: je crois (et même je suis sûre mais soyons prudente) n'avoir jamais entendu Omi ou Eve prononcer ce mot. Mon hypothèse: historiquement mes mères – ça remonte donc à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle (Omi est née en 1882, et elle a récité un poème devant le Kaiser Wilhelm – ont vécu dans une nette conscience 1) que l'Allemagne n'était pas leur *Heimat*. 2) que la *Heimat* était une notion nationaliste. (60)

[*Heimat*: I believe (and I'm even sure but let's be prudent) that I've never heard Omi or Eve pronounce that word. My hypothesis: historically my mothers – they go back to the end of the nineteenth century (Omi was born in 1882 and she recited a poem in front of Kaiser Wilhelm – lived with an awareness that 1) Germany was not their *Heimat*. 2) that *Heimat* was a nationalist concept.]

Clearly, the emotive word *heimat*/home is something Cixous immediately feels the need to historicize. Interestingly, she never answers the question of what *heimat* means to her but prefers instead to discuss her nineteenth-century ancestors. Her answer concludes with “c'est d'ailleurs cette famille Klein qui a été la plus déportée et la plus incinérée de mes familles germaniques” (61) [It was the Klein family, however, who were deported and incinerated the most out of all my German families]. Her German heritage and the German language that she frequently uses to express it are thus closely bound up with the Holocaust in her familial and her personal memory. The tension and difficulty Cixous experiences with reconciling herself to German are thus still apparent. The fact that she is exploring her relationship with her German heritage and the German language following the loss of her mother suggests she wishes to maintain her connection to them. Nevertheless, Cixous's reflections reveal a push and pull between embracing her German heritage and rejecting it due to the impact of the Nazi regime upon her family – a trauma that will presumably never be fully healed.

As is the case in the discussion of *heimat*, it is frequently Wajsbrot who introduces German words into the conversation, which Cixous mirrors and reflects upon in her responses. Wajsbrot asks her pointedly about her mother tongue, a point Nathalie Ségeral discusses in the only academic study of this text to date, which analyzes the text's representation of memory. Ségeral discerns that “tout au long du récit, Cixous n'a de cesse d'insister sur le lien intrinsèque entre langue maternelle et mère [...] L'identification entre langue maternelle, mère et ville maternelle, devient donc totale chez Cixous” (8) [throughout the narrative, Cixous insists on the intrinsic link between her mother tongue and her mother. [...] There is for Cixous a complete identification between mother tongue, mother and town of origin (literally 'mother town').] Wajsbrot asks Cixous about her mother tongue thus: “*Muttersprache*, est-ce la même chose que la langue maternelle?” (59) [*Muttersprache* – mother tongue, literally mother speak – is it the same thing as mother tongue?]. “Je suis un cas” (59) [I am a unique case], Cixous replies, in an allusion to her hybrid identity, and proceeds to explain her complicated relationship to the language. Two elements are discernible in her response. First, she immediately affirms her maternal connection to the language: “l'allemand est vraiment ma langue maternelle, par Omi et ma mère. Ce qui signifie que je suis et je ne suis qu'un, une enfant, en allemand, de l'allemand” (59)

[German is really my mother tongue, through Omi and my mother. Which means that I am and I am only one, one child, in German, from German]. Second, this last sentence points to a psychoanalytic approach toward language development, a well-known trope of investigation in feminist studies. French feminism of the 1970s, with which Cixous was aligned, was influenced by such an approach, as is evidenced in the work of the Psych et Po group. This strand of thought spurred works such as Luce Irigaray's *Ce Sexe qui n'est pas un*, which echoes in Cixous's words in this citation. In this, her most articulated explanation of her multilingualism to date, Cixous explains her situation in the following manner:

Cet allemand-enfant, cette première saveur, j'en ai joui: tous les mystères de la langue entendue avant la lettre, la pré-langue, j'ai encore en moi mes étonnements amusés, on a l'ouïe chatouillée par des mélodies pastiches, des simulacres, c'est l'origine de la poésie, du calembour, la trame sonore idiomatique [...] cette *sensibilité* est aussi intense et *aussi limitée* que celle de mes chats sensibles à mon français. Je la dirais féline, animale. Physique. Dans cette prélangue logent ou germent des terminaisons nerveuses: ce qui fait jouir, vivre, frissonner, en allemand (59).

[This child-German, this first taste, I enjoyed it: all the mysteries of the language heard before the letter, the pre-language, I still have inside me my amused astonishment, my hearing tickled by pastiche melodies, simulacrum, this is the origin of poetry, of wordplay, the idiomatic soundtrack [...] this *sensitivity* is as intense and *as limited* as my cats' sensitivity to my French. This sensitivity is feline, animal. Physical. In this prelanguage nervous terminations are embedded or germinate: which makes me enjoy, live, tremble, in German.]

