Reading Novels Translingually

Twenty-First-Century Case Studies

Julie Hansen

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Julie Hansen

For Christian and Peder

Contents

Acknowledgments

This book has taken shape slowly and benefited greatly along the way from exchange with several specialists on literary multilingualism and translation. For over a decade, I have enjoyed scholarly conversations and collaboration on these topics with a number of colleagues, including Helena Bodin, Zakhar Ishov, Steven Kellman, Natasha Lvovich, Charles Sabatos, Karine Åkerman Sarkisian, Eric Sellin†, Marja Sorvari, Adrian Wanner, and Susanna Witt. I am also grateful to the network on Slavic translation and translingualism studies founded at the 2014 Uppsala conference "Translation in Russian Contexts: Transcultural, Translingual, and Transdisciplinary Points of Departure," which I had the pleasure of co-organizing with Susanna Witt. The network's panel streams at European and North American conferences have provided good testing grounds for ideas developed in this book. Such collegial cooperation is one of the real pleasures of academic life.

The idea for chapter 7 arose while reading *War and Peace* together with colleagues and students in a seminar series organized by Torsten Pettersson, professor of literature at Uppsala University, during Spring Term 2019. Torsten and I subsequently co-organized the online symposium "Havoc and Healing: Insights into Human Action in Tolstoy and Dostoevsky," at which Tolstoy scholars Karin Beck and Donna Orwin offered suggestions that helped me develop my analysis of translingual elements in *War and Peace*.

Another source of inspiration was the 2019 symposium "Flerspråkig litteratur och läsaren" (Multilingual Literature and the Reader) at the Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators in Visby, Sweden, funded by a grant from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and organized by Helena Bodin, Lena Pasternak, Julia Tidigs, and myself. This project culminated in a special issue of the journal *Edda: Scandinavian Journal of Literary Research* (107, no. 3 [2020]), edited by Julia Tidigs and Helena Bodin. My contribution, entitled "En flerspråkig värld på svenska: Språkliga diskrepanser i Zinaida Lindéns roman *För många länder sedan*," has been translated and adapted for chapter 4 of this book.

Earlier versions of parts of chapter 2 appeared in the journals *Modern Language Review* ("Making Sense of the Translingual Text: Russian Wordplay, Names, and Cultural Allusions in Olga Grushin's *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, *Modern Language Review* 107, no. 2 [2012]) and *Translation and Interpreting*

Note on Transliteration

The modified Library of Congress system of transliteration is used in bibliographic references. This is also the case throughout the text, with the exception of Russian author names with conventional English spellings. The English translations of quoted passages are my own unless noted otherwise.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Translingual Reading

Literature in the twenty-first century looks more multilingual than perhaps ever before. Open a book and you might see different alphabets mingling on the same page, as in the following lines from a recent novel:

Nukkeruusunkuja 8

До встречи! (С бутылкой и хорошим настроением)

Jag läser, bredvid mig har jag ordboken, словарь.[1]

Texts like this call attention to language, confronting readers with the medium in advance of any message and giving rise to fascinating questions about language and how we read. The example above contains two scripts (Latin and Cyrillic) and three languages (Finnish, Russian, and Swedish). Readers who know them all may experience the pleasure of recognition or the satisfication of cracking a code, but what about other readers? What might those for whom Cyrillic script is opaque do with the second line? The English-language idiom "It's all Greek to me" employs a foreign language written in a foreign script as a metaphor for incomprehensibility. So what might readers do when faced with a passage of text that is, metaphorically speaking, all Greek to them?

As we will see in the analyses in this book, the deployment of multilingualism in a literary text engages readers in creating meaning even when they are unfamiliar with language on the page. Whenever uncertainty arises in the reading process, we are prompted as readers to apprehend language in new ways. This is reading translingually, and it is something all readers can do, no matter how many (or few) languages they know.

Of course, language play in literature is nothing new; writers have always exploited the pragmatic, expressive, and esthetic possibilities offered by linguistic

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1   Malin Kivelä, *Du eller aldrig* (Helsinki: Söderström, 2006), 69.

difference.[2] Literary multilingualism was common, for example, during the European Middle Ages. Monolingualism became the norm in Europe after the establishment of nation states, yet the literary use of multiple languages persisted.[3] It was part of the modernist esthetic project, as Juliette Taylor-Batty has shown, and the twentieth century produced a number of notable exceptions to the monolingual norm, especially among writers displaced by war and revolution.[4] In the twenty-first century, a new generation of authors—many of whom are migrants by necessity or internationally mobile by choice—are making explicit use of multiple languages in their poetry and prose. As Steven G. Kellman observed already in 2003, while "switching languages has a long antiquity, the business has been particularly brisk in recent years"[5]; more recently he notes that "[m]any of the most celebrated contemporary novelists, poets, and playwrights write in an adopted tongue."[6]

In the age of globalization, multilingual literature increasingly challenges traditional national and linguistic categories. As Rebecca L. Walkowitz points out, "Anglophone works of immigrant fiction are not always produced in an Anglophone country; some immigrant fictions produced in an Anglophone country are not originally Anglophone; and some do not exist in any one language at all. These variations test the presumed monolingualism of any nation."[7] Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson see this development not as a novelty, but a return to medieval literary practice, "recreating today the ambient multilingual conditions of earlier periods, when writers routinely elected to write in adopted dialects and languages, ever widening the compass of the bilingual text and its audiences."[8]

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2   For an overview of literary translingualism from different periods and geographical areas, see: Steven G. Kellman and Natasha Lvovich, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

3   Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

4   Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien argues that contemporary multilingual writers "are continuing a tradition begun by James Joyce, William Faulkner, Gertrude Stein, Louis Chu, T. S. Eliot, and others." Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien, *Weird English* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 11–12.

5   Steven G. Kellman, preface to *Switching Languages: Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft*, ed. Steven G. Kellman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), xvii.

6   Steven G. Kellman, *Nimble Tongues: Studies in Literary Translingualism* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2020), 16.

7   Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "The Location of Literature: The Transnational Book and the Migrant Writer," *Contemporary Literature* 47, no. 4 (2006): 529.

8   Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson, *The Bilingual Text: History and Theory of Literary Self-Translation* (London: Routledge, 2014), 211.

This literary trend has had an impact on how we study literature. "In the past two decades," Walkowitz observes, "the nation has ceased to operate as the only or necessary container for literary history." Instead, there has been "a conceptual shift from objects that fit, however heterogeneously, within a single language container to objects that span varied language and paralanguage containers."[9] Due to the new perspectives that readers bring to bear on the reading process, multilingual literature arguably looks different to readers today. As Rita Felski stresses, "Readers come to literature with very different histories, experiences, literary tastes, and forms of response that need to be reckoned with."[10] Because readers and reading are always situated in cultural, social, and economic contexts, real world conditions inevitably influence how we interpret fictional worlds. As many scholars have observed, globalization, digitalization, and increased migration all serve to highlight issues related to language, and thus literary multilingualism resonates with twenty-first-century readers in new ways, whether they speak one or many languages.[11] The resulting perspectives not only influence how we interpret contemporary fiction; they also give rise to new readings of canonical works.

This book examines how literary multilingualism in prose fiction brings language to the fore in the reading process. My choice of novels is deliberately eclectic, guided by a desire to illustrate different ways in which prose fiction engages readers in thinking about language. The selection is also necessarily influenced by my own language competencies and specializations as a literary scholar. With two exceptions (a nineteenth-century novel by Leo Tolstoy and

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9   Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "Less Than One Language: Typographic Multilingualism and Post-Anglophone Fiction," *SubStance* 50, no. 1 (2021): 95, 97.

10   Rita Felski, "Postcritical Reading," *Amercian Book Review* 38, no. 5 (2017): 5.

11   Currently at least one third of the world's population is polyglot. Li Wei, "Dimensions of Bilingualism," in *The Bilingualism Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Li Wei (London: Routledge, 2007), 4. Penelope Gardner-Chloros notes: "If you add together people who live in multilingual areas of the world (Africa, India, Singapore, Creole-speaking areas such as the Caribbean or Papua New Guinea, etc.); people who speak a regional language or dialect on top of a national language (from Basques to Chechens); and migrants and their descendants (Greeks in Australia, Punjabis in Britain, Spanish speakers in the USA, etc.), you are left with small islands of monolingualism in a multilingual sea. This is without counting people who learn a second/third language beyond a basic level at school (e.g. the Dutch or Scandinavians); those who have a different language for literacy from the one they speak (e.g. Gujerati and Punjabi speakers whose language of literacy is Hindi); those who become bilingual through changes in personal circumstances; and those whose mother tongue is not considered adequate for formal purposes [. . .] Plurilingualism is still the norm in spite of the fact that a large number of the world's languages are under imminent threat of extinction owing to economic and globalizing forces." Penelope Gardner-Chloros, *Code-Switching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5–7.

Andreï Makine's *Le testament français* from 1995), all of the novels analyzed have been published after the turn of the millennium. They deploy literary multilingualism in various ways: through plot, characterization, and thematicization, as well as the depiction of language practices such as writing, translation, and reading. Several contain a metafictional level that calls on the reader to reflect on language itself. My approaches to these case studies also vary, drawing on insights from the growing field of multilingual literary studies, as well as reader-response criticism, Formalism, New Formalism, translation studies, transfiction studies, cognitive literary studies, and postcritique. Most of the concepts I apply are defined in the chapter in which they first appear, but a few key terms are explained below.

Key Terms

When speaking of *language*, I follow Dirk Delabastita in using the word in an open way that "accommodates not only the 'official' taxonomy of languages but also the whole range of subtypes and varieties existing within the various officially recognized languages (e.g. dialect, sociolect, slang) and indeed sometimes challenging our neat linguistic typologies."[12] When speaking of the presence of more than one language in a literary text, I use two different terms in an overlapping, though not always interchangeable, way: *literary multilingualism* and *literary translingualism*.[13] While the term *multilingualism* indicates the presence of several languages without specifying relations between them, the prefix "trans," meaning "across, to or on the farther side of, beyond, over,"[14] captures a dimension I view as central for an understanding of the phenomenon. I thus apply the

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12   Dirk Delabastita, "Fictional Representations," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 2nd ed. ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 110.

13   The latter term was coined by Kellman in *The Translingual Imagination* (2000). A number of other terms have been used, for example: bilingualism, heterolingualism, plurilingualism, polylingualism, polyglossia, and exophone literature. There are also subcategories; for example, Rainier Grutman draws a distinction between exogenous and endogenous bilingualism, and Kellman distinguishes between monolingual translingual writers and ambilingual translingual writers. Rainier Grutman, "L'écrivain bilingue et ses publics: une perspective comparatiste," in *Écrivains multilingues et écritures métisses: l'hospitalité des langues*, ed. Axel Gasquet and Modesta Suárez (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2007), 31–50. Steven G. Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 19.

14   The prefix "multi" means "more than one, several, many." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "multi- *(comb. form)*," accessed September 4, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/multi_combform.

distinction drawn by Rainer Guldin, who holds that "[c]ontrary to the notion of multilingualism, translingualism emphasizes process and literary interaction between different languages. The prefix 'trans' suggests movement, expansion, and a crossing of borders. The prefix 'multi', on the other hand, often implies a series of languages existing next to each other without actually engaging in any exchanges."[15] Some translingual works seem to want to go beyond language, "to transcend language in general," as Kellman writes, "to be pandictic, to utter everything. Impatient with the imperfections of finite verbal systems, they yearn to pass beyond words, to silence and truth."[16] However not all multilingual works express this idea of "writing beyond the *concept* of the mother tongue," to borrow the words of Yasemin Yildiz, and so I reserve the term "translingual" for those that contain the idea of transcending language.[17] Kellman defines literary translingualism as "the phenomenon of authors who write in more than one language or at least in a language other than their primary one."[18] In this book, I shift the focus from authors to texts and readers, at the same time broadening the concept of literary translingualism to include various types of language interaction.

Transmesis

It can be difficult to catch sight of how language operates in a literary text because it is the very stuff of which texts are made. Language can convey a message in a manner that seems transparent, like a clear windowpane, through which we as readers peer at something on the other side of the glass.[19] If the windowpane becomes blurry, however, we may notice qualities of the glass before we register

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15   Rainer Guldin, "Metaphors of Literary Translingualism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism*, ed. Steven G. Kellman and Natasha Lvovich (New York: Routledge, 2022), 382.

16   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 22.

17   Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, 14.

18   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 8.

19   I borrow the metaphor of a windowpane from translator Elizabeth Bryer, who uses it in the following way in the afterword to her translation of the Spanish novel *The Palimpsests* by translingual writer Aleksandra Lun. "Spanish is the windowpane readers peer through to see into the lives of [the characters], and the transparency of that pane is in many ways the metafictional point: look at the linguistic and literary heights that a non-native writer [. . .] can achieve. We viewers of these people's lives forget we're looking through a windowpane at all [. . .]" Elizabeth Bryer, "Translator's Note," in *The Palimpsests* by Aleksandra Lun (Boston: David R. Godine, 2019), 101–2.

what lies beyond it. In such cases, we may need to suspend our disbelief not only with regard to the content of the story, but also with regard to the language that conveys it. The idea of suspension of disbelief, first discussed by Samuel T. Coleridge in 1817, entails a willingness on the part of the reader to overlook inconsistencies in a narrative in order to sustain readerly pleasure in the story.[20] "Literary scholars," as Saskia Böcking notes, tend to "assume that this abdication of reality-testing is a stance of basic trust users adopt directly before they start reading."[21] For example, in consuming an English detective novel that happens to be set in France, readers typically have no difficulty imagining that the characters speak French, even if their conversations are narrated in English. As readers we may focus more on twists of plot than on the language. But if the suspension of our disbelief is disrupted by the way in which language is depicted, we may begin to think more about the medium than the message. The representation of language can thus serve to thematicize language itself, opening up a metalinguistic and metafictional level in the text. This, too, can be a source of readerly pleasure.

"Works of fiction are wonderful at creating imaginary universes in which we immerse ourselves," writes Joshua Landy, "[b]ut not all novels and plays and films are content with leaving us comfortably ensconced in the illusions

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20 Coleridge writes of suspension of disbelief in relating a discussion he had with Wordsworth on two effects of poetry: "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination." In order to achieve the first effect, it is necessary, according to Coleridge, "to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." Interestingly, the second effect discussed by Coleridge bears similarities to that of the Formalist concept of *ostranenie* (defined later in this introduction): "to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom [. . . that] which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not." Samuel T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907 [1817]), 5–6.

21 Saskia Böcking, "Suspension of Disbelief," in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 1. Böcking lays out a "tripartite model of narrative processing consisting of the components belief, disbelief, and suspension of belief," according to which "[b]elief is understood as a form of uncritical processing of a narrative's content regarding its reality adequacy and plot consistency." Disbelief "is the individual's critical thinking about both aspects. It arises if the user notices flaws or inconsistencies in the narrative and considers them to be disturbing. Suspension of disbelief, finally, is the user's not focusing on violations of realism aspects and plot consistency, although he or she has noticed them." Böcking, "Suspension of Disbelief," 2.

they create. Some of them like to wake us up from time to time, bringing to the forefront our dim residual awareness that what we are imagining is not real."[22] Engaging with Landy's idea of lucid self-delusion, Merja Polvinen emphasizes the active role of readers in the reading process, which entails "a cognitive state of lucid self-delusion in readers, which would not exist without having been performed through active complicity in a fiction as fiction, and with full knowledge of the meaning-making actions required in that performance."[23]

Meir Sternberg was the first to coin a term for the depiction of multilingualism in literary texts, which he called "translational mimesis." In the article "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis" (1981), Sternberg argues that literary representation of multilingualism and translation necessarily comprises a particular "mimetic challenge" because of the dual role of language in literary texts: "as represented object (within the original or reported speech-event) and [. . .] as representational means (within the reporting speech-event)."[24] Authors must find a way "to represent the reality of polylingual discourse through a communicative medium which is normally unilingual."[25] This results in an unresolvable tension:

> Since this tension between object and medium or inset and frame arises in principle regardless of the polyglot qualifications of the audience, it obviously could not be resolved even if the author were to communicate in a lingua franca, like Greek in ancient times, Latin in the Middle Ages, or the more recent Esperanto. For the *raison d'être* of these is not to bridge the gaps of representation but to remove the barriers to communication, often with a view to ultimately turning back the wheel of time to a pre-Babel state of universal unilingualism.[26]

22 Joshua Landy, "Mental Calisthenics and Self-Reflexive Fiction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies*, ed. Lisa Zunshine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 559.

23 Merja Polvinen, "Cognitive Science and the Double Vision of Fiction," in *Cognitive Literary Science: Dialogues between Literature and Cognition*, ed. Michael Burke and Emily T. Troscianko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 147–48.

24 Meir Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis," *Poetics Today* 2, no. 4 (1981): 222.

25 Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality," 222.

26 Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality," 222.

Yet literature "is the art of the possible," argues Sternberg and offers a typology of four ways in which literature can represent multilingual situations (termed selective reproduction, verbal transposition, conceptual reflection, and explicit attribution).[27] Although later theory calls into question the idea of a unilingual norm in literature, as well as that of an extra-textual reality, Sternberg's structuralist typology was an important first step toward conceptualizing the phenomenon.[28]

Building on Sternberg's model, Thomas O. Beebee coined the term *transmesis* ("a metaphorical conjunction of *translation* and *mimesis*") as a tool for pinpointing and analyzing "what happens when one language is used as the *sign* of another."[29] In *Transmesis: Inside Translation's Black Box* (2012), Beebee observes that "[d]espite the plethora of theory and criticism on the translation *of* literary texts, there is very little to help us deal with the appearance of translation or code switching *within* literary texts."[30] He posits that "language resists representation" not only because of the dual roles noted by Sternberg, but because we are so immersed in language that it is difficult to get a view of how it operates.[31]

Transmesis is an umbrella term for fictional representations of multilingual environments, as well as of linguistic processes such as code-switching and translation.[32] Like Sternberg, Beebee breaks down the phenomenon into four types:

[1] Texts whose mimetic object is the act of translation, the translator, and his or her social and historical contexts.

[2] Texts that overtly claim to be translations, though no "original" exists. [. . .]

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27   Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality," 225. For a concise summary of Sternberg's model, see Delabastita, "Fictional Representations," 109.

28   For example, Julia Tidigs and Markus Huss object to Sternberg's "highly reductive conception of literature as the representation of a fixed, extra-textual object. For Sternberg, it is the correspondence with this object that assigns value to, or detracts value from, multilingual phenomena, and in accordance with this he neglects any possible aesthetic and political effects of textual linguistic phenomena that do not correspond to those of the supposed 'object.'" Julia Tidigs and Markus Huss, "The Noise of Multilingualism: Reader Diversity, Linguistic Borders and Literary Multimodality," *Critical Multilingualism Studies* 5, no. 1 (2017): 216.

29   Thomas O. Beebee, *Transmesis: Inside Translation's Black Box* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3, 16.

30   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 14.

31   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 5.

32   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 3.

[3] Texts that mime a language reality such that the medium does not match the object depicted (e.g., when conversations taking place in Cuba between Cubans are given in English.)

[4] Texts that make standard language strange to itself [...], inasmuch as such departures are seen as the result of transcoding from another, more "original" language; code-switching; interference from another language; and so forth.[33]

Transmetic works "remind their readers that the universe is multilingual," by highlighting the presence of other languages in the fictional worlds depicted and/or in the linguistic conditions underlying the creation of a text.[34] The focus, in Beebee's typology, on mimesis of "a language reality" can be productively supplemented by equal attention to the reality effect that arises in the process of reading fiction. New Formalist Fredric V. Bogel argues that "any literary text can display either a referential relation to an anterior reality or a rhetorical relation to the reality-effect it creates," and emphasizes "the need to look *at* the language we are tempted to look *through*."[35] In several of the chapters in this book, I use Beebee's concept of transmesis as an analytical tool for pinpointing translingual elements in the selected case studies, after which I go on to consider their implications for the reading process.[36]

Code-switching and heterographics

Within the field of sociolinguistics, code-switching is defined as "the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation, without prominent phonological assimilation of one variety to the other."[37] Code-switching also occurs as a literary phenomenon, defined as "the juxtaposition of two languages within

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33   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 6.

34   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 3.

35   Fredric V. Bogel, *New Formalist Criticism: Theory and Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 10, 185.

36   For other studies that apply Beebee's concept, see Roman Ivashkiv, "Transmesis in Viktor Pelevin's *Generation 'P'* and Andrew Bromfield's English Translation," *Translation Studies* 11, no. 2 (2018): 201–16; and Roman Ivashkiv, "(Un)translatability Revisited: Transmetic and Intertextual Puns in Viktor Pelevin's *Generation 'P'* and Its Translations," *European Journal of Humour Research* 7, no. 1 (2019): 109–25.

37   Carol Myers-Scotton, "Code-Switching as Indexical of Social Negotiations," in *The Bilingualism Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Li Wei (London: Routledge, 2007), 101.

the same text."[38] In literary prose fiction, code-switching may be present on multiple levels: fictional characters or the narrator may codeswitch; the author may codeswitch in paratexts[39]; and the reader may also do so in the reading process. Carol Myers-Scotton argues that code-switching is "simultaneously a tool and an index. For the speaker, switching is a tool, a means of doing something [...]. For the listener, switching is an index, a symbol of the speaker's intentions. Switching, therefore, is both a means and a message."[40] As we will see, code-switching operates in this way—as both a means and a message—in some of the novels examined here. Another term of relevance for the analysis is *code-mixing*, in which two or more languages are blended to a greater extent, making it difficult to separate them.[41] I will return to both code-switching and code-mixing in the analysis of Leo Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* in Chapter 7.

Heterographics can be described as visual code-switching between different scripts.[42] Twenty-first-century readers are surrounded by various scripts, which, as Simon Franklin argues, are more accessible than languages: "script is accessible to all who look, language only to those who can decipher or who can have others decipher for them."[43] The list below provides a sampling of the diversity of scripts available to us:

> algebras, alphabets, animations, architectural drawings, choreographic notations, computer interfaces, computer programming languages, computer models and simulations, diagrams, flow-charts, graphs, ideograms, knitting patterns, knowledge-representation formalisms, logical formalisms, maps, mathematical formalisms, mechanical

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38   Daniel Weston and Penelope Gardner-Chloros, "Mind the Gap: What Code-Switching in Literature Can Teach Us about Code-Switching," *Language and Literature* 24, no. 3 (2015): 196.

39   I apply here Gérard Genette's term for material external to but associated with a literary text, such as a preface or interview with the author. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

40   Myers-Scotton "Code-Switching as Indexical of Social Negotiations," 101.

41   D. R. Mabule, "What Is This? Is It Code Switching, Code Mixing or Language Alternating?," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 5, no. 1 (2015): 341.

42   Charles Lock, "Heterographics: Towards a History and Theory of Other Lettering," in *Literary Translation: World Literature or 'Worlding' Literature?*, ed. Ida Klitgård (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 97–112.

43   Simon Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere, 1450–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 102.

models, musical notations, numeral systems, phonetic scripts, punctuation systems, tables, and so on.[44]

It is often first when scripts are mixed that we become aware of these different systems (as in the mixing of Cyrillic with Roman letters in the heterographical passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter). Regardless of whether we are aware of the presence of different scripts, however, readerly perspectives are always decisive in the decoding process. As Bogel points out, it is readers who, "however habitually, instantaneously, and therefore invisibly—construe a capital T as that letter rather than as one of two supports holding up a clothesline, a capital O as that letter rather than as a cross-section of a garden hose, a capital L as that letter rather than a right angle or an uncompleted triangle."[45] Helena Bodin argues that "heterographic devices emphasise the heteromediality of literary texts, thereby heightening readers' awareness of the visual-spatial features of literary texts, as well as of the materiality of scripts."[46] As some of the novels analyzed in this book show, heterographical devices draw attention not only to language, but also to the script-based practices of writing, reading, and translation.

Ostranenie

All of the literary devices discussed above—transmesis, code-switching, code-mixing, and heterographics—potentially heighten the reader's awareness of language by impeding the reading process, perhaps even turning language into an irritant that interferes with comprehension. When this happens, language becomes strange to the reader. The Russian Formalist concept of *ostranenie* (variously translated into English as making strange, defamiliarization, or estrangement) is thus a useful concept for examining literary translingualism. Shklovsky explains *ostranenie* in the following way:

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44   Donald Peterson qtd. in Richard Menary, "Writing as Thinking," *Language Sciences* 29, no. 5 (2007): 624.

45   Bogel, *New Formalist Criticism*, 87. Bogel uses this example of letters to illustrate the following argument by Stanley Fish: "the text as an entity independent of interpretation and (ideally) responsible for its career drops out and is replaced by the texts that emerge as the consequence of our interpretive activities. There are still formal patterns, but they do not lie innocently in the world; rather, they are themselves constituted by an interpretive act." Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 13.

46   Helena Bodin, "Heterographics as a Literary Device: Auditory, Visual, and Cultural Features," *Journal of World Literature* 3 (2018): 196.

what we call art exists in order to give back the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make the stone stony. The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely recognizing, things; the device of art is the "*ostranenie*" of things and the complication of the form, which increases the duration and complexity of perception, as the process of perception is its own end in art and must be prolonged. Art is the means to live through the making of a thing; what has been made does not matter in art.[47]

Shklovsky viewed *ostranenie* as a phenomenon intrinsic to all literature (and art), and not specifically translingual works, but nearly a century before the term *literary translingualism* was coined by Kellman, the Russian Formalists offered interesting observations on the functions of multiple languages in literature, as we will see in Chapter 7.

In *Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education* (2004), Doris Sommer invokes Shklovsky and includes foreign language in a list of defamiliarizing devices: "Wordplay, distractions, detours, *foreign words* are among the devices of deliberate roughness that make up literary technique for Shklovsky."[48] Sommer draws an explicit connection between the transgressive qualities of code-switching, which "plays naughty games between languages, poaching and borrowing, and crossing lines,"[49] and *ostranenie* as "a surprise effect accomplished by roughening conventional material in unconventional ways."[50] Like Shklovsky, cognitive literary theorist Terence Cave describes defamiliarization as one of the primary functions of literature when he posits that "[c]ommunicative language of all kinds has the function of changing the cognitive environment of the listener; literature extends that function with a power that is in inverse relation to its immediate use-value in the everyday world. It makes things happen, gives a local habitation and a name to unfamiliar feelings and events, or makes familiar ones strange."[51] Kellman presents translingual writing as a limit case in this regard: "It is hard to take words for granted when writing in a foreign language.

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47   Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Device, (1917/1919)" in *Viktor Shklovsky: A Reader*, ed. and trans. Alexandra Berlina (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 80.

48   Doris Sommer, *Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 30.

49   Sommer, *Bilingual Aesthetics*, 34.

50   Sommer, *Bilingual Aesthetics*, 29.

51   Terence Cave, *Thinking with Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.

Translinguals represent an exaggerated instance of what the Russian formalists maintained is the distinctive quality of *all* imaginative literature: *ostranenie*."[52]

This book considers several cases of literary texts in which language is made strange in various ways. The translingual readings presented here take insights from the Formalists, at the same time adopting the New Formalist approach to texts as "linguistic structures that in some sense speak to the condition of the readers who read them, in the present (whichever present that is), and that offer readers significant representations, or explorations, or rehearsals of a variety of existential situations, or roles, or attitudes, or issues."[53] Postcritical approaches also attend to what readers do with texts. "Texts cannot think, feel, or act," observes Felski, and "if they have any impact on the world, they do so via the intercession of those who read them."[54] It is through the meeting of readers with texts that meaning is created.

The Translingual Turn in Literary Studies

Scholarly interest in multilingualism has continued to grow since the turn of the millennium. Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman note that "more and more Western academics, living in centralized cultures where the monopoly of communication is traditionally held by monolingual media, are noticing the real multilingualism lying beneath the surface of official, often State-induced, mono-lingualism."[55] Aneta Pavlenko observes that a "dramatic increase of linguistic diversity outside of academia made multilingualism impossible to ignore, while the rise in the number of bi- and multilingual academics—many of whom [. . .] live and work in languages other than 'our own'—created a cohort that saw mul-tilingualism as relevant to their daily lives and were ready to take it on."[56]

Multilingual literary studies (or translingual literary studies) has crystal-lized as an interdisciplinary field of study overlapping with linguistics, transla-tion studies, cultural studies, and migration studies. The body of scholarship has expanded significantly in recent decades, revealing translingualism in literature

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52   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 31.

53   Bogel, *New Formalist Criticism*, 35.

54   Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 32.

55   Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman, "Introduction: Fictional Representations of Multi-lingualism and Translation," *Linguistica Antverpiensia* 4 (2005): 14.

56   Aneta Pavlenko, *The Bilingual Mind: And What It Tells Us about Language and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 20.

to be more widespread than previously acknowledged.[57] The comprehensive scope of the recently published *Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism* (2022), edited by Steven G. Kellman and Natasha Lvovich, illustrates how productive and multifaceted scholarship on this topic is today. In addition to the studies I have cited thus far, a number of monographs deserve mention. Lydia H. Liu's *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (1995) considers the significance of translingual practice for modern Chinese literature in its contacts with European languages and cultures. Azade Seyhan's *Writing Outside the Nation* (2001) examines bilingual migrant writing in Germany and the United States, with a particular focus on contemporary Chicana and Turkish–German women writers. Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien's *Weird English* (2004) analyses how works by writers such as Junot Díaz, Maxine Hong Kingston, Vladimir Nabokov, Arundhati Roy, and Salman Rushdie use non-native English in innovative ways, arguing that "weird English constitutes the new language of literature."[58] Adrian Wanner's *Out of Russia: Fictions of a New Translingual Diaspora* (2011) examines the work of a new generation of Soviet-born émigrés who write in English, French, German, and Hebrew, while self-translations by seven translingual Russian poets of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries are the focus of Wanner's *The Bilingual Muse: Self-Translation among Russian Poets* (2020). The current translingual turn began with a focus on twentieth-century modernist and post-modernist literature, but recently several scholars have delved further back into literary history, offering new perspectives on canonical works by authors such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Thomas Mann, and Leo Tolstoy.[59]

The recent scholarly focus on multilingualism in literature has dovetailed with a critique of monolingualism. "If identity is shaped by language," Kellman declares, "then monolingualism is a deficiency disorder. It limits our versions of

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57 Two influential twentieth-century monographs on literary multilingualism are Leonard Forster's *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature* (1970), which examines multilingual poetry diachronically from medieval times through the modernist era, and Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour's *Alien Tongues: Bilingual Russian Writers of the "First" Emigration* (1989), which applies a neurolinguistic approach in an analysis of works by Russian émigré writers such as Elsa Triolet and Vladimir Nabokov, comparing them with Samuel Beckett.

58 Ch'ien, *Weird English*, 4.

59 See Olga Anokhina, Till Dembeck, and Dirk Weissmann, eds., *Mapping Multilingualism in 19th Century European Literatures. Le plurilinguisme dans les littératures européennes du XIXe siècle* (Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2019). See also the special issue of *Critical Multilingualism Studies* entitled "Multilingual Philology and National Literature: Re-Reading Classical Texts" from 2017, edited by Till Dembeck.

self, society, and universe."[60] Yildiz's *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (2012) explores how the literary strategies of multilingual writers in German, including Franz Kafka, Theodor W. Adorno, Yoko Tawada, and Feridun Zaimoğlu challenge "the monolingual equation of language, ethnicity, and culture."[61] Brian Lennon's *In Babel's Shadow: Multilingual Literatures, Monolingual States* (2010) critically examines how a monolingual literary print culture imposes limitations on the production, reception, and scholarly study of multilingual literature, arguing that "[l]anguages other than English are administered, so to speak, in an ethnographic or pedagogic mode presuming the lowest common denominator, Anglophone monolingualism."[62] Several scholars have lamented the persistence of monolingualism in institutional and conceptual frameworks for the study of literature. Till Dembeck proposes an alternative approach he calls multilingual philology, which "foreignizes each and every text in assuming that it might be written in more than one language, however monolingual it may seem at first sight."[63]

A general shift has occurred from a view of literary multilingualism as something extraordinary to a recognition that it is more ordinary than previously believed. The first step was to draw attention to the phenomenon, and to this end multilingual authors have been held up as "the prodigies of world literature"[64] and examined as exceptional cases who stand out for their mastery of a non-native language.[65] Such exceptions place high demands on researchers who study them; Kellman suggests that "[t]he ideal student of translingualism would be a polyglot

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60   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 8.

61   Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, 20.

62   Brian Lennon, *In Babel's Shadow: Multilingual Literatures, Monolingual States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 10.

63   Till Dembeck, "Multilingual Philology and Monolingual *Faust*: Theoretical Perspectives and a Reading of Goethe's Drama," *German Studies Review* 41, no. 3 (2018): 567. See also: Till Dembeck and Georg Mein, eds., *Philologie und Mehrsprachigkeit* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014). A defense of monolingualism is offered by David Gramling, who argues in *The Invention of Monolingualism* (2016) that we lack a "working definition of monolingualism, and there is little agreement about what we researchers would do if we had a shared definition. Despite and perhaps because of Derrida, 'monolingualism' remains an 'othered' epithet without much of an actionable analytic discourse." David Gramling, *The Invention of Monolingualism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 10.

64   Kellman, "Preface," ix.

65   The author-centered approach generated a categorization of writers as ambilingual translingual writers, "who have written important works in more than one language," and monolingual translinguals, "who have written in only a single language but one other than their native one." Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 19.

polymath, a monster of erudition."[66] In researching the topic of multilingualism, I have sometimes found myself wishing for omnilingualism, which is, for humans at least, an unattainable state. But, as my case studies show, the inability to comprehend everything can also be productive, and texts that we cannot immediately decode give rise to fascinating questions about the process of reading.

There have been calls for a recognition of "the ordinariness of diversity,"[67] and an "*un*marking" of multilingualism based on the view that "[d]ifference and diversity, multilingualism and hybridity are not rare and exotic conditions to be sought out and celebrated but the quotidian ordinariness of everyday life."[68] A middle path is offered by a view of reading itself as a multilingual process, which represents another shift of focus in the field of research: from authors to readers.[69] This view pays close attention to the qualities of translingual texts while acknowledging that much of the world is multilingual. My own approach to literary multilingualism has evolved from seeing it as a text-intrinsic phenomenon to something that arises in the reading process. As reader-response theorist Wolfgang Iser argues, it is the work of deciphering that makes reading interesting:

> The need to decipher gives us the chance to formulate our own deciphering capacity—i.e., we bring to the fore an element of our being of which we are not directly conscious. The production of the meaning of literary texts [...] does not merely entail the discovery of the unformulated, which can then be taken over by the active imagination of the reader; it also entails the possibility that we may formulate ourselves and so discover what had previously seemed to elude our consciousness. These are the ways in which reading literature gives us the chance to formulate the unformulated.[70]

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66   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 10.

67   Alastair Pennycook qtd. in Mela Sarkar and Bronwen Low, "Multilingualism and Popular Culture," in *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism*, ed. Marilyn Martin-Jones, Adrian Blackledge, and Angela Creese (London: Routledge, 2012), 413.

68   Sarkar and Low, "Multilingualism and Popular Culture," 415; Pennycook qtd. in Sarkar and Low, "Multilingualism and Popular Culture," 413.

69   In their introduction to the special journal issue entitled "Flerspråkig litteratur och läsare i interaction" [Mulitlingual literature and readers in interaction], Julia Tidigs and Helena Bodin note an ongoing shift to a view of multilingualism as "an event, something that is performed, for example, in the act of reading." Julia Tidigs and Helena Bodin, "Flerspråkig litteratur och läsare i interaktion," *Edda* 107, no. 3 (2020): 144.

70   Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988 [1972]), 227.

Translingual texts draw attention to their own verbal medium, confronting readers with it in ways that can present obstacles to immediate comprehension. The reader's choices influence the outcome of the interpretative process. As reader-response theorist Stanley Fish holds, "interpretive strategies are not put into execution after reading; they are the shape of reading, and because they are the shape of reading, they give texts their shape, making them rather than, as is usually assumed, arising from them."[71] Felski notes that reading is always situated in the world: "Acts of reading [. . .] are distinctively aesthetic insofar as they involve style and form, language and mood; and yet such aesthetic affinities cannot be quarantined from readers' ethical concerns or worldly affiliations."[72] In this book, I read the selected novels with a translingual lens in order to bring into focus the workings of language in the reading process and tease out how they might prompt us to think in new ways about language in the world.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 2, "Implied Readers in the Translingual Text: The Case of Olga Grushin's *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*," considers an example of a novel in English that contains a Russian subtext, leading one Russian critic to posit that its "underlying language" is in fact Russian.[73] The first part of this chapter analyzes how Russian elements are manifest on the surface of the anglophone text, with a focus on puns, proper names, and cultural allusions. Drawing on concepts from reader-response theory (such as the implied reader and the repertoire of the text), I consider the effects of literary translingualism on the reading process. While Russian elements in the text may accord bilingual readers the pleasure of recognition, they potentially serve as a device of *ostranenie* for the monolingual reader, thereby creating a parallel between the reading process and the protagonist's disorientation in face of changes brought by the reform policy of glasnost in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. This interplay between recognition and disorientation is, according to Iser, always an intrinsic part of the reading process. The second part of this chapter examines how translingual elements are rendered in Elena Petrova's Russian translation of the novel, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh* (2011). This comparison throws into relief several distinguishing

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71   Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, 13.

72   Felski, "Postcritical Reading," 5.

73   Iakov Borokhovich, "Rev. of *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*," *Znamia* 6 (2007) http://magazines.russ.ru/znamia/2007/6/bo20.html.

characteristics of literary translingualism and shows how translingual texts in translation pose challenges to traditional binary concepts within translation theory, such as source/target and domestication/foreignization.