Here, then, she presents German as her prelingual mother tongue; German was her language before she was able to manipulate language herself, she indicates. The German language thus represents a formative stage of her development, regardless of when or to which level she learned to speak it. The vocabulary she uses to describe her connection to the German language is sensual: physique [physical], frissonner [shiver], animale [animal], sonore [sound], saveur [flavor] and so on. It is perhaps through her connection with the German language that her ear for language, poetry and sensual expression is rooted, but is clearly the language she associates with sensual experiences that took place in a time she can no longer recall. This is a particularly striking reflection since Cixous is an author who has forged her writing in another language and in a way that minutely and exactly interrogates, explores and explodes that language. The comparison between the French and German languages is provocative in the reference to her cats' understanding of her French. She draws a parallel between her relationship

to her mother and grandmother's German, on the one hand, and her cats' relationship to her French, on the other hand. Cats are a frequent presence in Cixous's writing, as I have explored elsewhere.³ In *Une autobiographie allemande*, Cixous broadens her representation of them to allude to their linguistic sensibility. She claims that they have a sensitivity to the French language she speaks and that this sensibility is both intense and limited. The inability of the cat to understand words and to speak the language does not prevent their understanding of the sounds of the language, she infers. In a similar way, her own lack of understanding of German and of her inability to speak it in her prelingual phase did not prevent her from understanding the sensual properties of the language. Although the German language surrounded her before she could speak, and was soon replaced by French during her schooling, she recognizes her initial connection with it and its impact upon her throughout her life.

In Cixous's recognizable style of examining words and phonemes, she also breaks down the word *Muttersprache* itself. She suggests that the affect produced by the two expressions *Muttersprache* and *langue maternelle* [mother tongue] are different due to "l'écart entre le substantif (*Mutter*) et l'adjectif (*maternelle*). On dirait qu'une langue est Mère, et plus mère que l'autre!" (62) [the gap between the noun (*Mutter* – mother) and the adjective (*maternelle* – maternal, since the French expression *langue maternelle* translates literally to maternal language). One would think that one language were Mother, and more of a mother than the other!]. Cixous's two languages thus create for her two different understandings of the concept of a mother tongue, based upon the different grammars: *mother* in one language and *maternal* in the other. The fact that the German expression mentions the word "mother" brings Cixous closer to her own mother, who is of course the source of her German heritage. Cixous's meditation upon her *Muttersprache* is thus a unique, innovative take on the concept of the mother tongue. Such an approach furthers her connection with the mother whom she is mourning as she is engaged in this correspondence. By establishing a sensual link with her mother that dates from before her conscious memory, Cixous stages both a tribute to her mother and something of a reconciliation with the language with which she has held a tense relationship throughout her life; although the story of her German family is bound up with their treatment in the Holocaust, her relationship with the German language is represented as something primordial, sensual, intimate and sustaining.

Moreover, Cixous's reflections upon her mother tongue and its origins in her early childhood become a way for her to reconcile herself to the multiple layers of German she speaks. As we saw above, this was sometimes a source of discomfort during her childhood, as the language she had learned from Omi was called into question by those in authority. Nevertheless, her declination of her mother tongue as a fundamental part of her preverbal development allows her a different perspective on her

German heritage. She refers to “mes’ allemands” (60) [‘my’ Germans] and explains this plurality thus:

Mon pré-allemand est riche, sensuel, rigolo. Mais l’allemand-grande-personne, je ne l’ai pas développé. C’est comme si je m’étais arrêtée au lycée, du moins en ce qui concerne le parler: car lire, entendre, caresser, humer, cela me fut accordé à Oran, étrange ville refuge où *man sprach deutsch* sur les bancs algériens pendant la guerre. (60)

[My pre-German is rich, sensual, fun. But I didn’t develop grown-up-German. It is as though I had stopped in high school, at least as far as speaking goes, since reading, listening, caressing, smelling, I got that from Oran, the strange refuge town where *man sprach deutsch* (people speak German) on the Algerian benches during the war.]

She realizes that she might not have the German of the authority figures, the grown-up German, but recognizes that German was the major influence on her from before the development of her conscious memory. She also recognizes that she was surrounded by German as a child, and not just due to her mother and grandmother. The inclusion of the phrase in German, *man sprach deutsch* [people speak German] highlights how common and familiar it was to hear German in the Algerian town of Oran during her childhood. Her Germanophone community extended beyond her family, therefore, and her relationship with the German language is thus presented as broad, long-lasting and robust, despite the criticisms made of her German by the authority figures.

In addition to her reflections upon her mother tongue, Cixous discusses the topic of her multilingualism at length for the first time in *Une autobiographie allemande*:

Et, il y a assez longtemps déjà que je suis pour le bilinguisme comme langue minimale. *Au moins deux*. Et on voit le monde autrement. [...] Nous sommes destinés, politiquement, éthiquement, à dépasser les frontières, la clôture nationale. Mon regret: n’avoir qu’une seule nationalité! C’est d’un enfermant!!

Alors au moins ‘chez moi’ en littérature, bienvenue aux langues qui me font jouir, aux mots grecs, à la syntaxe latine. Je n’ai jamais été monolingue, et je crois que beaucoup de gens, de plus en plus aussi, ont cette bonne chance d’être munis de plus d’une langue. Je suis ardemment pour le polylinguisme. (91)

[And, I’ve been in favor for a long time of bilingualism as a minimal language. *At least two*. You see the world differently. [...] We are destined, politically, ethically, to go beyond borders and national boundaries. My regret is having only one nationality! It’s so confining!!

So at least 'at home' in literature, I meet languages that give me pleasure, Greek words, Latin syntax. I have never been monolingual and I think many people, more and more people, are fortunate to have more than one language. I am ardently in favour of plurilingualism.]

Monolingualism, she clearly states, is intellectually restrictive but also physically impossible due to the mobility – political and ethical, in her words – of individuals in the contemporary world. Bilingualism, she hints, is only slightly less restrictive, since she insists that two languages should be one's minimal linguistic repertoire. Moving from "monolingualism" to "bilingualism," she arrives at "plurilingualism" as her preferred term and linguistic situation of choice. It is all the more striking that as she refers to contemporary mobility in the era of globalization, the only languages she mentions by name are Latin and Greek. She does, however, refer elsewhere to Stendhal's knowledge of Italian, Mallarmé's knowledge of English and Kafka's knowledge of Czech (91). Again, she casts doubt upon the idea of neat separations between languages and between versions of the same language, hinting that Latin and Greek are bound up in what she reads, both in vocabulary and grammar (syntax). Literature is again her multilingual terrain, which is perhaps what she implies when she states that we are destined *ethically* to move beyond national borders. Those who speak only one language are confined to a cultural and intellectual paucity and reading in another language – or at least understanding the other languages involved in reading in one primary language – is ethically unsound, she suggests. As the reflection continues, she advances the term "pluslangue" (91) [morelingual] to refer to her situation, moving beyond terms such as monolingual, bilingual or plurilingual. Rather than dividing languages into numbers that are divisible, countable and discreet, she presents her linguistic repertoire as vast, hybrid and indivisible. As theorists of translanguaging have advanced, a creative, dynamic approach to multilingual language use calls into question the arbitrary divisions and boundaries between languages, opening a verbal/textual space for creative expression. Cixous refuses to biologize language into one mother tongue or two distinct native languages but instead insists upon the plurality of multilingual literary expression.⁴

Cixous's text in this way implicitly responds to Jacques Derrida's notion of monolingualism, to which she refers on numerous occasions within *Une autobiographie allemande*. Cixous and Derrida's close friendship is well known, and both refer to the other's work within their own. Having grown up as Jews in Algeria seven years apart, both experienced the colonial power and its impact upon such elements of their identity as citizenship and language. In *Le Monolingualisme de l'autre* (1996) [*Monolingualism of the Other*], Derrida writes his famous phrase "je n'ai qu'une langue et ce n'est pas la mienne" ["I have only one language and it is

not mine”]. In this statement, Derrida refers to the power wielded by the colonizer over language itself. Placing the colonizer in the position of the master, he asserts that the master owned language and used it to exclude the other from any sense of belonging. The force of French colonialism thus meant that he was granted the right to speak the French language but those who had power over him always prevented him from ownership of it. In her discussion of Derrida’s situation in *Une autobiographie allemande*, Cixous contrasts her position with his, emphasizing that he, the elder of the two, was excluded from high school whereas she was never admitted and was instead schooled in someone’s home. Although she felt the pain of exclusion, therefore, the mechanism of exclusion was different; Derrida felt this more acutely, she argues, since he was excluded from the institution of the French education system at such a young age. Moreover, Cixous also contrasts her linguistic situation with that of Derrida, writing that “quant à la langue, le monolinguisme est bien une signature de J.D. Il avait d’ailleurs un rapport féroce, jaloux, au français. Ma chance familiale, le plurilinguisme joyeux, a fait que le français a toujours été une de mes langues étrangères chéries” (73–74) [as for language, monolingualism is a hallmark of J.D. He had a ferocious, jealous relationship to French. The luck of my family, the joyous plurilingualism, means that French was always one of my cherished foreign languages.] Although she suggests a distant relationship with French, insisting that French is a foreign language to her, Cixous carves out another space of belonging to the French language in particular and to languages in general. French is “chérie” [cherished] to her and plurilingualism is “joyeux” [joyous]. As opposed to Derrida, then, she does not feel an exclusion from the language of the colonizer and her label of “pluslangue” to refer to herself contrasts sharply with his “monolinguisme.” This is not to suggest that she escaped this painful historical moment free from trauma and with her identity intact, as she underscores throughout this text. She does, however, find a reconciliation of her identity and a sense of belonging in her “pluslangue.” While for Derrida, the colonial power is bound up with the language of the master, Cixous creates a distinction beyond national regimes and languages; in the same way as she learned to separate German from Nazism, so too has she learned to separate French from the colonial and the Vichy regimes. The most important factor in this process has been, unsurprisingly, her love of literary texts in multiple languages. As she writes, “je crois n’avoir jamais ‘été en France,’ pleinement. Je suis en français” (83) [I don’t believe I have ever ‘been in France’ fully. I am in French].

Maternal Lineage

And behind this exploration, of course, is Cixous’s bereavement, her mourning of her recently deceased German mother. In the first letter following her mother’s death, Wajsbrot quotes an earlier text of Cixous’s,