Chapter 3, "Translingual Protagonists Go Global," considers three novels with translingual protagonists: Andreï Makine's *Le testament français* (1995), Michael Idov's *Ground Up* (2009), and Olga Grjasnowa's *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt* (2012). In each, the protagonist reflects on what might be called the translingual condition and the challenges that come with speaking, writing, and living in a non-native language. In several passages, these protagonists are depicted translating or interpreting between languages, with translation also serving as a metaphor for translingual experience. The Russian protagonist of Makine's novel writes in French but must resort to the subterfuge of a pseudo-translation in order to get his books accepted by a Paris publisher. Idov's novel chronicles the business failure of a Viennese-style café in New York along with the narrator's failure to realize the cosmopolitan ideal it embodies. Grjasnowa's novel portrays the challenges faced by a polyglot interpreter who aspires to professional mobility in a globalized world. Drawing on Alexander Beecroft's concept of ecologies of literature (in particular, vernacular, cosmopolitan, national, and global literary ecologies), I examine how these depictions of translingual protagonists both complicate and point beyond national categories. By portraying translation in different contexts, including everyday communication, business ventures, and literary markets, these novels prompt readers to reflect on the circulation of languages and literature alike.

Chapter 4, "The Translingual Narrator and Language Gaps: The Case of Zinaida Lindén's *Many Countries Ago,*" takes as its case study the Finland-Swedish author Zinaida Lindén's Swedish-language novel *För många länder sedan* (2013), examining the depiction of a multilingual world by a linguistically hyper-conscious first-person narrator. Lindén's protagonist-narrator is a well-travelled Russian émigré living in Finland in the early twenty-first century. Although this novel is written in Swedish, several other languages appear within the fictional world as well as on the level of the text. Drawing on the concepts of *transmesis* and *transfiction* (the latter term was coined by Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl for the literary "use of translation-related phenomena in fiction"), I analyze the effects of discrepancies in the text between languages in the fictional world and the narrative language, respectively.[74] Viewing the narrator as a translator figure who mediates a multilingual world for Swedophone readers, I argue that

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74   Klaus Kaindl, "Going Fictional! Translators and Interpreters in Literature and Film: An Introduction," in *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction*, ed. Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014), 4.

language discrepancies open up a meta-level in the text that prompts readers to reflect on the role of language and their own relations to it.

Translators and interpreters may seem unlikely heroes of novels, yet they have recently become more visible in contemporary fiction. Chapter 5, "The Literary Translator as Reader: The Case of Rabih Alameddine's *An Unnecessary Woman*," surveys the latest research on what has been called "translator fiction" and relates it to a new interest within translation studies in individual translators and the contexts in which they work, as well as in the phenomenon of self-translation.[75] Delabastita observes that some fictional works that depict translation "reflect the growing fascination of novelists with the very process of textual representation which has produced the highly self-referential works known as metafiction."[76] As Walkowitz notes in *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (2015), many contemporary works of fiction use translation as "a thematic, structural, conceptual, and sometimes even typographical device," and can thus be said to "build translation into their form."[77] This chapter takes Alameddine's novel *An Unnecessary Woman* (2013) as an example of translator fiction that prompts readers to see translation not as a derivative literary activity, but rather as creative production closely related to writing and reading.

In order to gain a fuller picture of the manifold forms literary translingualism can take, it is interesting to consider the role of multiple languages in popular genres. With the exception of language-mixing in hip-hop culture, manifestations of multilingualism in popular culture have not received much scholarly attention to date.[78] Chapter 6 takes as its case study a contemporary novel in which translingualism is less immediately apparent but nevertheless integral to the reading process: Swedish author Andreas Norman's thriller *En rasande eld* (2013, *Into a Raging Blaze*). The protagonist is a civil servant at Sweden's Foreign Ministry who is suspected of involvement with an Islamic extremist terrorist group. My analysis reveals how the interplay between language competence

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75   Several scholars have observed that transfiction has become more prominent in literature and film since the turn of the millennium. See, for example: Nitsa Ben-Ari, "Representations of Translators in Popular Culture," *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 5, no. 2 (2010): 220–42; Delabastita and Grutman, "Introduction: Fictional Representations of Multilingualism and Translation," 11–35; and Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl, eds., *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014).

76   Delabastita, "Fictional Representations," 112.

77   Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 4, 6.

78   Sarkar and Low, "Multilingualism and Popular Culture," 404.

and incomprehensibility in the plot creates suspense and engages readers in critically evaluating language-based prejudices.

Chapter 7, "Code-Switching and Language-Mixing in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace,*" revisits this nineteenth-century novel in light of twenty-first-century understandings of literary translingualism. Tolstoy's extensive use of the French language in a Russian novel puzzled many of his contemporary critics; it has also, until recently, tended to be less visible in translations into other languages. The chapter surveys previous research on the multilingual dimension of *War and Peace* by well-known scholars such as Viktor Vinogradov, Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Uspensky, R. F. Christian, and Gary Saul Morson. Among the explanations they offer for the presence of French in the text are realism, characterization, and *ostranenie*. Applying Formalist principles and Beebee's concept of transmesis, I present a new translingual reading of this canonical novel. The analysis focuses on selected passages in which multiple languages come into play, showing how they draw the reader's attention to language as a medium through depictions of multilingual situations, as well as through metalinguistic commentary.

Chapter 8, "Reading Between Medieval and Modern: The Case of Eugene Vodolazkin's *Laurus,*" considers a case study in which linguistic hybridity is used to explore sacred functions of language. Set in the fifteenth century, this Russian novel from 2012 paints a compelling picture of a medieval Russian world. Vodolazkin has described it as depicting a saint's life "according to the rules of medieval poetics," yet the narrative explicitly addresses readers living in the twenty-first century.[79] I contextualize my reading with background on the complex language situation of medieval Rus and analyze how the narrative stylizes medieval variants of Russian in ways that enact diglossia. As I will show, Vodolazkin's depictions of the activity of reading, writing, language learning, and translation in medieval times serve to defamiliarize modern reading practices for contemporary readers.

Chapter 9 offers concluding remarks on what the novels discussed in this book reveal about translingual reading in the twenty-first century.

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79   Eugene Vodolazkin, "The New Middle Ages," trans. Lisa C. Hayden, *First Things*, August 2016. https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/08/the-new-middle-ages.

Implied Readers in the Translingual Text: The Case of Olga Grushin's *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*

The turn of the millennium saw the debuts of a new generation of translingual Russian writers born in the 1970s or 1980s in the Soviet Union. These writers emigrated early in life (either as children or young adults) to other countries (primarily Israel, North America, and Western Europe), where they subsequently published literary work in non-native languages. Due to "a variety of historical, geographical, and political reasons," as Wanner observes, "Russia has provided a particularly fertile environment for multilingual writing."[1] Among the prose writers who have received critical acclaim and literary awards for works in English, French, and German are David Bezmozgis, Lena Gorelik, Olga Grjasnowa, Olga Grushin, Michael Idov, Wladimir Kaminer, Andreï Makine, Irina Reyn, Gary Shteyngart, Anya Ulinich, and Lara Vapnyar.[2]

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1   Adrian Wanner, *The Bilingual Muse: Self-Translation among Russian Poets* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 2.

2   For studies on the work of these authors, see Miriam Finkelstein, "From German into Russian and Back: Russian-German Translingual Literature," in *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism*, ed. Steven G. Kellman and Natasha Lvovich (New York: Routledge, 2022), 188–99; Miriam Finkelstein, "Global Transnational Russian Culture: Non-Russians Writing Russian Literature," in *Global Russian Cultures*, ed. Kevin M. F. Platt (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019), 312–30; Miriam Finkelstein and Diana Hitzke, "Mehrsprachigkeit in der translingualen russischen und postjugoslawischen Gegenwartslitteratur," *Variations* 22 (2014), 53–65; Yelena Furman, "Hybrid Selves, Hybrid Texts: Embracing the Hyphen in Russian-American Fiction," *Slavic and East European Journal* 55, no. 1 (2011): 19–37; Yelena Furman, "Hybridizing the Canon: Russian-American Writers in Dialogue with Russian Literature," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 58, no. 3 (2016): 205–28; Yelena Furman, "Rewriting Gender: Russian-American Women Writers and the Challenge to Russian Feminity," in *Global Russian Cultures*, ed. Kevin M. F. Platt (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019), 272–89; Amelia Glaser, "Introduction: Russian-American Fiction," *Slavic and East European Journal* 55, no. 1 (2011): 15–18; Yasha Klots, "The Ultimate City: New York in Russian Immigrant Narratives," *Slavic and East European Journal* 55, no. 1 (2011): 38–57; Tintti Klapuri, "Literary St. Petersburg in Contemporary Russian Transnational Writing: Anya Ulinich, Gary Shteyngart, and Zinaida Lindén," *Scando-Slavica* 62, no. 2

As evidenced by the literary production of numerous émigré writers before them, migration can be "a powerful motive for translingualism, for assimilating to and through the language of a new environment."[3] A number of writers from this fourth wave of Russian emigration now reside in North America—a circumstance which has influenced not only their choice of literary language, but also their chosen themes.[4] For example, David Bezmozgis's *Natasha and Other Stories* (2004), Irina Reyn's *What Happened to Anna K* (2008), Gary Shteyngart's *The Russian Debutante's Handbook* (2002), and Lara Vapnyar's *Memoirs of a Muse* (2006) all depict life in Canada or the United States from the perspectives of Russian newcomers. For anglophone readers, this potentially has the effect of bringing—as migrant literature often does—"a certain strangeness to something familiar."[5]

Among the contemporary writers for whom Russian is a native language and English an acquired one is Olga Grushin, whose debut novel *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* (2005), is the focus of this chapter. Born in Moscow in 1971, Grushin spent part of her childhood in Prague, where her father, the prominent sociologist Boris Grushin, wrote for an international journal during the years 1977–1981. From the age of thirteen, Grushin attended Moscow School Number 45, which had a focus on the English language and exposed Grushin to works of Western literature not typically taught in Soviet schools. Upon graduation, she followed in the footsteps of several of her relatives by enrolling, in 1988, in Moscow State University's Department of Journalism. After one year of study there, she accepted a scholarship to Emory University, where she received a bachelor's degree in 1993.[6] Grushin continues to reside in the United States. In a public

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(2016): 235–48; Karen L. Ryan, "Forging a Transcultural Identity as a Russian-American Writer," in *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, ed. Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Julie Hansen, and Carmen Zamorano Llena (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 27–46; Adrian Wanner, *Out of Russia: Fictions of a New Translingual Diaspora* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011); and Kristen Welsh, "Between the Canvas and the Printed Page: Nabokovian Intertexts and Olga Grushin's Soviet Artist-Hero," *Slavic and East European Journal* 55, no. 1 (2011): 75–92.

3   Kellman, "Preface," xii.

4   For a summary of the four waves of Russian émigré writers during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, see Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 4–5.

5   Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, *Mapping World Literature: International Canonization and Transnational Literatures* (London: Continuum, 2008), 99.

6   Olga Grushin, "Pisatel' Ol'ga Grushina: 'Ia vybirala mezhdu prestizhem i prednaznacheniem,'" interview by Galia Galkina, *Izvestiia*, May 17, 2006, https://iz.ru/news/313724.

talk given at the Library of Congress National Book Festival in 2010, Grushin recounts that she had always planned to become a writer, and that, around the age of twenty-three, she made a conscious decision to switch to English as her literary language in the hope of being published in the United States.[7] After publishing several short stories in various journals, Grushin debuted as a novelist with *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* and has subsequently published three other novels: *The Line* (2010, U.K. edition *The Concert Ticket*), *Forty Rooms* (2016), and *The Charmed Wife* (2021).

Grushin's early work stands out from the "strong immigrant sensibilities" of much of contemporary Russian anglophone fiction in that it is set in the Soviet Union.[8] If it is true that migrant writers "give a voice to local material,"[9] Grushin can be said to do the reverse for anglophone readers, giving an English-language voice to a Russian setting and subject matter. This becomes clear already in the novel's opening pages, which depict how the fifty-six-year-old protagonist, Anatoly Pavlovich Sukhanov, rides in a Volga car to a retrospective exhibition in honor of his father-in-law, the celebrated socialist realist painter Pyotr Alekseevich Malinin. The time is August 1985, five months after Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party. While Gorbachev is never mentioned by name, the narrative notes that "certain nebulous changes had been transpiring ever since the ascension of the new Party leader in March."[10] These first changes in late-Soviet society are keenly felt by Sukhanov, who, as editor-in-chief of "the country's leading art magazine,"[11] finds it difficult to adapt to new expectations of journalistic openness. At the same time, he is increasingly

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7   Library of Congress, "Olga Grushin: 2010 National Book Festival," September 25, 2010, Video, 4:44 to 5:12, https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-5020.

8   Furman, "Hybrid Selves, Hybrid Texts," 20. Furman argues that contemporary Russian-American fiction is "unified by a central concern with the immigrant experience(s) and the hybrid cultural and linguistic selves that this experience engenders," noting, at the same time, the exception of Grushin, whose work she describes as "a closely related yet nevertheless separate instance of Russian-American writing" (20, 22). Similarly, Welsh writes, "Situating Grushin within contemporary Russian-American fiction presents challenges, for her biography and literary work locate her outside the prevailing typology," which she identifies as a continuation of the tradition of pseudo-autobiography. Welsh, "Between the Canvas and the Printed Page," 75.

9   Thomsen, *Mapping World Literature: International Canonization and Transnational Literatures*, 61.

10   Olga Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* (New York Putnam, 2005), 66.

11   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 10.

beset by memories of his childhood in Stalinist Russia and his youth during the subsequent Thaw under Nikita Khrushchev.

Although Grushin wrote *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* in American English,[12] the text contains numerous Russian words and cultural allusions. At first glance, the novel might be mistaken for an English translation from Russian, in which a variety of translation strategies appear to have been applied, ranging from foreignization to domestication, to use Lawrence Venuti's terms.[13] Some proper nouns, such as *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, are translated into English. Other expressions, such as the toast "*Vashe zdorovie!*"[14], the greeting "*Dobryi vecher!*"[15], and food names—such as *tvorog*,[16] *vareniki*[17], and *vobla*[18]—are transliterated and sometimes further marked with italics. Sometimes a direct translation or explanation is given;[19] sometimes the meaning is suggested by context, as in the "*vareniki* with cherries" served for supper.[20] In other cases, the meaning of Russian words remains less transparent to the non-russophone reader. *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* also draws upon a Russian cultural subtext through numerous allusions to Russian art, literature, music, and popular culture. One Russian critic concludes that "the underlying language in which this novel is written is not English, but Russian."[21]

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12 Sergei Moskalev, "Ol'ga Grushina: 'Ia schitaiu sebia russkoi pisatel'nitsei,'" *Golos Ameriki*, December 30, 2006: para. 17–20. https://www.golosameriki.com/a/a-33-2006-12-30-voa4/619487.html.

13 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

14 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 5.

15 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 79.

16 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 45.

17 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 54.

18 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 252, 259.

19 For example, the first occurrence of the word *vobla* (Caspian roach) is immediately followed by the English description "salty dried fish" (252).

20 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 54. *Vareniki* denotes a kind of dumpling. Although the word *tvorog* stands without explanation in the phrase "the familiar smells of shortbread cookies and *tvorog*," the placement of the Russian word in a conjunctive phrase with "shortbread cookies," taken together with the setting of a kitchen, suggests to the non-initiated reader that *tvorog* (a kind of curd cheese) is something that is eaten (45).

21 Borokhovich, "Rev. of *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*." Grushin by contrast, states in an interview that although she "wanted the novel to convey a very Russian sensibility," its "verbal underpinnings [. . .] — wordplays, double meanings, alliterations, and so on—tend to be

The presence of Russian elements in Grushin's anglophone text raises interesting questions with regard to the reading process. How might the recognition of Russian words and cultural allusions contribute to an interpretation of the text? And how might anglophone readers unable to decode these elements make sense of the novel? Reader-response theory offers a useful approach to these questions with its view of the reading process as a two-way transaction between reader and text, through which meaning is created.[22] Let us now analyze the effects of Russian elements in *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, focusing on wordplay, proper names, and cultural allusions. I will propose two potential readings of the novel, the first of which posits a hypothetical bilingual reader, the second of which posits a hypothetical anglophone reader unfamiliar with (at least some of) the Russian words and cultural allusions that appear in the novel.

Reader-Response Theory and Translingual Texts

Writers like Grushin, who wrote her earliest stories in Russian and subsequently adopted English as her literary language, are often categorized as bilingual authors. Yet it would be inaccurate to apply the term bilingual to Grushin's novel *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*. Written and published for an anglophone readership, the novel employs Russian on the level of individual words and phrases, but not in longer passages, as is the case with, for example, Tolstoy's use of French in *War and Peace*, at which we will take a closer look in Chapter 7.

Grutman makes the following distinction between bilingual authors and bilingual texts: "There is indeed an appreciable difference between a writer who creates separate works each in a different language and one who uses the stylistic resources of foreign speech in his predominantly monolingual texts. A *bilingual author* has an audience in every single one of the languages in which he chooses to write. [. . .] *A text,* however, can only be bilingual if it makes a *relevant use* of

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rooted in English, and would not easily translate into Russian." Olga Grushin, "10 Questions with Olga Grushin," para. 3, accessed September 6, 2023, http://www.politics-prose. com/10-questions/olga-grushin. Several works by other Russian anglophone authors utilize Russian words, but as Yasha Klots point out, they serve here as "markers of a peculiar idiolect which reflects the Runglish spoken in New York's Russian communities," in which these narratives are set. Klots, "The Ultimate City," 55.

22   Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994).

other languages."[23] Kellman notes that translingual texts "usually reveal traces of their authors' other tongues, but most are written entirely in one language or another."[24] The term translingualism thus signifies not only the presence of two languages, but also movement between and beyond them. This idea is reflected in Grushin's own statement, in an interview, that she wanted to write a "Russian novel in English words."[25]

How, then, should we conceive of readers of a translingual text such as *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*? Reader-oriented critics make a distinction between real readers and a hypothetical reader implied by the text. Iser describes this theoretical construct as "a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him."[26] Iser's concept of the implied reader does not refer specifically to the linguistic context of the text. Rather, he speaks more generally of the "repertoire of the text," defined as an external frame of reference comprised of literary allusions, cultural allusions, and social norms upon which the text draws: "The repertoire consists of all the familiar territory within the text. This may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged."[27] Other critics have focused more on how readers' interpretive activity is influenced by their own historical, social, and theoretical contexts. Fish includes linguistic competency in his list of the three characteristics of the "informed reader,"[28] but less attention has been given to the ways in which readers' linguistic context(s) might influence their reception of texts.

In the following analysis, I apply Iser's concepts of the implied reader and the repertoire of the text in order to explore how readers might make sense of *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*. I will distinguish between two categories of hypothetical reader: the monolingual anglophone reader, on the one hand, and the

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23   Rainier Grutman, "Mono versus Stereo: Bilingualism's Double Face," *Visible Language* 27, no. 1–2 (1993): 209.

24   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 21.

25   Moskalev, "Ol'ga Grushina," para. 20.

26   Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 34.

27   Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 69.

28   The other two characteristics are "knowledge [...] of lexical sets, collocation probabilities, idioms, professional and other dialects, etc." and "*literary* competence." Stanley E. Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralismv*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 86–87.

bilingual reader with competency in Russian and an ability to recognize Russian cultural allusions, on the other.[29] I hold that both of these hypothetical readers are implied by the novel, and that these different starting points potentially result in interpretations which amplify the motifs and themes in the novel, although they do this in different ways. As we will see, the recognition of the past as well as disorientation in a changing present emerge as salient themes.

Wordplay in the Novel

Wordplay is defined succinctly by Delabastita as "the various *textual* phenomena in which *structural features* of the language(s) are exploited in order to bring about a *communicatively significant confrontation* of two (or more) linguistic structures with *more or less similar forms* and *more or less different meanings* [original italics]."[30] The effects of wordplay can be brought about by various means: "homonymy (identical sounds and spelling), homophony (identical sounds but different spellings), homography (different sounds but identical spelling), and paronymy (there are slight differences in both spelling and sound)."[31] By adding "s" in parentheses to "language" in the above definition, Delabastita suggests the possibility of multilingual wordplay in addition to wordplay within one and the same linguistic system, noting that "many punsters have been known to combine linguistic material from two or even more languages."[32] Delabastita adds two dimensions to his typology of wordplay in Western languages, specifying that "the two formally similar linguistic structures may clash associatively by being co-present in the same portion of text (vertical wordplay), or they may be in a relation of contiguity, occurring one after another in the text (horizontal wordplay)."[33]

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29 It should be noted that linguistic competency and the ability to recognize cultural allusions do not necessarily go hand in hand. A reader may possess native-level competency in Russian yet be unable to decode allusions to Russian culture. The inverse is also possible: a reader without knowledge of the Russian language may still be able to recognize cultural allusions.

30 Dirk Delabastita, "Introduction," in "Wordplay and Translation," ed. Dirk Delabastita, special issue, *The Translator* 2, no. 2 (1996), 128.

31 Delabastita, "Introduction," 128.

32 Delabastita, "Introduction," 131.

33 Delabastita, "Introduction," 128. For a more extensive definition of wordplay, see Dirk Delabastita, *There's a Double Tongue: An Investigation into the Translation of Shakespeare's Wordplay with Special Reference to* Hamlet (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 55–151.

The Dream Life of Sukhanov contains both wordplay that draws exclusively upon one language (English or Russian), and multilingual wordplay, which draws upon both English and Russian for its effect. In an interview, Grushin points out an example of English wordplay that occurs in a description of how Sukhanov compromised his artistic ambitions during the Stalinist period.[34] The wordplay is anagrammatic, based on similarity between the words "art" and "craft": "he had acquired a habit of adjusting to his surroundings with unquestioning acquiescence, and ceased to distinguish between art and craft—a difference of only two letters, after all."[35] In another passage, Sukhanov takes pleasure in the wordplay on the last name of the artist Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian verb "to fly":

> Once, in his reading, [Sukhanov] had chanced across a curious tidbit about Vladimir Tatlin, an avant-garde artist who in middle age had become obsessed with flight and had spent years building models, and whose flying glider had been exhibited in 1932 [. . .] Sukhanov had carried that irrelevant scrap of information with him for many years, probably because the glider's name, *Letatlin*, had amused him with its ingenious merger of inventor and invention, of Tatlin and *letat'*, "to fly."[36]

Other instances of monolingual wordplay in the novel require more interpretive work on the part of the reader. In an early passage, Sukhanov thinks of himself as "a man who is himself something of a weight in the art world, pun most certainly intended."[37] The effect of puns generally derives from the simultaneous presence of multiple and disparate meanings.[38] In this example, however, the text indicates the presence of a pun, but its referends are not immediately apparent. Instead, the realization of the pun is deferred by the dispersal of multiple meanings over the course of several pages. The subsequent paragraph states that Sukhanov is editor-in-chief of the journal *Art of the World*, creating a context for the pun on the phrase "art world." A further antanaclastic (homographic) pun on "weight" is created eight pages later, in the next chapter, where Sukhanov's old friend Lev Belkin notes that Sukhanov has "[g]ained weight, become all

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34   Grushin, "10 Questions with Olga Grushin," para. 3.

35   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 162.

36   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 51.

37   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 10.

38   Derek Attridge, "Unpacking the Portmanteau, or Who's Afraid of *Finnegans Wake*?," in *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*, ed. Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 144.

solid."[39] Puns typically link two disparate contexts, but the phrase "a weight in the art world" contains a triple-context pun, the completion of which is delayed by the separation of the pun phrase from its referends.[40] Sukhanov is associated with weight both figuratively, signifying his professional status, and literally, indicating that he has grown heavier.

Reversal of word order in the novel—another kind of anagrammatic word-play—also generates puns. For example, a rearrangement of the word order in the name of Sukhanov's journal, *Art of the World,* renders *The World of Art*, the title of a Russian art journal published in St. Petersburg between 1898 and 1904 that espoused art for art's sake. For the initiated reader, the allusion to the *fin de siècle* journal comprises an ironic commentary on Sukhanov's highly formulaic style of socialist realist art criticism, as described in the following extended metaphor:

> He prepared each glossy, pleasantly substantial issue of *Art of the World* according to the same simple yet unfailing recipe: Take a doughy theo-retical discourse on the methods and principles of Revolutionary art, stuff it with two or three well-seasoned essays portraying Repin and Fedotov as precursors of socialist realism and Levitan as an enemy of tsarism, mix in a sugarcoated biography of a famous Soviet master in the vein of Malinin and a spicy discovery of some unjustly ignored genius of the Italian Renaissance who was vilely persecuted by the Church, whisk in, for a bit of exotic flavor, an interview with this or that diamond-in-the-rough from a remote Asian republic (whose artistic development was clearly born of the wonders of Soviet educa-tion), and finally, generously pepper the whole with quotations from Marx and Lenin.[41]

Knowledge of Russian is not required to perceive the wordplay on the names of the journals.[42] However, the pun is more striking when translated into Rus-sian, in which both titles consist of only two nouns, due to the genitive case and

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39   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 18.

40   I apply here James Brown's definition of double- and triple-context puns. James Brown, "Eight Types of Puns," *PMLA* 71, no. 1 (1956): 14–26.

41   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 65.

42   Nor is knowledge of English required to recognize this wordplay. As Frederick Ahl notes, "To grasp the presence of an anagram, we need not necessarily understand the language—only the writing system." Frederick Ahl, "Ars Est Caelare Artem (Art in Puns and Anagrams Engraved)," in *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*, ed. Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Black-well, 1988), 26.

absence of articles. Thus, the two titles are nearly mirror images of one another: the fictional *Art of the World* is *Iskusstvo mira* in Russian, while *The World of Art* is *Mir iskusstva*. Only one vowel sound distinguishes them phonetically, and only two letters distinguish the titles orthographically. This is the same number of letters that distinguish "art" from "craft" in the wordplay discussed above, and a parallel can be drawn between the two puns: the turn-of-the-century journal *The World of Art* embodied the principle of art for art's sake, while Sukhanov approaches his work as editor of *Art of the World* as a craft. In terms of content and ideology, the two publications could not be further apart. The near mirror image created by the reversal of word order in the journal's title contributes to a leitmotif of reflection in the novel, which contains many descriptions of mirrors and other reflective surfaces such as glass and water. As we will see, the reversal of word order occurs elsewhere in the novel, as well.

As with the triple-context pun on the phrase "weight in the art world," there is a delay in the completion of the pun on the journal titles. The name of Sukhanov's journal is first mentioned on page 10 of the novel. While readers familiar with the Russian cultural context may pick up on the similarity with the earlier, real-life publication's title, the wordplay is not explicitly revealed until much later in the novel, when Sukhanov recalls having seen an issue of the journal *The World of Art* as a child,[43] and again when he reads an article that mentions "the influential World of Art movement."[44] (Later in this chapter, I will analyze a translingual pun on the title of the real-life Soviet magazine *Ogonyok*.)

Another example of monolingual wordplay shows how knowledge of the Russian cultural context on the part of the reader facilitates recognition of punning in Grushin's novel. The venue of the retrospective exhibition, the Moscow Manège exhibition hall, is first mentioned only briefly and without explanation on page 3, but a reader familiar with the history of Moscow might be aware of the building's original purpose as a riding academy, still indicated by its name. A pun which draws upon this fact occurs on the subsequent page, where Sukhanov involuntarily recalls a past visit to the same place: "He had not been here for a while—in fact, not since . . . well, no need to be exact, he thought hastily, *reining in his memory* with the chilling sensation of the near-slip [my italics]."[45] Here, the Freudian metaphor of a slip for the return of a repressed memory is linked through the pun to the former presence of horses in the Manège.

43   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 93.

44   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 172.

45   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 4.

This pun is made explicit in the second chapter, in a conversation between Sukhanov and Belkin, who states, "You used to say the Manège was better as a riding academy, that its architecture was suited for horses, not paintings."[46] The significance of the Manège in Sukhanov and Belkin's shared past is elaborated on later in the novel, when Sukhanov recalls how their paintings were briefly exhibited there, only to be condemned by Khrushchev as "amoral and anti-Soviet."[47] This event, at which Sukhanov's artistic aspirations could be said to have been harshly "reined in" by the Soviet leader, marks a turning point in his life. He subsequently acquiesces to the demands of the state, suppressing memories of his past as a nonconformist painter in exchange for a comfortable life as a member of the Soviet nomenklatura. The metaphor of reins for control also occurs in the description of Sukhanov assuming "the reins" of the journal.[48] The repeated mention of rain, which begins to fall while Sukhanov is at the Manège and intensifies during his conversation with Belkin, creates a homophonic pun on *rein*.[49] This addition of a third context for the pun serves to emphasize the chain of associated ideas.

An extended metaphor describing Sukhanov's car ride to his dacha creates a pun with a metafictional aspect, drawing attention to play with language. Sukhanov—who, as an editor, works with the written word—perceives the landscape outside his window in terms of the components of a sentence:

> as Moscow slid back faster and faster, the spaces between the buildings widened until precipitately, without so much as a *comma*, they changed into fields, *bracketed* by fire-tipped rowan trees and *punctuated* here and there by the *exclamation point* of a leaning bell tower or an *ellipsis* of dilapidated log houses—and Sukhanov envisioned the whole drive as one endless, unconstructed, rambling *sentence*, and thinking of Nina, of the girl she had been once, of the woman she was

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46   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 20.

47   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 291. This part of the plot alludes to an actual incident at the Manège in November 1962, when Khrushchev became enraged by an exhibit of experimental art and publicly insulted the artists. The latter had never enjoyed official Party approval and the invitation to exhibit their work at the Manège turned out to be a provocation set up by conservative Party officials who disliked the more open cultural policy of the Thaw. William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (London: Free Press, 2003), 588–90.

48   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 66.

49   The equine leitmotif also appears in a dream Sukhanov has the night after the opening, in which Belkin wears livery at a dinner party with horses. Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 38–39.

now, was barely able to follow all of its *clauses*, until, veering from yet
another unpaved turn in the local road, they arrived quite suddenly at
the long-sought *period* of his country home [my italics].[50]

The metaphor of an "unstructured, rambling sentence" within a sentence that
is itself rambling reminds the reader of the textual material of the narrative. A
parallel is also created between the forward movement of the protagonist and
the reading process: the reader reaches the end of the sentence just as Sukhanov
reaches his dacha.

Translingual Wordplay

The examples of wordplay discussed above are all monolingual, comprised of
either English or Russian words without any mixing of the two. The novel con-
tains considerably more translingual puns. Several of these are not explained in
the text and thus require comprehension of both English and Russian in order to
be actualized by the reader. As James Brown notes, a necessary condition, on the
part of the reader, for the realization of the pun is "knowledge of multiple and
disparate meanings for the pun word." It follows that "readers lacking certain lex-
ical experience will inevitably miss certain puns."[51] It is therefore interesting to
consider possible effects of Grushin's translingual puns on readings of the novel,
depending on whether the reader has knowledge of both languages involved.

Puns can have a disturbing effect on the reader. As Jonathan Culler
observes, they "present the disquieting spectacle of a functioning of language
where boundaries—between sounds, between sound and letter, between mean-
ings—count for less than one might imagine and where supposedly discrete
meanings threaten to sink into fluid subterranean signifieds too undefinable to
call concepts."[52] Bogel sees puns as a particularly clear example of something
that occurs in all encounters with language:

Although even the semantic import of a word or phrase is not
something we apprehend immediately, it often seems as though we
do because processing the range of a word's dictionary meanings is

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50   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 225.

51   Brown, "Eight Types of Puns," 15.

52   Jonathan Culler, "The Call of the Phoneme: Introduction," in *On Puns: The Foundation of
      Letters*, ed. Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 3.

extremely rapid and conventional—in everyday life, and even in a variety of literary contexts. There are, of course, numerous moments in which the semantic dimension withholds itself and provides a kind of double take, an initial apprehension of the unexceptional followed by a recognition that there is more there than meets the eye. Such withholding frequently occurs through the agency of the pun.[53]

Translingual puns in particular can open up a metalinguistic pespective because they transcend the semantic boundaries of not only individual utterances but also languages, reminding the reader that language is always contextual and contingent. Translingual puns propel readers to move between languages and become co-creators of wordplay. In a discussion of the challenges of translating wordplay, Delabastita emphasizes the co-creating role of the reader:

> I believe one must come to the conclusion that puns are not necessarily given once and for all. Their recognition and appreciation largely depend on the reading habits of the text user, which are in their turn closely linked to genre conventions and conceptions of language. That this definitely lends a more fluid and historically variable character to what we call the "original" or the "source text" (with the familiar look of these words reassuring us of the fixed and permanent identity we ascribe to it) is a consequence that merits further contemplation.[54]

Hokenson and Munson argue that the simultaneous deployment of mutiple languages in wordplay creates a "stereoscopic" effect that sharpens the reader's awareness of language itself.

> Colingual puns and wordplay are like a microstep into the space between languages, the liminal no-man's-land where sounds and concepts, punned signs and signifieds collide in a way that is immensely difficult to describe. Colingual wordplay propels us into that space. It does not just traverse the space between languages, but it inhabits and animates it as the stereoscopic reading field.[55]

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53   Bogel, *New Formalist Criticism*, 168.

54   Delabastita, "Introduction," 132.

55   Hokenson and Munson, *The Bilingual Text*, 8.

Grushin is not the first Russian novelist writing in English to pun translingually—the anglophone novels by Nabokov contain numerous examples of multilingual wordplay. In interviews Grushin has named Nabokov as one of her favorite writers,[56] and her novel pays homage to him through wordplay on the Russian word for butterfly. Belkin wears "an absurd maroon bow tie," and Sukhanov, who is embarrassed to be seen with his former friend, overhears a passer-by pronounce the Russian word *babochka*, which can have two different meanings: butterfly and bow tie.[57] Unable to discern the context of this utterance and thereby determine the meaning of the word, he tries "to convince himself she was discussing lepidoptery rather than Belkin's unfortunate neck decoration."[58] A double allusion to Nabokov is embedded in this passage: first, two languages interact in a manner reminiscent of Nabokov's fiction; secondly, one of the meanings generated by the wordplay points to the scientific study of butterflies and moths, to which Nabokov contributed with descriptions of several species and genera.[59] This passage makes the pun on *babochka* explicit by stating the two meanings of the word, while the intertextual allusion to Nabokov remains implicit. The pun is echoed later in the narrative, when Sukhanov thinks of his designer neckties purchased on trips abroad as "his lovely silk specimens collected like rare butterflies on his infrequent European sojourns."[60]As in many of Nabokov's literary works, images of butterflies and myths comprise a leitmotif in Grushin's novel.[61]

The novel contains an example of visual wordplay that turns on similarities between the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. Sukhanov is momentarily confused while leaving the Moscow metro: "On the way out, mildly befuddled,

56   Olga Grushin, "Russko-amerikanskii pisatel' Ol'ga Grushina," interview by El'vira Bariakina, Spravochnik Pisatelia, accessed September 6, 2023, http://avtoram.com/russko-amerikanskij-pisatel-olga-g/.

57   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 19.

58   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 20.

59   On Nabokov's contribution to lepidoptery, see: Kurt Johnson and Steve Coates, *Nabokov's Blues: The Scientific Odyssey of a Literary Genius* (Cambridge, MA: Zoland, 1999). On lepidopterological influences on Nabokov's literary production, see: Brian Boyd, "Nabokov, Literature, Lepidoptera," in *Nabokov's Butterflies: Unpublished and Collected Writings*, ed. Brian Boyd and Robert Michael Pyle (Boston: Beacon, 2000), 1–31.

60   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 74.

61   For detailed analyses of intertextuality with Nabokov in *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, see: Julie Hansen, "The Pleasure of Translingual Punning: Homage to Nabokov in Olga Grushin's *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*," in *Living through Literature: Essays in Memory of Omry Ronen*, ed. Julie Hansen, Karen Evans-Romaine, and Herbert Eagle (Uppsala: Acta Upsaliensis Universitatis, 2019), 217–39; and Welsh, "Between the Canvas and the Printed Page," 75–92.

he attempted to exit through a glass door that read, in mirrorlike inversion, 'ƎƆИАЯTИƎ.'"[62] Because Sukhanov tries to leave through the wrong door, he reads the entrance sign backwards. The English word "ENTRANCE" is reversed on the page, making five of the eight capital letters (И, А, Я, Т, and again И) appear identical to Cyrillic letters. The reversed typography impedes the reader's decoding of the word, pushing the reader into "the space between languages, the liminal no-man's-land" (to use Hokenson and Munson's words from the quote above) between two different scripts. This visual wordplay is thus an example of the literary device identified by Shklovsky as *ostranenie* (making strange or defamiliarization). Its effect elicits in the reader the same sense of disorientation experienced by the protagonist, who tries to leave the metro station through the wrong door, and who, on a metaphorical level, is also finding it increasingly difficult to orient himself within his daily life. This confusion (along with the novel's leitmotif of mirroring) is expressed elsewhere in Sukhanov's perception of "his past and present endlessly reflecting off each other in a multiplying infinity of mirrors."[63]

The title of another Soviet-era magazine, given in transliteration, creates a translingual pun: "[Sukhanov] finally managed to start a good fire, fed by a three-year-old issue of *Ogonyok*."[64] This refers to a popular illustrated weekly that came to serve as a forum for change during the glasnost period. The pun derives from the etymology of the magazine's name as the diminutive from *ogon'*, meaning "fire." Thus, Sukhanov is "feeding fire with fire," and from the reader's post-Soviet perspective, there is irony in his burning of a magazine that later became associated with glasnost—the first signs of which Sukhanov resists as editor of *Art of the World*. The image of fire also figures as a leitmotif in the novel, appearing in a painting by Malinin entitled *Firebird* (the mythical phoenix-like bird, called *zhar-ptitsa*, of Russian folklore),[65] in descriptions of works by the Russian avant-garde painters Malevich, Filonov, Kandinsky, and Chagall,[66] and

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62   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 163–64.

63   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 173.

64   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 228. After Gorbachev introduced the reform policy of glasnost in his speech at the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1986, the circulation of *Ogonyok*, which served as a channel for the new openness, increased from "a few hundred thousand [prior to the reforms] to four million" by 1990. Vitaly Korotich, introduction to *Small Fires: Letters from the Soviet People to* Ogonyok *Magazine 1987–1990*, ed. Christopher Cerf and Marina Albee (New York: Summit Books, 1990), 13.