Benjamin à Montaigne, in which the character of Cixous's mother speaks the lines: "on a besoin d'appartenir à quelque chose dans la vie. C'est bien et ce n'est pas bien. Chez nous on appelle ça le *Zugehör*. Tu ne peux pas annuler le *Zugehör*. Tu crois l'annuler et ta façon de l'annuler est exactement dans le *Zugehör*" (43–44) [we need to belong to something in life. That's good and it's not good. Where we're from, we call that *Zugehör*. You can't nullify *Zugehör*. You think you're nullifying it but your way of nullifying it is exactly in the *Zugehör*]. This shows first that Cixous has incorporated words of German into her previous texts but never to the extent that she does so in *Une autobiographie allemande*. Reflecting upon this citation in the later work, less than one month after her mother's death, Cixous writes, "je ne sais pas ce qui m'attend: ce sera, je l'espère (je ne veux pas craindre), une façon de continuer le *Zugehör* en faisant résonner sa sagesse unique, son économie spirituelle et domestique" (45) [I don't know what awaits me: it will be, I hope (I don't want to fear), a continuation of the *Zugehör* in which her unique wisdom and her spiritual and domestic presence will resonate]. As is her practice throughout this text, Cixous offers no translation or explanation of the German word *Zugehör*. In English, this term denotes belonging, which, as we have seen in our discussion of the differences between Derrida's and Cixous's approach to language, is perhaps the leitmotif of this text. The German equivalent of the verb *to belong* is *gehören*, and the form *zugehören*, which incorporates the preposition *zu* (*to*) is a less commonly used version. Using the term *Zugehör* as a noun, as Cixous does in this citation, is rare, which increases the foreignness of the text. As we have seen in Cixous's practice throughout this text, she insists upon her family's personal lexicon of German vocabulary, in contrast to the standard language. This unique usage of the language emphasizes that Cixous's sense of belonging to her German heritage is clearly a very personal sentiment to her, and she chooses to subvert the tenets of standard German in order to express it. Moreover, her sense of belonging to German is deeply connected to her mother. As she fears the effects of the loss of her mother, chief among her concerns are the loss of her connection to her German heritage and, more pointedly, to the German language. Her knowledge of German is clearly mediated through her mother's version of the language, in addition to the grandmother Omi's version of it. Cixous even refers to German using a rhyming, hyphenated composite word formation, "l'allemand-maman" (41) [Mum-German]. Her choice to include German vocabulary – and not standard German but her family's own version of the language – reflects her desire to express the preciseness of her personal experience of belonging, her maternal connection with the language and her urgency in reclaiming her connection to her German heritage.

Importantly, the narrative Cixous develops of her relationship to the German language is clearly rooted in her relationship with her mother

but goes beyond this. Indeed, as Cixous historicizes her connection with German, she uses the mother as a springboard to reflect upon a series of family members, paying particular attention to her female lineage. Although she alludes to her mother, this figure is frequently displaced in the narrative by the character of the grandmother Omi and the line of German ancestors to which the text refers. Fearful that the disappearance of her mother will lead to the disappearance of her German, Cixous in this text emphasizes the strong female lineage that has forged her German identity. The way in which she incorporates these female ancestors into *Une autobiographie allemande* furthers the hybridity on which this text is based; she incorporates both textual and visual material into the work. As I have explored elsewhere, Cixous uses photographs strategically in some of her works to nuance and to historicize her self-narrative.⁵ In *Une autobiographie allemande*, she continues this narrative strategy but accentuates it in terms of both gender and language. There are eleven photographs included in this text, most of which are portraits of people. After the first two images of streets that situate the narrative in the places of Osnabrück and Oran, they are arranged chronologically; they begin with Cixous's great-grandmother and culminate in an image of her as a child. These photographs hang suspended in the text, seemingly unrelated to the prose, which makes no reference to the images. They each take one full page of the text, often interrupting the prose mid-sentence. Apart from one photograph of Cixous's father alone and one of her great-grandfather, they all depict female protagonists; her mother, her mother's sister, her grandmother, her great-grandmother and her mother surrounded by over thirty girls from her school. The German language is often incorporated into the short captions that accompany them: the name "Fräulein von Langecke" (64), one of Eve's teachers, or the inscription "Erinnerung an meinen 80ten Geburtstag" (46) [Souvenir of my eightieth birthday] on her grandfather's birthday portrait. Cixous thus proclaims herself as one of a long line of German-speaking Jewish women who are assembled here as proof of their existence and of Cixous's connection with them. As the faces of the Jewish women in the black and white photographs, many dated in the 1930s and 1940s, look out at the reader, they also refer implicitly to those who have disappeared. The ghost-like figures serve as a reminder of the gaps in this family history and the ongoing trauma this creates. The photographs thus deepen Cixous's narrative of belonging to German culture and to the German language, despite the trauma her German heritage has caused to her and her family.

To look closely at one particular image, the grandmother Omi is one of the principal figures in Cixous's German heritage. Omi has figured in many of Cixous's self-reflexive texts and stands as a key figure in the life of this writer. In *Une autobiographie allemande*, a page-sized portrait of Omi appears. This image of Omi is particularly striking. It is a

portrait in which the woman sits, upright and regal, looking to the side. The caption reads, "Omi: Rosi Klein, née Jonas en 1882 à Osnabrück. Elle quitte l'Allemagne et rejoint ma mère à Oran en novembre 1938. Elle me chante du Heine et du Goethe" (81) [Omi: Rosi Klein, née Jonas in 1882 in Osnabrück. She left Germany and joined my mother in Oran in November 1938. She sang Heine and Goethe to me]. The German place name and family names serve as a reminder of Omi's native language. Furthermore, this caption is a skeleton outline from which much significant information is removed. The reader is able to piece together from a close reading of the text that Omi and her husband had lived in Strasbourg while Alsace was German. When he was killed in the First World War, Omi became a war widow. Subsequently, when Alsace returned to France, she became entitled to a French passport, although she had returned to her native Osnabrück. It was through this passport that she escaped Europe in 1938 and joined her daughter Eve in Algeria. Some of her relatives were less fortunate, and Cixous grew up hearing the stories of their extermination. *Une autobiographie allemande* stands as a reminder of what Cixous has had to overcome in order to reconcile herself to her German heritage. Inscribing the grandmother's voice, and particularly the grandmother's German, into her writing, proclaiming its validity and correctness, is clearly an important act in her explanation of her hybrid identity and in the expression of her desire to maintain her connection to the German language.