65   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 7.

66   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 267–68.

in reference to Sukhanov's own talent as a young artist: "he had so much fire, so much power in him."[67] The image of fire appears in Sukhanov's memory of his family "gathered in the evening around a fire on a deserted beach, listening to the breathing of the sea and the hissing of mussels in the flames."[68] There are further images of small fires—echoing the diminutive form in the magazine name *Ogonyok*—in candle flames and lit cigarettes. When Sukhanov's mentally disturbed neighbor lights small pieces of newspaper and drops them from his balcony, Sukhanov catches sight of the words "change," "crucial," and "youth" in the newsprint—all of which were associated with the discourse of glasnost.[69] The pun on the magazine title, together with the leitmotif of fire, thus amplifies the novel's theme of change during the late Soviet period.

A further passage illustrates how translingual wordplay underscores this theme. At the opening of the retrospective exhibition, Sukhanov is approached by a journalism student in a yellow dress, who wishes to interview him about his appraisal of Malinin's painting, which she calls "fake" and "trite."[70] Sukhanov's observation that her "raspberry-colored nail polish was peeling" creates a pun on Malinin's name, derived from the Russian word *malina*, meaning raspberry.[71] The raspberry-colored nail polish—a kind of paint—can thus be read as a metonym for Malinin's paintings, and the description of peeling nail polish as representing the student's attempt to chip away at the official view of Malinin's art. Although glasnost is never mentioned explicitly in the novel, it is alluded to by the student's declaration, echoing Bob Dylan's lyric, "I don't care who hears me [. . .] The times are changing."[72] This "girl in a yellow dress" appears as a leitmotif throughout the novel, and although Sukhanov does not recognize the journalism student, the reader who does is thereby reminded of the effects of glasnost with which she is associated.

Raspberries also appear in Sukhanov's memory of a walk with his wife Nina, whose maiden name is Malinina, during which she "had surreptitiously picked moist, sweet raspberries off bushes spilling over low fences."[73] To Sukhanov, this

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67   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 343.

68   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 353–54.

69   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 144.

70   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 14.

71   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 13.

72   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 15. Bob Dylan, "The Times They Are A-Changin'," track 1 on *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, Columbia Records, 1964, LP.

73   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 238.

memory represents a happy period that he feels is now lost, together with his marriage and life of "safety, constancy, tranquillity" as a Soviet apparatchik.[74] The image of raspberries thus echoes the association, established in the passage with the journalism student, between the color of raspberries and the loss of past certainties.

The Significance of Names

The novel's characters all bear Russian names, many of which appear in various forms. The eponymous protagonist is referred to variously by his last name Sukhanov, his first name Anatoly, first name and patronymic Anatoly Pavlovich, "Anatoly Palych" (using a colloquial contracted form of the patronymic),[75] and the diminutive nicknames "Tolya,"[76] "Tolik,"[77] and "Tolenka."[78] Sukhanov's friend Lev Belkin is addressed variously as "Leva,"[79] "Lev Borisovich," and "Levka,"[80] his daughter Ksenya is nicknamed "Ksiushka,"[81] and her boyfriend Boris is nicknamed "Borya."[82] Many of these names can be difficult to pronounce for the non-Russian speaker, and the variety of forms potentially makes it difficult for readers unfamiliar with the variants of Russian names to keep track of the gallery of characters—a difficulty which mirrors the protagonist's own problems in remembering names, for which he is reproached by his wife Nina.[83] Sukhanov's reaction to an unnamed novel—"the words meant nothing, all the characters seemed to have the same name"—may be mirrored in readers' reactions to the Russian words and names that appear in Grushin's novel.[84]

Proper names often contain wordplay in Grushin's fiction. A good illustration of this is found in her short story "Spiders Did It," in which a reclusive

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74   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 316.

75   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 154.

76   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 334.

77   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 327.

78   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 320.

79   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 23.

80   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 195.

81   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 189.

82   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 200.

83   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 34–35.

84   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 58.

man is found dead from a mysterious cause, "enveloped in cobwebs from head to toe."[85] "Spiders Did It" can be read as a detective story in which clues to the crime are embedded in the character names, which taken together create translingual puns. The name of the deceased is "Mr. Mukha," and the intradiegetic police report states that he was "once married to C. B. Webbs." While the anglophone reader is able to perceive the pun on "cobwebs" in the latter name, a pun created by the former requires knowledge of Russian, in which *mukha* means "fly." The narrator of the police report does not draw this connection; rather, the report offers a convoluted hypothesis that Mr. Mukha was killed by spiders in revenge for having disturbed them with the incessant ringing of his alarm clocks.

Two further puns on names in "Spiders Did It" occur in connection with the police report. The speculation contained in the report, attributed to the secretary "Mrs. Agaric," is dismissed by a police lieutenant named "Aaron Redips," whose signature "strangely resembled a cobweb." Although the secretary's name denotes a mushroom, its collocation with "fly" in "fly agaric"—the common name of the mushroom species Amanita muscaria (*mukhomor* in Russian)— creates a link by association to the word "fly." The police lieutenant's first name resembles the zoological term for spiders, "Araneae," which appears earlier in the same paragraph, and his last name spells "spider" in reverse. While the puns in the names "C. B. Webbs" and "Aaron Redips" are accessible to the anglophone reader, knowledge of Russian is required to decode the pun created by "Mr. Mukha." Without this decoding, the association of "Mrs. Agaric" with "fly" is less apparent. When the meanings of all of the character names are taken into account, an alternative motive to the crime presents itself: the man has been murdered by spiders (or perhaps by his ex-wife C. B. Webbs) because he is a fly, and the involvement of spiders is subsequently covered up by the police lieutenant because he himself is a spider. Knowledge of Russian thus provides the reader with an interpretative key, which also ties in with the title of the story, "Spiders Did It." This short story resembles *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* in its use of proper names to create translingual puns, which in turn offer interpretative possibilities.[86]

In *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, translingual wordplay appears in the name of the assistant editor-in-chief of *Art of the World*, Pugovichkin, who assumes Sukhanov's post when the latter is placed on involuntary leave. The following description of this character draws attention to his name: "his shape as small,

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85   Olga Grushin, "Spiders Did It," *Tampa Review* (Fall/Winter 1998–99): 57.

86   Flies and other insects also appear as a leitmotif in the novel.

rotund, and faintly comical as his name."[87] While the russophone reader is able to make a connection between the name and the Russian word *pugovitsa*, meaning button, the "comical" nature of the name is not specified for the anglophone reader. Buttons figure elsewhere in the novel as a leitmotif, connecting the temporal planes of Sukhanov's past and present. In the following passage, narrated by Sukhanov, the device of *ostranenie* is employed: "For some time I studied an object lying on Lev's open palm. It was round and black and shiny, and had four small holes in it; a frayed bit of thread was sticking out of a lower hole. It looked odd, like some puzzling artifact of an ancient, forgotten civilization."[88] The memory of this button, which Belkin tears from Sukhanov's coat after Khrushchev's closing of their show at the Manège, is triggered by the sight of another button—its "double" in Sukhanov's present.[89] For readers familiar with *War and Peace*, the torn-off button carries an intertextual allusion, recalling the scene in which Pierre confronts Anatole for attempting to seduce Natasha. Pierre shakes Anatole by the collar of his uniform, ripping out a button in the process. The detail of the torn-off button is mentioned twice in this chapter of *War and Peace*.[90]

Other suggestive names in the novel include that of Sukhanov's distant cousin, Fyodor Dalevich, who unexpectedly turns up on Sukhanov's doorstep as he struggles to write an article on the surrealist painter Salvador Dalí. An association between Dalevich and Dalí, beyond the identical first syllable of their last names, is thus established.[91] Reversal of Dalevich's full name occurs when his article on Chagall is published, against Sukhanov's editorial judgement, in *Art of the World* under the pseudonym D. M. Fyodorov. Belkin bears the same last name as the fictional compiler of the short story collection *Povesti Belkina* (*The Belkin Tales*, 1830) by Alexander Pushkin. Another reference to Pushkin occurs in a line of poetry, "*Chisteishei prelesti chisteishii obrazets,*" which is first rendered in transliteration and then translated in the subsequent sentence: "The purest

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87   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 154–55.

88   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 291.

89   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 299.

90   L. N. Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, vol. 1 (Moscow: AST, 2018), 943–47; Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Knopf, 2007), 592–94.

91   The name Dalevich further recalls both the avant-garde Russian painter Kazimir Malevich and the nineteenth-century Russian lexicographer Vladimir Dal. As the novel later points out, Dalevich also bears the first name and patronymic of Dostoevsky (Fyodor Mikhailovich). Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 310.

image of the purest charm."[92] The line is attributed to Pushkin, but the source—his poem "Madonna" from 1830—is not revealed directly. Rather, the second appearance of this quotation is followed, one page later, by the use of the word "Madonna" in a strikingly different context—that of a vision described as a "surrealist atrocity—a pale Madonna rolling in a trough with swine."[93] For readers able to identify the source of Pushkin's line, the appearance of the title word "Madonna," separate from the poem and in another context, can serve as an illustration of surrealist free association central to Sukhanov's artistic style before he is co-opted by the political system. A further reference to Pushkin occurs twice, when Sukhanov hums "the duel aria from *Evgeny Onegin*," Tchaikovsky's opera based on Pushkin's verse novel.[94] In both instances, this occurs immediately after Sukhanov has attempted to dismiss the memory of his former best friend. The duel aria becomes associated in this way with the rivalry between the two friends for Nina's affections, as well as their later disagreement over Sukhanov's decision to conform to ideological requirements. His seemingly involuntary humming of the aria can also be seen to illustrate the Freudian idea of the return of repressed memory. References to Pushkin thus comprise a leitmotif in the narrative, highlighting the associative properties of memory and reminding both the protagonist and the reader of Sukhanov's repressed past.

Two passages that discuss character names recall a passage from Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in which Pierre inquires about the name of the village ahead. At this point in the plot, the historical Battle of Borodino has not yet taken place, and thus the characters (unlike the reader) are not yet familiar with the name of the village. The following dialogue represents this unfamiliarity, making the place name "Borodino" strange to the reader:

> – Позвольте спросить, обратился Пьер к офицеру, – это какая деревня впереди?
>
> – Бурдино или как? – сказал офицер, с вопросом обращаясь к своему товарищу.
>
> – Бородино, – поправляя, отвечал другой.[95]

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92   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 199.

93   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 219.

94   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 34, 63. Pushkin's *Evgeny Onegin* has been translated into English by, among others, Nabokov.

95   L. N. Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, vol. 2 (Moscow: AST, 2018), 260.

"Allow me to ask," Pierre addressed the officer, "what village is that in front of us?"

"Burdino or something?" said the officer, turning to his comrade with the question.

"Borodino," the other replied, correcting him.[96]

In a memory passage in Grushin's novel, Malinin mixes up Belkin's name ("what's his name, Rifkin, Semkin, Bulkin?")[97] and tries to recall the name of "some nice young man named Misha Buryshkin or Broshkin or Burykin who [. . .] promised to go far, very far, at the Ministry of Culture."[98] By 1985, Mikhail Burykin has, as "a top official at the Ministry of Culture," become a well-known name in Sukhanov's world.[99]

Cultural Allusions and the Russian Repertoire of the Text

In addition to the proper names discussed above, Grushin's novel contains numerous allusions to Russian culture. Some of these, such as references to the nineteenth-century Russian writers Pushkin, Gogol, and Chekhov, are potentially recognizable to anglophone readers. Other references that would likely require no explanation to a Russian readership are explicated, as in the following description of a well-known Russian painting: "the highest accomplishment of Russian art—*The Trinity* by Andrei Rublev, the legendary fifteenth-century icon painter who might or might not have existed."[100] However, several references to Soviet-era popular culture, such as a 1930s romance sung by Aleksandr Varlamov, and the late-Soviet rock bands Akvarium and Tsvety, are less accessible to monolingual readers. The name of the band Akvarium appears in English in the following description of graffiti that Sukhanov sees in the elevator of his apartment building: "the doors slid shut, revealing, spread diagonally on the inside, the freshly scratched word 'Aquarium,' the name of some semi-underground band,

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96   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 761.

97   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 297.

98   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 276.

99   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 179.

100   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 103.

he seemed to recall.”[101] The name of Sukhanov’s daughter’s boyfriend, Boris Tumanov, who is an underground singer-songwriter, bears a resemblance to that of Boris Grebenshchikov, the lead singer of Akvarium. The reference to the band Tsvety is less obvious: “Two drunk girls stumbled along, singing over and over, ‘We wish you happiness,’ a line from a popular song.”[102] Translated into Russian, the line is the title of a song by Tsvety from 1982: “My zhelaem schast’ia vam.” While the band’s name is not stated explicitly, it is later echoed in a reference to another kind of music group, “the folk ensemble Samotsvety.”[103]

The novel also contains a number of false references in the form of names and titles that lack a historical referent, but which nevertheless may ring a bell of familiarity for readers with some knowledge of Soviet culture. For example, the fictional perfume name “Krasnyi Oktyabr” recalls the real Soviet brand Krasnaia Moskva.[104] A neighbor to Sukhanov is described as “one of the foremost classics of Soviet literature, the author of the celebrated trilogy *We the Miners*,”[105] and another, Ivan Svechkin, is described as a composer of children’s songs such as “That Happy Day in April When Our Ilyich Was Born.”[106] While neither of these titles exists outside of the fictional narrative, they evoke those of other socialist realist works.

The name of the cake “Ptich’e Moloko,” popular during the Soviet era, is first introduced without translation or explication.[107] Eight pages later it is referenced obliquely in the phrase “the richness of the creamy bird’s-milk dessert crumbling on the plates.”[108] While bilingual readers might relate this phrase to the previous mention of the cake, the monolingual reader is arguably not as likely to draw a connection between the two passages. Thus, the strange-sounding “bird’s-milk dessert” potentially carries a defamiliarizing effect for anglophone readers. At the same time, it offers an interpretative path by creating an association between the bird’s-milk dessert and the pet canary Dalevich gives to Sukhanov’s mother. As Iser states of the reading process, “whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into

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101   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 185.

102   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 28.

103   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 305.

104   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 43.

105   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 70.

106   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 60.

107   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 312.

108   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 320.

play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself."[109] There are many descriptions of birds in the novel, and the bird leitmotif is linked specifically to Dalí and surrealism through the following details: Dalevich's "canary-yellow beard,"[110] a description of a painting of "a man in a bowler hat with a bird in place of his face,"[111] and a mention of Max Ernst's canary.[112] This passage potentially replicates in the mind of the reader the associative properties of surrealist art, as well as the dynamics of Sukhanov's dreams, both of which are central motifs in the novel.

Defamiliarization and Recognition

As the above examples show, translingual wordplay, Russian names, and cultural allusions in *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* offer particular interpretative possibilities to readers who are able to decode them. This ability puts the reader one step ahead of the protagonist in his efforts to make sense of his own past and present. For example, when Nina tells Sukhanov that she is going to the theater—when she is actually going to see Lev Belkin's art show—Sukhanov does not at first suspect the lie, although readers familiar with the Russian context might note that theaters are closed during August, the month in which the novel is set. The earlier description of an old theater program littering the pavement serves as an implicit reminder of this,[113] yet Sukhanov does not make this connection until nearly a hundred pages later.[114]

At times the plot structure recalls that of the detective genre through the interspersion in the narrative of clues which the attentive reader can piece together. In an interview, Grushin characterizes *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* as "a detective story in which the hero has lost himself."[115] The detective genre typically "involves the isolation of clues, the making of deductions from these clues, and the attempt to place the various clues in their rational place in a complete

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109   Iser, "The Reading Process," 216.

110   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 325.

111   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 98. This description fits René Magritte's painting *Man in a Bowler Hat*.

112   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 310.

113   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 122.

114   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 210–11.

115   Moskalev, "Ol'ga Grushina," para. 7.

scheme of cause and effect."[116] Grushin states that Sukhanov "tries to reconstruct himself on the basis of certain details, he seeks answers to various questions about his past, to various mysteries."[117] The text taxes the reader's memory for detail, which is required in order to construct a chronology of Sukhanov's past out of the many flashbacks, as well as to solve smaller mysteries which arise in his present, such as Nina's secretive behavior, his missing neckties, and the origin of a wayward letter. The demands that detection plots make upon readers are, to an extent, intrinsic to all fiction. As Peter Hühn notes, "[t]he continual rearrangement and reinterpretation of clues is [...] the basic method of reading and understanding unfamiliar texts."[118] As in the short story "Spiders Did It," the use of Russian words in *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* provides clues to solving the mysteries presented by the text.

How, then, might readers unable to decode Russian words and cultural allusions make sense of *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*? To borrow Iser's words, what does this novel do to its potential monolingual reader?[119] As Louise M. Rosenblatt notes, "different aesthetic transactions with the same text may also produce different kinds or levels of experience, depending on the nature, state of mind, or past experience of the reader."[120] Ralph Sarkonak and Richard Hodgson delineate a range of possible responses to texts that contain more than one language:

> One can imagine a whole spectrum of responses varying from readers who deliberately skip the foreign words, sentences or passages that upset their reading patterns to more perverse readers who might read only those words, sentences or passages written in the second but not for them secondary language. In between, one could find the reader who, engaged in the very bilinguality of the text deciphered, takes the time and the trouble to confront the bilingual message in detail.[121]

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116 John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 43.

117 Moskalev, "Ol'ga Grushina," para. 7.

118 Peter Hühn, "The Detective as Reader: Narrativity and Reading Concepts in Detective Fiction," *Modern Fiction Studies* 33, no. 3 (1987): 455.

119 Wolfgang Iser, "Do I Write for an Audience?," *PMLA* 115, no. 3 (2000): 311.

120 Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, 27.

121 Ralph Sarkonak and Richard Hodgson, "Seeing in Depth: The Practice of Bilingual Writing," *Visible Language* 27, no. 1–2 (1993): 25–26.

Translingual texts serve to heighten the reader's awareness of the reading process and of language as the material of the literary text. While Russian elements in Grushin's novel elicit the pleasure of recognition on the part of the bilingual reader, for the monolingual reader they potentially carry the opposite effect of disorientation. The act of reading any novel can be seen as a constant process of orienting oneself within a narrative that defamiliarizes the familiar. As Iser argues,

> The efficacy of a literary text is brought about by the apparent evocation and subsequent negation of the familiar. What at first seemed to be an affirmation of our assumptions leads to our own rejection of them, thus tending to prepare us for a re-orientation. And it is only when we have outstripped our preconceptions and left the shelter of the familiar that we are in a position to gather new experiences.[122]

Felski describes recognition in the reading process as paradoxical: "Simultaneously reassuring and unnerving, it brings together likeness and difference in one fell swoop. When we recognize something, we literally 'know it again'; we make sense of what is unfamiliar by fitting it into an existing scheme, linking it to what we already know."[123]

The effects of recognition and disorientation on the reader of *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* mirror the protagonist's experience in different ways. On the one hand, recognition on the part of the reader able to decode translingual elements and cultural allusions parallels Sukhanov's gradual recognition and acceptance of his own past. On the other hand, the disorienting effect of the same elements on the monolingual reader parallels the protagonist's sense of estrangement within a changing world, as political reforms usurp his position of privilege and prompt him to reinterpret his past. This is also reflected in Sukhanov's estrangement from his wife and children, and his geographical disorientation when he finds himself on the outskirts of Moscow. These parallels between the experiences of the reader and protagonist are subtly underscored by repeated depictions of Sukhanov as a reader—of galley proofs of a biographical entry on himself for *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, his own monograph entitled "Surrealism and Other Western 'Isms' as Manifestations of Capitalist Insolvency," E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman," a manuscript submitted to his journal, detective and science fiction novels (his preferred genres), and, metaphorically, his own past.

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122   Iser, "The Reading Process," 224.

123   Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 25.

Translingual elements in Grushin's novel thus serve to amplify the themes of disorientation and gradual recognition of a previously repressed past in the wake of glasnost. While this is true for both monolingual and bilingual readers, it potentially does this in different ways for each. An example of how the monolingual reader's reception of the text might replicate Sukhanov's reaction to his own situation is found in the passage depicting his discovery that his mother had disposed of his early paintings. Sukhanov's shock is portrayed using the device of *ostranenie:*

> And for a while the world was so silent that it felt as if a deep hush, a hush of finality, of lost chances, of all the things that had gone wrong and could never be changed, enveloped it, never to lift again. Yet after some time—whether a fragment of an hour or another lonely stretch of a century—uncertainly, out of the soundless void, timid noises began to emerge: the whispering of trees, the barking of far-off dogs, the chirping of a canary on a windowsill, the trembling voice of an old woman talking, sighing, imploring someone named Tolenka to please understand.[124]

Just as Sukhanov does not recognize himself at this moment, the monolingual reader may not immediately identify the nickname "Tolenka" as referring to the protagonist.

A further parallel can be drawn between the monolingual reader's encounter with the Russian aspects of the repertoire of the text, which includes numerous references to Russian paintings, and the depiction of Sukhanov's first encounters with Western art. The device of *ostranenie* in employed in the description of Botticelli's painting *The Birth of Venus*, shown to Sukhanov by his neighbor Professor Gradsky:

> I did not see a naked woman. Instead I saw tender ripples of the palest silvery gray, and a green so lush, so full of golden hints it felt like trapped sunshine, and glowing, translucent whites, and the brightest coppery sheen, and a pink that was not pink at all but in truth had no name fitting enough to describe it, so pearly and iridescent it was, more precious than the inside spiral of a seashell [. . .] Entranced, I watched, for a suspended, breathless span of my private eternity, as the

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124   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 320.

shades and the textures flowed smoothly into one another, creating harmony, creating glory, creating beauty. . . .

The old man was talking above my head about some man named Botticelli, some woman named Venus, some place named Florence. I heard nothing.[125]

Although Sukhanov, growing up in the Soviet Union, is isolated from the cultural context of this painting, he still perceives beauty in its colors and textures. The device of *ostranenie* also occurs in the depiction of Sukhanov's first encounter with the work of Dalí, who is described as "some crazy Spanish artist."[126] Elsewhere, Professor Gradsky defines artistic genius as the ability to defamiliarize:

An artist of true genius is not one who wholly dismisses old traditions and plunges us headfirst into an unknown, disorienting, possibly meaningless paradigm, but rather one who, working from within a predetermined framework, subtly manages to push away our blinders an inch or two, to reflect our faces in a mildly distorted mirror, to find a second bottom in the most familiar things or a second meaning in the most exhausted words—in short, to wipe the accumulations of dust from our world—and who by doing so allows us to rise with him to a higher plane of existence.[127]

When, towards the end of the novel, Sukhanov's glasses are broken, he perceives his surroundings in a defamiliarized manner that recalls avant-garde painting: "The crack splintered the light into dozens of cubist fragments and imparted a rainbow-tinted brightness to one side of his vision, granting unwitting haloes to a night brigade of women in orange overalls who were presently illuminated by the flickering beams of their flashlights [. . .], endowing his own reflection in the window with the multifaceted eye of an insect."[128]

Iser sees defamiliarization as an intrinsic part of the reading process, arguing that "it is only by leaving behind the familiar world of his own experience that the reader can truly participate in the adventure the literary text offers him."[129]

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125   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 94–95.

126   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 194.

127   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 121.

128   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 255.

129   Iser, "The Reading Process," 218.

Elsewhere he argues that his concept of the implied reader "holds true even when texts deliberately appear to ignore their possible recipient or actively exclude him."[130] Monolingual anglophone readers may appear to be excluded from some of the meanings created by translingual wordplay and cultural allusions in *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*. Yet all readers, whether mono- or bilingual, are capable of engaging in various ways with translingual elements in the text. Judging from the critical acclaim Grushin's novel has received in the United States and Great Britain, knowledge of Russian is not required for an appreciation of it.[131]

The readings of *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* proposed here are, of course, not exhaustive. As Iser notes, "one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way."[132] By leaving gaps to be filled in by the reader (arguably more for the monolingual reader than the bilingual one), Grushin's novel draws attention to the reading process, demanding more of readers than a traditional monolingual text and rewarding them with expanded interpretive possibilities. In this way, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* challenges real readers, monolingual and bilingual alike, to produce meaning out of the translingual text.

Translating the Translingual Text

Although *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* was composed entirely in English, various details, such as the Russian name of the eponymous protagonist Sukhanov (as well as that of the author), the Soviet-era setting, and the presence of Russian words in the anglophone text, potentially create a misleading impression that the novel must have been written in Russian and subsequently translated into English. In light of this, it is interesting to consider what happens when a translingual text such as this one is translated from English into Russian.

Elena Petrova's Russian rendering of *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, entitled *Zhizn' Sukhanova a snovideniiakh* (2011), provides an interesting case study. Grushin collaborated with Petrova on the translation to a certain extent,

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130 Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 34.

131 *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* won the 2007 Young Lions Fiction Award and was nominated for the 2007 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, the 2006 Orange Award for New Writers, and the 2006 Los Angeles Times Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction. It was also listed as one of the best works of fiction of the year by several publications, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

132 Iser, "The Reading Process," 216.

reviewing and revising it,[133] and she praises Petrova's rendering in her preface.[134] Following Lawrence Alan Rosenwald's observation that "the question of how to translate becomes a lens of analysis, showing us things about the works that we could not otherwise see," I will consider the strategies applied in selected passages of Petrova's translation.[135] The analysis below will focus on passages containing translingual elements in the original text, seeking to identify particular challenges they pose to translation, as well as what these challenges might reveal about literary translingualism as a phenomenon.

Rendering the Russian Subtext

Grushin's novel was written and first published in the United States for an anglophone readership, yet the repertoire of the text (to employ Iser's term) draws heavily on a Russian cultural subtext.[136] While the novel can be read as a universal story of a midlife crisis, this crisis is precipitated by circumstances specific to the late-Soviet Russian context. My characterization of Grushin's text as an English-language novel with a Russian cultural repertoire is supported by the author's own statement that she wanted to write a "Russian novel in English words."[137]

Texts written in an acquired language sometimes bear traces of the author's mother tongue, revealing, as Kellman observes, "instances in which the author is thinking in one language but employing the locutions of another."[138] The Russian linguistic and cultural subtext often shines through the English text of *The Dream Life of Sukhanov.* This was an intended effect, according to Grushin, who has explained that she "tried to preserve Russian cadences, paraphrases of Russian poems and turns of speech, Russian ways of thinking, specifically Russian uses of certain concepts and words (e.g., the recurrence of 'soul,' which populates

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133   Author's email correspondence with Olga Grushin, April 4, 2012.

134   Petrova is a linguist who has translated works by Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, and Ray Bradbury, among others. Grushin writes in her preface to Petrova's translation: "The translation from English was done by the wonderful translator Elena Petrova, for whose fine-tuned sense of language I am forever grateful." Ol'ga Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh,* trans. Elena Petrova (Moscow: Ėksmo, 2011), 5.

135   Lawrence Alan Rosenwald, *Multilingual America: Language and the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 123.

136   Iser, *The Act of Reading,* 34.

137   Moskalev, "Ol'ga Grushina," para. 20.

138   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination,* 18.

Russian expressions quite literally)."[139] In a sense, a process of translation was in operation already in the writing of the original novel, which conveys a Russian cultural subtext through the medium of the English language. As a result, Russian words, expressions, and cultural allusions appear in the text alongside idiomatic English expressions, such as "What the hell" and "Mr. Big Shot."[140]

The reader of the original novel is frequently reminded of its Russian subtext through numerous typographical markers of foreignness, as Russian words and expressions, such as "*Spokoinoi nochi*" ("good night") and "*vareniki*" ("dumplings"), are often (though not always) set off by italics and/or quotation marks.[141] Sometimes, although again not consistently, Russian words and phrases are translated or explained through context. This practice appears to follow what Lennon identifies as "three main conventions for managing languages other than English in U.S. trade-published books":

> First, [foreign languages] are *contained*—confined to single words, phrases, or brief exchanges of spoken dialogue, as touches of cultural verisimilitude (or its simulation) that "season" the text ever so lightly with the foreign without dulling its domestic flavor. Second, they are tagged (by convention, with italic type) to mark them as voiced (as breaks in a continuum of subvocalized prose) and to mark them as "foreign" language. Third, they are translated—usually in direct apposition, as in "The Mexican said *Hola*, or hello."[142]

Venuti criticizes similar conventions in English-language translations, arguing that Anglo-American publishers have an economic interest in "producing cultures in the United Kingdom and the United States that are aggressively monolingual, unreceptive to foreign literatures, accustomed to fluent translations that invisibly inscribe foreign texts with British and American values and provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural other."[143] Antoine Berman also notes this tendency in translations: "The traditional method of preserving vernaculars is to *exoticize* them.

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139   Author's email correspondence with Olga Grushin, November 12, 2009.

140   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 81, 16.

141   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 83, 54.

142   Lennon, *In Babel's Shadow*, 10.

143   Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 12.

Exoticization can take two forms. First, a typographical procedure (italics) is used to isolate what does not exist in the original. Then, more insidiously, it is 'added' to be 'more authentic,' emphasizing the vernacular according to a certain stereotype of it."[144] As Walkowitz notes, anglophone literary fiction "since the nineteenth century has used italics to affirm the borders between local and global diction."[145] Lennon's characterization of the current trend within commercial anglophone publishing implies that conformity to these conventions has an undesirable reductive effect, diluting foreign elements in literary works to an easily digestible strength by smoothing out or eliminating possible obstacles to interpretation.[146]

Grushin's novel was first published by G. P. Putman's Sons, which, as a subsidiary of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., falls into the category of publishers described by Lennon. However, as I have argued in my analysis of Russian elements in *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, rather than reducing foreignness to kitsch, they carry a defamiliarizing potential that gives rise to interpretative possibilities. Let us now examine what happens to these elements in the Russian translation of the novel.

In the following passage, a transliterated Russian expression is conveyed using two of the three conventions described by Lennon: italics and quotation marks. The third convention mentioned by Lennon—translation—is rendered unnecessary by a contextual description:

> Suddenly there was a rustle, a stir, glasses being raised first here, then there, as a chorus of "*Vashe zdorovie!*" spread across the hall, rolling through the crowd like exalted ripples originating somewhere at the heart of things and reaching wider and wider.[147]

Italics draw the reader's eye to the transliterated Russian drinking toast, further highlighted by the description of its aural amplification in the exhibition hall, where it "spread," "as a chorus," "rolling through the crowd" and "reaching wider and wider." By incorporating Russian words and expressions into the primarily

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144 Antoine Berman, "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd ed., ed. and trans. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2012), 250.

145 Walkowitz, "Less Than One Language," 104.

146 For discussions of how reviews of translations of literature into English express a preference for fluency and transparency, see Edith Grossman, *Why Translation Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

147 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 5.

anglophone text, Grushin confronts the reader with the foreignness of the fictional world she depicts. In the Russian translation, however, this effect is naturally diminished due to the use of the Cyrillic alphabet throughout. The same Russian words and phrases, set off variously by transliteration, quotation marks, and/or italics in the original text, visually blend in with the surrounding words in the Russian translation, as illustrated by Petrova's rendering of the above-quoted passage:

> Вдруг по залу пролетел шорох, где-то зародилось волнение, то тут, то там в воздухе стали встречаться бокалы, и наконец по толпе прокатилось дружное "ваше здоровье!", расходясь восторженными кругами откуда-то эпицентра событий.[148]

Grushin has stated that, when writing the novel, she "embedded 'explanations' of various Russian expressions and traditions that I would never include if writing in Russian."[149] The passage in which Sukhanov runs into his estranged friend Lev Belkin for the first time in many years can serve as an example of this. I quote it first in the original, then in Petrova's translation, and finally in my literal rendering of Petrova's translation into English (a kind of back translation):

Original:

> "I haven't changed, and yet you didn't recognize me," Belkin said.
> "Well, you know what they say—if someone who knows you well doesn't recognize you, you'll end up rich," Sukhanov joked humorlessly.[150]

Petrova's translation:

> – Нисколько не изменился – то-то ты меня не узнал, – сказал Белкин.
> – Значит, богатым будешь, – безрадостно отшутился Сукханов.[151]

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148   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 14.

149   Author's email correspondence with Olga Grushin, November 12, 2009.

150   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 19.

151   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 29.

Back translation:

"I haven't changed at all, and yet you didn't recognize me." Belkin said.

"That means you'll be rich," Sukhanov joked humorlessly.

Not surprisingly, the signaling of the idiom followed by an explanation in the original text has been omitted from the translation, as they are superfluous for readers familiar with the Russian idiom "Ne uznal, bogatym budesh.'" Another example of an embedded explanation in the original text that is unnecessary for Russian readers is found in the following passage, which describes socialist realist paintings at the exhibit:

Original:

Other, milder creations hung under the spotlights, presenting to the audience so-called Socialism with a Human Face—a slogan that was perhaps more familiar to Sukhanov than to anyone else here.[152]

Petrova's translation:

Другие, более умеренные работы, умело подсвеченные, наглядно демонстрировали «социализм с человеческим лицом».[153]

Back translation:

Other, more moderate works, skillfully illuminated, clearly displayed "socialism with a human face."

Also superfluous for Russian readers is the explanation, provided in the original text, of the pun in Vladimir Tatlin's invention "Letatlin": "the glider's name, *Letatlin*, had amused him with its ingenious merger of inventor and invention, of Tatlin and *letat'*, 'to fly.'"[154] In Petrova's translation, it is merely stated that Sukhanov retained knowledge of the invention due to its clever name: "благодаря остроумному названию аппарата, 'Летатлин'" (back translation: thanks to the

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152 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 6.

153 Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 15.

154 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 51.

machine's clever name, "Letatlin").[155] Similarly, some proper nouns given in full in the original text are abbreviated in the translation, for example: "Moscow State University"[156] is rendered into Russian simply as "MGU"[157]; the "Foreign Affairs Institute"[158] is referred to as "MGIMO"[159]; and, in an encyclopedia entry about Sukhanov, "the Surikov Art Institute" is translated as "MGAKhI im. V. I. Surikova" and "the Communist Party" as "KPSS."[160]

A converse strategy of expansion can be observed in the passage listing the awards Malinin has received. The original reads: "two-time laureate of the Lenin Prize, member of the Academy of Arts of the USSR since 1947," while the translation reads: "лауреата Ленинской и Государственной премии, члена Академии художеств СССР с тысяча девятьсот сорок седьмого года" (back translation: laureate of the Lenin and State prizes, member of the Academy of Arts of the USSR since 1947.[161] Here, the translation elaborates on the original passage, adding the "Gosudarstvennaia premia" (State Prize) to the list of his achievements. After de-Stalinization, this prize replaced the Stalin Prize (Stalinskaia premia), and the title "Gosudarstvennaia premia" was applied retroactively to previous recipients of the Stalin Prize.[162] Together with the year 1947, its appearance in Petrova's translation serves to strengthen the implication that Malinin, although officially feted as an artist, is little more than a hack. The words "State Prize," had they appeared in the original novel, would not have carried the same connotation for most anglophone readers.

The above example of expansion as a translation strategy appears to be an exception to the overall tendency in Petrova's translation. The omission of cultural explanations, embedded in the original text for the benefit of monolingual

155   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 67.

156   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 13.

157   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 23.

158   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 11.

159   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 20.

160   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 36. Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 48. In Russian, "MGIMO" stands for "Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi institut mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii (Moscow State Institute of International Relations) and "MGAKhI im. V. I. Surikova" stands for Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii khudozhestvennii institut imeni V. I. Surikova" (Surikov Moscow State Academic Art Institute).

161   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 9. Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 18–19.

162   The Gosudarstvennaia premia (State Prize) was awarded annually in the Soviet Union from 1967 to 1991.

anglophone readers but unnecessary for russophone readers' understanding of the text, results in an economy of language. This phenomenon goes against the general trend, identified by Berman, of expansion of translations resulting from the translator's efforts to clarify or explain foreign elements for the target reader. "Every translation," Berman notes, "tends to be longer than the original," which, he argues, has the effect of impoverishing the text.[163] In the case of Petrova's translation of Grushin's novel, however, the reverse is true.[164] For russophone readers, the Russian cultural subtext requires less explanation than in the anglophone original.

Translingual Puns in Translation

Wordplay "poses a special problem to translators," dependent as it is on multiple meanings of words.[165] Kathleen Davis maintains that "[a]s a signature of one language that requires the affirmative but contestatory countersignature of another language, wordplay in translation ensures that languages encounter one another, and that through their very difference they challenge and confirm—but never resolve—each other's identity."[166] Jeroen Vandaele holds that "it is obvious that verbally expressed humor stretches over a continuum from easily translatable humor to very resistant, 'metalinguistic' humor [. . .] It is worth asking if play with words that is not play *on* words (i.e. that is not wordplay *sensu stricto*) [. . .] may also to some extent be resistant to translation."[167] Against this background,

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163 Berman, "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign," 246.

164 It should be noted that Russian translations of English texts are typically shorter than the original. This is due, among other things, to the absence of grammatical articles in Russian. This holds true for Petrova's translation, which consists of 80,130 words, whereas the original novel contains 113,856 words (author's email correspondence with Olga Grushin, June 11, 2013). The word count is exclusive of paratexts such as the preface and acknowledgements.

165 Kathleen Davis, "Signature in Translation," in *Traductio: Essays on Punning and Translation*, ed. Dirk Delabastita (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 27. For in-depth discussions of types and characteristics of puns, see Ahl, "Ars Est Caelare Artem (Art in Puns and Anagrams Engraved)," 17–43; Attridge, "Unpacking the Portmanteau," 140–55; Brown, "Eight Types of Puns," 14–26; Culler, "The Call of the Phoneme," 1–16; and Delabastita, "Introduction," 127–39.

166 Davis, "Signature in Translation," 40.

167 Jeroen Vandaele, "Wordplay in Translation," in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), 182.

it is particularly interesting to examine if and how puns in *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* have been rendered into Russian.