Moreover, in addition to the plural languages and the plural media of textual and visual material, there is a further layer of plurality in this text. Much of Cixous's life writing is predicated upon a refusal of a unitary model of autobiography based on a single person, a single 'I' and a single story.⁶ In *Une autobiographie allemande*, the text is also plurivocal. The work is written as a conversation, as opposed to the unitary voice of many autobiographies. Two voices are clearly discernible as Wajsbrot and Cixous together construct the narrative. While Wajsbrot structures the narrative by posing the questions to which Cixous responds, Cixous drives the conversation; Wajsbrot frequently takes her cue from Cixous's responses, so that Cixous's memories shape the direction of the dialogue. Nevertheless, Wajsbrot sometimes recounts memories of her own or discusses her own situation. When asking Cixous about her *Muttersprache* [mother tongue], for example, she writes "le français est ma langue maternelle mais celle de mes parents était le Yiddish. [...] J'ai le sentiment d'une langue apprise, d'une langue d'école et non d'une langue affective. Mon français n'est pas enraciné dans telle ou telle province comme chez ceux dont les parents sont nés ici, dont on peut retracer la lignée d'ascendants" (63) [French is my mother tongue but my parents' was Yiddish. [...] French feels to me like a learned language, a school language, not an affective language. My French is not rooted in any province, as is the case for people born there, who can trace

their line of ascendants]. Wajsbrot's short but meaningful references to her own national and linguistic situation broaden the text's representation of multilingual usage. The text hints that Cixous's multilingualism has created a highly unique subject position for her; Wajsbrot's has done the same for her, and the same will be true of many other individuals. The notion of the relationship individuals have to specific languages and to language in general is thus pluralized, demonstrating the unique relationships different people will have with the constructs neatly referred to as "French," "German" or other languages. This hybrid conversation of hybrid media therefore bears witness to hybrid identities forged through history, migration, nations and border crossing, but primarily through language and specifically through multilingualism.

Overall, then, this chapter has demonstrated that Cixous's plural, hybrid text reveals another version of her self-narrative. Marta Segarra points to the plural nature of Cixous's writing as a hallmark of her literary innovation (87). Only in *Une autobiographie allemande*, however, does Cixous extend this plural innovation to linguistic plurality. The effects of this are both individual and collective. On an individual level, Cixous explores a past that she had relegated and a language that, albeit important to her, had never been a significant element of her writing. By translanguaging between several languages and several forms of languages, Cixous opens up the possibilities of interpretation of her text, of her story and of her identity. This intimate, confessional, epistolary narrative allows Cixous to explore a past that she had never fully explored in her writing, despite her turn to life writing in recent years. By returning to her childhood memories of German, her grandmother Omi's influence on her German and her experiences of hearing German in her family and in her community, she renews her ties with her heritage and nuances her previously published narratives of life writing. In particular, her multilingual neologisms become a unique literary language that enables her to narrate her self in more revealing ways. As she mourns the loss of her mother and the potential loss of her mother tongue, she moves closer to reconciliation with this traumatic aspect of her past. She also ensures that her memory of her mother will live on through her closer connection to her mother tongue. On a broader level, *Une autobiographie allemande* defies several generic conventions. Not only does Cixous refute the monolingual straitjacket of conventional French literary style, she also rejects a singular, unitary approach to autobiography. Indeed, she appears intent on commenting upon autobiography more generally as a supposedly singular, unitary concept. *Une autobiographie allemande* defies several conventions of French literature, with its regulated style and enforced monolingualism, and of autobiographical writing. By taking a non-unitary approach to language, to voice and to subjectivity, Cixous creates a new paradigm for multilingual life writing.

Notes

- 1 This position is clear both in her essays, such as “Mon Algérie” and her partially autobiographical texts, such as *Les Rêveries de la femme sauvage* and *Si près*.
- 2 All translations of this text, which is as yet untranslated, are mine.
- 3 See Natalie Edwards, “Pussy: The Feline and the Feminine in Cixous’s *L’Amour même dans la boîte aux lettres*.”
- 4 Cixous adds an ironic twist to her argument at the end of this section with an allusion to the feline language mentioned above: “à ma pluslangue vient se mêler, et quel subtil plaisir, le chat, une langue riche à plusieurs registres, où tout le corps est registre des signes, et la voix musical fait passer maint message vital” (91–92) [to my morelanguage, can also be added cat, and what a subtle pleasure, a language rich in registers in which the whole body is the register of signs and the musical voice allows expression of many vital messages].
- 5 See Natalie Edwards, “The Absent Body: Photography and Autobiography in Helene Cixous’s *Photos de racines* and Annie Ernaux and Marc Marie’s *L’Usage de la photo*.”
- 6 See, for example, my chapter on Cixous’s collective self-reflexive writing in *Shifting Subjects: Plural Subjectivity in Contemporary Francophone Women’s Autobiography*.