As we have seen, the reader's attention is drawn to the act of punning by a passage early in the original novel, in which Sukhanov reflects on his own accomplishments and social status as "a man who is himself something of a weight in the art world, pun most certainly intended."[168] This pun, which is homonymic, turns on similarity with the title of Sukhanov's journal *Art of the World*. A further pun, on the word "weight," becomes apparent several pages later, when Belkin notes that Sukhanov has "[g]ained weight, become all solid."[169]

Petrova's translation of the first passage reads: "имеет какой-никакой вес в мире искусств" (back translation: he had a certain weight in the world of the arts).[170] The clause that provides an explicit indication of a pun in the original text is omitted in translation, while the second pun, on "weight," is not retained, as the translation of the later passage reads simply: "Располнел, солидный такой . . ."[171] Although the Russian verb *raspolnet'* means 'to put on weight,' it has a different root from that of the noun *ves* (weight), and thus does not create a pun.

The first pun—on "the art world"—is, however, conveyed in translation: "Уже двенадцать лет Анатолий Павлович Суханов занимал чрезвычайно ответственный, чрезвычайно завидный пост главного редактора ведущего искусствоведческого журнала 'Искусство мира'" (back translation: For the past twelve years Anatoly Pavlovich Sukhanov has occupied the extremely important, extremely enviable post of editor-in-chief of the leading art journal "Art of the World").[172] The pun created by "v mire iskusstv" (in the world of the arts) and "Iskusstvo mira" (Art of the World) is more compact in Russian than in the English original. Furthermore, the title of Sukhanov's magazine contains a pun on the title of the early twentieth-century art nouveau journal *Mir iskusstva*, with the contrast between the art-for-art's-sake ethos of *Mir iskusstva* and the socialist realist ideology of Sukhanov's journal offerring an ironic commentary on the latter. While this particular pun is latent in both the original text and the translation, it is arguably more likely to be perceived as a pun by russophone readers, due to greater familiarity with the cultural-historical context.

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168   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 10.

169   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 18.

170   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 20.

171   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 28.

172   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 20.

Considering the general difficulty of translating wordplay, it is not surprising that some puns are omitted in Petrova's translation. However, several puns are conveyed through the strategy of substitution.[173] Let us take another look at the passage containing a translingual pun on the Russian word *babochka*:

> a well-known actor emerged, in the process of unfolding an enormous pink umbrella over his nineteen-year-old wife. The couple chirped "Good night" to Anatoly Pavlovich, stared at Belkin with unbridled curiosity, and ran to a Volga that had just pulled up. The girl was giggling, and Sukhanov distinctly heard her say *babochka*—"bow tie" or "butterfly"—but the night swallowed the rest of the sentence and he tried to convince himself she was discussing lepidoptery rather than Belkin's unfortunate neck decoration.[174]

In the original text, the pun is made in Russian and thus requires an embedded explanation for the anglophone reader. Perhaps surprisingly, the one Russian word that appears in the original passage—*babochka*—is not retained in Petrova's translation of this passage, although the compound word *galstuk–babochka* (back translation: necktie–bow tie) is used in an earlier description of Belkin's clothing. While the bow tie is described as "maroon" in the original, the translation elaborates on this with the idiom "*sero-buro-malinovyi*," which denotes a dull, non-descript color.[175] Sukhanov's uncertainty about what he has heard (Was the speaker talking about Belkin's embarrassingly shabby bow tie, or lepidoptery?) is transformed here into a question of whether the comment concerned women's fashion in general, or Belkin's bow tie specifically:

> Суханов явственно расслышал: «. . . и сбоку бантик», но остальные ее слова проглотила ночь, и он постарался себе внушить, что предметом обсуждения была некая модная дамская идея, а не дурацкая удавка не шее у Белкина.[176]

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173   For a discussion of various techniques for translating idiomatic wordplay, such as equivalent transformation, loan translation, extension, analogue transformation, substitution, compensation, omission, and metalingual comment, see: Andrejs Veisbergs, "The Contextual Use of Idioms, Wordplay, and Translation," in *Traductio: Essays on Punning and Translation*, ed. Dirk Delabastita (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 155–76.

174   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 19–20.

175   Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 19. Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 29.

176   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 30.

Back translation:

Sukhanov distinctly heard: ". . . And the bow's to one side," but the night swallowed the rest of her words, and he tried to convince himself that the subject of the discussion was some kind of fashionable female notion, and not the idiotic noose around Belkin's neck.

The word *babochka* has been replaced here by a fragment of the Russian idiom "Chert-te chto i sboku bantik," which is typically used to express disapproval of something perceived as strange or absurd, often with reference to clothing. The Russian word *bantik*, although meaning "bow" in English, would not typically be used to denote a man's necktie, but in the context of this passage, the overheard phrase ". . . i sboku bantik" could be interpreted as an idiomatic reference to Belkin's appearance in general. A pun is thus created, with two possible interpretations as referents: an idiomatic interpretation (according to which the giggling nineteen-year-old speaks disparagingly of Belkin's appearance), and a literal one (according to which she describes a bow in the context of women's fashion). The specific reference to Belkin's shabby bow tie in the original novel is lost here, however, along with the pun on "*babochka*," with its referents "bow tie" and "butterfly."

Another difference between the source and target texts with regard to this passage lies in the varying degrees of probability of the explanations, associated with the pun's referents, of the meaning of the words overheard by Sukhanov. While the pun's referents in Petrova's translation offer two equally plausible explanations (i.e., a comment on Belkin's appearance, on the one hand, and a comment on women's fashion, on the other), it is arguably less plausible within the fictional world of the original novel that the giggling nineteen-year-old girl would be referring to lepidoptery, rather than Belkin's bow tie. The far-fetched character of lepidoptery in this context serves to highlight the implicit allusion to Nabokov.

The pun on "*babochka*" in the original novel resonates with other passages in which butterflies and moths appear as a leitmotif, as for example in the following passage: "One single thought fluttered in him like a dying moth—why didn't I take the metro, why didn't I take the metro, why didn't I . . ."[177] Petrova has translated this as follows: "В голове издыхающей бабочкой трепетала одна только мысль: почему я не поехал на метро, почему я не поехал не метро, почему я . . ."[178]

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177 Grushin, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, 28.

178 Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 39.

By alluding to Nabokov, Grushin evokes him as a predecessor and inscribes herself within the canon of translingual russo-anglophone writers. In this way, she can be seen to continue a tradition of literary translingualism, described by Kellman as:

> [. . .] a genuine and rich tradition, one in which authors are acutely aware of shared conditions and aspirations. Chinua Achebe responds, explicitly and implicitly, to Conrad, Eva Hoffman to Mary Antin. Both J. M. Coetzee and Raymond Federman have written extensively about Beckett. Even when Nabokov is belittling "Conrad's souvenir-shop style, bottled ships and shell necklaces of romanticist clichés" (*Strong Opinions* 42), he is acknowledging affinity with another Anglophonic author who left behind a Slavic land and language.[179]

Although the homage paid to Nabokov though the butterfly pun is absent in the corresponding passage of Petrova's translation, the latter retains the metaphor likening Sukhanov's collection of neckties to butterfly collecting.[180] The sound of the Russian word *sboku* in the expression used in Petrova's translation also echoes the middle syllable of Nabokov's name: *bok*. Furthermore, Nabokov is explicitly evoked in two paratexts to the translation. In Grushin's preface to the Russian version, she draws a parallel between herself and Nabokov through a parenthetical aside noting that *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* was published by Putman, which, as she further notes, is the same publishing house that brought out *Lolita*.[181] A paper band wrapped around the cover of the Russian edition exclaims "Nabokov's linguistic paradoxes come to life" ("Lingvisticheskie paradoksy Nabokova ozhivaiut!"), presenting the book, before the reader has even opened it, as continuation of a Nabokovian tradition.

Translingual Texts and Translation Theory

As the above examples illustrate, Russian elements stand out as foreign within the context of Grushin's anglophone novel, whereas translingual elements are less apparent—if at all visible—in the Russian translation. Berman criticizes what he identifies as a general tendency in translation to smooth out idiosyncrasies of the source language and source text in order to make them conform

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179   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 8.

180   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 94.

181   Grushina, *Zhizn' Sukhanova v snovideniiakh*, 5.

to conventions of the target language and thereby appear less foreign. "[T]he principal problem of translating the novel," he argues, "is to respect its *shapeless polylogic* and avoid an arbitrary homogenization."[182] Berman draws here on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia as inherent to the novelistic genre.[183] One of twelve negative "deforming tendencies" identified by Berman is "the effacement of the superimposition of language," rendering the target text more monolingual than the source text and reducing variation between dialects, idiolects, or languages.[184] Venuti argues that a striving to meet expectations of fluency on the part of translators, editors, publishers, reviewers, and readers results in an "illusion of transparency" that reduces or eliminates non-familiar elements in the target text.[185] As an alternative, he advocates what he calls "foreignizing translation."

Venuti describes foreignization as impelling the target-language culture "to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad," as opposed to "bringing the author back home" through a domesticating approach.[186] Here Venuti paraphrases Friedrich Schleiermacher's formulation of the two choices available to the translator: "Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him."[187] Schleiermacher's preference for the former, foreignizing method, has been invoked by several translation theorists, most notably Berman and Venuti, who view foreignizing translation as an ethical stance against English-language dominance.

Scholars of translation have in recent decades examined how translation reflects power differentials between languages and cultures, especially in postcolonial contexts.[188] In the case of Petrova's translation, however, the

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182　Berman, "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign," 243.

183　Berman, "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign," 251–52.

184　Berman, "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign," 244.

185　Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 1.

186　Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 15.

187　Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating," trans. Susan Bernofsky, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd ed., ed. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2012 [1813]), 49.

188　For example, see: Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1999); Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, eds., *Translation and Power* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002).

domesticating effect cannot be explained by unequal relations between English and Russian. While Grushin has explicitly expressed her intention to "foreignize" the world she depicts for anglophone readers by incorporating Russian words, idioms, and cultural phenomena into the original text, there is no comparable relation of foreignness between the fictional world and the target reader of the Russian translation. In the Russian version, the language of the text corresponds to the setting and language of the fictional world. Taking into consideration the novel's plot and setting, as well as the target audience of the Russian translation, it would seem unmotivated to incorporate English words, idioms, and puns into the Russian translation to the same extent that translingual elements occur in the original.

Grushin's novel—and indeed translingual texts in general—may well comprise a special case that does not easily lend itself to either of the approaches articulated as foreignization and domestication. Translation theory has often assumed a correlation between source language and source culture, target language and target culture. Yet translingual literature tends to disrupt or reverse these correlations, mixing cultures as well as languages. As Rosenwald notes, particular challenges arise for the translator "when a secondary language of the source text is also the principal language of the target text."[189] In this situation, Grutman argues, "the linguistic elements that signalled Otherness in the original run the risk of having their indexical meaning reversed and being read as 'familiar' signs of Sameness."[190] Rather than "sending the reader abroad," Petrova's translation of Grushin's novel brings the text home to its cultural subtext, as well as to readers familiar with the very elements that appear foreign to the source audience, resulting in a kind of domestication by default.

This domesticating or homogenizing effect cannot be explained by the economic and culturally hegemonic mechanisms that both Venuti and Lennon observe in the publishing world. In this case, the "illusion of transparency," of which Venuti speaks, results not from erasure or adaptation in the translation, but from the position of the target readers vis-à-vis the cultural subtext of the source text. As I have shown elsewhere, a sense of the uncanny on the part of the novel's protagonist Sukhanov is central to the novel's theme of coming to terms with the past.[191] Through Grushin's use of foreign elements in the anglophone

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189 Rosenwald, *Multilingual America*, 125.

190 Rainier Grutman, "Refraction and Recognition: Literary Multilingualism in Translation," *Target* 18, no. 1 (2006): 22.

191 Julie Hansen, "Memory Unleashed by Perestroika: Olga Grushin's 'The Dream Life of Sukhanov,'" *Die Welt der Slaven* LVII (2012): 161–77.

text, *ostranenie* becomes inherent to the reading process itself, but the effect is made less strange when rendered into Russian.

The resistance that Grushin's translingual elements present to non-russo-phone readers, who comprise the majority of the original novel's audience, is thus weakened in translation. The result is not esthetically inferior, but arguably leads to different readings. It also raises broader questions about the translation of translingual texts. Do translingual texts present specific challenges to the translator, and if so, what can they tell us about the functions of literary translingualism? Is it useful to speak in terms of "source" and "target" with regard to translingual texts and their translations? Calling for more functionalist descriptive research on the translation of such texts as a "correction to a certain idealizing monolingualism,"[192] Reine Meylaerts argues that "[i]mplicitly or explicitly, translation is still approached as the *full* transposition of *one* (monolingual) source code into *another* (monolingual) target code for the benefit of a *monolingual* target public."[193] As Sherry Simon observes, "Translation is called upon to play the role of regulator, to keep languages separate. But when two languages intermingle [. . .] translation is put to the test."[194]

Literary translingualism can be viewed as a limit case of what Berman characterizes as the polylingualism of the novelistic genre, which contains "the enormous brew of languages and linguistic systems that operate in the work," and "mobilizes and activates the totality of 'languages' that coexist in any language."[195] The operation of these linguistic systems becomes more visible in translingual texts, which push the boundaries of the languages in which they are written. In his lecture to a French organization for literary translators in 1998, Jacques Derrida used translingualism and specifically the translation of wordplay as starting points for a definition of the essence of translation.[196] As he argues in *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, all language entails "an essential alienation."[197] By constantly moving between two or more

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192 Reine Meylaerts, "Heterolingualism in/and Translation: How Legitimate Are the Other and His/Her Language? An Introduction," *Target* 18, no. 1 (2006): 6.

193 Meylaerts, "Heterolingualism in/and Translation," 5.

194 Sherry Simon, "Crossing Town: Montreal in Translation," *Profession* (2002): 15.

195 Berman, "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign," 243.

196 Jacques Derrida, "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3rd ed., ed. and trans. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2012), 367.

197 Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prothesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 58.

languages, translingual texts highlight the strangeness and contingency of all literary language.

As Kellman points out, "[a] remarkable number of translinguals have been active and important as translators, brokers who position themselves between the language of an author and the language of the reader."[198] Like Nabokov, several contemporary Russian translingual writers also engage in self-translation. The translation of translingual texts promises new challenges and opportunities for translation studies, contributing to re-evaluations of a traditional binary view of translation as movement from a source language to a target language. As Simon notes, "models of translation theory emerge out of specific sites and are not universally applicable."[199] Translation, as Iain Chambers defines it:

> is not about transparency in which two languages come to reflect each other in a shared semantic mirror [...] translation moves in more than one direction: between the language, literature, and culture translated and the language, literature, and culture that translates, between an "original" and a "copy" in another language. Further, what is "lost" in translation, in linguistic meaning, in semantic anchorage, may open up a sense, a direction, leading elsewhere.[200]

Translingual texts call for a more flexible, multidimensional approach which does not take any linguistic or cultural boundaries for granted. Such an approach reveals the unstable yet highly productive space between languages, in which not only the translator but also the reader's interaction with the text becomes more visible.

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198   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 33.

199   Simon, "Crossing Town," 22.

200   Iain Chambers, "Citizenship, Language, and Modernity," *PMLA* 117, no. 1 (2002): 26.

Chapter 3

Translingual Protagonists Go Global

The international playing field of literature is uneven as a result of what Pascale Casanova calls "the literary inequality of languages."[1] It is therefore interesting to consider the relative status of English, French, German, and Russian today. Johan Heilbron views English as "hyper-central" to the world system of translation, while French, German, and Russian each play "a central role, although their share is significantly smaller than that of English."[2] Abram de Swaan classifies Russian as one of thirteen "supercentral languages" in the world, used for internal as well as local communication.[3] With regard to world literature, Beecroft observes the following:

> There are few other languages that might rival English and French as global literatures, given the political and economic power, demographic weight and geographic breadth they possess; however, each of their major rivals (Chinese, Spanish, Hindi, Arabic, Russian) participates in a global circulation of some kind, as do a very few other literatures under more limited circumstances.[4]

Exactly how globalization might be reconfiguring the rules of "the world literary game"[5] and linguistic power differentials remains to be seen. Yildiz holds that globalization "produces a new framework [. . .] in which languages circulate,

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1   Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 133.

2   Johan Heilbron, "Translation as a Cultural World System," *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 8, no. 1 (2000): 14.

3   The others are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Portugese, Spanish, Swahili, and Turkish. Abram de Swaan, "Language Systems," in *The Handbook of Language and Globalization*, ed. Nikolas Coupland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 57.

4   Alexander Beecroft, "World Literature Without a Hyphen: Towards a Typology of Literary Systems," *New Left Review*, no. 54 (2008): 99, https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii54/articles/alexander-beecroft-world-literature-without-a-hyphen.

5   Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 133.

change, and accrue meaning."[6] In Russian-speaking parts of the world, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late twentieth century gave rise to, in the words of Wanner, a "new translingual diaspora" of Russian-speaking émigré writers who publish literary works in languages that are not native to them.[7] Stephanie Sandler noted the "reduced gravitational pull of Moscow and Petersburg" for Russian literature already before the Russian Federation's fullscale invasion of Ukraine, arguing that "[t]he most radical extrusion of Russian literature from the territory of Russia has happened in the language itself."[8]

Russian literature has held a prominent place in the Western literary canon ever since the late nineteenth century, when the novels of Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy were translated into other European languages. The Russian language qualifies for cosmopolitan status in that it is a "single literary language [. . .] used over a large territorial range and through a long period of time."[9] Although its significance as a lingua franca has diminished since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union,[10] and the war in Ukraine, over two hundred fifty million people speak Russian today, as either a native or acquired language.[11]

In this chapter I will examine three translingual novels in which the relative status of languages comes into play: Andreï Makine's *Le testament français* (1995), written in French, Michael Idov's *Ground Up* (2009), written in English, and Olga Grjasnowa's *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt* (2012), written in German. While Idov's potential audience is larger in English than in Russian, Makine's switch from Russian to French and Grjasnowa's switch from Russian to German cannot be explained by an aspiration to reach a larger readership, nor would their chances of being translated into other languages have been significantly lower had they written their novels in Russian.[12] It is therefore inter-

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6   Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, 109.

7   Wanner, *Out of Russia*.

8   Stephanie Sandler, "On Russian Poems, Poets, and Prizes, Late in 2020," *Russian Review* 80, no. 3 (2021): 499, 500.

9   Alexander Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London: Verso, 2015), 34.

10   De Swaan, "Language Systems," 58.

11   Ethnologue, "What Are the Top 200 Most Spoken Languages?," SIL International, accessed September 6, 2023, https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/ethnologue200.

12   According to UNESCO's Index Translationum database, English tops the list of original languages for published translations of books, followed by French, German, and Russian in descending order.

esting to consider what these novels say about negotiating the uneven territory between languages and literary markets.[13] In each, the narrator-protagonist is an immigrant who reflects upon the translingual condition and the practical and existential challenges of speaking, writing, and living in a non-native language. The novels both depict and enact language-switching strategies, making translation intrinsic to their plots, characterization, and themes.

Vernacular, Cosmopolitan, and Global Literatures

Beecroft defines different dynamics of interaction between literature and reading in terms of six different ecologies: epichoric, panchoric, cosmopolitan, vernacular, national, and global.[14] By viewing literary texts in this way, he highlights the conditions in which they compete for readers and recognition.[15] Walkowitz observes how these conditions also influence literary scholarship today, through "new competitions and new debates. We see competitions between versions of language, such as 'standard' and 'vernacular'; and debates about who has the right, the ability, and the obligation to use one language or another."[16]

My analysis in this chapter takes as its conceptual starting point four of Beecroft's literary ecologies: cosmopolitan, vernacular, national, and global. Cosmopolitan literature lays claim to universality through the use of a single literary language employed throughout a large geographical territory.[17] Vernacular literature develops, according to Beecroft, within the context of, and in competition with, cosmopolitan literature "when sufficient cultural resources accumulate behind some version of a locally spoken language to allow for its use for literary purposes."[18] While cosmopolitan literature aims to transcend the limitations of the vernacular, the vernacular seeks to convey something that can-

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13   For insights into the biographical aspects of literary translingualism and the variety of possible motives for writing in a non-native language, see Kellman, *Switching Languages* and the chapter "Pourquoi Translingual?" in Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 23–35. For a discussion of various motivations for bilingual authors to translate their own works, see Rainier Grutman and Trish Van Bolderen, "Self-Translation," in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Sandra L. Bermann and Catherine Porter (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 324–27.

14   Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 33–36.

15   Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 17.

16   Walkowitz, "Less Than One Language," 96.

17   Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 34.

18   Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 34.

not be expressed in a lingua franca. In this way, cosmopolitan and vernacular are "unstable, overlapping categories"[19] that "should not be thought of as opposites but as two modes—or vectors—of literary worldliness that may interact, merge or contest each other."[20]

With the emergence of nation states in Europe, a national literary ecology grew out of the vernacular one.[21] This ecology presupposes a one-to-one correspondence between nation and language, giving rise to the "monolingual paradigm" identified by Yildiz. As Beecroft notes, the ecology of national literature "tends to forget works whose origins belie this congruence between nation and language, as well as works written in the cosmopolitan language after the emergence of the vernacular and works that do not suit the narrative of national history."[22] Many contemporary works of translingual fiction call into question this assumed congruence.

Beecroft concludes his monograph on ecologies of world literature with a consideration of "a hypothetical future ecology" of global literature, posing the question "What is the literary environment of the world like today, and how might currently existing trends, or unpredictable future ones, transform that environment?"[23] The answers, which are necessarily tentative, include a narrative structure that Beecroft calls the "plot of globalization," involving "the use of multistrand narration to convey on a formal level our interconnected and polycentric world."[24] Beecroft argues:

> The national-literature model is now clearly inadequate, both because a number of languages and their literatures transcend national borders, and because the de-centring of the nation-state brought about by contemporary global capitalism alters literary circulation. As such, we may begin to imagine what might reasonably be termed a *global* literature. This category, still more conjectural than real, consists of

19 Stephanos Stephanides and Stavros Karayanni, "Introduction: Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Intimate Estrangement of Homecoming," in *Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination*, ed. Stephanos Stephanides and Stavros Karayanni (Leiden: Brill, 2015), xiii.

20 Stefan Helgesson, "General Introduction: The Cosmopolitan and the Vernacular in Interaction," in *World Literatures: Exploring the Cosmopolitan-Vernacular Exchange*, ed. Stefan Helgesson et al. (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2018), 2.

21 Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 35.

22 Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 35–36.

23 Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 243.

24 Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 36.

literatures whose linguistic reach transcends national, even continental, borders.[25]

Let us now consider how depictions of multilingualism and translation in the selected novels might be related to these different ecologies.

Andreï Makine's French Testament

As Brian James Baer's study *Translation and the Making of Modern Russian Literature* (2016) shows, foreign languages and translation have shaped the development of Russian literature in significant ways ever since its medieval origins in Old Church Slavonic. "To examine a nation's literature through the lens of translation," Baer writes, "is to interrogate the continued investment of literary studies in Romantic nationalism and to challenge the imperative to monolingualize cultures."[26] Transcending this monolingual paradigm can prove tricky for contemporary Russian authors due to a view, still prevalent in Russia, of the national literature as inextricably tied to the national language. Contemporary translingual Russian authors are sometimes greeted with skepticism, if not ignored entirely, by Russian critics.

Makine's novel *Le testament français* is an interesting case in point. It won the prestigious Prix Goncourt and Prix Médicis in France in 1995 and garnered international critical acclaim. Yet, as Wanner recounts, "The few critical appraisals [. . .] to appear in Russian journals were mostly negative, and the sporadic mentions of his other works in the Russian press have generally been ill informed and dismissive."[27] In the eyes of some Russian critics, Makine committed a transgression by not writing the novel in his native language of Russian. The strikingly different receptions of Makine's work in Russia and abroad, respectively, are curiously illustrated by two reviews of *Le testament français* by Tatiana Tolstaya. In the Russian journal *Znamia*, Tolstaya accuses Makine of packaging clichés of Russianness for Western consumption, while in the *New York Review of Books* she praises Makine's mastery of the French language and depiction of Russian culture.[28]

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25 Beecroft, "World Literature Without a Hyphen," 98.

26 Brian James Baer, *Translation and the Making of Modern Russian Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 14.

27 Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 25.

28 For discussions of Tolstaya's reviews, see Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 26–27. See also Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant after Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 146–49.

The novel tells the story of a boy, Alyosha, who grows up in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s and learns the French language from his French grandmother. Long before Alyosha sets foot in France, he comes to know and love French culture. The themes of bilingualism and translation are prominent in the novel.[29] Because of his foreign background and bilingualism, Alyosha is viewed as an outsider by his peers, and this in turn shapes his sense of identity: "it is at moments [...] when I find myself between two languages, that I believe I can see and feel more intensely than ever."[30] Alyosha emigrates as an adult to France in the 1980s, where, after years of struggle, he becomes a published writer.

One passage describes his visit to a Paris bookshop, where he finds his early novels shelved between those of Lermontov and Nabokov. Although Alyosha's last name is not stated, alphabetical order implies that it begins with the letter M, which would give him the same initials as the author, thus inviting a biographical reading. Alyosha recounts how his novel came to be published:

> Il s'agissait, de ma part, d'une mystification littéraire pure et simple. Car ces livres avaient été écrits directement en français et refusés par les éditeurs: j'étais «un drôle de Russe qui se mettait à écrire en français». Dans un geste de désespoir, j'avais inventé alors un traducteur et envoyé le manuscrit en le présentant comme traduit du russe. Il avait été accepté, publié et salué pour la qualité de la traduction. Je me disais, d'abord avec amertume, plus tard avec les sourire, que ma malédiction franco-russe était toujours là. Seulement si, enfant, j'étais obligé de dissimuler la greffe française, à présent c'était me russité qui devenait répréhensible.[31]

> All of this was the result of a literary mystification on my part, pure and simple. For the books had been composed directly in French and rejected by editors, who considered me "a funny Russian who thought he could write in French." In a desperate gesture, I had then invented a translator and submitted a manuscript, presenting it as a translation from the Russian. It had been accepted, published, and commended for the quality of the translation. I told myself, first with bitterness,

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29 Both themes are discussed in Wanner, *Out of Russia*, 29–38. For an overview of the novel, see Julie Hansen, "Le testament français," *The Literary Encyclopedia*, March 22, 2011, accessed September 6, 2023, https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=32149.

30 Andreï Makine, *Dreams of My Russian Summers,* trans. Geoffrey Strachan (New York: Simon, 1997)

31 Makine, *Le testament français*, 282.

later with a smile, that my Franco-Russian curse was still with me. The only difference was that as a child, I was forced to hide my French graft, while now it was my Russianness that was unacceptable.

The above passage recalls the experience of Makine himself, whose first manuscripts were rejected by editors. It was only after he falsely presented his novels as French translations from Russian that they were accepted.[32]

As the Index Translationum published by UNESCO indicates, Russian literature does not lack prestige on the Western literary market. Yet it is arguably not the status of Russian itself that has accorded a number of Russian works a place in the canon, but rather consecrating translations of them into other prominent literary languages, such as English and French. As Casanova observes:

> Translation is the foremost example of a particular type of consecration in the literary world. Its true nature as a form of literary recognition [. . .] goes unrecognized on account of its apparent neutrality. Nonetheless it constitutes the principal means of access to the literary world for all writers outside the center. Translation is the major prize and weapon in international literary competition, an instrument whose use and purpose differ depending on the position of the translator with respect to the text translated—that is, on the relation between what are commonly called "source" and "target" languages.[33]

According to the logic of the national literary ecology, the intermediary step of translation is required in order to reach readers beyond the confines of the mother tongue and national borders. Translation provides safe passage from one language into another, confirming as it does the integrity of both the source and target languages and, in some cases, also confirming established hierarchies between them. When the fictional character Alyosha, like the real author Makine, bypassed the need for translation by writing directly in French, disbelief on the part of editors required "a literary mystification" in the form of a forged Russian original. Thus, Makine and the fictional character Alyosha both succeed as translingual writers by playing to the Schleiermachian assumption that authentic writing can be done only in the mother tongue.

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32   Nina Nazarova, *Andreï Makine: Deux facettes de son oeuvre* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 18–19.

33   Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 133.

Walkowitz uses the term "preemptive translation" to denote a strategic choice on the part of an author to write in a dominant language, thus precluding the need for translation:

Some writers have tried to mitigate the need for translation by choosing to write in a dominant language, if they can. We could call this strategy preemptive translation. This is in some ways an old strategy. Late Medieval and early modern European writers often circulated their work both in Latin and in vernacular languages in order to reach secular as well as clerical audiences. [. . .] From the perspective of the past, it is in some ways a misnomer to call this practice translation or even preemptive translation since it is a relatively recent assumption that one's writing language and one's speaking language would naturally be the same.[34]

Walkowitz notes several examples of preemptive translation in contemporary literature, such as the work of Elif Shafak, who chose English over Turkish as her literary language, and Milan Kundera, who switched from Czech to French after emigrating from Czechoslovakia to France in 1975. Makine could be added to this list, but the preemptive strategy seems to have backfired in his case. Having preempted translation by writing directly in French rather than his native Russian, Makine was required to falsify the existence of a source text, thereby turning his manuscript into what Gideon Toury calls a pseudotranslation:

Being persons-in-the-culture themselves, producers of texts, translators included, tend to be aware of the positions translation and translators, as well as the activity of translation as such, are allotted in the culture and the functions they may fulfil. This awareness is often accompanied by, and finds its expression in certain behavioural patterns, including textual-linguistic features. On occasion, one may decide to manipulate this awareness, put it to active use and offer texts, often even actually compose them, as if they were translations. From the point of view of the culture that hosts them, the resulting texts,

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34 Walkowitz, *Born Translated*, 11. A different strategy, which aims not to preempt but rather to conceal translation, is what Juliane House calls covert translation. "A covert translation," writes House, "is a translation which enjoys the status of an original text in the receiving lingua-culture. The translation is covert because it is not marked pragmatically as a translation at all, but may, conceivably, have been created in its own right." Juliane House, "Overt and Covert Translation," in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), 245.

these pseudotranslations (or fictitious translations) are really on a par with genuine translations. What is activated here is the Source-Text Postulate: i.e., the tacit agreement that for every assumed translation, a corresponding text in another language/culture must have existed.[35]

Toury notes a number of different circumstances—professional, political, commercial, and sociocultural—that have prompted authors to disguise their fictional works as translations. Regardless of the reason, Toury holds that the "the decision to disguise a text as a translation always implies a deliberate act of *subordination*, namely, to a culture which is considered prestigious, important, or dominant in some way. An attempt is thereby made to impart to the new text part of the prestige of the 'donating' culture as it is seen in the eyes of the persons-in-the-'domestic'-culture, as a way of directing, even manipulating, the reception of the new work by its intended audience."[36]

In *Le testament français*, the fictional protagonist Alyosha, like the real author Makine, encounters difficulty in crossing the Iron Curtain into the French literary market in the late twentieth century. A direct, non-mediated switch of literary language from Russian to French challenged the underlying assumptions of the monolingual, national-literature ecology, which sorts languages into discrete vernacular and national categories. Makine's manuscript (like Alyosha's fictional one) thus required the subterfuge of a pseudotranslation in order to have a chance of getting published and becoming recognized in France.

Michael Idov's Cosmopolitan Café

Translation is associated with falsification in different ways in Idov's novel *Ground Up* (2009), often to humorous effect. The narrator-protagonist Mark Scharf has moved to New York City from the Midwest, where he grew up in a Russian-Jewish immigrant family. Together with his wife Nina Liau he opens a café inspired by one in Vienna, which they remember fondly from their honeymoon. They seek to import a nostalgic idea of cosmopolitan European coffeehouses to New York City: "A real belle epoque Viennese café, ours, here, a sunlit expanse of marble tabletops and many-antlered coatracks, loud as a railway station. That's what it would be, in a way, a terminal of the intellect, always in tremulous flux: a constant, polite tangle of arrivals and departures, garrulous

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35   Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies—and Beyond*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), 47.

36   Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies,* 50.

greetings and hushed conflagrations."[37] Wanner notes that the protagonist of *Ground Up* views his café "not primarily as a moneymaking enterprise but as a sort of cultural statement, an emblem of sophistication and authenticity in a world of stultifying corporate chain outlets."[38]

Multilingualism is part and parcel of this cosmopolitan vision, and several passages in the novel highlight language-switching in ways that evoke a cosmopolitan ideal. For example, Mark imagines the new café as "humming with gallery gossip and multilingual verbal sparring,"[39] and he recounts that one of the café owners in Vienna "hopped between Austrian German, passable Russian acquired in his Czech childhood, and a version of Italian that I was in no position to evaluate but that sounded perfectly functional."[40] By comparison, Mark's own multilingualism is less functional, as he had acquired only a "pallid second-generation copy of Russian," despite his parents' best efforts, which included forcing him to read Russian-language books as a child, including Russian translations of works by the American O. Henry.[41] Nevertheless, Mark begins translating at an early age and remembers "spending grades five through seven translating Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* into Russian."[42] One stanza of this translation is reproduced in transliteration:

> *Voda, voda vezde, no pust*
> *Nash tryum, i sohnet snast'.*
> *Voda vezde, no k toi vode*
> *Ustami ne pripast'.*

A footnote provides non-russophone readers with the following clue as to the source text: "*Voda* means *water*, which should be enough to identify the passage."[43]

Mark's translation cannot be said to rival a more elegant rendering from 1919 by the well-known poet Nikolai Gumilev, but his incomplete mastery of

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37   Michael Idov, *Ground Up* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 42.

38   Adrian Wanner, "The Most Global Russian of All: Michael Idov's Cosmopolitan Oeuvre," in *Global Russian Cultures*, ed. Kevin M. F. Platt (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2019), 247.

39   Idov, *Ground Up*, 99.

40   Idov, *Ground Up*, 35.

41   Idov, *Ground Up*, 8.

42   Idov, *Ground Up*, 20.

43   Idov, *Ground Up*, 20.

his native language is precisely the point in this passage.[44] For a boy growing up in the American Midwest, Russian was a vernacular of limited use; as an adult, however, Mark discovers he can capitalize on it. The narrative repeatedly associates his Russian skills with deception. For example, Mark earns "a quick $300" by interpreting for a Slovenian émigré in court. He confesses to the reader in parentheses, "I don't happen to speak Slovenian, but figured its hisses and whistles ran close enough to Russian".[45] He recounts that, as a student majoring in Russian studies at Northwestern University, "[a]ll I needed to do was to feign cluelessness in the beginning, and slowly phase in expertise as semesters ticked by. Ironically, as a result of speaking less and less to my now embarrassing parents, my Russian kept steadily disintegrating; by senior year, I spoke it at the level of, well, someone about to graduate with a Russian studies degree from Northwestern."[46] Mark repeatedly describes himself as deficient in effort and devoid of success, in statements such as the following: "I used intelligence *to* do nothing"[47]; "the jobless boyfriend whose biggest achievement was an unfinished paper on Anna Akhmatova."[48]

As Natasha Lvovich observes, translingual characters are frequently depicted as tricksters, who switch not only languages, but also names and identities, thereby associating translingualism with the qualities of "duality, ambivalence, and liminality."[49] An element of shapeshifting appears also in the spelling of the author's first name on the covers of the English (Michael) and Russian (Mikhail) versions of the novel.[50] The idea of identity as something performed is

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44   Gumilev's translation of this stanza reads: "Вода, вода, одна вода. / Но чан лежит вверх дном; / Вода, вода, одна вода, / Мы ничего не пьем." For an analysis of Gumilev's translation, see Maria Khotimsky, "British Literature in the World Literature Publishing House," *Slavic and East European Journal* 66, no. 1 (2022): 23–25.

45   Idov, *Ground Up*, 25.

46   Idov, *Ground Up*, 21.

47   Idov, *Ground Up*, 32.

48   Idov, *Ground Up*, 31.

49   Natasha Lvovich, "Translingual Identity and Art: Marc Chagall's Stride through the Gates of Janus," *Critical Multilingualism Studies* 3, no. 1 (2015): 119. For an in-depth analysis of the trickster trope in Russian literature of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, see Mark Lipovetsky, *Charms of the Cynical Reason: The Trickster's Transformations in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011). For a broader examination of tricksters in myth and art, see Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).

50   As Grutman and Van Bolderen note, many authors who write in more than one language "choose to differentiate between their respective personae in each language (think of Karen

emphasized in the novel's opening, which depicts the dinner party at which the idea of opening a coffeehouse is born: "The evening was an unrelieved success. If it were a play, Nina would have received a standing ovation. In a way, a play it was: we had put on a small-scale pageant—a piece of dinner theater starring ourselves as a couple remarkably like ourselves, with a few crucial differences."[51] The guests, as well, are described as performers: one is a "performalist," another is "all tics and shtick"[52] and speaks at one point in "a piercing stage whisper,"[53] while yet another is a musician who arrives directly from a gig carrying an amplifier. Throughout the novel, performance, like translation, is associated with inauthenticity. The word "passing" appears repeatedly in the sense of pretending to belong to a group, as do "false," "fake," "faux," and "pseudo."

Nina and Mark name the café after a seventeenth-century historical figure, Georg Franz Kolschitzky, who is credited with opening Vienna's first café, purportedly with coffee beans confiscated from retreating Ottoman Turks—a detail for which Mark expresses admiration: "Part Paul Revere, part Johnny Appleseed, and part McDonald's founder Ray Kroc, he was hero as trickster as looter as entrepreneur. I liked him."[54] Mark and Nina finance their venture by borrowing on the equity of their apartment, which is owned by Nina's mother. In order to conceal this fact, Mark makes up a story about writing a book: "In an alternate universe, which had branched off from ours sometime that past June, I was writing a book [. . .] called *Kolschitzky: The Rogue Who Changed Europe*. Not only was I writing the thing, I had sold it for a six-figure advance. Part of which we then, in a fit of whimsy, invested in a real-life café."[55] Mark's rationale for this ruse recalls Walkowitz's concept of preemptive translation: "It was an original advertisement for the upcoming book! It was an art stunt! It was *preemptive defictionalization*!"[56] Instead of writing a book, however, Mark reviews books for *New York* magazine—an occupation similar to that of literary translator in that it is often freelance, part-time, sporadic, poorly renumerated, and viewed as secondary in relation to original literature.