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Conclusion

This book has argued that reading the *trans* in translingual literature reveals important facets about literary texts, about life writing and about the relationship between language and power in literary creation. Lydie Salvayre, Kim Thúy, Catherine Rey, Gisèle Pineau, Chantal Spitz and Hélène Cixous demonstrate an array of narrative strategies to incorporate another language into their predominantly French-language writing. The bilingual speech of Salvayre's characters highlights the connection between language, memory and history, whereas Thúy's prose juxtaposes French and Vietnamese as equally valid components of her identity. Rey demonstrates the inadequacy of her native French language for her self-narrative and her need to supplement it with Australian English, while Pineau points to the historical importance of Creole not just for her own story but also for that of generations of Caribbean women. Spitz points to the incompatibility of Tahitian and French and, by extension, the irreconcilable nature of relations between the two cultures, whereas Cixous accentuates the place of both French and German in her identity and approaches a reconciliation with a painful period of her family's history through her relationship to language. For all of these authors, another language is an intrinsic part of their identity and the choice to incorporate it into their writing emanates from a desire to proclaim its importance, either to them as individuals or to a collective, or both.

What is most striking in reading the work of these six women authors is the extent to which, to return to a call of a previous decade, the personal is political. The authors all have a different relationship to the French language, from it being their mother tongue, to the language of the colonizer, to the language of adoption, to the language of hospitality in forced migration. The other language they choose to incorporate into their writing is in many cases their native tongue, their first language, but for others it is the language they have spoken alongside or instead of French. Their national origin places them in different areas of the globe with different national histories and different connections to the metropole. Nevertheless, they are united by a commitment to resisting an ideology that proclaims monolingualism as a norm – the “monolingual paradigm,” to return to Yasemin Yildiz's theory. For all of these authors, asserting the presence of another language in their writing is

important for their own self-expression. It is also important for a collective with which they identify: the inhabitants of their nation or region of origin, their female ancestors, their family members who suffered at the hands of another power, for example. By translanguaging between French and another language, they stage their own subversion of power, talk back to the forces of history, colonization and oppression and use language as a tool with which to resist domination.

As this connection between the personal and the political suggests, all of the authors studied here call attention to gender. The writers demonstrate different perspectives on gender and present their own gender in diverse ways. Whereas some of the writers appeal to a historical collective of women, such as Pineau's inscription of herself in a line of female ancestors, others concentrate on contemporary relationships, such as Cixous's exploration of her relationship with her mother while she is in mourning. Interestingly, each of the writers focuses on one specific female relationship, either a mother or a mother figure; Cixous mourns both her mother and grandmother, Rey writes about her separation from her French mother, Thúy celebrates the mother who adopted her and eased her emotional turmoil by migrating to Montreal to join her, Spitz focuses on Emily/Emere who celebrates her Tahitian heritage at the expense of her European ancestry, Pineau highlights her relationship with her grandmother, and Salvayre writes the demise of the mother figure through Alzheimer's. For each author, language is closely linked to the mother or mother figure and the use of their *mother tongue* in their writing resonates strongly with the maternal influence. This study has privileged the writing of female authors in order to highlight the link between gender and language and to call attention to the ways in which women writers subvert power structures such as the hegemony of the French language within their work. By pointing to the ways in which these writers challenge the norms of life writing, this book aims to add to the substantial literature on women's autobiography and the resistance it stages to male-dominated aspects of the genre. It is hoped that attention to such writers who refuse the "monolingual paradigm" and the emphasis on transnational inquiry in current research will lead to further study of female- and male-authored bilingual writing. As higher numbers of people migrate to different parts of the world and are obliged to negotiate different linguistic landscapes, multilingualism is set to increase. Emily Apter's important work on the role and practice of translation suggests that the world is now both more monolingual and more multilingual and that complex language practices are a necessary part of it (Apter 2006). Debates over world literature and writing from the global south demonstrate that multilingualism will be a growing presence in literary studies – and that some aspects of the complex linguistic, cultural and political practices it creates will be 'untranslatable'.¹ It is hoped that such multilingualism in writing of various forms will be valorized, celebrated, taught and researched.

In particular, it is hoped that this book will lead to more sustained attention to multilingual literature in colonial and postcolonial contexts. This study has assembled the work of six women writers who are united by the focal point of the French language and their sustained use of another language within their life writing, despite their national and regional provenances. The analyses of their work function as case studies of how authors from different regions and different language backgrounds incorporate another language into their writing. As the chapters on Pineau's and Spitz's writing hint, and as Jean-Marc Moura has suggested, multilingual writing in former colonies is a multilayered phenomenon. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, many languages coexist – nearly 250 are spoken in Cameroon alone, for example – and there is a tradition of incorporating other languages into literary writing in French. Female-authored life writing from this region is less common than in other territories, however, due to cultural values such as *khersa*, the Wolof term for modesty or propriety. While beyond the scope of this study, then, research into multilingual writing in the specific context of African postcolonial nations should be a future direction for research. Tobias Warner's volume *The Tongue-Tied Imagination: Decolonizing Literary Modernity in Senegal* is an important step in this direction.

In addition to further avenues for literary research, it is hoped that this study will contribute to a greater dialogue between Applied Linguistics, on the one hand, and Literary and Cultural Studies, on the other hand. As mentioned in the introduction, the separation between these two fields of inquiry is rooted in disciplinary and organizational developments, but creating connections between them could lead to significant innovation and exploration. By borrowing the theoretical lens of translanguaging from Applied Linguistics, this study has highlighted the ways in which bilingual authors mingle languages within literary texts for a variety of poetic and political ends. It argues that bilingual writing is not predicated upon two distinct languages but upon a heteroglossic, dynamic system of language use. The theory of translanguaging views bilingualism as a dynamic process and bilingual practice as transformational – in the sense that it transforms specific languages, the concept of language itself and the lives of bilingual speakers. By applying this theoretical framework to literary texts, this study points up the creative linguistic processes involved in writing, the way in which bilingual authors transform languages within their writing and how they question the boundaries between their languages. The writers assembled here create neologisms and homonyms, use the grammar of one language to change the forms of another, and substitute idiomatic expressions in one language to fill the lacunae in another, for example. The creative practice of literary writers who transform their languages through their dynamic, bilingual writing practice is one of the central findings of this study. Moreover, since the authors studied here approach writing with one integrated linguistic system rather than

on the basis of two monolingualisms, their writing questions the artificial boundaries between languages. With the exception of Spitz, who draws attention to her bilingualism in order to accentuate the separation between French and Tahitian for political motivations, these authors show how their languages seep into one another within their literary writing. From Thúy's transliterations of French in Vietnamese script, such as "oeuf óp la" (42), to Rey's switching between languages mid-sentence, to Salvayre's French conjugations of Spanish verbs, these texts point to the unstable boundaries between languages in the practice of bilingual individuals. This adds an important nuance to current research in life writing, since it enhances our understanding of language choice within self-narrative and breaks open the possibilities of reading for and between languages. It also contributes to our understanding of transnational writing by probing how authors bridge not only nations and areas within their work but also negotiate languages and the porous borders between them. Research that questions transnational and transcultural paradigms is among the most innovative elements of current scholarship. This study suggests that research into translingual practices presents not just a helpful but a necessary strand to this line of inquiry.

As a corollary, not only can Applied Linguistics help to broaden the interpretative toolbox of literary and cultural studies, so too can such textual and cultural analysis nuance understandings within areas of linguistics. This study of literary texts is predicated upon the ethical stance that the politics is in the poetics. Using the theory of translanguaging to think through the politics in the literary texts accentuates the power involved in language choice by literary writers. Studies of translanguaging in Applied Linguistics apply the theory to a variety of situations but concentrate on practices of bilingual speakers in educational settings. Of course, translanguaging was originally a pedagogical practice in Welsh schools; so, its educational purpose is evident.² But, using translanguaging to understand the interplay between languages in literary texts accentuates how poetics, aesthetics and performance can inform our understanding of translanguaging as a practice. Indeed, translanguaging has been applied to – and nuanced by – various disciplines, as demonstrated by Suresh Canagarajah's expansive edited work, *The Routledge Handbook of Migration and Language*. In his introduction, Canagarajah points to research "from creative literature or dramatic performances written by migrants, which sometimes provide fictional representations that still provide significant insights into migrant experience. Drama, autobiographies, and novels are useful texts for relevant data" (18). As he suggests, and as this study demonstrates, literary studies presents a wealth of tools that could potentially nuance linguistic study by pointing up the creative practices of bilingual individuals.

Importantly, the theory of translanguaging suggests that it is a cognitive process: that the linguistic repertoire of bilingual speakers enables them to function cognitively in two languages. The application of this theory to literary texts clearly departs from a view of translanguaging as a cognitive process and interprets it as a practice. Literary creation is clearly based upon choice – the choice to use specific words in specific ways – rather than a cognitive process; so, this study has explored the ways in which translanguaging as a practice can aid the interpretation of the language choices of bilinguals in their writing. This appropriation of translanguaging not only fosters different interpretations of literary texts but it also contributes to the process of theorizing translanguaging. Whereas some linguists have suggested that translanguaging is merely an appropriation of code-switching, this study suggests that the major component of translanguaging is its transformational, creative aspect that blurs the boundaries between established languages. The writers studied here do not merely switch between two clearly demarcated languages, they mesh their languages into new forms based upon their large linguistic repertoire. Bringing translanguaging into the realm of literary creation and poetics points to further potential for renewed understanding of such bilingual practices within.

More broadly, *Multilingual Life Writing by French and Francophone Women Writers* aims to draw attention to the need for more open approaches to reading the work of migrant writers. Transnational, transcultural and translingual texts signal important implications for the reading process. Unfamiliarity is often a requisite element of reading such writing, especially writing that includes more than one language. These forms of writing practice can be alienating for a reader. Indeed, the reader may feel distanced from a text and have to revise her/his expectations of it. An openness to the unfamiliarity of migrant writing is thus a prerequisite for reading such writing, which this study hopes to underline. These texts call for a more engaged reading process and for reading to become an act of solidarity: to listen to a writer's multiple languages and to read in an appropriate way as a response. Transnational, transcultural and translingual writing often do not conform to predefined categories but create and perform new models of narration. If reading is always an inherently ethical process, reading the writing of migrant authors is even more acutely so.