Blixen/Isak Dinesen in Denmark, Jean Ray/John Flanders in Belgium, or Julien/Julian Green in France)." Grutman and Van Bolderen, "Self-Translation," 324.

51   Idov, *Ground Up*, 3.

52   Idov, *Ground Up*, 5.

53   Idov, *Ground Up*, 6.

54   Idov, *Ground Up*, 50.

55   Idov, *Ground Up*, 172.

56   Idov, *Ground Up*, 172.

Similar to his own "preemptive defictionalization," Mark observes that his friend Vic Fioretti's mediocre music "showed sustained mastery of only one thing, namely preempting criticism by making you unsure which criteria to apply."[57] While Fioretti ultimately achieves success, Mark's "preemptive defictionalization" fails to fool his mother-in-law.

The café, too, fails financially, and a review in *New York* deals the death blow by criticizing the café for inauthenticity: "Kolschitzky, a Viennese-themed coffeehouse on the Lower East Side, joins [. . .] several other businesses whose M.O. is to pretend that the industrialization of the American service sector never happened [. . .] They are, essentially, art projects, existing outside of—sometimes, in direct opposition to—economic reality."[58] Economic viability thus trumps the cosmopolitan ideal. Ironically, Mark and Nina attempt to realize this ideal in a neighborhood that is "practically synonymous with immigration."[59] Although Mark views the Lower East Side as "the most European-feeling neighborhood in New York,"[60] the narrative reveals it to be cosmopolitan in another, less Eurocentric way, with immigrants from the Middle East and the Caribbean, as well as from Europe.

New York City is represented as a multilingual cosmopolis in an early passage of the novel depicting the New York City Marathon, during which Mark volunteers for the "mini-Babel" of the interpreter team.[61] His claim to language proficiency here reveals a colonial attitude harking back to the Soviet era: "I picked Russian and Polish, not because I knew Polish but because Poles should know Russian."[62] The imposed status of Russian as a lingua franca within the Eastern Bloc is also hinted at in the following exchange between Mark and his Latvian cleaner: "I gave her a '*Labrit*' (Good morning), fizzing, as usual, with mediated imperial guilt for her compatriots long forced to say '*Dobroe utro*' to mine."[63]

Idov's novel thus calls into question the cosmopolitan ideal that drives its plot. In his effort to transplant a bygone Central European milieu to the Lower East Side, Mark neglects the contemporary multilingual, cosmopolitan world that surrounds him. It is significant that one of the many acts of translation

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57   Idov, *Ground Up*, 119.

58   Idov, *Ground Up*, 258.

59   Idov, *Ground Up*, 51.

60   Idov, *Ground Up*, 51.

61   Idov, *Ground Up*, 26.

62   Idov, *Ground Up*, 27.

63   Idov, *Ground Up*, 37.

depicted in the novel takes place during Mark's phone conversations with his parents in the Midwest:

> I generally tried to keep my parents as ill-informed of my daily existence as possible, not because they wouldn't approve, but because their strange accumulation of experience (three decades in the USSR followed by three more in rural Indiana) left them without any useful points of reference as far as New York was concerned. Everything from "I'm fine" onward needed a footnote, and some things were altogether inexplicable. [. . .] Whenever I spoke to my parents, and found myself having to translate the subtleties of our ecosystem into rough Midwestern terms, I felt the delicate reasoning that held it all together, the Great Manhattan Social Contract that assigned outsize value to some phenomena and trashed others, fall apart. [64]

This passage expresses a sense of untranslatability of cosmopolitan experience into a vernacular frame of reference. Mark fails at this, just as he fails to transplant his idea of a cosmopolitan Viennese coffeehouse to the Lower East Side.

Olga Grjasnowa's Global Citizen

While Idov portrays a striving for the cosmopolitan as comical and ultimately inviable, Grjasnowa depicts a striving for the global as the only viable option. Translation is central to her novel *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt* (2012). The young narrator-protagonist Maria Kogan works as an interpreter in Frankfurt and later Tel Aviv. Like Grjasnowa (who was born in Baku, spent her childhood in the Caucasus, and emigrated to Germany at the age of twelve), the narrator is transnational and translingual, a non-native speaker of German who has acquired fluency in the language and everyday life of Germany. The narrative often draws the reader's attention to the qualities of words and the multiple languages in the narrator's environment. Prominent within the setting are the accessories of language study, such as "Vokabellisten, Karteikarten und Wörterbücher, die ich von A biz Z auswendig lernte."[65] The narrative also shows Maria

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64   Idov, *Ground Up*, 114–15.

65   Olga Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2013), 12. "vocabulary lists, flash cards, and dictionaries that I memorized from *A* to *Z*." Olga Grjasnowa, *All Russians Love Birch Trees*, trans. Eva Bacon (New York: Other Press, 2014), 6.

doing simultaneous translation in her head, in passages such as the following: "Im Hintergrund lief das Radio. Ich übersetzte die Nachrichten simultan ins Englische, die Werbung ins Französische."[66]

Like Idov, Grjasnowa draws connections between speaking a foreign language and performing an assumed role. This appears for the first of many times in the opening chapter, where the narrator explains that she made quiche for dinner:

> weil ich das Wort *Quiche* für meinen Sprachgebrauch anprobieren wollte. Als wäre ich eine französische Schauspielerin, die eine französische Hausfrau spielte, die ihren französischen Liebhaber erwartet, der als Invalide aus dem Krieg zurückkehrt, und die für ihn eine Quiche bäckt und nicht weiß, welches seiner Gliedmaßen er verloren hat. *Quiche* lag gut auf meiner Zunge, und ich mochte ihr grammatikalisches Geschlecht.[67]

> because I wanted to try out the word *quiche* for my vocabulary. As if I were a French actress playing a French housewife awaiting her French lover, who was returning from the war an invalid, and she is baking a quiche for him, not knowing which limb he's lost. *Quiche* rolled nicely off my tongue. *La quiche*.[68]

The narrative repeatedly specifies *which* language is being spoken and *how*, offering comments and reflections on vocabulary and grammar. Maria's multilingualism is also highlighted: she speaks not only German, but also Azerbaijani, Russian, French, English, Italian, and Arabic. She has taken courses in Spanish and Polish as well as master's programs in Arabic and interpreting, with the ambition of working for the United Nations.[69] The presence of these various languages in the narrator's everyday life and consciousness is conveyed in the novel by isolated foreign words and phrases in the otherwise German text. Other languages spoken in the narrative (though not by the narrator) are Hebrew,[70]

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66 Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 14. "A radio was on in the background. I translated the news simultaneously into English, the ads into French." Grjasnowa, *All Russians Love Birch Trees*, 9.

67 Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 11.

68 Grjasnowa, *All Russians Love Birch Trees*, 5–6.

69 Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 31.

70 Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 161.

Turkish,[71] and Yiddish,[72] as well as Armenian, Greek, and Persian.[73] Arabic is described as being spoken in different dialects, such as Lebanese Arabic and Egyptian Arabic. And Maria is repeatedly depicted working in an interpreting booth.

Similar to Beecroft's observation of the frequency of the "plot of globalization" within the global literary ecology, Walkowitz notes that a focus on translation is characteristic of many prominent works of literature from recent years:

> These world-shaped fictions are also world-themed. They present collaborative projects and private undertakings that operate between or across sovereign states. Characters take part in transnational activities such as humanitarian aid, undocumented labor, wartime emigration, architectural design, concert performance, corporate finance, maritime trade, and scientific research. Because characters travel across nations and continents, the novels are saturated by translation, in both explicit and implicit ways. Many feature translators and scenes of translation or intended translation.[74]

Grjasnowa's novel is a good illustration of this tendency, saturated as it is by the theme of translation. In the process, it explores situations and places related to migration and travel, including expired visas and immigration offices. Throughout, the narrative offers a critique of traditional conceptions of language, ethnicity, and citizenship, as these categories rarely match up in the expected ways. When one of Maria's professors expresses regret that she did not become multilingual earlier in life, she offers the following scathing critique of the professor's worldview: "Sein Multikulturalismus fand in Kongresshallen, Konferenzgebäuden und teuren Hotels statt. Integration war für ihn die Forderung nach weniger Kopftüchern und mehr Haut, die Suche nach einem exklusiven Wien oder einem ungewöhnlichen Reiseziel."[75] Maria expresses distaste for the labels

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71 Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 57.

72 Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 77.

73 Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 220.

74 Walkowitz, *Born Translated*, 122.

75 Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 33. "His multiculturalism took place in congress halls, convention centers, and expensive hotels. To him integration meant demanding fewer hijabs and more skin, hunting for exclusive wines and exotic travel destinations." Grjasnowa, *All Russians Love Birch Trees*, 31.

"immigrant background" and "postmigrant."[76] Although she aspires to a career as a UN interpreter, she describes the activities of NGOs, the United Nations, and the European Union in the Middle East as "[d]ie reinste Parade der neuen Kolonisierung."[77] In the novel's penultimate chapter, she voices skepticism about traditional identity markers when asked what she believes in. The brief conversation goes like this:

> "An was glaubst du?", fragte er.
> "An nichts."
> "Gott?"
> "Nein."
> "Kultur?"
> "Auch nicht."
> "Nation?"
> "Weißt du, in meiner Kindheit gab es einen gepackten Koffer zu Hause, für den Fall der Fälle. [...]"
> "Oh, Anspielungen!"[78]

> "What do you believe in?" he asked.
> "Nothing."
> "God?"
> "No."
> "Culture?"
> "Nope."
> "Nation?"
> "You know, when I was a kid everyone kept a packed suitcase. Precautionary measure. [...]"
> "OK, I got the hint!"[79]

Sheldon Pollock argues that "the choice between the global and the local, whether in literary culture or in the organization of power, may now find some kind of resolution in the blunt refusal to choose from among the alternatives, a refusal that can be performable in practice however difficult to

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76   Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 12.

77   Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 260. "A parade of the new colonialism" Grjasnowa, *All Russians Love Birch Trees*, 297.

78   Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, 276.

79   Grjasnowa, *All Russians Love Birch Trees*, 314–15.

articulate in theory."[80] In responding with negations to the questions in the above passage, Maria can be seen to perform the resolution outlined by Pollock, defying categorization in terms of religion, culture, and nation. Mobility is depicted here as multidirectional, and the fictional world is, to a greater extent than Makine's Paris or Idov's New York, multilingual, decentered, and global.

If it is true, as Pollock argues, that cosmopolitanism strives "to ensure that texts could circulate across a cultural space and time thought of as endless," these novels by Makine, Idov, and Grjasnowa suggest that hierarchies of languages continue to pose obstacles to circulation.[81] Translation is intrinsic to these fictional portraits of immigrants who switch languages and struggle to overcome the limitations of languages in a variety of contexts, ranging from everyday communication to the literary market. The strategies they employ are informed variously by vernacular, national, cosmopolitan, and global ideals. While the vernacular and national modes predominate in Makine's novel, a cosmopolitan ideal drives the plot of Idov's novel, and Grjasnowa's novel bears characteristics of the global mode outlined by Beecroft.

The authors' biographies reflect how the situation for Russian émigré writers, as well as for the circulation of their works, changed in the first post-Soviet decades. Makine, born 1957, belongs to the third wave of Russian émigré writers, having sought political asylum in France in 1987. In order to publish his work, he engaged in pseudotranslation, disguising his Francophone novels as translations with fake Russian source texts. Idov and Grjasnowa belong to the fourth wave: Idov, born 1976, emigrated from Latvia to the United States as a teenager in 1992, while Grjasnowa, born 1984, emigrated from Azerbaijan to Germany as a child in 1996.[82] Although Idov's novel contains comic depictions of linguistic deception, his standing in both of his literary languages—English and Russian—has led him to engage in self-translation, rather than pseudotranslation; in 2010 he published a Russian version of *Ground Up*, entitled *Kofemolka*.[83] Idov had, for a time, a presence on the domestic Russian literary

80   Sheldon I. Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 624.

81   Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," 606.

82   Adrian Wanner, "Moving beyond the Russian-American Ghetto: The Fiction of Keith Gessen and Michael Idov," *Russian Review* 73, no. 2 (2014): 282. On Idov's biography and professional background, see also Wanner, "The Most Global Russian of All," 231. On Grjasnowa, see Adrian Wanner, "Writing the Translingual Life: Recent Memoirs and Auto-Fiction by Russian-American and Russian-German Novelists," *L2* 7, no. 1 (2015): 148.

83   For a discussion of Idov's self-translation, see Adrian Wanner, "Lolita and Kofemolka: Vladimir Nabokov's and Michael Idov's Self-Translations from English into Russian," *Slavic and East European Journal* 57, no. 3 (2013): 450–64.

scene, writing articles for the publications *Bol'shoi gorod*, *Kommersant*, and *Snob*, as well as screenplays for television and film in Russian, and was, for a period, editor-in-chief of the Russian edition of *GQ*.[84] "Idov's bouncing back and forth between continents and languages," argues Wanner, "is paradigmatic of a new phase in the history of Russian migration."[85] Emigration no longer necessarily implies a one-way ticket, and multilingualism has become more visible in some parts of the world today—a reality highlighted in Grjasnowa's novel. Since the success of *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*, Grjasnowa has continued to publish novels in German.[86] By portraying the activity of translation, as well as drawing attention to languages and hierarchies between them, the three novels examined here prompt readers to reflect on the circulation—whether unidirectional, bidirectional, or multidirectional—of people, languages, and literature.

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84   For a discussion of the first season of the Russian television series *Londongrad*, for which Idov was the main screenwriter, see Wanner, "The Most Global Russian of All," 242–47.

85   Wanner, "The Most Global Russian of All," 231. Wanner argues here that Idov as a writer has fashioned a flexible cosmopolitan persona for himself "out of the shards of discrete languages and ethnicities." Wanner, "The Most Global Russian of All," 248.

86   *Die juristische Unschärfe einer Ehe* (2014) and *Gott ist nicht schüchtern* (2017).

Chapter 4

The Translingual Narrator and Language Gaps: The Case of Zinaida Lindén's *Many Countries Ago*

Zinaida Lindén's novel *För många länder sedan* (Many Countries Ago, 2013) depicts the everyday life of a Russian diplomat's wife. It opens with a dream in which the first-person narrator, Galina Pavlova Dolochova, fumbles around in the dark, unable to locate the light switch in her own apartment. She interprets the dream in the following way:

> I själva verket är det ingen dröm utan verklighet. Hela mitt vuxenlivs verklighet. Jag bor överallt och ingenstans. Jag kommer inte ihåg min nuvarande postadress. Jag minns aldrig var strömbrytaren sitter. Jag har flyttat minst trettio gånger.
> Och säkert blir det fler.[1]

> Actually, this is not a dream but reality. The reality of my entire adult life. I live everywhere and nowhere. I can't recall my current address. I never remember where the light switch is. I've moved at least thirty times.
> And I'll surely move again.

A feeling of living "everywhere and nowhere" pervades this novel by the Finnish-Swedish author Zinaida Lindén. Set in the early 2000s in the city of Turku, Finland, it exhibits features of Beecroft's idea of a plot of globalization. Galina's husband Igor is the Russian Federation's Consul in Turku, and her life is full of cultural encounters as well as culture clashes. Translingualism is not only foregrounded in the plot, but also enacted on the level of text. Although the novel is written in Swedish, a number of other languages make various kinds of appearances in the narrative. As a result, the narrative language does not always

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correspond to the languages used in the fictional world. As I will show, these gaps between languages and cultures are thematically central to the novel, as hinted at by the narrator's disoriented feeling of living "everywhere and nowhere" in the passage quoted above.

Lindén's Oeuvre

Lindén is considered "the leading Russian-Nordic émigré writer" today.[2] Since her debut in 1996, she has been awarded a number of literary prizes, the motivations for which emphasize the boundary-crossing qualities and "cultural, geographical, and linguistic breadth" of her work.[3] These qualities are also reflected in Lindén's biography to date; she grew up in Leningrad, lived for a time in Japan, and relocated in 1995 to Turku, where she still resides. Lindén's first language is Russian, but she writes in Swedish as well as Russian, and she has readers in three languages: Finnish, Russian, and Swedish.[4] Before emigrating to Finland, she completed a master's degree in Swedish and Swedish literature at Leningrad State University, and her literary debut took place in Swedish.[5] In addition to novels and short stories, Lindén writes newspaper columns and film reviews, and she also translates literature—her own works as well as works by other authors—from Swedish into Russian. Marja Sorvari describes Lindén's method of self-translation in the following way:

> when asked about the process of how the translation from the foreign language to the native tongue takes place, Lindén says that the Russian texts are not exactly translations of her Swedish texts, but, in fact, Russian versions of the original. Lindén has two working languages in her literary work: Swedish, the acquired foreign language, and Russian,

2   Klapuri, "Literary St. Petersburg in Contemporary Russian Transnational Writing," 236.

3   "Zinaida Lindén," accessed November 1, 2022, https://litteratur.sets.fi/forfattare/zinaida-linden/. Lindén debuted with the short story collection *Överstinnan och syntetisatorn*. It was followed by the collection *Scheherazades sanna historier* (2000), the novel *I väntan på en jordbävning* (2004), the novel *Takakirves—Tokyo* (2007), the story collection *Lindanserskan* (2009), the novel *För många länder sedan* (2013), the story collection *Valenciana* (2016), and the novel *Till min syster bortom haven* (2022).

4   Marja Sorvari, "'On Both Sides': Translingualism, Translation and Border-Crossing in Zinaida Lindén's *Takakirves—Tokyo*," *Scando-Slavica* 62, no. 2 (2016): 141.

5   Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 143.

her mother tongue. When writing her works, she creates the two versions as if 'simultaneously'.[6]

Lindén's literary trajectory resembles that of other translingual writers of her generation, and themes of migration, cultural hybridity, identity, and language are also prominent in her works. She stands out from this cohort in one interesting respect, however. While many contemporary translingual Russian writers have adopted a major European language, such as English, French, or German, as their literary medium, Lindén has chosen to write in Swedish, which is considerably less widespread than her native language of Russian. On the uneven playing field of what Casanova describes as "the world literary game,"[7] Swedish would seem to have a huge disadvantage in relation to Russian. Whereas Russian ranks as the ninth most spoken language in the world today, with an estimated 255 million speakers, the number of Swedish speakers is estimated to be between 10 and 13 million.[8]

As Casanova explains, one way for literature written in a relatively smaller or less prestigious language to gain international recognition is through translation into a larger or more prestigious language, a process she terms "littérisation":

> Literary transmutation is achieved by crossing a magic frontier that allows a text composed in an unprestigious language—or even a nonliterary language, which is to say one that either does not exist or is unrecognized in the verbal marketplace—to pass into a literary language. Accordingly, I define *littérisation* as any operation—translation, self-translation, transcription, direct composition in the dominant language—by means of which a text from a literarily deprived country comes to be regarded as literary by the legitimate authorities.[9]

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6 Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 146. For a comparative analysis of Lindén's Swedish novel *I väntan på en jordbävning* (2004) with her self-translation of it into Russian, *V ozhidanii zemletriaseniia* (2005), see Marja Sorvari, "Native, Foreign, Translated? 'Russian' Migrant Literature between Finland and Russia," in *Migrants and Literature in Finland and Sweden*, ed. Satu Gröndahl and Eila Rantonen (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2018) 57–80.

7 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 133.

8 On the Russian language: Ethnologue, "What Are the Top 200 Most Spoken Languages?," accessed September 10, 2023. On the Swedish language: "Om svenska språket," Institutet för språk och folkminnen, last modified October 7, 2021, accessed September 10, 2023, https://www.isof.se/lar-dig-mer/kunskapsbanker/lar-dig-mer-om-svenska-spraket/om-svenska-spraket. Ethnologue, "Swedish," SIL International, accessed September 10, 2023, https://www.ethnologue.com/language/swe.

9 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 136.

Rainier Grutman and Trish Van Bolderen make the following argument regarding self-tranlsation:

> gaining access to a new (and ideally larger) audience is probably the most commonly given reason for translating one's work. Particularly for bicultural writers with native or near-native access to a more widespread language, self-translation can be a powerful tool for individual self-promotion, giving them a competitive edge over their colleagues with no such access. Making their work known *urbi et orbi* without having to wait for a translator to do so, they can become their own ambassadors, agents, and even career-brokers.[10]

Lindén has, however, taken a detour from the path outlined by Casanova, in that she first composes her works in a comparatively smaller language (Swedish) and then translates them into a comparatively larger one (Russian). Moreover, Swedish is a minority language in Lindén's adopted country of Finland. Although Swedish is, together with Finnish, an official language in Finland, only about two hundred ninety thousand people (approximately 5 percent of Finland's population) in Finland have Swedish as a native language today.[11] The majority of contemporary Russian-language authors in Finland write in either Russian or Finnish, or publish their work in Finnish translation (from Russian).[12] Sorvari notes that "[a]s an author writing in a language other than her native one, [Lindén] is not unique in Finland, but as a Russian author writing in Swedish and enjoying considerable popularity and success, she is one of a kind."[13] Alexei Vostrov characterizes Lindén as "a transnational phenomenon uniting cultures from multiple countries (Russia, Finland, and Sweden)."[14] Lindén can thus be

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10   Grutman and Van Bolderen, "Self-Translation," 325.

11   Charlotta af Hällström-Reijonen, "Svenska talas också i Finland," Svenska Institutet, accessed November 13, 2022, https://si.se/sa-arbetar-vi/svenskan-i-varlden/artiklar-om-sprak/svenska-talas-ocksa-i-finland/. Native Swedish-speakers in Finland are referred to as Finland Swedes.

12   Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 143.

13   Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 141–42.

14   Alexei Vostrov, "Zinaida Lindén: Na grani kul'tur," *Voprosy literatury* 6 (2015): 340. Vostrov discusses the reception of Lindén's work in Russia.

said to represent two language minorities in Finland: Russian and Swedish,[15] a situation that she has described as belonging to a "minority squared."[16]

Transcultural themes are present in all of Lindén's novels. In *I väntan på en jordbävning* (2004), the first-person narrator Iraida Dahlin (who can be seen as Lindén's alter ego) is a Russian émigré living in Finland who writes literature in Swedish. While on a train trip in Russia, she meets another expatriate, Ivan Demidov, who has moved to Japan. In Lindén's second novel *Takakirves–Tokyo* (2007), which has an epistolary form, Iraida and Ivan correspond (first by letter, then by email) from their respective countries of residence (Finland and Japan), reflecting together over cultural differences, languages, and identity. As Sorvari observes, both characters are "immigrants, foreigners, who have to deal with differences, cultural adaptations and collisions, in their everyday lives."[17] Tintti Klapuri argues that the travel and epistolary genres of these novels serve to highlight "the characters' in-betweenness and their hybrid identity." In the first novel, "[t]he central crux of the story takes place in the no-man's-land aboard an international train travelling between Moscow and Helsinki."[18] In the second novel, "the sense of non-belonging that unites Iraida and Ivan is made possible by the cyberspace in which the exchange of letters takes place."[19]

Kaindl argues that translators portrayed in contemporary fiction tend to embody aspects of life in a globalized world, such as "in-betweenness between languages and cultures and the resulting feeling of being uprooted and the inability to call any place [. . .] home."[20] Delabastita notes that the theme of translation serves as a "master metaphor epitomizing our present *condition humaine* in a globalized and centreless context, evoking the human search for a

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15   Tintti Klapuri qtd. in Sorvari, "Native, Foreign, Translated?," 68.

16   Qtd. in Vostrov, "Zinaida Lindén," 332. Native Russian speakers, currently numbering 90,000, are the largest group in Finland of native speakers of languages other than Finnish, Sami, or Swedish. "Foreign-Language Speakers," Statistics Finland, 2021, accessed November 2, 2022, https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa/vieraskieliset_en.html. Sorvari, "'On Both Sides'," 145.

17   Sorvari, "'On Both Sides'," 145.

18   Klapuri, "Literary St. Petersburg in Contemporary Russian Transnational Writing," 244.

19   Klapuri, "Literary St. Petersburg in Contemporary Russian Transnational Writing," 244–45. For in-depth analyses of the novels *I väntan på en jordbävning* and *Takakirves–Tokyo*, see: Klapuri, "Literary St. Petersburg in Contemporary Russian Transnational Writing," 235–48; Sorvari, "'On Both Sides'," 141–59; Marja Sorvari, "Altering Language, Transforming Literature: Translingualism and Literary Self-Translation in Zinaida Lindén's Fiction," *Translation Studies* 11, no. 2 (2018): 158–71; Sorvari, "Native, Foreign, Translated?," 57–80.

20   Kaindl, "Going Fictional!," 9.

sense of self and belonging in a puzzling world full of change and difference."[21] It is this kind of globalized world that the narrator of *För många länder sedan* inhabits.

Multilingualism in the Fictional World of *Many Countries Ago*

Several languages other than Swedish figure within Lindén's novel. Some of these appear explicitly in the form of individual words and phrases in the text, for example in English, French, Italian, and Japanese ("hungry spirit,"[22] "*joie de vivre*,"[23] "Madonna mia,"[24] "himawari," and "omawari"[25]). The text also contains sayings in Latin, such as "Morituri te salutant?" (in reference to the Lenin Mausoleum in Moscow).[26] Several other languages are mentioned without being used: Farsi, Finnish, Russian, Tajik, Tswana, Yoruba, and sign language.

A number of comments on words and their meanings show an awareness of language on the part of the narrator. Grammatical terms appear in several passages, for example, in the following line of dialogue: "Fint att du använder imperfekt när du pratar om det."[27] Foreign language skills are valued by Galina and others in her family. As Sorvari notes, there is an explicit focus on language also in the novel *Takakirves–Tokyo*, in which "[l]inguistic issues come up frequently [...], and language-switching and linguistic comments proliferate in the text."[28] This is motivated by the plot, but it carries thematic significance, as well: "While telling the story of two migrants living in two different countries, it is not surprising that language is one of the main 'characters' in *Takakirves–Tokyo*."[29]

In *För många länder sedan*, the narrator makes a number of observations concerning other characters' language usage. She repeatedly comments on *which* languages they speak and sometimes even *how* they speak them, which is not always perfect. For example, Galina remarks of Pastor Aimo, who is planning a missionary trip to Siberia, "Då han talar ryska struntar han i gramma-

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21   Delabastita, "Fictional Representations," 111.

22   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 107.

23   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 49.

24   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 147.

25   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 91.

26   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 50.

27   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 194. "Nice that you speak of that in the imperfect tense."

28   Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 144.

29   Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 143.

tiken."[30] This characteristic is then exemplified in direct speech, which appears not in Russian but incorrect and antiquated Swedish: "'God dag, ärevördig [sic] madam!' ropar han på sin säregna ryska."[31] Galina recounts that she met "en äldre finsk diplomat på en mottagning. Han stod omgiven av några bulgarer och berättade på välklingande ryska."[32] Russian serves here as a lingua franca for the Finn as well as for the Bulgarians; notably, none of the participants in this conversation appear to be speaking their native language. Yet the Russian language is not visible in these passages, which are conveyed in the narrator's Swedish.

The narrator reflects on the meanings of specific words in a way that connects them with the theme of transcultural movement, as in the following reflection on the words "oligarch" and "consensus":

Jag kommer aldrig att förstå mig på det nya Ryssland. Jag vägrar att tro att dagens sagolika förmögenheter är skaffade på ett lagligt sätt. Jag är hopplös. Jag förstår inte ordet oligark. Visst vet jag vad det betyder, men jag förknippar det inte med det land där jag föddes och växte upp.

Jag läser tidningar och håller mig à jour. Jag har till och med berättat om ryska oligarker i internationella sammanhang. Ändå förstår jag inte ordet. [. . .]

Av alla postsovjetiska neologismer gillar jag mest ordet konsensus. När jag hör det känner jag mig lycklig. Tyvärr hör jag det alltmer sällan på sistone.[33]

I will never understand the new Russia. I refuse to believe that the fantastic riches of today have been earned in a legal way. I'm hopeless. I don't understand the word oligarch. I know what it means, of course, but I don't associate it with the country in which I was born and grew up.

I read the newspapers and stay up-to-date. I've even given talks for international audiences on the subject of Russian oligarchs. But I still don't understand the word [. . .]

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30   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 106. "He disregards grammar when he speaks Russian."

31   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 107. "'Good day, honorable madam,'" he shouts in his peculiar Russian."

32   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 110. "an older Finnish diplomat at a reception. He stood surrounded by some Bulgarians and told a story in resonant Russian."

33   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 118–19.

Of all the post-Soviet neologisms, I like the word consensus the most. I feel happy when I hear it. Unfortunately, I've been hearing it less and less lately.

Galina expresses a sense of disorientation in the wake of the dramatic post-Soviet changes in her homeland and claims to simply not understand the word "oligarch." By contrast, the word "consensus," which has positive connotations in Swedish-language contexts, makes her feel "happy."

Another example of the foregrounding of language as a phenomenon in this novel is found in descriptions of the activity of writing, which include objects such as dictionaries, calligraphy books, and a typewriter. For example, Galina's daughter observes, "Att stava på finska är lätt [. . .] Här behöver man inga lexikon som Oxford Dictionary."[34] In the following passage describing a calligraphy book, specific words are associated with the narrator's understanding of the world as a child: "Moskva är vårt hemlands huvudstad. Vi är stolta över Moskva. Så stod det i den kalligrafibok som var i bruk när jag lärde mig att skriva. Våra första ord är Lenin, Fosterlandet, Moskva. Jag gillade inte detta kalligrafiska påstående. Mina första ord var mamma, pappa, Leningrad."[35] These passages draw a connection between language and a feeling of home and belonging.

At Home and Abroad in Language

The first two of the novel's four parts are entitled "Home" and "Abroad" ("Hemma," "Borta"). They represent two contrasting semantic fields that characterize different periods in Galina's life: her childhood in Soviet Leningrad and an adult life spent mostly abroad, on different continents, in "Africa, Japan, Finland."[36] The words "home" and "abroad" can also stand for different existential conditions that give rise to tension in Galina's inner world.

The home in which Galina grew up no longer exists—her parents have died, the Soviet Union has been dissolved, and Leningrad, which she calls "[m]in stad, min vagga, min modell av universum. [. . .] mitt urhem," no longer bears the

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34   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 100. "It's easy to spell Finnish words [. . .] You don't need reference books like the Oxford Dictionary."

35   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 71. "Moscow is the capital city of our homeland. We are proud of Moscow. That was what we read in the calligraphy book used when I was learning to write. Our first words are Lenin, Motherland, Moscow. I didn't like this calligraphic statement. My first words were mama, papa, Leningrad."

36   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 8.

same name.[37] As an adult Galina leads an international life: "Jag är en del av le monde diplomatique."[38] During the Soviet period, this lifestyle was reserved for the elite, but Galina implies that the life of a diplomat's wife is less glamorous in the post-Soviet era. Her main responsibility is to create a home, but she herself lacks a sense of belonging: "Jag har alltid känt mig obekväm med diplomatfruarnas funktion: att vara ett hem. Att själv utgöra ett hem, ett näste."[39] With an unfinished dissertation in art history, Galina feels that she has not accomplished anything beyond the traditional role of wife and mother.

Galina characterizes herself as a nomad: "gudarna dömt mig till eviga vandringar"[40] and mentions a Roma relative: "Kort efter oktoberrevolutionen övergav han nomadlivet och blev barnhemsföreståndare."[41] The idea of a wandering existence also appears in the image of migrating birds that serves as a leitmotif in the novel (it also appears in the heading of the fourth and final part: "Flyttfåglar" [Migrating birds]). Galina states, "Mina föräldrar besvärades inte av tyngdkraften. Likt himlens fåglar var de alltid redo att lämna sitt näste och flyga bortom molnen."[42]

In several passages, a globe serves as a symbol of the digitalized world and lightning-speed communication. Galina speaks of gravity in a literal as well as figurative sense. As a child she was fascinated by the planet Mars, where gravity is weaker than on Earth: "Livet var lättare på Mars. Därför gillade jag den planeten."[43] Later in the novel she comments, "Redan i treårsåldern var jag medveten om Jordens dragningskraft."[44] The following statement recalls the title of Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (in Czech *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí*), which like Lindén's novel plays with the contrast between weight

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37 "[m]y city, my cradle, my model of the universe. [. . .] my primordial home." Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 175.

38 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 133. "I am a part of le monde diplomatique."

39 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 22. "I have always felt uncomfortable with the function of diplomat wives: to be a home. To constitute a home, a nest."

40 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 64. "the gods doomed me to eternal wanderings"

41 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 29. "Soon after the revolution in 1917, he gave up the nomadic life and became the director of an orphanage."

42 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 26. "My parents were not troubled by gravity. Like birds of heaven, they were always ready to leave the nest and fly beyond the clouds."

43 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 26. "Life was lighter on Mars. I liked that planet for that reason."

44 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 52. "Already at the age of three, I was aware of the pull of Earth."

and lightness: "Det var varats olidliga lätthet. Ingen i min familj besvärade sig med anskaffning av jordiska tillgångar."[45] In this way, the gravity metaphor also expresses a tension in the narrative between the ease offered by information technology and a longing for a fixed point of reference.

In lieu of a fixed point, space and time are conflated, as suggested by the novel's title *För många länder sedan* (this phrase also appears twice in the narrative[46]). Galina explains, "På Putin röstade jag i Japan. På nästa president kommer jag att rösta i Finland, vid Rysslands generalkonsulat i Åbo. Då någon frågar mig *när* någonting hände svara jag egentligen på frågan 'var'?"[47] Towards the end of the novel Galina asks Igor if he recalls when they last had an argument, and he replies by wondering if it was in Mafikeng or Okavango. In response Galina concludes, "Vår tid mäts inte på samma sätt som hos resten av mänskligheten, men enligt relativitetsteorin är tid och avstånd samma sak."[48] This replacement of time with space as a point of reference serves to emphasize Galina's disorientation on an existential level.

Lindén uses spatial terms to describe language in one of her columns for the Helsinki newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet*. It describes Finland-Swedes she has met who went to Swedish-language schools but later decided to switch from their native Swedish to the Finnish language. Lindén calls such individuals "linguistic emigrants" ("språkliga utvandrare"), for whom "Svenskan var ett landskap de lämnat."[49] With a focus on grammar, Lindén depicts how a dentist "talade utan brytning, men hennes svenska var lite trevande, med en del prepositionsfel och felaktiga böjningsformer."[50] The appearance, in this short essay, of migration as a metaphor for language-switching recalls Galina's thoughts about her nomadic life.

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45   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 23. "It was the unbearable lightness of being. No one in my family bothered with acquiring earthly assets." The title of Kundera's novel in Swedish translation is *Varats olidliga lätthet*.

46   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 41, 136.

47   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 8. "I voted for Putin in Japan. I will vote for the next president in Finland, at Russia's consulate in Turku. When someone asks me *when* something happened I actually reply to the question 'where?'"

48   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 195. "Our time is not measured in the same way as for the rest of humanity, but according to the theory of relativity, time and distance are the same thing."

49   Zinaida Lindén, "Språkliga utvandrare," *Hufvudstadsbladet*, November 30, 2014, 28. "Swedish was a landscape they'd left."

50   Lindén, "Språkliga utvandrare," 28. "spoke without an accent, but her Swedish was a little tentative, with some preposition errors and incorrect conjugations."

Galina's silence stands in contrast to her awareness of language. Igor holds that "diplomatin ska vara assertiv. Att man ska kommentera, dementera, upplysa"; "ingen frågar mig. Någonting hindrar mig från att kommentera och dementera."[51] She explains, "Min förmåga att tiga hjälper mig som diplomatfru."[52] Here a connection is drawn between Galina's silence and a subordinate role as a diplomat's spouse—a role which she does not enjoy. The idea of silence is conveyed in another way in the narrative, through the invisibility on the level of the text of Galina's native language of Russian.

Just as "home" and "abroad" comprise contrasting semantic fields, there is a tension in the narrative between silence and language. Galina's sense of disorientation continues throughout the novel, but the ending suggests that she finds resolution through language. Her lover Roman marries another woman, but Galina's friendship with him continues, and she comments, "Vi har börjat hitta ord för det som vi länge tigit om."[53] Igor suggests that they could move to St. Petersburg in the future, and Galina likes this idea.[54] Towards the end of the novel, it seems possible for Galina to find a sense of home and also a language for experiences she has previously been unable to put into words. A contrast between silence and language can be discerned not only in the novel's plot, but also in its depiction of different languages—a dimension we will examine more closely below.

Multilingualism in the Text of *Many Countries Ago*

Implicitly, the fictional world of this novel contains at least three different scripts: Latin, Cyrillic, and kanji, yet only the Latin alphabet is visible on the surface of the text. One passage describes writing in kanji without showing this script on the page: "När Igor märkte att Dima var intresserad av skriftsystemet började han ordna skämtsamma tävlingar i kanji-skrivtecken. Många kvällar satt de sida vid sida och ritade skrivtecken."[55]

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51 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 169. "Diplomacy should be assertive. That one should comment, deny, inform"; "no one asks me. Something prevents me from commenting and denying."

52 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 126. "My ability to be silent helps me as a diplomat's wife."

53 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 171. "We have started to find words for what we had, for a long time, been silent about."

54 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 195–96.

55 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 92. "When Igor noticed that Dima was interested in the system of writing he began holding humorous competitions in kanji characters. Many evenings they sat side by side and drew characters."

The Russian language is frequently present in the fictional world, yet absent from the text. Considering that the first-person narrator's native language is Russian and that a large part of the plot takes place in an environment where Russian is spoken, a discrepancy arises between the narrative language and the languages of the fictional world. The plot has a Russian background, but it is only implied; the Russian language is neither heard nor seen explicitly in the text.