Most specifically, perhaps, is the contribution this study makes to our understanding of literature and culture in French. In the introduction, we saw that France has played a central role in international affairs for many centuries and that multicultural and multilingual transactions involving France have been commonplace since the nation was a major trading power in the Middle Ages. We also discussed how the French state has

developed a series of institutions, organizations and policies that have served to protect the French language from external – and indeed, due to France’s many regional languages, internal – forces. The result of these is that monolingual ideologies have taken root in France more than in many other nations. Coupled with the forces of canon, literary standards and generic conventions, these monolingual ideologies have contributed to a comparably restrictive model of literary success. Nevertheless, the advent of transnational literatures in French and the publication of translangual works such as those studied here augur well for the future development of bilingual literary writing. Literary works such as the examples examined in this book demonstrate that France, French culture and the French language are far from monolingual, monoethnic, monoracial, or monocultural entities. It is a central argument of this book that translangualism is a critical category that, together with transnationalism and transculturalism, has the potential to change a paradigm within literary studies in general and within literary studies in French in particular. The works studied here sit either uncomfortably or not at all within the category of “French literature.” Similarly, the label of “literature in French” is problematic for many of them due to their multilingualism. These texts do not correspond to the term “littérature-monde en français,” as discussed in the introduction, and reveal the monolingual ideology that underpins the manifesto. Their resistance to categorization does not necessarily suggest a new category or generic label but highlights the restrictive boundaries of paradigms based upon national boundaries, especially those that equate one nation with one language.

Moreover, while the texts studied here were all written in the contemporary period – the last decade of the twentieth century and the opening years of the twenty-first century – it is important to historicize the concept of translangual writing. Literature written prior to the institutional organization of monolingualism contains many examples of writing formed of several languages. Public figures such as Samuel Pepys, whose diary written between 1660 and 1669 is written in English, Spanish, Italian and French, and thinkers who were bilingual and self-translated their works, such as Jean Bodin (1530–1596), Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) and Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639), constitute an important avenue for future research. Indeed, it is hoped that this book, suggesting that translangualism be taken up and employed as a critical category, will contribute to a growing body of research that will open up writing from previous centuries to other forms of scrutiny. Furthermore, it is hoped that inquiry into multilingual writing such as this study will contribute to further research on writing by authors within France who incorporate regional languages into their work.

To return to the contemporary period, however, it is nonetheless witness to unprecedented levels of migration, mobility, population growth and multilingualism. While this impacts upon many languages, the French language is clearly significantly affected due to its number of

speakers throughout the world. President Emmanuel Macron famously predicted that French would be one of the most prominent languages of the future as population growth and migration in Africa would lead to an exponential number of French speakers. In this speech, which he made to the *Académie française* in March 2018, he celebrated not just the French language but multilingualism on a global scale. He stated:

Le français ne peut se développer que dans ce plurilinguisme, que dans ces traductions permanentes. [...] Lorsque je parle d'usage, lorsque je parle du français comme une langue d'échange, je ne peux pas ne pas parler de plurilinguisme et de traduction. Au fond, nous sommes le seul pays de la Francophonie qui ne vit qu'en français. La Francophonie, si elle nous dit quelque chose – et je ne me suis pas essayé ici, sous le contrôle de plus experts que moi, à essayer de dire qui était Francophone ou pas –, mais celles et ceux qui parlent en langue française ont une richesse, ils ont plusieurs langues. Il n'y a que les Français qui n'ont que le Français. Et la Francophonie nous enseigne une chose, c'est que nous n'existons que dans ce plurilinguisme. Notre force, c'est de penser ces passages.

[French can develop only as part of this multilingualism, within these constant translations. [...] When I talk about usage, when I describe French as a language of transmission, I must talk about multilingualism and translation. In essence, we are the only Francophone country in which French is the only language spoken. Francophonie, if it tells us anything – and I haven't tried, there are greater experts than me, to say who is Francophone or not –, French speakers benefit from the wealth of several languages. Only French people speak only French. And the French language teaches us one thing: that we exist only in this multilingualism. Our strength is to think up these transitions.]³

While Macron's assertion that France is the only country of *la Francophonie* that lives only in French will be unlikely to resonate with the millions of French citizens who are not monolingual French speakers, his gesture toward multilingualism is very welcome. He defends the *Académie* on the grounds that it was founded not to govern the French language but to ensure that the language is adaptable and open to everyone. He simultaneously points to a long list of languages spoken throughout the world that coexist with French – although regional languages are notably absent. His suggestion that multilingualism is a necessary component of the contemporary world is well taken and highlights the need for greater understanding of this phenomenon. This book suggests that, against the backdrop of globalization and migration, it is imperative to understand the functioning of multilingualism and the way it impacts upon individual and collective identity. As the individual records of life writing in this volume show, self-expression in more than one language is a necessity for many people,

and the contemporary period suggests that this phenomenon will become more pervasive. An openness to such models will empower more people to express themselves and more people to offer understanding.

Notes

- 1 See Emily Apter's *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. London: Verso, 2013.
- 2 For example, Catherine Mazak applies the theory to tertiary-level classrooms in the bilingual territory of Puerto Rico. Suresh Canagarajah's work uses translanguaging to analyze the interplay between languages in the written work of bilingual students. Interestingly, as referenced in the introduction, some of this written work is autobiographical, so, resonates with this study.
- 3 This is the official translation published on the website of the *Embassy of France in Washington, DC*.

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