This looks different, however, in the Russian version of the novel, *Mnogo stran tomu nazad* (2014), which was self-translated by Lindén. Here Russian is the most visible language, while Swedish plays a smaller role in the story and the narration alike. If we choose to view the novels *För många länder sedan* and *Mnogo stran tomu nazad* as two parts of a greater whole, it could be argued that a balance is achieved, through translation, between the two language worlds of Russian and Swedish. Sorvari makes a case for such a view in her analysis of *Takakirves–Tokyo* together with Lindén's Russian translation of it, *Po obe storony* (2014): "these novels cannot be read just as 'Finnish-Swedish' or 'Russian' novels, although they were written in one language: both editions need context-based reading, as far as the different linguistic and literary elements are considered [. . .] Both versions imply a process of (cultural and actual) translation between Finnish-Swedish and Russian cultures."[56] In her comparative analysis of Lindén's novel *I väntan på en jordbävning* and the Russian version (also self-transated), *V ozhidanii zemletriaseniia*, Sorvari concludes that "it is more productive to view a self-translated text as encompassing two originals that both entail cultural mediation and translation between two (or more) cultures and languages, for two (or more) target audiences."[57]

As we have already seen, Galina offers observations about the language choices of other characters. Sometimes these choices are based on incorrect assumptions, as in the following passage: "Igor är trött. Han kom just hem från något sammanträde. Han berättar om några estniska kolleger som hade försökt tala finska med en ålänning."[58] Igor's irritation is caused by ignorance on the part of the Estonian colleagues of the language situation in Finland, which leads them to wrongly assume that Finnish, instead of Swedish, is the better choice.

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56 Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 155.

57 Sorvari, "Altering Language: Transforming Literature," 168. As Chiara Montini observes, Brian T. Fitch draws a similar conclusion about Samuel Beckett's works, arguing that "both authorial texts constitute a whole." Chiara Montini, "Self-Translation," in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), 307.

58 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 161. "Igor is tired. He just came home from a meeting. He tells about some Estonian colleagues who had tried to speak Finnish with an Ålander."

This mismatch between the languages of speaker and receiver is also reflected on the level of the text. According to the premises of the fictional world, it is logical to assume that Igor relates this episode to Galina in their shared native language of Russian, yet it is, like all conversations between them in the novel, conveyed to the reader in Swedish. This is thus an instance of the third type of transmesis in Beebee's typology, when a text depicts a fictional world in which the language spoken does not correspond with the language of the text. Similar discrepancies occur in the novels *I väntan på en jordbävning* and *Takakirves– Tokyo*. The reader understands that Iraida and Ivan's fictional communication takes place in their shared language of Russian, although it is depicted in Swedish. There is only one passage in *För många länder sedan* where the reader can be entirely certain that the narrative's language corresponds to the language used in the fictional world. This is when Igor and Galina are on vacation in Istanbul and speak English with the staff at a Turkish bath:

> Sista dagen ville vi gå och bada hamam. Personalen förklarade att det bara var för damer på onsdagar:
> "But we have got a gay bar, sir," tillade mannen bakom disken stolt.
> "Thanks, maybe not this time," svarade Igor hövligt.[59]

> On the last day we wanted to bathe at a hamam. The staff explained that it was only open for women on Wednesdays:
> "But we have got a gay bar, sir," added the man behind the desk proudly.
> "Thanks, maybe not this time," replied Igor politely.

Galina observes, "Så många länder jag har bott i, så många språk jag har hört talas," but the reader does not learn much about her own language use.[60] She mentions that she studied French on her own when Dima was a baby,[61] and that in Turku she needs a Finnish phrase book to communicate with her landlord,[62] but otherwise there are no indications in the narrative as to which language, or languages, she speaks outside of her home and the Russian consulate in Turku. Hypothetically it could be Swedish, Finnish, or English, but when Galina's conversations with other characters are depicted in the text, they appear in Swedish

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59 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 152.

60 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 103. "So many countries have I lived in, so many languages have I heard spoken"

61 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 77.

62 Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 84.

(with the exception of individual words and phrases in other languages). She narrates the story in Swedish, yet there are no details in the story itself or in the fictional world that might explain when, where, and how she has learned Swedish. According to the logic of this fictional world, it is not even certain that she knows Swedish. Vostrov argues that Lindén's protagonists always play "hide-and-seek with the reader,"[63] and this characterization could also be applied to Lindén's language choices. The first-person narrator controls the narrative, with the result that the language(s) she uses in the fictional world are hidden from the reader, because everything that is said and done in the fictional world is related by the narrator in Swedish. In this way, the narrator can be seen to assume the role of translator for her readers, conveying the narrative in a way that might lead the reader to perceive the text as a Swedish translation from Russian. According to Mary Louise Pratt, this quality is typical of multilingual works, which "[y]ou read as you would a translation, only in this case there is no original."[64]

The Narrator as Translator

Lindén's novel contains three instances of the first of Beebee's four types of transmesis: "[t]exts whose mimetic object is the act of translation, the translator, and his or her social and historical contexts."[65] Galina recounts that she had to engage the consulate's interpreter in order to speak with her son Dima's teacher in Japan.[66] Even Dima sometimes translated for Galina: "Jag var en fåfäng mor. Jag gladdes åt att Dima hade blivit min tolk. Han läste skyltar åt mig. Tack vare Dima kunde jag skilja hårschampo från hårbalsam som såldes i likadan flaska. Jag kände mig som en mor från gamla tider, en analfabet som skickar sitt barn till skolan i hopp om en bättre framtid."[67] Later in the narrative, Galina recalls the opening of a Moscow exhibition by the French-Canadian artist Jean-Paul Riopelle. The gallery had hired an English-language interpreter, and Igor, feeling

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63   Vostrov, "Zinaida Lindén," 333.

64   Mary Louise Pratt, "Comparative Literature and the Global Languagescape," in *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, ed. Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 288.

65   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 6.

66   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 93.

67   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 91. "I was a vain mother. I was glad Dima had become my interpreter. He read signs for me. Thanks to Dima I could tell the difference between the shampoo and conditioner sold in the same bottle. I felt like a mother from previous times, an illiterate who sends her child to school in hope of a better future."

embarrassed, went up to the microphone and interpreted the Canadian museum director's speech from French.[68] This passage is another example of mistaken assumptions about *who* speaks *which* language.

Kaindl makes the following observation regarding the literary functions of transfiction: "A character who is a translator or interpreter as well as translation processes can be employed to examine the big questions and opposing poles of communication, such as understanding and misunderstanding, creation and negotiation of meaning, the self and the other, and encounters between languages and cultures, allowing them to be reinterpreted as fundamental issues of our existence."[69] Questions concerning understanding (and misunderstanding) between different languages and cultures are central to the novel *För många länder sedan*. It is such questions that preoccupy Galina, and the narrative prompts readers to consider them as well.

Galina is not a translator in a literal sense; as we have seen, she is herself in need of an interpreter on two occasions, but she can be seen as a translator figure in several respects, one of which is her role as a diplomat's spouse. Diplomacy and translation are related activities, according to Matthew Reynolds, who points out that one "aspect of translation—mediation, the avoidance of conflict—is crucial in diplomatic negotiation," and holds further that "every act of translation negotiates between two powers. The aim of conveying what a speaker or source text is saying has to be tempered by an awareness of what the listener or reader is prepared to take on board. [...] all translation involves diplomacy."[70] Anthony Pym includes both translators and diplomats in the category of professional intercultures, in which people must "know and operate in more than one cultural frame at once."[71]

Galina not only has a different native language than Swedish but also a cultural frame of reference that differs from that of the implied Swedophone reader. There are a number of passages in which Galina provides sociological or cultural-historical context in explanations of phenomena such as Russian holidays. Such moments in the text resemble lessons, for example when Galina adds "in the Russian folktale" after the following simile: "Mitt föräldrahem präglades av bekymmerlöshet. Det vacklade och skakade likt stockstugan på kycklingfötter

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68   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 161–62.

69   Kaindl, "Going Fictional!," 10.

70   Matthew Reynolds, *Translation: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6.

71   Anthony Pym, "Globalization and the Politics of Translation Studies," *Meta* 51, no. 4 (2006): 751.

i den ryska folksagan."[72] No explanation would be needed for Russian readers (and indeed the words "in the Russian folktale" do not appear in the Russian version of the novel[73]), but here the allusion is in a sense translated for the benefit of Swedphone readers. As a result, translation and cultural exchange not only appear as motifs in the narrative, but also become part of the reader's encounter with the novel.

Interestingly, the protagonist Iraida in *Takakirves–Tokyo* had aspired to become a translator in Finland but discovered that interpreters from Swedish were in low demand. Instead, she becomes a Swedish-language writer—an activity which Sorvari holds is a form of cultural translation:

> in a way, the wish to become a translator was partly fulfilled, but in quite a different manner to that which Iraida had planned; she translates not in the anonymous, invisible way she originally wanted, but as a writer of translingual fiction, with the authorial visibility that goes with that position. Instead of translating a foreign source text into her native target tongue, she is herself a producer of both the source and the target text.[74]

Lindén's literary depictions of different types of translation serve to highlight transcultural experiences. Both Klapuri and Sorvari consider Lindén's oeuvre to be a form of translation in a broad sense, as cultural mediation. Sorvari holds that cultural mediation "is at the core of Lindén's work, where the textual composition is formed of interaction, encounters, and sometimes inevitably even collisions between cultures, languages and ethnicities."[75] Klapuri locates Lindén's writing within a larger body of translingual works by contemporary Russian authors: "In directly hinting at Russian literature and culture, the authors can be seen as interpreters of Russian literature for a new audience [. . .], that is, as mediators who decode the intertextual and cultural framework of their texts for uninitiated readers."[76] Pym notes the mobility of translators as mediators, who "tend to move, not only from discourse to discourse, not just from client to

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72   Lindén, *För många länder sedan*, 22. "My childhood home was characterized by carefreeness. It rocked and shook like the log cabin on chicken feet in the Russian folktale."

73   Zinaida Lindén, *Mnogo stran tomu nazad* (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii dom, 2014), 23.

74   Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 153.

75   Sorvari, "'On Both Sides,'" 156.

76   Klapuri, "Literary St. Petersburg in Contemporary Russian Transnational Writing," 246.

client, but also from country to country."[77] Viewed from this perspective, both the narrator and author of *För många länder sedan* are cultural mediators, drawing readers' attention to experiences of living between countries, cultures, and languages.

Similar to the way space seems to replace time for the internationally mobile and existentially disoriented narrator-protagonist, the variety of languages spoken in the fictional world are replaced by another language in the narrative. The narrator tells us next to nothing about her own linguistic world, yet offers the reader glimpses of a multilingual world behind the text. The reader is in turn prompted to reflect on language as a phenomenon, and the various ways in which humans put it to use.

Two of Beebee's types of transmesis can be identified in this novel: depictions of translation or translators, and discrepancies between languages spoken in the fictional world and what we see on the level of the text. The novel thus draws attention to language in a number of ways: through translational situations in the plot, through the narrator's comments on language, through depictions of how characters write and speak, and—not least of all—through discrepancies between languages. Literary representations of multilingualism, writes Beebee, "remind their readers that the world is multilingual."[78] When we as readers of Lindén's novel *För många länder sedan* become aware of language gaps, a meta-level opens up, inviting us to imagine how we all wander among languages.

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77   Anthony Pym, "Humanizing Translation History," *Hermes* 42 (2009): 36.

78   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 3.

The Literary Translator as Reader:
The Case of Rabih Alameddine's
An Unnecessary Woman

As if in defiance of the translator's invisibility postulated by Venuti's seminal monograph from 1995, a number of post-millennial novels and films have put translation under the microscope.[1] At first glance, translators—especially literary translators—would seem unlikely heroes of novels. Susan Bassnett laments a "hegemonic distinction made between writing and translating," which has led to a view of translators as copiers rather than creators.[2] Nitsa Ben-Ari surveys representations of translators in a selected corpus of popular cultural texts, dating from the 1970s through the first decade of the twenty-first century, and finds that negative images predominate: "Whether portrayed as transparent or lacking stamina, effeminate or outright impotent, shunning power or dangerously powerful, loyal to or betraying their employers/professional ethics—not one protagonist is satisfied with his profession."[3] Kaindl's analysis of a corpus of approximately one hundred fictional depictions of translators yields the following picture:

> The physical appearance of the characters is very often marked by physical defects, inadequacies and illnesses, and their psychological disposition is often frail. The psychological disorders are attributed to an identity crisis resulting from the translators' multilingualism, their linguistic and cultural rootlessness or their frustrating working conditions. Thus, the act of translating becomes an occupation that

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1   Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility.*

2   Susan Bassnett, "Writing and Translating," in *The Translator as Writer*, ed. Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 173. For a critique of how literary reviewers treat translations, see Grossman, *Why Translation Matters*, 29–32.

3   Ben-Ari, "Representations of Translators in Popular Culture," 236. For details on the selected corpus, see page 222.

does not allow for personal fulfilment and at times even leads to the complete annihilation of the translator as a subject.[4]

Similarly, Judith Woodsworth, writing in 2021, notes "the continuing perception of translation as a subsidiary art" in the popular imagination.[5]

Nevertheless, a number of new films and novels not only shine a spotlight on translators and interpreters, but also portray them in a more positive manner, often problematizing old stereotypes at the same time.[6] Ben-Ari notes that "the translator, once transparent, has become a desirable protagonist."[7] Fictional depictions of translation and interpreting have been present throughout literary history, but recently, as Woodsworth observes, "translation has been sparking curiosity and a new appreciation for its intricacies."[8] This is also apparent in a number of recent biographies and scholarly monographs on individual translators.[9] The current fascination can be related to developments in the real world. "Translation is both pervasive and prominent in today's world," note Woodsworth and Gillian Lane-Mercier, who attribute this to "economic and cultural globalization, intensified migration and increasingly pluralistic societies."[10] Jon Thiem ascribes the increased prominence of translators as lit-

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4 Klaus Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality: The Role of Fiction in Translation Studies," in *The Fictions of Translation*, ed. Judith Woodsworth (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018), 160.

5 Judith Woodsworth, "Dressing Up for Halloween: Walking the Line Between Translating and Writing," in *Literary Translator Studies*, ed. Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2021), 296.

6 This phenomenon is exemplified and analyzed in the following studies: Delabastita and Grutman, "Introduction," 11–34; Kaindl and Spitzl, eds., *Transfiction*; Judith Woodsworth, ed., *The Fictions of Translation* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018); Michael Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies* (London: Routledge, 2009).

7 Ben-Ari, "Representations of Translators in Popular Culture," 221.

8 Woodsworth, "Dressing Up for Halloween," 293. Kaindl argues that the history of translation fiction goes back to the Old Testament. Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality," 157.

9 As Baer explains, the genre of translator's biography was established earlier in the Soviet Union than in the West, due to "a specific set of cultural and political circumstances" that accorded translators "special prominence in Soviet culture." Brian James Baer, "The Translator's Biography and the Politics of Representation: The Case of Soviet Russia," in *The Fictions of Translation*, ed. Judith Woodsworth (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018), 51–52.

10 Judith Woodsworth and Gillian Lane-Mercier, "Introduction: Translation as a Master Metaphor," in *The Fictions of Translation*, ed. Judith Woodsworth (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018), 1.

erary characters in fiction from the second half of the twentieth century to two factors: first, an internationalization of literature, precipitated by the displacements caused by revolutions, wars, and repressive regimes; second, a postmodernist sensibility, which has led readers to appreciate the role of translators in a new way: "The translator's secondary position with respect to the primary text makes him or her a personification of belatedness, and translation itself a model for all forms of belated cultural endeavour."[11] As Kaindl observes, the figure of the translator can also serve as a focal point for broader issues: "The topic of translation and interpreting is placed into a fictional space with a performative act, as it were, transporting it into a new and larger context that goes beyond the concrete working and living situation of the interpreter or translator."[12] The intermediary position occupied by translators and interpreters thus makes them intriguing literary heroes for our time, offering authors and readers alike a vessel for exploring questions related to language.

The Translator's New Visibility in Translation Studies

Parallel to the literary trend discussed above, translators have come into focus in a new way within the field of translation studies. In *Negotiating the Frontier: Translators and Intercultures in Hispanic History* (2000), Pym calls for a shift "from idealized translation to something slightly more human, something a little more active. We must seek the place of translators and their kind. Although the conceptual shift from translation to translators may seem rather trivial, it changes almost everything."[13] In his contribution to a 2009 special issue of the journal *Hermes* entitled "Translation Studies: Focus on the Translator," Pym makes the following case for research devoted specifically to the roles of translators: "Translators, the human producers of translations, might also be legitimate objects of knowledge. The history of translators is at least as valid an organizing principle as have been the various focuses on source-text authors, source texts, or target-vs.-source languages, cultures or nations."[14] Maria Tymoczko's

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11   Jon Thiem, "The Translator as Hero in Postmodern Fiction," *Translation and Literature* 4, no. 2 (1995): 209. Thiem further attributes the new scholarly interest in fictional translators to developments in translation theory, namely "a new awareness of the textual paradoxes emerging from the phenomenon of self-translation, and the apologia for translation in the writings of Jorge Luis Borges," 210.

12   Kaindl, "Going Fictional!," 10.

13   Anthony Pym, *Negotiating the Frontier: Translators and Intercultures in Hispanic History* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2000), 2.

14   Pym, "Humanizing Translation History," 31–32.

monograph *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (2007) takes issue with Eurocentric conceptualizations that have shaped the discipline of translation studies, including "the metaphor of the translator as standing 'between' in the transfer process. The problem with this metaphor, holds Tymoczko, is that it "suggests that the translator is neutral, above history and ideology," resulting in "the effacement of ideology and the evisceration of the agency of the translator as a committed, engaged, and responsible figure."[15] She makes a case for expanding the definition of translation in order to gain "insights about the agency of translators and ultimately to the empowerment of translators."[16] Kaindl argues that the focus on machine translation in the early days of translation studies resulted in "a great misconception, which led to the translator being left out of theory formation," and he advocates a different approach that is "not primarily concerned with texts but with people."[17] Pym argues that "[i]nstead of the binarisms of source vs. target, language vs. language, culture vs. culture, a focus on translators should make us think about something operating across the two sides, in their overlaps."[18]

The special journal issue on translators also contains an article by Andrew Chesterman in which he redraws James Holmes's foundational map of translation studies from 1972 in order to include human translators. Chesterman proposes a new subfield called translator studies (rather than translation studies), in which "texts are secondary, the translators themselves are primary":[19]

> Assume that Translation Studies consists of four big branches: textual, cultural, cognitive and sociological. The textual branch deals with all matters textual, and thus by definition lies outside Translator Studies. But the three other branches are all relevant to us here, and indeed

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15 Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007), 7.

16 Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, 8. This concern is especially reflected in Part 2 of Tymoczko's book, "Empowering Translators," with its focus on translators' political agency, activism, and ethics; it is also at the heart of the volumes *Translation and Power* (eds. Tymoczko and Gentzler, 2002) and *Translation, Resistance, Activism* (ed. Maria Tymoczko, 2010).

17 Klaus Kaindl, "(Literary) Translator Studies: Shaping the Field," in *Literary Translator Studies*, ed. Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2021), 3, 2.

18 Pym, "Humanizing Translation History," 45.

19 Andrew Chesterman, "The Name and Nature of Translator Studies," *Hermes* 42 (2009): 15. For Holmes's map, see: James S. Holmes, "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies," in *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies*, ed. James S. Holmes (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988) 67–80.

offer one way of conceptualizing this subfield of Translation Studies. The cultural branch deals with values, ethics, ideologies, traditions, history, examining the roles and influences of translators and interpreters through history, as agents of cultural evolution. The cognitive branch deals with mental processes, decision-making, the impact of emotions, attitudes to norms, personality, etc. The sociological branch deals with translators'/interpreters' observable behaviour as individuals or groups or institutions, their social networks, status and working processes, their relations with other groups and with relevant technology, and so on. All three branches comprise both theoretical and descriptive studies, and also pure and applied studies.[20]

In a similar vein, Jeremy Munday calls for a new research methodology that utilizes unpublished texts by translators, such as translation drafts and translator correspondence, which he sees as "an indispensable resource for the investigation of the conditions, working practices and identity of translators and for the study of their interaction with other participants in the translation process."[21] By providing "crucial and more direct access to the creative *process* that is literary translation,"[22] this kind of approach aims to supplement descriptive translation studies, which, Meylaerts argues, focuses on the product of translation "as a depersonalized construct of structural relationships."[23] Similarly, Pym expresses "discontent with the illusions of objective science that abound in systems-based Descriptive Translation Studies."[24] As I will show, Munday's approach of "digging out what might seem minor details of a working life" has a counterpart in contemporary fictional depictions of literary translators, which invite the reader to imagine the minutiae of the translation process as they appear from the subjective position of the individual translator.[25]

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20   Chesterman, "The Name and Nature of Translator Studies," 19.

21   Jeremy Munday, "Using Primary Sources to Produce a Microhistory of Translation and Translators: Theoretical and Methodological Concerns," *The Translator* 20, no. 1 (2014): 64.

22   Jeremy Munday, "The Role of Archival and Manuscript Research in the Investigation of Translator Decision-Making," *Target* 25, no. 1 (2013): 126.

23   Reine Meylaerts, "The Multiple Lives of Translators," *TTR* 26, no. 2 (2013): 104.

24   Pym, "Humanizing Translation History," 24.

25   Munday, "Using Primary Sources," 73.

The Transfictional Turn

In order to learn more about the role of translators, some scholars have turned to fiction. Already in 1981, Sternberg coined the term "translational mimesis" for literary representations of translation, and Beebee later built on this in developing the concept of "transmesis."[26] As a literary subgenre, the phenomenon has recently acquired a number of other names, including "translator fiction," "translation fiction," and "transfiction," the latter defined broadly by Kaindl as "the introduction and (increased) use of translation-related phenomena in fiction."[27]

Within this fictional turn in translation studies, fiction is mined for theoretical insights on the process of translation.[28] For example, in an analysis of prose fiction by Argentine author Julio Cortázar, Adriana S. Pagano argues that fiction "informs translation thinking from a comprehensive perspective, sensitive to relationships and movements difficult to capture through more orthodox analyses that do not consider fictional texts" and explicitly places herself "within this movement of reading fiction as a source for translation theory."[29] Similarly, Karlheinz Spitzl argues that "[i]nvestigating translatorial action in the mirror of fiction (seen as another reality which we create) can stimulate the work of translation and interpreting practitioners, scholars, teachers and students by approaching related phenomena from beyond the cognitive barrier of 'fact', and, thus, challenge established concepts and paradigms."[30]

In light of this approach, the potential of translation as a literary device appears to have been previously undervalued. "Why is it," wonders Claudia V. Angelelli in *Revisiting the Interpreter's Role*, "that interpreters, powerful individuals who have occupied center stage since the origins of cross-cultural communication, have traditionally been portrayed [. . .] as mere language conduits, invisible parties in the communicative event, deprived of agency, yet capable of

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26   Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality," 221–39;" Beebee, *Transmesis*.

27   Kaindl, "Going Fictional!," 4.

28   See, for example, Rosemary Arrojo, "The Power of Fiction as Theory: Some Exemplary Lessons on Translation from Borges's Stories," in *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction*, ed. Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014), 37–49.

29   Adriana S. Pagano, "Translation as Testimony: On Official Histories and Subversive Pedagogies in Cortázar," in *Translation and Power*, ed. Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 97, 82.

30   Karlheinz Spitzl, "A Hitchhiker's Guide to . . . What to Expect and Where to Start From," in *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction*, ed. Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014), 27.

performing complex linguistic and information processing tasks?"[31] Kaindl suggests that "it seems natural for authors and [film] directors to use the expressive, symbolic, and representative potential of translation and interpreting to address themes of movement, such as migration, flight, displacement, wandering, restlessness, or uprooting in literature and film."[32] Delabastita and Grutman hold that fictionalization of translation offers "a comment about our socio-cultural values and the state of the world we live in. In that respect, fictional representations of multilingualism on the one hand, and of translation on the other, ultimately lead us back to a common reality, that is, if we understand 'translation' not just as an abstract or 'technical' operation between words and sentences, but as cultural events occurring, or significantly *not* occurring, between people and societies in the real world."[33] In *Born Translated,* Walkowitz shows how "translation functions as a thematic, structural, conceptual, and sometimes even typographical device" in many recent novels. "Refusing to match language to geography," Walkowitz observes, "many contemporary works will seem to occupy more than one place, to be produced in more than one language, or to address multiple audiences at the same time. They build translation into their form."[34]

Several studies of fictional depictions of translation have been published in the new millennium, including the special journal issue "Fictionalising Translation and Multilingualism," edited by Delabastita and Grutman (2005), Michael Cronin's monograph *Translation Goes to the Movies* (2009), and the volumes *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction,* edited by Kaindl and Spitzl (2014); *The Fictions of Translation,* edited by Woodsworth (2018); and *Literary Translator Studies,* edited by Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager (2021).[35] Their approaches reflect a broadening of translation theory, from a focus on text-based operations to the contexts of translation. As Pym notes, the paradigm of cultural translation launched by Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) has entailed a movement away from the study of concrete translations to a metaphorical application of translation as a concept for wider phenomena related to migration and cultural hybridity: "The concepts associated with cultural translation can complement other paradigms by

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31   Claudia V. Angelelli, *Revisiting the Interpreter's Role: A Study of Conference, Court, and Medical Interpreters in Canada, Mexico, and the United States* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 1.

32   Kaindl, "Going Fictional!" 4.

33   Delabastita and Grutman, "Introduction," 14.

34   Walkowitz, *Born Translated*, 4, 6.

35   For a brief summary of the history of this subdiscipline to date, see Woodsworth and Lane-Mercier, "Introduction: Translation as a Master Metaphor," 1–2.

drawing attention to the intermediary position of the translator, the cultural hybridity that can characterize that position, the cross-cultural movements that form the places where translators work, and the problematic nature of the cultural borders crossed by all translations."[36]

Scholars who adopt this more expansive approach sometimes use both "translation" and "fiction" metaphorically. While stretching the boundaries of these concepts can open up new paths of research, it also runs the risk of muddying the conceptual waters. Ben-Ari holds that the fictional turn in translation studies "promises some reward for the sometimes frustrating job of translation/interpretation, and the translator's lack of symbolic or social capital may be compensated for by such interest [. . .], this whim of fashion may lead away from translation research as an independent discipline back into the realm of Sociology, Linguistics, Psychology or—in the worst scenario, salon conversation—undermining the serious work invested in constituting its distinction."[37] Pym, who explicitly attributes "the great attraction of translation as a metaphor or way of thinking" to its potential to "cut across binarisms,"[38] notes at the same time that while "[s]uch generalization may be liberating and exciting to many; it could seem dissipating and meaningless to others."[39] He argues elsewhere that "[i]t would be a pity if that development were to leave behind those members of our societies who are actually called translators."[40] At worst, an expansive use of translation metaphors can serve to reinforce old stereotypes.

Fiction can never duplicate a world outside the text, yet statements such as the following misleadingly suggest a one-to-one correspondence between the two: "Fiction is a creative work held up as a mirror to reflect, or refract, reality: it can offer new perspectives and a fresh understanding of the intricacies of the translation process."[41] Kaindl holds that fictional works are "not mere reproductions of reality; instead, they also shape and contribute to our world in a productive manner," and that it is precisely fiction's connection to the real world that makes it possible for researchers to glean "epistemological knowledge [. . .] from fictional representations of translators and interpreters."[42] He

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36   Anthony Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 138.

37   Ben-Ari, "Representations of Translators in Popular Culture," 221.

38   Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, 140.

39   Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories*, 153.

40   Pym, "Humanizing Translation History," 45.

41   Woodsworth and Lane-Mercier, "Introduction: Translation as a Master Metaphor," 1.

42   Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality," 159, 158.

also suggests that "it is very possible that fiction has an impact on the reality of translation."[43] Woodsworth and Lane-Mercier express a similar belief in the potential of transfiction to influence reality: "The anxieties, preoccupations and struggles of contemporary life are among those that can be illuminated, if not resolved, through the fictional use of the motif of translation."[44]

The conceptual relationship between fiction and translation is further complicated by the movement from transfiction to "fictions of translation," by which is meant "different practices of translation [that] are considered 'fictions' because they are out of the ordinary; overturning previously held assumptions about the nature of translation, they blur the boundaries between creation and translation."[45] As examples, the volume *The Fictions of Translation*, edited by Woodsworth, considers cases of self-translation and "discursive constructs" used by translating institutions in officially multilingual countries, as well as concepts applied in translation studies.[46] Kaindl makes the following point about the research field:

> Translation studies also makes use of innumerable fictions. Just to name a few examples: equivalence, neutrality, reader's expectations and translation function. When we talk about the fictionality of these concepts, we talk about the fact that we perceive the translation as if it were equivalent, as if it fulfilled the reader's expectations or as if it were neutral. Even though these fictions have no physical counterpart in reality, they are scientific instruments that help to explain translation as a product and process.[47]

Translation and Translingualism

Sternberg has suggested that literary depictions of translation are particularly frequent in works by translingual writers, who "are among the writers most

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43   Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality," 160.

44   Woodsworth and Lane-Mercier, "Introduction," 6.

45   Woodsworth and Lane-Mercier, "Introduction," 4.

46   Gillian Lane-Mercier, "Official Facts and Fictions: The Canada Council's Discourse on Literary Translation (1972–2015)," in *The Fictions of Translation*, ed. Judith Woodsworth (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018), 273–96.

47   Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality," 161.

addicted to translational mimesis."[48] Although this statement is difficult to quantify, it is clear that translation and translingualism are interrelated phenomena. "Translation," holds Kellman, "is a function of translingualism," and it could be argued that the reverse is also true: that translation is inherently translingual, requiring simultaneous engagement with at least two languages (or language variants).[49] As the case studies in this book show, literary translingualism can enact translational processes, even building them into the reading process.

The translingual nature of translation is highlighted by the phenomenon of self-translation, defined by Hokenson and Munson as a dual text "authored by a writer who can compose in different languages and who translates his or her texts from one language into another," thus "re-creating their own words, bridging both the source and target languages."[50] Kellman posits that "[t]he most willful of ambilingual translinguals are those who choose to rework the 'same' material in another language."[51] Grutman and Van Bolderen draw a distinction between self-translation and standard translation. "While it is customary for literary translators to work from a foreign tongue into their native language," they note, "self-translators work the other way round, producing a second version not in their native language but in their acquired tongue," resulting in a bidirectional, bilingual, and bicultural "translational flow."[52]

The concept of self-translation was first defined by Ukrainian scholar Oleksandr Finkel' in 1929, but his research did not became known outside of Eastern Europe until several decades later.[53] As Hokenson and Munson observe, the practice of literary self-translation is nothing new: "the tradition of the bilingual

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48   Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality," 228.

49   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 90.

50   Hokenson and Munson, *The Bilingual Text*, 1.

51   Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination*, 20.

52   Grutman and Van Bolderen, "Self-Translation," 327.

53   On Finkel', see Oleksandr Kalnychenko and Natalia Kamovnikova, "Oleksandr Finkel' on the Problem of Self-Translation," *InTRAlinea* 21 (2019), https://www.intralinea.org/archive/article/oleksandr_finkel_on_the_problem_of_self_translation. See also: Oleksandr Kalnychenko, "History of Ukrainian Thinking on Translation (from the 1920s to the 1950s)," in *Going East: Discovering New and Alternative Traditions in Translation Studies*, ed. Larisa Schippel and Cornelia Zwischenberger (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2017), 309–38. For overviews of the concept of self-translation, see: Grutman and Van Bolderen, "Self-Translation," 323–32; Montini, "Self-Translation," 306–8; Rainier Grutman, "Self Translation," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 2nd ed., ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (London: Routledge, 2009), 257–60; and Eva Gentes and Trish Van Bolderen, "Self-Translation," in *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism*, ed. Steven G. Kellman and Natasha Lvovich (New York: Routledge, 2022), 369–81. See also Anthony

writer creating a single text in two languages, smoothly spanning different audiences, is a rich and venerable one, arising in Greco-Roman antiquity and thriving in the European Middle Ages and Renaissance. Self-translation was a common practice in the ambient translingual world of early modern Europe, when bilingualism was the norm, and writers increasingly translated between Latin and vernaculars."[54]

As a literary phenomenon, self-translation raises a number of relevant questions for both translation studies and multilingual literary studies. As Wanner writes in *The Bilingual Muse*:

> Is the self-translated version a variant of the original text? Should one speak of two parallel poems, or two originals? How does the passage from one language to another affect the poem's form and content? How "faithful" should a self-translator be—or does this term even make sense when the functions of author and translator coincide? In other words, can an author "betray" himself or herself in translation? And what does "faithfulness" mean anyway?[55]

Hokenson and Munson pose the question, "Since the bilingual text exists in two language systems simultaneously, how do the monolingual categories of author and original apply?" and conclude that "the specific ways in which bilinguals rewrite a text in the second language and adapt it to a different sign system laden with its own literary and philosophical traditions, escapes the categories of text theory, for the text is twinned."[56] Self-translated literature thus "diverges radically from literary norms: here the translator *is* the author, the translation is an original, the foreign is the domestic, and vice versa."[57] The very categories of source and target texts become blurred when an author writes and translates a work simultaneously, which allows the author-translator to "anticipate the other version and sometimes even inscribe its future image in the 'original.'"[58] As Wanner points out, self-translation further "raises the problem of reception

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Cordingley, ed., *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

54   Hokenson and Munson, *The Bilingual Text*, 1.

55   Wanner, *The Bilingual Muse*, 6.

56   Hokenson and Munson, *The Bilingual Text*, 2.

57   Hokenson and Munson, *The Bilingual Text*, 161.

58   Grutman and Van Bolderen, "Self-Translation," 328. The authors also note that even for self-translators, simultaneous translations are less common than consecutive ones.

and reader response. Do we read and judge a self-translated text differently from a monolingual creation? Who is the intended, or the ideal, reader of such texts? Does such an audience even exist? Is it growing today?"[59]

Wanner notes an ambiguity inherent in the term itself, in that self-translation denotes an authorial translation but can also be read metaphorically, as translation of the self. "Seen from that angle," he observes, "any literary writing in a non-native language could be considered a self-translation of sorts."[60] Grutman and Van Bolderen observe that the term has also been used within migration studies "to describe the manifold ways in which writers' identities, their 'selves,' are remolded by the move to a new country and the integration into a new language-culture, a physical 'translation' that can be accompanied or not by actual translations."[61] The phenomenon of self-translation thus has the potential to expand our understandings of both translation and translingualism, and help us revise the binary paradigms of source language/target language, source text/target text, foreignization/domestication, author/translator, and original/translation.

In other ways as well, definitions of translation have recently been extended to encompass translingual activities that blur these conceptual boundaries between source and target. Reynolds argues that "translation needs to be at the heart of the way we use and think about language,"[62] and his concept of "translaterature" accords a role not only to authors and translators, but also readers:

> translation is not a matter of trying (and of course failing) to achieve sameness with the source text. The meaning and character of the source text are not simply there for the taking: they have to be conjured up, co-created as you read. If you then go on to translate, you make a new text, out of different materials, in a different context. You want it to stand in for the source text insofar as that is possible in the changed circumstances: to do a similar job or have a similar effect. But whatever you have written is then of course put into the hands of readers who will interpret it in its turn, each in their own way.[63]

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59   Wanner, *The Bilingual Muse*, 14.

60   Wanner, *The Bilingual Muse*, 9. For a comprehensive overview of research on self-translation, see Eva Gentes's regularly updated online bibliography (self-translation.blogspot.com).

61   Grutman and Van Bolderen, "Self-Translation," 323.

62   Reynolds, *Translation*, 120.

63   Reynolds, *Translation*, 107–8.

As the above overview shows, the question "How do translators live?" (posed by Pym) is being addressed in new ways by translation studies scholars and literary authors alike. Translation fiction gives translators a human face, placing what Kaindl calls "the translatorial subject" front and center.[64] Fictional depictions of translation not only render the occupation of translation more visible, but also bring language and reading to the fore. As a case study of how this works, let us now turn to the novel *An Unnecessary Woman* (2013) by Lebanese-American author Rabih Alameddine.

Alameddine's Portrait of a Translator

Set in Beirut in the early twenty-first century, *An Unnecessary Woman* can be read as a fictional autobiography of a translator. The narrator, seventy-two-year-old Aaliya Saleh, looks back on her life, describing her childhood, her arranged marriage at the age of sixteen and subsequent divorce, her job at a bookstore, and the recurring wars in Lebanon. The novel depicts Aaliya's sleepless nights and daily routines, walks around Beirut, and sporadic interactions with neighbors and family. She reflects on her fraught relationship with her elderly mother as well as her close friendship with Hannah, now dead by suicide. She also recalls the many books she has read and translated. Literature, music, film, and art are constantly in the foreground of the narrative, which contains a virtual compendium of literary references and direct quotes (some attributed in the text, others not), as well as commentary on various writers, philosophers, artists, composers, and translators. The narrator describes literature as a refuge from life: "I slipped into art to escape life. I sneaked off into literature."[65]

For Aaliya, literature is a mode of relating to the world, and she often interprets events both past and present through a literary lens, referring to details from various works alongside events in her life. For example, after expressing nostalgia for certain aspects of her childhood, she concludes, "But then I feel nostalgia for the walks by Swann's Way, as well as by Guermantes Way, for how Charles Kinbote surprises John Shade whiles he's taking a bath, for how Anna Karenina sits in a train."[66] Here literature is given the last word over life in a pattern that is repeated many times throughout the novel. "I fill in the blanks with literary personas better than I do with real people," she states, "or maybe I make

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64   Kaindl, "(Literary) Translator Studies," 6.

65   Rabih Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman* (London: Corsair, 2013), 112.

66   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 129.

more of an effort."[67] She employs language and translation as metaphors for life: "Childhood is played out in a foreign language and our memory of it is a Constance Garnett translation."[68]

Early on, the novel evokes familiar images of the translator as a solitary figure of secondary importance, only to complicate these by the end. Ever since her divorce, Aaliya has lived alone, which is an anomalous situation for a single woman in Lebanon. As Simon points out, both women and translators "have historically been the weaker figures in their respective hierarchies: translators are handmaidens to authors, women inferior to men."[69] Aaliya states, "I am my family's appendix, its unnecessary appendage."[70] The novel's title can thus be read ironically, as referring to her marginal social status as a woman who has opted out of the traditional role of caregiver: "I am alone. It is a choice I've made, yet it is also a choice made with few other options available. Beiruti society wasn't fond of divorced, childless women in those days."[71] Although she prefers solitude to the company of most people, she also experiences "loneliness" and "abject isolation," commenting on "how alone I am, how utterly inconsequential my life has become, how sad."[72] Later in the novel, she describes herself as "invisible."[73]

The novel's title can also be interpreted in light of Aaliya's own characterization of her translations as "useless."[74] Her criteria for selecting novels are idiosyncratic, as she translates into Arabic not from the original language of the source

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67   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 222. The translator Edith Grossman describes a similar way of viewing the world through the lens of fiction: "Over the years, as I have continued to explore the world of fiction, the kind of perception that grows out of and is nourished by reading keeps expanding until it spills over into ordinary, concrete life. Haven't you thought on more than one occasion that in a kind of authorial prescience on the part of some writers, or with a Borgesian creation of fictional realities within the confines of a physical, concrete actuality, certain scenes and conversations on the street, in restaurants, on or trains come right out of novels by Turgenev or Kafka or Grass? And haven't you realized with a start that whatever ways you may have devised for responding to those situations probably come from the same novels too?" Grossman, *Why Translation Matters*, 25–26.

68   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 255.

69   Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.

70   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 13.

71   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 7.

72   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 48.

73   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 102.

74   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 108.

text, but by triangulating from published English and French translations. The rationale is explained in the following way:

> I decided that since some Lebanese can read English or French, I wouldn't translate writers who wrote in those languages; might be a somewhat arbitrary decision, but a necessary one I felt. Restricting choices is not always a bad thing. I have never translated a French writer, an English writer, or an American one.
>
> [. . .] However, I'm fluent in only three languages: Arabic, English, and French. So I invented my own special system: to achieve the most accurate representation of a work, I use a French and an English translation to create an Arabic one. It is a functional and well-planned system that allows me to enjoy what I do. I know this makes my translation one step further removed from the original [. . .], but it is the method I continue to use. Those are the rules I chose. I became a servant, albeit voluntarily, of a discipline, a specific ritual. I am my system, and my system is me.[75]

The concluding sentence of this passage suggests a total identification between translation and the translator. This system of translation is a closed one, as the products of it do not circulate ("I have never published."[76]). No one but the translator has read the translations, which are stored away in boxes in an unused former maid's room and bathroom (Aaliya summarizes her process with a pun: "I create and crate!"[77]). The practice of indirect translation, although not uncommon, is often frowned upon.[78] Within Alameddine's fictional world,

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75   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 62.

76   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 106.

77   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 107.

78   Several recent studies by translation scholars provide a more nuanced and in some cases even positive assessment of various practices of indirect translation. For example, see: Susanna Witt, "Institutionalized Intermediates: Conceptualizing Soviet Practices of Indirect Literary Translation," *Translation Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017): 166–82; Alexandra Assis Rosa, Hanna Pięta, and Rita Bueno Maia, "Theoretical, Methodological and Terminological Issues Regarding Indirect Translation: An Overview," *Translation Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017): 113–32; Maialen Marin-Lacarta, "Indirectness in Literary Translation: Methodological Possibilities," *Translation Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017): 133–49; Hanna Pięta, "Theoretical, Methodological and Terminological Issues in Researching Indirect Translation: A Critical Annotated Bibliography," *Translation Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017): 198–216; Laura Ivaska and Outi Paloposki, "Attitudes towards Indirect Translation in Finland and Translators' Strategies: Compilative and Collaborative Translation," *Translation Studies* 11, no. 1 (2018): 33–46; Lada Kolomiyets, "The

it precludes publication and also serves to emphasize the derivative nature of Aaliya's work. "The original translation can at times convey the subtleties of the writer's language, its diction, its rhythm and rhyme. My version is a translation of a translation. All is doubly lost. My version is nothing."[79] As will come clear from the discussion below, however, the narrative belies this self-proclaimed insignificance.

Aaliya describes the physical routines and accessories of her translation work as a source of pleasure:

> How safe I will feel once I begin my translation, how sheltered, seated at this desk in the dark night, as Sebald as Jacques Austerlitz described, seated at this desk "watching the tip of my pencil in the lamplight following its shadow, as if of its own accord and with perfect fidelity . . . from left to right"—right to left, in my case—"line by line, over the ruled paper."
>
> On this oak magnificence I place the new notepad, next to the pencils, next to the pens. I unscrew the primary pen, an old Parker, and inspect the ink. The walnut-shaped inkwell, a fake antique of porcelain and copper, is lushly full. It is always a delicious thrill when I prepare for a new project. I feel at home in my rituals.[80]

As if in imitation of Sebald's characteristic way of weaving the words of others into his narratives, Aaliya quotes his novel *Austerlitz* and adds a remark that reminds the reader that she works in a different language—Arabic, written "right to left" on the page. The following description similarly emphasizes the materiality of translation work: "The ritual of preparation: setting aside the two versions of the book of choice—one English, the other French—the papers, the notebook that's to be filled with actual notes, the 2B graphite pencils with the sharpener and Pearl eraser, the pens."[81] The following comments, as well, highlight written script and its materiality:

Psycholinguistic Factors of Indirect Translation in Ukrainian Literary and Religious Contexts," *East European Journal of Psycholinguistics* 6, no. 2 (2019): 32–49. On the potential benefits of allowing indirect translations in certain contexts today, see: Cecilia Alvstad, "Arguing for Indirect Translations in Twenty-First-Century Scandinavia," *Translation Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017): 150–65; Geraldine Brodie, "Indirect Translation on the London Stage: Terminology and (In)visibility," *Translation Studies* 11, no. 3 (2018): 333–48.

79   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 284.

80   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 24.

81   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 5–6.

When you write about the past, you lie with each letter, with every grapheme, including the goddamn comma.[82]

These passages were elaborately exuberant, the sentences overflowing, words leapfrogging one another, words jumping off the page into my lap. Each line ended with a loop that wanted to complete a full circle before flying off into the red-and-orange sunset at the other end of the room.[83]

Reminders that Arabic is used in the fictional world are scattered throughout the narrative. In that it depicts a translator as well as the activity and products of translation, Alameddine's novel falls into the first of Beebee's four categories of transmesis: "Texts whose mimetic object is the act of translation, the translator, and his or her social and historical contexts." It also exhibits Beebee's third category ("Texts that mime a language reality such that the medium does not match the object depicted"), in that the narrative language is English, while Arabic is the dominant language in the fictional world.[84] The novel evokes Arabic without showing it directly, through brief and subtle reminders that the language of the fictional world differs from that of the text, as in the following observation, which tells about the co-existence of two different scripts, even though it only shows the reader one of them: "I pass a sign that says SALON AALIYA in Arabic lettering, though its Roman alphabet counterpart says SALON BEYONCÉ."[85]

Not only scripts, but also paper is foregrounded as the material manifestation of the translator's work. When Aaliya decides to reread her translation, completed years before, of W. G. Sebald's *The Emigrants*, she must first retrieve it from the unlit storage room. This part of the narrative describes not only the content of her manuscript archive, but also its material qualities:

Crates, crates, boxes, and crates. The translated manuscripts have the two books, French and English, affixed to the side of the box for identification. Tolstoy, Gogol, and Hamsun; Calvino, Borges, Schulz, Nádas, Nooteboom; Kiš, Karasu, and Kafka; books of memory, disquiet, but not of laughter and forgetting. [. . .] I take the top boxes down, making sure they don't fall on me. Sebald is weighty, as if it added heft

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82   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 127.

83   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 151.

84   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 6.

85   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 192.

during its perfectly sedentary lifestyle all these years. I can barely carry it [...][86]

The final sentence in this passage personifies the translated manuscript of Sebald's novel, attributing to it not only physical weight but a "sedentary lifestyle," not unlike that of literary translators. The focus on the materiality of the manuscript is sustained throughout this passage, which ends with a reminder of the translator-narrator's own physicality:

> I place the heavy box on the floor next to the reading armchair. With a slightly damp cloth, I wipe off the dust. I tear open the masking tape and remove the lid. The reams of paper are there, of course, just as I left them so many years ago. I remove a short stack from the top. The first page has the title of the book in Arabic written in indelible ink, Sebald's full name, and mine, Aaliya Saleh, below it, a bit smaller. The sheet is slightly brittle at the edges, nothing too worrisome. I stretch my back and consider whether I want another cup of tea before delving into Sebald's world of melancholy.[87]

The narrative thus repeatedly draws the reader's attention to the material qualities of paper, scripts, and ink—the indelible quality of which will prove to be an advantage at the end of the novel, when a plumbing leak floods the archive.

Yet translation is also depicted as a metaphysical state. Aaliya experiences moments of transcendence and bliss while translating: "I'll be sitting at my desk and suddenly I don't wish my life to be any different. I am where I need to be. My heart distends with delight. I feel sacred."[88] She describes her experiences of reading in a similar way, likening it to falling in love: "I believe that the choice of a first book, the book that opens your eyes and quickens your soul, is as involuntary as a first crush."[89] The simile is reversed in another passage that compares erotic love to reading: "Sex, like art, can unsettle a soul, can grind a heart in a mortar. Sex, like literature, can sneak the other within one's walls, even if for only a moment."[90]

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86   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 63.

87   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 63–64.

88   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 109.

89   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 35.

90   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 43.

Aaliya relates how she was prompted to begin translating by a powerful reading experience involving different languages:

> Raskolnikov was the catalyst for my obsessive translating. *Crime and Punishment*, the vehicle, was one of the first books I picked up at the bookstore—well, *Crime et Châtiment*, because at the time my French was more seasoned than my English. I loved the novel. [. . .] I remember it as the first adult novel I read, or the first with a fully developed theme. Dostoyevsky's St. Petersburg burst into such splendor around me that it became more real than my life, which I found more incomprehensible with every passing day. I belonged in his book, not mine.[91]

This experience led Aaliya to read the English translation by Constance Garnett, which she assesses in the following way: "The Garnett version was by no means awful. Had I not encountered the French one first, I would have considered it a spectacular book. Only in comparison did I find it lacking. I thought the Garnett version was less charming, more matter-of-fact. I didn't know which version was the more accurate one, more Dostoyevskian. I thought that if I translated the book into Arabic, I could combine both. I did."[92] The continuation of this brief section touches on all of the following topics: Garnett's biography and Victorian context; Joseph Brodsky's and Vladimir Nabokov's criticism of her translations; the contemporary translator duo Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky; the Renaissance Venetian translator Lodovico Dolce; Marguerite Yourcenar's French translation of Cavafy's poems; Walter Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator," and Aaliya's own triangulating method of translation. These four pages thus combine elements of translation history, reception, criticism, and theory with the narrator's reflection on her own practices of reading and translation.

Aaliya's observations on translation frequently segue into essayistic reflections on reading, writing, and language, as in the following passage:

> After reading Sebald yesterday, I realized that translating *Austerlitz* was an easier project than *The Emigrants*, possibly because the latter laid the bitumen, smoothed the ride, for *Austerlitz*. A troublesome issue arises in translating Sebald into Arabic. His style, drawn-out and elongated sentences that wrap around the page and their reader, seems at first glance to be an ideal fit for Arabic, where use of punctuation is

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91   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 102–3.

92   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 103.

less formal. (Translating Saramago's *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* was a relative breeze.) However, Sebald's ubiquitous insertion of Jacques Austerlitz's tongue into the unnamed narrator's first-person narrative was difficult to convey precisely, since Arabic, like Spanish, drops pronouns more often than English or German. Sebald's *I* spoke for at least two people.[93]

Other passages exhibit multiple modes of literary activity. For example, when Aaliya's mother pays her an unwelcome and disconcerting visit, Aaliya wonders why her mother screamed at the sight of her. In a metafictional address to the reader, she observes, "If this were a novel, you would be able to figure out why my mother screamed," and continues with a reflection that compares responses to fiction with responses to life: "we all expect to understand the motivation behind each character's actions, as if that's possible, as if life works that way. I've read so many recent novels, particularly those published in the Anglo world, that are dull and trite because I'm always supposed to infer causality. [. . .] Causation extraction makes Jack a dull reader."[94]

This passage continues with a reflection on causality and readers' expectations, with references to philosophers (Hume and Sartre) and literary works (Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Moravia's *The Conformist*, Nabokov's *Lolita*, and Kafka's *The Trial*), as well as a lengthy quote from Kertész's *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*. Here Aaliya performs the roles of both reader and critic. After an intellectual exploration of the topic, she describes her own reading experience in more affective terms: "When I read a book, I try my best, not always successfully, to let the wall crumble just a bit, the barricade that separates me from the book. I try to be involved. I am Raskolnikov. I am K. I am Humbert and Lolita."[95] This recalls Felski's argument about the role of recognition in the reading process, resulting in "*self-extension*, of coming to see aspects of oneself in what seems distant and strange."[96] Aaliya's anaphoric expression of identification with the literary characters Raskolnikov, K, Humbert, and Lolita concludes strikingly with the statement "I am you," thus equating the narrator with the reader. The final lines in the section contain a direct address to the reader, thus positioning the narrator as author of the text: "If you read these pages and think I'm the way I am because I lived through a civil war, you can't feel my pain. If you

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93   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 59–60.

94   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 96.

95   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 100.

96   Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 39.

believe you're not like me because one woman, and only one, Hannah, chose to be my friend, then you're unable to empathize. Like the bullet, I too stray. Forgive me."[97]

Aaliya is portrayed not only as a highly literary translator, but also a reader par excellence—attentive, discerning, and affected by what she reads. She notes that she has not always been so well-read, however: "My only hope was to fake my way to an education."[98] In passages that highlight the pleasures of reading, she recalls how she introduced literary works to her friends Hannah and Ahmad. The narrative also shows her performing the roles of critic and writer, although she does not explicitly identify herself with these roles. By repeatedly addressing the reader in second person and referring to the text itself, the narrator assumes an authorial position, for example: "If I am to think of what image you'll retain from reading these paltry pages [. . .]"; "As I write this, as the nib of my pen follows its shadow slowly from right to left [. . .]"[99] Alameddine's novel thus undermines the traditional author-translator hierarchy, in which the author is primary and the translator subsidiary, and replaces it with a triad of literary activity in which reading, writing, and translating are accorded equal status.

In the final pages of the novel, a reassessment of the value of Aaliya's translations unexpectedly takes place when they are damaged by water. Her visceral reaction to the damage belies her earlier statements about the uselessness of her translations, as conveyed in the following passage, which quotes John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, "My heart behaves strangely, wishing to object. I feel an urge to regurgitate. *Hail horrors, hail / Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell.*"[100] The three neighbors whom Aaliya habitually avoids appear at her door to inform her of the plumbing leak, unaware of the manuscripts she has stored in the flooded room. It is at this point that Aaliya identifies herself to them as a translator for the first time: "How can I explain my esoteric vocation, my furtive life? This is the private source of meaning in my life. 'Translations,' I say. 'I'm a translator.' I hesitate. What I said doesn't ring true in my ears. I sound like a liar. 'I was,' I add. My heart feels too exhausted to beat. 'I was a translator.'"[101] The neighbors immediately join in an effort to salvage the manuscripts. The vulnerability of the translated texts is emphasized along with their materiality:

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97   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 100.

98   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 209.

99   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 128, 144.

100   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 264.

101   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 267.

My handwriting hasn't changed much in all these years, but the water damage makes the pages look like a stranger wrote them. Everything is written in a foreign language that I must translate—retranslate. Letters are thickened randomly, some word endings are extended. In a few instances, the tip of the Arabic letter *r* runs like a river tributary until it either dries up or pours itself into the lake of the letter that follows.[102]

This description of bleeding ink on wet paper emphasizes the material dimension that Munday seeks to include in translation studies when he argues that translation drafts

> constitute visible traces of the translatorial act. They are also tangible objects that create a direct link to the creation of some of the great works of literature. Their physical form is crucial to their interpretation, since handwriting needs to be deciphered, the type of paper and ink may be significant [. . .] Touching the paper and seeing the ink used by the translators also puts the scholar into the closest contact with great translators. It is a physical sensation. For me, the archive allows the researcher literally to feel and smell the presence of literary creation.[103]

The water damage defamiliarizes the language of the translations, rendering them unrecognizable to the translator who produced them. Tempted to give them up for lost, Aaliya nonetheless seeks out her translation of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, revealing in the process part of her personal history as a translator:

> This was one of my earliest translations, probably the third or fourth. I love Anna, but that's not the only reason she's important. *Karenina* was the first project where I began to feel I knew what I was doing. I shouldn't say that. I'll say it was the first translation where I didn't feel as inadequate, where the struggle was no longer as arduous or titanic, where the translating itself became enjoyable—just as pleasurable, if not more so, than the anticipation of finishing the project. *Anna Karenina* was the first time I allowed a book and its world into my house.[104]

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102   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 277–78.

103   Munday, "The Role of Archival and Manuscript Research," 134–35.

104   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 276.

In the process of separating and drying out the pages of Aaliya's manuscripts, the initially unwelcome neighbors become the first readers of the translations. "You write well," says one of them, conflating the roles of translator and author. "Don't you want people to read your writing?" says another. Aaliya objects, "I have to say I've never thought of my projects as writing," but becomes persuaded by these new readers, who argue, "I'd like to read them. Others would as well."[105]

These accidental readers' discovery of value in the translations suggests a kind of redemption through reading. The novel's final pages indicate the beginning of a new kind of translation for Aaliya:

> If English and French are the limits of my language, the limits of my world, then still my world is infinite. I no longer need to translate a translation. Not all has to be doubly lost. I've been studying the water while snugly nestled within the safety of a boat, but now I will swim in the murky waters of Flaubert's French. I don't have to work from a language once removed; I don't have to translate from a distance.[106]

Aaliya had believed her translations were useless to everyone but her, but the readers' response from the three neighbors opens new possibilities for her. Alameddine's portrait of a socially isolated translator shows, in the end, how translation can never be isolated from other literary activities such as reading, criticism, and writing. As Bassnett argues,

> it is absurd to see translation as anything other than a creative literary activity, for translators are all the time engaging with texts first as readers and then as rewriters, as recreators of that text in another language. Indeed, given the constraint of having to work within the parameters of that source text, it could be argued that translation requires an extraordinary set of literary skills, no whit inferior to the skills required to produce that text in the first instance.[107]

One of Pym's arguments in his call for a more humanizing approach to translation studies is that "[e]ven when less than heroic, the translators of the past tend to force recognition of what we might call multidiscursive mediation. This means that they participate in more than one professional discourse," and "often

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105   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 282, 284.

106   Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman*, 290.

107   Bassnett, "Writing and Translating," 174.

do more than just translate—they engage in many aspects of cross-cultural communication."[108]

Meylaerts has argued against a focus in translation studies on the translator as "social actor in his/her (more or less) exclusive role as a professional translator," which she finds limiting because literary translators "often combine their translation practice with a (literary) profession and/or with a multitude of literary activities and transfer roles (writing, translating, adapting, self-translating, publishing, etc.) in varying combinations."[109] As an alternative, Meylaerts advocates "[a] nuanced understanding of literary translators' self-image, perceptions and transfer activities in cultural history," gained through "detailed analyses of their multipositionality as it relates to their multiple lives [. . .] and to their plural and variable socialisation in a variety of social and cultural contexts."[110] The novel *An Unnecessary Woman* shows the translator-protagonist engaged in several literary activities simultaneously, including translation, narration, commentary, criticism, selling books at the bookstore at which she works for many years, and—not least of all—reading.

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108   Pym, "Humanizing Translation History," 33, 45.

109   Meylaerts, "The Multiple Lives of Translators," 108.

110   Meylaerts, "The Multiple Lives of Translators," 109.

Suspicion and the Suspension of Disbelief in Multilingual Fiction: The Case of a Nordic Thriller

Few studies of contemporary literary translingualism to date have focused on popular genres. Instead, scholarship has tended to focus on works that stand out for the ways they challenge readers. Mela Sarkar and Bronwen Low maintain that multilingualism in popular culture has long been understudied, despite the fact that popular culture "lends itself to multilingual language mixing particularly well," because it "crosses political and cultural borders with such ease" and is therefore "likely to have a strong multilingual flavour."[1] They call for an effort to make "multilingually oriented research on popular culture (or popular culture-oriented research on multilingualism) into an 'unmarked' domain of study," arguing that "the hybrid, multilingually mixed nature of much popular culture [. . .] is a fact neither to celebrate nor to deplore, but something to observe and examine with interest like anything else."[2]

Thanks to its complex linguistic landscape, the contemporary Nordic region is a rich source of material for such studies. The contours of this landscape include the widespread role of English as a second language and the practice of parallel lingualism, in which mutually comprehensible languages are spoken in the same context without the need for translation or code-switching.[3] An interesting

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1   Sarkar and Low, "Multilingualism and Popular Culture," 406, 407.

2   Sarkar and Low, "Multilingualism and Popular Culture," 412. Louise Nilsson, David Damrosch, and Theo D'haen make a similar argument concerning the place of crime fiction within world literature: "Scholars of world literature have neglected crime fiction, focusing instead on elite writers in preference to mass-market or 'airport' novels." Louise Nilsson, David Damrosch, and Theo D'haen, "Introduction: Crime Fiction as World Literature," in *Crime Fiction as World Literature*, ed. Louise Nilsson, David Damrosch, and Theo D'haen (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 3.

3   For overviews of the complexity of language situations in the Nordic countries, see Jenny Fossum Grønn, ed., *Nordic Voices: Literature from the Nordic Countries* (Oslo: Nordbok, 2005), and Julie Hansen and Helena Bodin, "Nordic Literary Translingualism," in *The*

example of a popular novel that makes use of multilingualism is the thriller *En rasande eld* by Andreas Norman (English translation, *Into a Raging Blaze*, 2014). Published in 2013 to positive reviews, this Swedish novel contains a number of words and phrases in English, which has a strong status as a second language in Sweden. The narrative contains smatterings of other languages as well, and the fictional world is more multilingual than the surface of the text reveals.

With an international setting and a plot that takes the reader from Stockholm to Brussels to Cairo and back again, the presence of different languages in the novel not only adds local color; as we will see, it also contributes to the suspense that is one of the hallmarks of the thriller genre. Delabastita observes that some of the conventions of fiction "would seem to invite the 'emplotment' of multilingualism and translation," and that these can contribute to "mystery and suspense-management."[4] Let us now examine how this works in the case of *Into a Raging Blaze*.

The Multilingual World of the Thriller

At the novel's opening, the protagonist Carina Dymek works as an analyst at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The suspense plot is set in motion when she attends a meeting at the European Commission in Brussels and is approached by a stranger named Jean, who hands her a USB stick and entreats her to take action. Carina reads the file, which contains a classified plan for a clandestine pan-European intelligence service:

> Den ville övertyga, övertala, få henne att tänka som de som skrivit rapporten. Den ville få henne att säga ja. Hela texten dröp av samma rasistiska antaganden om EU och omvärlden som provocerat henne så många gånger förut. Gränskontrollen, illegala immigranter som potentiella hot. Terrorism och muslimer.

> It wanted to persuade, convince, make her think like the person who had written the report. It wanted her to say yes. The entire text was

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Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism, ed. Natasha Lvovich and Steven G. Kellman (New York: Routledge, 2022), 165–76. For a volume that examines case studies from Northern Europe, see: Heidi Grönstrand, Markus Huss, and Ralf Kauranen, eds., *The Aesthetics and Politics of Linguistic Borders: Multilingualism in Northern European Literature* (London: Routledge, 2020).

4   Delabastita, "Fictional Representations," 109.

dripping with the same racist assumptions about the EU and the surrounding world that had been a source of provocation for her so many times previously. Border controls, illegal immigrants as potential threats. Terrorism and Muslims.[5]

Carina sends the file to her supervisor and is, to her surprise, promptly suspended from her job while the Swedish intelligence service investigates the case with assistance from British MI6.

Two other central characters are Bente Jensen, head of Swedish intelligence in Brussels, and Carina's boyfriend Jamal Badawi, a lawyer at Sweden's Department of Justice. Carina and Jamal both have multicultural backgrounds: Carina was born in Stockholm to a Polish father and Swedish mother, while Jamal is foreign-born, having emigrated from Cairo with his family at the age of thirteen.[6] Prejudice based on ethnic and linguistic background figures in the novel's plot, as both Carina and Jamal come under suspicion of involvement in an Islamic terrorist network. Over the course of the narrative, the kind of racist assumptions to which Carina reacts negatively in the passage above are shown to mislead the various intelligence services involved—British and American, as well as Swedish.

The plot develops along parallel and interconnected lines of pursuit, as Carina tries to locate the mysterious Jean in order to prove her innocence, with MI6 pursuing her all the while. At the same time, Bente concludes—independently of the intelligence service—that the terrorism charges are a smokescreen intended to keep the plan for a new pan-European intelligence service from becoming public. Bente, too, pursues Carina in order to rescue her from MI6 and CIA operatives, who interrogate her under torture.

The action unfolds in an international milieu of diplomacy and foreign intelligence, in which a number of languages are spoken. Many passages include words and phrases in languages other than Swedish (Arabic, English, French, and German), but most often these languages are indicated only indirectly, through narrative description telling the reader what language is spoken (sometimes even specifying the variant, such as American, British, or Irish English), without showing the foreign language in the text. As a result, the novel contains

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5   Andreas Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, trans. Ian Giles (London: Quercus, 2014), loc 1800; Andreas Norman, *En rasande eld* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers, 2013), 125.

6   The fictional character Jamal has this in common with 20% of Sweden's current population, who were foreign-born (as of 2021). "Utrikes födda i Sverige," Statistikmyndigheten SCB, last modified February 22, 2023, accessed September 6, 2023, https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/manniskorna-i-sverige/utrikes-fodda-i-sverige/.

numerous examples of Beebee's third category of transmesis, involving "[t]exts that mime a language reality such that the medium does not match the object depicted."[7] Sometimes the language spoken in the fictional world is suggested through code-mixing on the level of the text, with isolated words embedded in the Swedish-language narrative, as in the following example: "Green hade ringt upp henne på eftermiddagen. Han var *happy* över den snabba svenska responsen."[8] Frequently, lines of dialogue in which the characters speak English begin with English words and codeswitch mid-sentence back to Swedish, as in the following example: "'*Good morning everyone*'" började Hamrén. 'Ni har alla fått länken. Magnus kommer att gå igenom hemsidan för oss nu. Okej, Magnus. Varsågod.'"[9] Here code-switching occurs only on the level of the narrative and not in the fictional world, in which English serves as the lingua franca at a meeting between Swedish intelligence and MI6.

Passages such as these where, as Beebee puts it, "one language is used as the *sign* of another,"[10] presume a willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader, who must imagine that the continuation of the dialogue takes place in English (though represented in the text in Swedish). Alternatively, the reader might do the work of code-switching (as if back-translating the Swedish text) in order to hear in the mind's ear how this conversation might have sounded in English. In some passages, the process of translating dialogue from Swedish to English is made more challenging by idiomatic phrases, as in the following example: "'Håll käften för helvete,' sa en mörk röst alldeles intill henne på engelska."[11] Readers of the original text might pause to wonder which English obscenity comes closest to the Swedish "för helvete." The final two words of this sentence serve to highlight the mismatch of languages between this line of dialogue in the fictional world (spoken, we are informed by the narrator, in English) and the way it appears in the text (in Swedish). The process of readerly code-switching that such passages potentially entail mirrors what the fictional characters do in multilingual situations.

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7   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 6.

8   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 176. The code-switching in the original text is not represented in the English translation: "Green had called her in the afternoon. He was happy to see the prompt Swedish response." Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 2449.

9   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 203. Again, the code-switching in the original text is not represented in the English translation: "'Good morning, everyone,' he began. 'You have all been sent the link. Magnus will go through the channel for us now. Okay, Magnus. Take it away.'" Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 2843.

10   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 16.

11   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 443. This is translated into English as "'Shut your mouth, for God's sake,' said a dark voice right beside her, in English." Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 6129.

Thus, a number of languages are deployed in this novel to various effect, without, however, excluding readers who are not proficient in a particular language. For example, English words are set off by italics in the following passage, which illustrates Carina's enthusiasm for her work: "Rapporter med titlar som *Afghanistan – Monthly threat assessment August 2009* eller *The 'single narrative' of the European homegrown terrorism: a British perspective* hade en oemotståndlig dragningskraft. Att få läsa och analysera sådana rapporter var en viktig orsak till att hon älskade sitt jobb."[12] A large majority of contemporary Swedophone readers are proficient in English, but the sentence as a whole is comprehensible even to readers who are not, as the English report titles do not contain essential information, but serve as signboards indicating a multilingual environment (for those who cannot, or choose not to, decode them) or as realistic details (for those who do). (In light of how the plot develops later in the novel, the re-reader of this novel might detect irony in the second English title.) In general, the narrative reflects the way many contemporary speakers of Swedish include English idioms and turns of phrase in their speech.[13] Below are three further examples of what this looks like in the novel:

> Allt sköttes strikt enligt *need to know*-principen och diplomater behövde egentligen inte veta någonting om operativt underrättelsearbete för att kunna göra sitt jobb.[14]

> Vid ett regeringsskifte uppstod alltid ett kort *window of opportunity* när tjänstemännen i några dygn tog ministrarnas korridorer i besittning.[15]

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12 Andreas Norman, *En rasande eld*, 29. "Reports with titles such as *Afghanistan – Monthly threat assessment, August 2011* or *The 'single narrative' of European home-grown terrorism: a British perspective* had an irresistible appeal. To read and analyse reports like that was an important part of why she loved her job." Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 557.

13 On the current high influence of English on the Swedish language, see: "Hur förändras svenskan?," Svenska Institutet, accessed May 22, 2023, https://si.se/sa-arbetar-vi/svenskan-i-varlden/artiklar-om-sprak/hur-forandras-svenskan/.

14 Norman, *En rasande eld*, 54. "Everything ran on a strictly need-to-know basis and diplomats didn't really need to know anything about operational security work in order to do their jobs." Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 866.

15 Norman, *En rasande eld*, 62. The passage (just under one page long) that contains this sentence in the original novel has been omitted from the English translation. My translation: "Changes in government always brought a brief *window of opportunity* when civil servants took control of the ministers' corridors for a few days."

> EU:s *back door diplomacy* dominerades helt av britter, spanjorer, frans-
> män och italienare.[16]

The text also contains isolated French words, many of which are potentially recognizable as loan words or, alternatively, understood from context, as in the following example: "'It's objectively sexy to be approached,' said Johan. 'It means that you are someone. *Une personne très importante*,' he said in his dreadful French, reaching for his beer glass."[17] This passage contextualizes foreign words in a way that relieves readers of the requirement to decode them. By first indicating the language spoken and then characterizing the speaker's French as "dreadful," the narrative does not go over the head of the reader.

Suspicious Language

As we saw in Chapter 3, not all languages enjoy equal status in the world, regardless of how many people speak them. Likewise, not all languages are considered equal in the fictional world of this novel. This is illustrated by the intelligence meeting discussed above, during which an intercepted email from Jamal's uncle in Cairo is presented as evidence of participation in a terrorist network. Although this passage is conveyed entirely in Swedish, two other languages come into play without appearing on the surface of the text:

> Ett egyptiskt mejl som gått till en svensk dator. [. . .] Hon betraktade brevet som dök upp på duken tillsammans med de övriga i rummet. Ett inskannat original skrivet på arabiska. Endast salafistexperten och den brittiske analytikern verkade kunna läsa det. Analytikern, George, klickade fram en ny bild: en engelsk översättning.
>   *Min käre Jamal*, började mejlet.[18]

The English translation renders invisible the mismatch, in the original novel, between the language of the text (Swedish) and the language spoken in the fictional world (English):

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16   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 72. "The EU's back-door diplomacy was entirely dominated by Britain, Spain, France and Italy." Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 1055.

17   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 908. "'Det är objektivt sexigt att bli kontaktad', sa Johan. 'Det betyder att man är någon. *Une personne très importante*', sa han på sin fruktansvärda franska och sträckte sig efter ölglaset." Norman, *En rasande eld*, 57.

18   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 188.

It was an Egyptian email to a Swedish computer. [. . .] She looked, together with the others in the room, at the message that appeared on the screen. The original had been written in Arabic and scanned on to the computer. Only the Salafist expert and the British analyst seemed to be able to read it. The analyst, George, brought up a new slide: an English translation.

    My dear Jamal, the message began.[19]

The content of the email is narrated over the course of two pages. Written in Arabic and translated into English in the fictional world, it is represented in the Swedish narrative through a combination of paraphrases and quotes in Swedish. The email discusses family news and political changes in Egypt in the wake of the Arab Spring. The uncle expresses affection for Jamal and a desire to see him again, concluding: "Desire is a remarkable fire, is it not?"[20] The email concludes with a poem that also employs fire as a metaphor:

> *Då deras boningar är nära*
> *Skall lägereldarnas lågor hägra framför dig*
> *Och egga begäret till en rasande eld*
>
> *Låt dina kameler vila där*
> *Räds inte de spejande lejonen*
> *Åtrån skall förvandla dem*
> *Till valpar*[21]

> Their stations will be near.
> Their fire will loom before you,
> kindling desire
> into a raging blaze.
>
> Kneel your camels there.
> Don't fear their lions.
> Yearning will reveal them to you
> As whelps.[22]

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19   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 2625–36.

20   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 2657. "*Längtan är en märklig eld, eller hur?*" Norman, *En rasande eld*, 189.

21   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 189.

22   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 2657.

This poem turns out to be central to the novel: an excerpt from the third line comprises its title, and intelligence officers ascribe significance to it in their investigation and subsequent interrogation of Jamal. Poetry as a literary genre foregrounds language and invites multiple interpretations. Trained to look for threats to national security, the intelligence analysts misread the poem. Although it has been translated into English for them, they do not perceive it as a literary text containing figurative language, but rather take it for a terrorist code.

In the passage describing the intelligence meeting, Arabic and English are heard and/or seen by the fictional characters, but not by the reader, who only has access to the Swedish text. While English (the target language of the translation of the intercepted email) is perceived by the characters as a neutral lingua franca, Arabic (the source language) is depicted in a way that emphasizes its foreignness. The depiction of two fictional texts, both of which play a key role in the plot, serves to strengthen the contrast between the two languages. One is a volume of poetry owned by Jamal, which contains the poem quoted by his uncle. The other is the report on the European Intelligence Service given to Carina. The poem is in Arabic and the report is in English. The former is written in literary language, the latter in bureaucratese, "detailed and technical."[23] The former has a concise form, the latter is hundreds of pages long. The poetry collection lies unconcealed in Jamal's home, while the report is a brutally guarded secret. Carina reads the EU report critically, while the intelligence agencies read the poem literally. Due to the language in which it is written, it is the poem that comes under suspicion.

Suspense in the Narrative

In Norman's novel, pre-conceived notions held by various characters (and potentially also by readers) about different languages contribute to the creation of suspense. Suspense results from interaction between elements of the text and the reader's cognitive and emotional response to it.[24] As Donald Beecher observes, "[t]he critical challenge at this juncture is to decide whether a study of suspense should begin in narratology or psychology, for without the *récit* of

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23   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 1807.

24   Until recently, there has been little research on the phenomenon of suspense in the reading or viewing of fiction. Donald Beecher, "Suspense," *Philosophy and Literature* 31, no. 2 (2007): 257. The volume *Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analyses, and Empirical Explorations*, edited by Peter Vorderer, Hans J. Wulff, and Mike Friedrichsen (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), provides a good overview of approaches.

events in time there are no prompts, even though suspense as experience does not reside in texts but in psyches."[25] Suspense arises when there is uncertainty as to the outcome of the plot and is sustained only until the outcome is revealed.[26] Gerald C. Cupchik identifies two types of uncertainty: one "concerns *predictions* regarding future events, be they the experiences of characters or the outcomes of their actions," while the other "concerns the *understanding* of ongoing events, which may require the discovery of facts and conditions."[27] Some scholars hold that suspense is enhanced by readers' expectations and preferences regarding outcomes, as well as feelings of sympathy for characters in distress. Beecher explains:

> where there is literary suspense there are characters who serve as the center of concern through empathy [. . .]. Readers are desperate to find that center because they are eager to locate their own moral vision regarding the action. Because they are not in the story, yet live it as an equivalent-to-reality representation, empathy is a means for establishing a reading perspective through a person who most represents their values.[28]

Although it has been debated whether empathy and identification are requisite elements of suspense, it is clear that suspense cannot exist without the participation of readers.[29] Whenever "we try to imagine how the story will unfold," Iser holds, "we heighten our own participation in the course of events."[30] He continues:

> The temporary withholding of information acts as a stimulus, and this is further intensified by details suggestive of possible solutions. The blanks make the reader bring the story itself to life—he lives with the

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25   Beecher, "Suspense," 256.

26   Noël Carroll, "The Paradox of Suspense," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2001), 257.

27   Gerald C. Cupchik, "Suspense and Disorientation: Two Poles of Emotionally Charged Literary Uncertainty," in *Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analyses, and Empirical Explorations*, ed. Peter Vorderer, Hans J. Wulff, and Mike Friedrichsen (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996), 189.

28   Beecher, "Suspense," 270.

29   For a summary of different standpoints, see Beecher, "Suspense," 266–72.

30   Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 191.

characters and experiences their activities. His lack of knowledge concerning the continuation of the story links him to the characters to the extent that their future appears to him as a palpable uncertainty.[31]

Beecher also emphasizes the active role of readers in the suspensefulness of fiction:

> Readers attempt to know endings before they arrive, just as in the perceptual world potential victims read over in the imagination as many drafts of the future as possible. With stories, readers may be passive, perhaps, and trust entirely to the writer to lead them to the conclusion held in secret. But to a minimal degree, they must be proactive in an orientational sense—constructing the fictive "world," and keeping track of characters and their intentions—and they must sense options as a condition for anticipation. Without this level of participation, there can be no sense of story.[32]

In Norman's novel, suspense revolves around three questions: 1) whether Jamal is involved in an Islamic terrorist network; 2) whether Carina will succeed in proving her innocence; and 3) whether Bente will succeed in rescuing Carina from torture at the hands of MI6. The answer to the first question concerning Jamal's guilt or innocence depends on how the poem is interpreted. Within the world of the story, this poem has been secretly intercepted, translated from Arabic into English, and decoded, yet not taken for the literary text that it is. Because it is written in Arabic, the intelligence services read it as a threat, presuming Jamal and his uncle guilty by association with the foreign language. Since Carina is depicted as a sympathetic protagonist with a strong sense of integrity, the reader's assessment of Jamal is likely to be influenced by Carina's reactions. Carina condemns ethnic stereotypes when she encounters them within the European Commission, but catches herself reflexively reproducing them when Jamal receives a phone call from someone with whom he speaks Arabic. Carina is the internal focalizer of this passage, which conveys her ambivalent reaction to a language she does not understand.

> Han lät annorlunda när han talade arabiska, eller om det bara var den han pratade med som fick honom att låta så, arg och vass på ett sätt

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31   Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 192.

32   Beecher, "Suspense," 266.

som hon aldrig hört tidigare. Samtalet drog ut på tiden och till slut blev hon rastlös och reste sig. Hon hörde hans korthuggna svar och sedan vad som lät som ett försök att lugna. Jamal brukade i vanliga fall inte gå undan när han pratade i telefon. Men det här verkade inte vara något vanligt samtal. I andra änden fanns någon som tillhörde den andra delen av hans liv, den som han aldrig nämnde och som de aldrig pratade om.[33]

He sounded different when he spoke Arabic, or perhaps it was just the person he was speaking to who made him sound like that—angry and sharp in a way she had never heard before. The conversation dragged on and eventually she became restless and got up. She heard his terse answers and then what sounded like an attempt at reassurance. Jamal didn't normally leave the room when talking on the phone. But this didn't seem to be any ordinary phone call. At the other end was someone who belonged in the other part of his life, the part he never mentioned and that they never talked about.[34]

Here Carina associates spoken Arabic with secrecy, and she herself engages in secretive behavior by eavesdropping. Unable to understand the meaning of Jamal's words, she focuses on how they sound. She then catches sight of a well-worn book on the coffee table, which is also in Arabic. Unable to read the script, she focuses instead on the material aspects of the text:

Hon plockade upp den, öppnade den försiktigt. En diktsamling, tänkte hon med ett leende. Så fint att tänka sig Jamal sitta och läsa dikter på arabiska. Synd att hon inte förstod vad som stod. Allt hon kunde göra var att betrakta raderna av sirliga tecken som flöt i varandra i vackra, främmande mönster. Kanske var det religiösa texter. Tanken att Jamal kunde vara troende hade aldrig slagit henne. Han kanske var muslim. För henne själv var religion något så främmande att hon inte ens hade reflekterat över den möjligheten. Fast så särskilt troende var han förmodligen inte, invände hon genast för sig själv, för han drack ju vin. Sedan skämdes hon över sina ängsliga tankegångar, som om det var ett problem om han var muslim.[35]

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33   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 68.

34   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 991–1001.

35   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 69.

She picked it up, opening it carefully. A collection of poems, she thought with a smile. How lovely to think of Jamal sitting and reading Arabic poetry. What a shame that she didn't understand what they said. All she could do was look at the rows of ornate characters that flowed into each other in beautiful, yet incomprehensible patterns. Perhaps they were religious texts. The thought that Jamal might be religious had never occurred to her. Perhaps he was a Muslim. To her, religion was something so alien that she hadn't even considered the possibility. Although, presumably, he wasn't all that religious, she reflected immediately, because he drank wine. Then she felt ashamed of her anxious train of thought—as if it was a problem if he were a Muslim.[36]

In this passage Carina is the beholder of the book, and it is her perceptions that are conveyed to the reader. She associates Arabic script with hidden meaning; the script is not shown in the narrative, but described in an exoticizing way as beautiful and foreign, which leads, in Carina's associative train of thought, to religion and Islam. She stops herself there, however, and criticizes herself for worrying that Jamal might be Muslim: "The small, prejudiced worry that had pushed its way forward irritated her. She didn't want to feel like that, didn't want to be someone who thought like that."[37] This is confirmed by her criticism, a page later, of opinions voiced at the meeting in Brussels as racist.[38]

Yet Carina's reaction to the Arabic conversation plants a seed of uncertainty that potentially invites the reader to consider whether there is cause to suspect Jamal. In reading fiction, we apply "knowledge from everyday life without which the thoughts, feelings, and actions of protagonists would not be meaningful."[39] Carina's ambivalent reaction to Jamal's use of Arabic together with the lack of information in the text about the meaning of Jamal's speech, opens up a space in which readers' knowledge and ideas, particularly with regard to languages, can influence the reading process. If suspense, as Beecher claims, engages the reader's thoughts and emotions in projecting possible plot outcomes, reading Norman's novel potentially entails a reassessment, on the part of readers, of assumptions based on language. Toward the end of the novel, Jamal is interrogated about the

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36   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 1011.

37   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze*, loc 1011. "Den lilla fördomsfulla oron som hade trängt sig fram irriterade henne. Hon ville inte känna så, inte vara en sådan som tänkte så." Norman, *En rasande eld*, 69.

38   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 70.

39   Cupchik, "Suspense and Disorientation," 189.

meaning of the poem. When he replies, "Det är en dikt, bara en dikt"[40] ("It's a poem. Just a poem."[41]), the British interrogator does not buy this explanation, but it is likely at this point that the reader might, having already considered the possibility through the thoughts and emotions of both Bente and Carina.

In this way, translingual elements in Norman's novel contribute to the construction of a suspenseful plot and, at the same time, serve to highlight the danger of jumping to conclusions about languages and the individuals who speak them. The uncertainties that give rise to suspense in the plot also confront readers with preconceived notions about the role of various languages in the world. Readers may fall into the same trap as MI6, the CIA, and Swedish intelligence or, alternatively, question stereotypes along with Carina and Bente. In the end, the suspense is resolved when the suspicions against Carina and Jamal are revealed to be unfounded and the villains turn out to be not Arabic speakers, but the native speakers of English working for British and American intelligence.

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40   Norman, *En rasande eld*, 437.

41   Norman, *Into a Raging Blaze,* loc 6053.

Code-Switching and Language-Mixing in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*

Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*) occupies a central place in the world canon. It has been translated numerous times since it was first published serially in the journal *Russkii vestnik* (*Russian Herald*) in 1865. There are nearly a dozen English translations to date, several of which have appeared after the turn of the millennium.[1] Until recently, however, an intrinsic aspect of this novel remained less visible in translation, namely its translingual fabric, in which French, along with other languages, is intricately woven into the Russian.

French is used in the novel to convey both oral and written communication—in letters, salon conversations, intimate tête-à-têtes, and war councils. Many of the characters, as well as the omniscient third-person narrator, codeswitch, sometimes mid-sentence, and mix languages in a variety of ways. The reader of the novel is confronted with its translingualism *in medias res*, as it opens with the French words of Anna Pavlovna Scherer greeting the first guest to arrive at her soirée. The reader is vicariously ushered into the multilingual world of the salon, where the conversation, as Gary Saul Morson observes, "incorporates French, Russian, German, Italian, and English, and complex hodgepodges of these languages as characters jump from one to another."[2]

Many of Tolstoy's contemporary Russian critics viewed the novel as a hodgepodge, as expressed in comments such as the following: "because of some inexplicable caprice, half of [Tolstoy's] characters speak in French, and their entire correspondence is conducted in that language [. . .] To read a book that presents some sort of medley of 'French and Great Russian' without any need for it is truly

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1   These translations are by Anthony Briggs (2005), Andrew Bromfield (of Tolstoy's first version of the novel; 2007), Amy Mandelker (a revision of Aylmer and Louise Maude's translation from 1922–1923; 2010), and Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (2007).

2   Gary Saul Morson, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in "War and Peace"* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 47.

inconvenient and unpleasant."[3] A review from 1868 in the periodical *Golos* faulted Tolstoy not for the French phrases per se, but the extent of them:

> Заметим автору, что в книге его странным кажется не это употребление французских фраз вместе с русскими, а чрезмерное, сплошное наполнение французской речью целых десятков страниц сряду. Для того, чтобы показать, что Наполеон или другое какое-либо лицо говорит по-французски, достаточно было бы одну первую его фразу написать по-французски, а остальные по-русски, исключая каких-либо двух-трех, особенно характеристических оборотов, и мы без труда догадались бы, что вся тирада произнесена на французском языке.[4]

> We would remark to the author that what appears strange in his novel is not this use of French phrases together with Russian ones, but rather the inordinate filling of dozens of pages with French dialogue. In order to show that Napoleon or some other character speaks French, it would have been enough to give his first words in French and the rest in Russian, with the exception of two or three especially characteristic turns of phrase, and we would have had no trouble guessing that the entire tirade was pronounced in French.

Tolstoy himself went back and forth over what to do with the French passages. In the *Russian Herald* and the first two book editions (both from 1868), the French was glossed in footnotes with Tolstoy's own translations into Russian. In the third edition from 1873, the French passages were eliminated and replaced by Russian in the main text, only to be reinstated in the 1886 edition.[5] Even Tolstoy's translation of the French passages, as Morson observes, "borders on the macaronic, a mixture of two languages. Tolstoy's footnotes are not just

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3   Zelinskii quoted in Morson, *Hidden in Plain View,* 46.

4   Quoted in Viktor Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil' v romane L'va Tolstogo "Voina i mir"* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1928), 208.

5   For a summary of changes made with respect to the French in various editions, see Karin Beck, "The Emperor Has No Voice! How Not to Do Things with Words in War and Peace," *Tolstoy Studies Journal* 21 (2009): 1–2, https://www.tolstoy-studies-journal.com/volume-xxi. See also R. F. Christian, *Tolstoy's 'War and Peace': A Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 158–59.

an aid, but an intrinsic part of his work, because he creates a curious dialogue between them and the text."[6]

Translators of *War and Peace* have rendered the French passages in various ways; the English translation by Briggs does not use French at all, while that by Pevear and Volokhonsky, as well as Mandelker's 2010 revised version of the Maude translation, retain the original French passages. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the challenges of translating translingual elements become particularly apparent when the target language is one of the languages employed in the original, because code-switching in the original becomes by default less marked in translation. This is the case with translations of *War and Peace* into French. Elisabeth Guertik's French translation from 1963 attempts to compensate for this neutralizing effect by italicizing the passages that appear in French in the original.

The Functions of French in *War and Peace*

Several literary scholars have analyzed the functions of French in the Russian text. Vinogradov and Shklovsky both characterized *War and Peace* as a bilingual novel.[7] Christian argues against this view, estimating that only around 2 percent of the novel's text is in French.[8] Yet as Morson points out, 2 percent of the text corresponds to about forty pages, which "could itself be a short novel."[9] Furthermore, the proportion of French to Russian in the novel is much higher if we include dialogues conveyed to the reader in Russian, but which, as we are informed by the narrator, take place in another language. Such passages are instances of Beebee's third category: "[t]exts that mime a language reality such that the medium does not match the object depicted."[10] For example, when Nikolai Rostov confides to his sister Natasha that he has decided to marry Sonya, their dialogue is conveyed entirely in Russian, yet the narrator specifies that Nikolai speaks French in a whisper: "Наташа, – сказал он ей *шепотом*

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6   Morson, *Hidden in Plain View*, 48.

7   V. Vinogradov, *O iazyke Tolstogo: (50-60e gody)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1939), 123, accessed September 6, 2023, http://feb-web.ru/feb/litnas/texts/l35/t35-117-.htm?cmd=p.; Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 210.

8   Christian, *Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'*, 158.

9   Morson, *Hidden in Plain View*, 48.

10   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 6.

по-французски, – знаешь, я решился насчет Сони [italics added]."[11] ("'Nata-sha,' he whispered to her in French, 'you know, I've made up my mind about Sonya.'"[12])

The complexity of multilingualism in *War and Peace* makes it interesting to examine what the narrative conveys about who speaks which language to whom, as well as how and why they use particular languages. Let us begin by considering what has already been observed about multilingualism in the text of the original novel. One common conclusion is that Tolstoy's use of multiple languages contributes to realism. This was the explanation given by the editors of the *Russian Herald* when the journal began publishing *War and Peace* serially. In a footnote prefacing Tolstoy's Russian translations of the French passages, the editors explain that in order to "maintain the atmosphere (*kolorit*) of the conversation of the characters, the author very often uses French expressions."[13] Indeed, French had held special status among the Russian nobility ever since Peter the Great's reforms in the early eighteenth century brought cultural influences from Western Europe. As Derek Offord, Gesine Argent, Vladislav Rjéoutski, and Lara Ryazanova-Clarke point out, this "was also due to the spread of French across Europe as a language of diplomacy, the lingua franca of the polite society frequented by aristocracies, the vehicle for a refined secular literature and, crucially, the principal means of communication in the so-called Republic of Letters."[14]

Despite the threat represented by the French Revolution in 1789 and Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812, the use of French among the Russian nobility did not begin to decline until the mid-nineteenth century.[15] Multilingualism was thus a reality of life for the Russian noble class, which is the main social group depicted in *War and Peace*. The French language also played a role in the emergence of a national Russian literature, in that it served as "a medium of literary activity and a language of sociability among Russian writers of the first half of the nineteenth century."[16] As Baer observes, "A relatively small, highly homogenous polyglot elite, the Russian educated classes of the two capitals,

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11   Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 1, 844.

12   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 530.

13   Quoted in Beck, "The Emperor Has No Voice!," 1–2.

14   Derek Offord et al., introdution to *French and Russian in Imperial Russia: Language Use among the Russian Elite*, ed. Derek Offord et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 2015), 2.

15   Offord et al., "Introduction," 3.

16   Offord et al., "Introduction," 6.

relied to a great extent on translations of Western literature to lay the foundations of modern Russian literature."[17]

Yet there is a gap of six decades between the world Tolstoy depicts in *War and Peace*, the plot of which spans from 1805 to 1820, and the time of its writing in the 1860s, at which point the use of French among the Russian nobility had begun to decline.[18] As Shklovsky observes, "[t]he language of the novel's characters is not the language spoken by people in 1812, but rather the language of people remembering the year 1812."[19] Tolstoy himself, in his essay "A Few Words Apropos of the Book *War and Peace*," names the nobility's use of French as one of the aspects of the Napoleonic era he sought to capture, and he justifies his inconsistent use of French in the novel with a striving not for a documentary effect, but an artistic one:

> Упрек в том, что лица говорят и пишут по-французски в русской книге, подобен тому упреку, который бы сделал человек, глядя на картину и заметив в ней черные пятна (тени), которых нет в действительности. Живописец не повинен в том, что некоторым— тень, сделанная им на лице картины, представляется черным пятном, которого не бывает в действительности; но живописец повинен только в том, ежели тени эти положены неверно и грубо. Занимаясь эпохой начала нынешнего века, изображая лица русские известного общества, и Наполеона, и французов, имевших такое прямое участие в жизни того времени, я невольно увлекся формой выражения того французского склада мысли больше, чем это было нужно. И потому, не отрицая того, что положенные мною тени вероятно, неверны и грубы, я желал бы только, чтобы те, которым покажется очень смешно, как Наполеон говорит то по-русски, то по-французски, знали бы, что это им кажется только оттого, что они, как человек, смотрящий на портрет, видят не лицо с светом и тенями, а черное пятно под носом.[20]

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17 Baer, *Translation and the Making of Modern Russian Literature*, 17.

18 The novel *Anna Karenina* (1873–1877), which also contains passages in French, comprises a contrasting case, written as it was very close in time to the period it depicts. R. F. Christian, "The Passage of Time in *Anna Karenina*," *Slavonic and East European Review* 45, no. 104 (1967): 207–10.

19 Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 205.

20 L. N. Tolstoi, "Neskol'ko slov po povodu knigi 'Voina i mir'," in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1981), 357–58.

The reproach that people speak and write in French in a Russian book is similar to the reproach made by a man who, looking at a painting, notices black spots in it (shadows) that are not found in reality. The painter is not to blame if the shadow he has made on the face in the painting looks to some like a black spot that does not exist in reality, but is to blame only if those shadows are laid on incorrectly and crudely. Studying the period of the beginning of the present century, portraying Russian figures of a certain society, and Napoleon, and the French, who took such a direct part in the life of that time, I was involuntarily carried away more than necessary by the form of expression of that French way of thinking. And therefore, without denying that the shadows I laid on are probably incorrect and crude, I wish only that those to whom it seems very funny that Napoleon speaks now in Russian, now in French, should know that it seems so to them because, like the man looking at the portrait, they see not a face with light and shadow, but only a black spot under its nose.[21]

Christian draws a distinction between gallicisms in Tolstoy's Russian, on the one hand, and the direct use of French, on the other. He considers the former "rather an unconscious reflection of the language of educated Russian society in [Tolstoy's] day than a conscious linguistic device," while the latter is, in his view, "[e]qually contrived and equally important in an examination of the style of *War and Peace*."[22]

The use of French in *War and Peace* also contributes to characterization. Christian holds that the French words spoken by the characters—major and minor, fictional and historical, alike—reveal something about their background, attitudes, and moral values. Karin Beck examines how the "complex and competitive play of linguistic systems—French and Russian" in Tolstoy's depiction of Napoleon serves to make fun of this historical figure and also furthers the thesis of the novel's historical essays, namely that history is *not* made by great men.[23] The question of the role of French in *War and Peace* is further complicated by the fact that Russia's war with France is at the center of the plot. Shklovsky speculates that the irony in Tolstoy's depiction of Napoleon was lost on contemporary

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21   Leo Tolstoy, "A Few Words Apropos of the Book *War and Peace*," in *War and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 1218.

22   Christian, *Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'*, 158.

23   Beck, "The Emperor Has No Voice!," 1.

French readers precisely because it is dependent on the interplay of French and Russian, which becomes less visible in French translation.[24]

The characters' language preferences indicate their changing loyalties and attitudes toward Napoleon. After Napoleon's invasion of Russia, the use of French stands in contrast to patriotism and Russian interests. For example, French serves as one of the devices by which the historical character of Count Rastopchin, Governor-General of Moscow, is depicted unfavorably. The narrator's use of French to convey Rastopchin's justification for his actions on the eve of Napoleon's occupation implicitly calls into question his loyalty to the Russian city:

> Впоследствии, объясняя свою деятельность за это время, граф Растопчин в своих записках несколько раз писал, что у него тогда было две важные цели: De maintenir la tranquillité à Moscou et d'en faire partir les habitants.[25]

> Afterwards, explaining his activity during this time, Count Rastopchin wrote several times in his notes that he then had two important goals: *De maintenir la tranquillité à Moscou et d'en faire partir les habitants.*[26]

Napoleon appears ridiculous when he arrives trimphantly in Moscow only to find it deserted, without a Russian delegation to greet him, and the narrator drives home this point by inserting the French words "le ridicule" into two separate Russian sentences.[27]

The French language also serves as a vehicle for criticizing the Russian nobility. Christian notes that "[i]rony and ridicule of the theatrical and the self-important underly most of the French phrases used in *War and Peace*."[28] As

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24   Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 219.

25   Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 2, 453.

26   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 884.

27   Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 2, 436–37; Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 873.

28   Christian goes on to make the curious argument that "[a]s such they serve a legitimate purpose as long as French is readily understood by the reader. But when that language ceases to be understood and there is a need for footnotes to explain the meaning, their purpose is no longer useful. This is not say that they ought to be deleted. It is only to emphasize that a knowledge of both French and Russian is essential for a full appreciation of the language of Tolstoy's novel." Christian, *Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'*, 161. While I do not agree with Christian's statement that knowledge of both languages is requisite to a full appreciation of the work, it raises a relevant question concerning readers' proficiency and how meanings are created through the reading process.

Offord, Rjéoutski, and Argent argue, "French is inextricably associated in Tolstoi's eyes with the hypocrisies, ambitions, and stratagems of the social milieu in which it is spoken. It is a language in which speakers dissemble, play roles, and behave histrionically."[29] As they further point out, French signals sensuality—Anatole Kuragin speaks French when trying to seduce Natasha, as does his sister Hélène with Pierre—and superficiality, both of which are on full display at Anna Pavlovna Scherer's soirées, "at which [...] there gathered *la crème de la véritable bonne société, la fine fleur de l'essence intellectuelle de la société de Pétersbourg,* as Anna Pavlovna herself put it" ("на которых [...] собиралась la crème de la véritable bonne société, la fine fleur de l'essence intellectuelle de la société de Pétersbourg, как говорила сама Анна Павловна").[30] Offord, Rjéoutski, and Argent suggest that the ironic tone in some of the depictions of French being spoken stems from factors in Tolstoy's contemporary context, rather than the historical period he depicts:

> Tolstoi's treatment of francophonie in the early nineteenth-century Russian world invites reflection on broader questions concerning the nation's integrity and identity that had resonance in the 1860s. The xenophobic flavour of the novel and in particular Tolstoi's treatment of foreign commanders in the Russian army perhaps answered an emotional need following Russia's humiliating defeat at the hands of Britain and France in the recent war in the Crimea.[31]

Pratt observes that multilingualism tends to appear in literature "not when realism calls for it, but when writers undertake to explore linguistic difference as a social force, a site of power, and a source of knowledge."[32] A closer look at the linguistic landscape of *War and Peace* reveals how the characters' choice of language, like other aspects of their behavior, is always contextual, influenced by setting, interpersonal relationships, and social situations.

Yet just as Tolstoy's use of multiple languages in *War and Peace* "cannot be reduced to the principle of realism," as Pavel Trost argues, characterization and

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29   Derek Offord, Vladislav Rjéoutski, and Gesine Argent, *The French Language in Russia: A Social, Political, Cultural, and Literary History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 544.

30   Tolstoy, *War and Peace,* 364; Tolstoi, *Voina i mir,* 1, 577.

31   Offord, Rjéoutski, and Argent, *The French Language in Russia,* 545–46.

32   Pratt, "Comparative Literature and the Global Languagescape," 289.

social criticism cannot fully account for the presence of French.[33] Shklovsky suggests a further explanation based on the observation that Tolstoy's use of French in *War and Peace* evolved over the course of working on the manuscript, acquiring new significance in the process. According to Shklovsky, Tolstoy initially saw the French language as part of the raw material on which the novel was based, much like the historical and archival sources upon which he drew in his depiction of the Napoleonic Wars. Subsequently, however, "[a]s a result of the encroachment of a second language on the novel, a bilingual plan for the novel emerged."[34] As the role of translingual elements in the text increased, their focus and effects also shifted. In the second half of *War and Peace*, Shklovsky notes, Tolstoy began to use French in another way, in order "to note the incompatibility of ways of thinking in two different languages."[35]

Shklovsky suggests that language took on a life of its own in the process of writing *War and Peace*, and that Tolstoy became increasingly interested in aspects of language itself: "Marked language in general interested Tolstoy," who "forces the reader, as well, to listen to it."[36] Shklovsky notes that later in the novel, Tolstoy increasingly mixes French and Russian, "making this mixture apparent to the reader."[37] Another way to describe this is the concept of "laying bare the device," coined by Shklovsky in his 1921 study of Lawrence Sterne's *Tristam Shandy*. The effect of such code-mixing on readers is potentially that of making strange—*ostranenie*. In his essay "Art as Device," Shklovsky illustrates how *ostranenie* operates by citing a number of passages by Tolstoy—from his diary, from the story "Kholstomer," and from *War and Peace*.

The Metalinguistic Dimension

In *War and Peace*, the effects of translingual elements extend into a metalinguistic dimension that draws the reader's attention to the workings of language in ways that potentially break the illusion of the fictional world. This is especially the case when dialogue is conveyed to the reader in Russian with narrative comments explaining that other languages are spoken, as when Nikolai confides his

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33   Pavel Trost, "K dvojjazyčnosti *Vojny a míru*," in *Studie o jazycích a literatuře* (Prague: Torst, 1995), 52–57.

34   Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 247.

35   Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 216.

36   Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 213.

37   Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 217.

feelings to Natasha in whispered French words in the passage quoted earlier. As Uspensky observes of dialogue in *War and Peace*, "the reporting of a character's speech in either French or Russian is not always dependent upon what language that particular character, at that moment, is assumed actually to have spoken (in the imagination of the author)."[38] For example, while the French words spoken in the novel by the Russian Field Marshal Kutuzov are motivated by the presence of foreign interlocutors (the German military advisors Benningsen and Barclay de Tolly), the premises of the story offer no corresponding explanation for the occasions when Napoleon's words appear in Russian.

The multilingual dimension of the novel becomes more visible when we consider the numerous instances of metalinguistic commentary. The narrator often states explicitly not only *which* language is being spoken, but also *how*, and sometimes even *why*. We also learn how certain characters perceive the language of others. To better understand the function of such passages, it is useful to apply Beebee's four categories of transmesis. While the second of Beebee's categories ("Texts that overtly claim to be translations, though no 'original' exists") does not occur in *War and Peace*, there are instances of the other three: 1) "[t]exts whose mimetic object is the act of translation, the translator, and his or her social and historical contexts," 3) "[t]exts that mime a language reality such that the medium does not match the object depicted," and 4) "[t]exts that make standard language strange to itself [. . .], inasmuch as such departures are seen as the result of transcoding from another, more 'original' language; code-switching; interference from another language; and so forth."[39] Although there are numerous examples of categories 1 and 3, category 4 is especially striking in *War and Peace*.

Many of the passages containing more than one language serve to highlight not the language proficiency of the characters, but rather the opposite: moments of failed communication, incomprehensibility, and incommensurability of languages. One such example is an early passage in which the character Dolokhov is introduced to the reader. Within the fictional world, this is also the first time Pierre encounters him. It is a night of carousing and Dolokhov is involved in a bet. One of the participants is the Englishman Stevens, and although the dialogue in the passage is conveyed entirely in Russian, a parenthetical comment

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38   Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 46.

39   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 6.

informs the reader that Dolokhov "spoke in French so that the Englishman would understand him, and he did not speak the language all that well" ("он говорил по-французски, чтоб его понял англичанин, и говорил не слишком хорошо на этом языке").[40] This passage is an example of Beebee's third category, in that it depicts "a language reality such that the medium does not match the object depicted." Stevens' reply to Dolokhov is given in the text in Russian, thus calling on the reader to suspend disbelief and imagine that Stevens (referred to by the narrator as "the Englishman") is speaking English. At this point, Anatole "began repeating the terms of the bet to him in English," implicitly confirming the limited comprehensibility of Dolokhov's French.[41] Three languages are now at play in the fictional world: English, French, and Russian, although only Russian appears on the surface of the text. The characters' speech in English and French is not conveyed directly, but the narrator makes note of their language choices. What follows is a moment of incomprehension (or, perhaps, a strategic denial of comprehension) resulting in ambivalence: "The Englishman nodded his head, in no way making clear whether he did or did not accept this new bet" ("Англичанин кивнул головой, не давая никак разуметь, намерен ли он, или нет, принять это новое пари").[42]

Another example of Beebee's third category, in which the language used in the narrative does not match up with the language used in the fictional world, occurs when Kutuzov speaks with an Austrian general, and Prince Andrei, serving as Kutuzov's adjutant, enters the room. Here, too, we are told not only *which* language is spoken, but *how*:

> – А . . . – сказал Кутузов, оглядываясь на Болконского, как будто этим словом приглашая адъютанта подождать, и продолжал по-французски начатый разговор.
> – Я только говорю одно, генерал, – говорил Кутузов с приятным изяществом выражений и интонации, заставлявшим вслушиваться в каждое неторопливо сказанное слово. Видно было, что Кутузов и сам с удовольствием слушал себя.[43]

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40   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 33; Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 1, 53.

41   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 33.

42   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 33; Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 1, 53.

43   Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 1, 192–93.

"Ah . . ." said Kutuzov, glancing at Bolkonsky, as if with this word he was inviting the adjutant to wait, and went on with the conversation begun in French.

"I'm saying only one thing, General," Kutuzov said with a pleasant graciousness of expression and intonation, which made one listen well to every unhurriedly uttered word. It could be seen that Kutuzov, too, listened to himself with pleasure.[44]

This brief passage, which contains the words *saying, uttered*, and *word* (the latter occurs twice), emphasizes language in several ways: the omniscient third-person narrator interprets for the reader the monosyllabic interjection: "Ah . . ." as an invitation to wait; Kutuzov comments on his own speech ("I'm saying only one thing"); and his manner of speaking is commented on by the narrator ("with a pleasant graciousness of expression and intonation, which made one listen well to every unhurriedly uttered word"); in reponse to Kutuzov's manner of speaking, the addressees "listen well," and even Kutuzov "listened to himself with pleasure." The reader, too, is made to "listen well" to language while reading this passage, taking in not only its semantic content (the "one thing" Kutuzov is saying to the Austrian general), but imagining the audial effects as the characters speak and listen. The passage also prepares the reader for the code-switching that occurs throughout this chapter, which quotes directly in German from a letter by Archduke Ferdinand and contains phrases of dialogue in German and French.

The above examples show the degree of detail in Tolstoy's depiction of the characters' speech in *War and Peace*. Uspensky notes the "scrupulousness and almost pedantic attention to the transmission of the phonetic peculiarities of the characters."[45] This kind of commentary on language—what language is spoken, how, and why—often appears in parentheses that interrupt the narrative flow to give information about the means of communication, drawing the reader's attention from *what* is being said to *how*—away from the content of the text toward its linguistic form.

The distribution of languages in *War and Peace* is inconsistent and defies any systematic attempt to correlate characters with particular languages. Rather, the characters' language choices reflect individual preferences, momentary states of mind, and attitudes, as well as collective factors such as fashion and

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44   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 122.

45   Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition*, 46.

social convention. In keeping with Tolstoy's philosophy of history, language, like human thought and action, is shown to be unpredictable. Code-switching occurs in mundane exchanges as well as crucial conversations. As Uspensky points out, "both the French characters and the Russian aristocracy use both languages in the novel, expressing themselves in Russian, or in a mixture of French and Russian."[46] Shklovsky argues that the main characters of the novel can be divided into two groups based on language competency: "those who speak French well and those who speak French poorly," and he makes the further observation that native speakers do *not* serve as role models in this respect: "French characters who speak French in the novel are not represented by Tolstoy as the ideal of the French language; in particular, he faults Mademoiselle Burienne for mispronouncing the letters *r* and *l*, and Napoleon for over-articulating."[47]

We might then wonder which characters in *War and Peace* speak French best. Pierre and Andrei are portrayed as the most competent codeswitchers, and multiple passages show them making use of different languages and even accents. Their linguistic dexterity is in keeping with other positive qualities attributed to them, such as "the ability to respond to change, the qualities of restlessness, curiosity, flexibility and dynamism," which Christian sees as "perquisites of the main heroes of the novel, and in particular Pierre, Prince Andrei and Natasha."[48] Early on, the narrative repeatedly shows Andrei making conscious choices about language, some of which may surprse twenty-first-century readers. For example, he speaks not Russian but French to Field Marshal Kutuzov; although the entire passage is in Russian, the narrator specifies that Andrei addressed him "quietly in French."[49] When Andrei's attention is required by an old Russian general toward whom he feels contempt, he chooses to speak to him in Russian overlaid with "that French pronunciation which he used when he wanted to speak disdainfully."[50] Andrei's multilingual proficiency is further evidenced by mention in the narrative that he "he had translated the articles of the Roman and French [legal] codes into Russian."[51]

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46   Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition*, 46.

47   Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 211.

48   Christian, *Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'*, 176.

49   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 118.

50   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 249.

51   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 466.

Pierre, as well, is depicted translating. As Offord, Rjéoutski, and Argent note, "Pierre has the ability to assimilate foreign languages and cultures."[52] His ambilingualism is reflected by the two versions of his name: the French Pierre Besukoff and the Russian Pyotr Kirillovich Bezukhov. When the French army occupies Moscow, Pierre resolves to hide his knowledge of French from the enemy, but his empathy causes him to temporarily forget this and intervene diplomatically to save the life of the French officer Ramballe, as well as the drunk Russian who intends to shoot him. This passage contains comic examples of grammatically incorrect language and incomprehension both real and feigned. In spite of himself, Pierre falls into French conversation with Ramballe, who declares him "Français ou prince russe incognito," while Pierre objects (in French), "Je suis Russe."[53] Feeling conflicted about enjoying the company and conversation of the enemy, Pierre attempts at first to conceal his identity from Ramballe, only to end up discussing the very personal subject of love with him over wine. This passage contains a reflection on types of love that switches back and forth between the Russian and French nouns for *love*:

> Очевидно было, что l'amour, которую так любил француз, была ни та низшего и простого рода любовь, которую Пьер испытывал когда-то к своей жене, ни та раздуваемая им самим романтическая любовь, которую он испытывал к Наташе (оба рода этой любви Рамбаль одинаково презирал – одна была l'amour des charretiers, другая l'amour des nigauds); l'amour, которой поклонялся француз, заключалась преимущественно в неестественности отношений к женщине и в комбинации уродливостей, которые придавали главную прелесть чувству.[54]

> It was obvious that the *amour* which the Frenchman liked so much was neither that low and simple kind of love that Pierre had once felt for his wife, nor the romantic love he felt for Natasha and fanned so much himself (Ramballe equally despised both these kinds of love— one was *l'amour de charretiers*, the other *l'amour des nigauds*); the *amour* which the Frenchman venerated consisted mainly in unnatural

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52   Offord, Rjéoutski, and Argent, *The French Language in Russia*, 549.

53   Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 2, 486, 484; Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 904, 903.

54   Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 2, 497.

relations with women and in the combinations of abnormalities that endowed the feeling with its main charm.[55]

The reader may recall at this point in the narrative that Pierre had first declared his love for his wife Hélène not in Russian, but in French.

The passages depicting Andrei translating texts and Pierre interpreting speech both fall into Beebee's first category of depictions of "the act of translation, the translator, and his or her social and historical contexts." Tolstoy's enactment of translation in the novel sometimes takes translingualism to a metanarrative level. In addition to code-switching, numerous passages in *War and Peace* exhibit code-mixing, with a higher degree of permeation of languages and their sphere of references.[56] As Morson observes, "the French language is so woven into this text that it cannot be removed mechanically."[57] A good example of code-mixing, noted by Uspensky, is the passage depicting how Napoleon glimpses Moscow for the first time:

> – Cette ville asiatique aux innombrables églises, Moscou la sainte. La voilà donc enfin, cette fameuse ville! Il était temps, – сказал Наполеон и, слезши с лошади, велел разложить перед собою план этой Moscou и подозвал переводчика Lelorgne d'Ideville.[58]

> "*Cette ville asiatique aux innombrables églises, Moscou la sainte. La voilà donc enfin, cette fameuse ville! Il était temps,*" said Napoleon and, getting off his horse, he ordered a map of this *Moscou* spread out before him and summoned the interpreter Lelorgne d'Ideville.[59]

Here, the French word for Moscow indicates that Napoleon is the focalizer: the Russian city *Moskva* is seen from the specific perspective of the French Emperor, as *Moscou*. Uspensky argues that "Tolstoy feels it necessary to show the actual pronunciation of this particular word from Napoleon's position, while all the other words of the same sentence are given in Russian from a different position.

55   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 911.

56   Code-mixing is defined as "expressions in which a mixture of the grammar of one language and another language is used without altering the grammar of the first language used." Mabule, "What Is This? Is It Code Switching, Code Mixing or Language Alternating?," 341.

57   Morson, *Hidden in Plain View,* 49.

58   Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 2, 433.

59   Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 871.

Sentences of this kind may be viewed as the result of the synthesis (an indivisible combination) of the French phrase as it was supposed to have been pronounced and the Russian translation of it."[60] Furthermore, the two different scripts used in this passage—Cyrillic and Latin—serve to foreground language and difference. In the phrase "этой Moscou," a French proper noun is preceded by a Russian modifier, which is declined as if it were modifying the Russian noun *Moskva*. Shklovsky mentions, albeit only very briefly, that Tolstoy uses transcription as a means of *ostranenie*.[61] As with other translingual elements in *War and Peace*, transcription and heterographics are not employed systematically; at one point in Nikolai's speech, French is transliterated into Russian, set off only by italics: "И Берг тут! Ах ты, *петизанфан, але куше дормир!*" ("And Berg's here, too! Ah, you *petisenfan, allay cushay dormir!*"),[62] as if to remind the reader that language can look different than we expect, fulfilling Beebee's fourth category: texts that "make standard language strange to itself."

Transmeses, holds Beebee, "remind their readers that the universe is multilingual."[63] By frequently drawing the reader's attention to characteristics of language, *War and Peace* reminds us that the fictional world inhabited by Pierre, Andrei, and Natasha is multilingual, as is our own. There is no simple explanation for the complex interplay of languages in Tolstoy's masterpiece. Translingual elements appear in various forms within the depicted fictional world, as well as on the surface of the text. The inconsistencies in the way the characters and narrator all use language, as well as variations in how language is presented on the level of the text, create a deautomatizing effect, forcing readers, as Shklovsky observes, to listen to language.

The translingual fabric of *War and Peace* contributes variously to the novel's realism, characterization, and social criticism, and it also opens up a metalinguistic dimension that foregrounds language itself. The many instances of metalinguistic commentary highlight, in the words of Shklovsky, "the incompatibility of ways of thinking in two different languages."[64] Pratt argues that literary multilingualism often appears when authors "aim to enact and examine the force of language and the powers of linguistic difference. Heterolingual experimentation and

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60   Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition*, 53.

61   Shklovskii, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 216.

62   Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, 1, 377; Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 239.

63   Beebee, *Transmesis*, 3.

64   Shklovsky, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 216.

improvisation is a proliferating feature of the global languagescape."[65] In this way, too, Tolstoy was ahead of his time.

The make-up of Tolstoy's readership has changed dramatically since his time, expanding from a Russian elite that could be assumed to know French to an international audience that may know neither French or Russian, yet *War and Peace* continues to be read widely. Many translations of *War and Peace* have smoothed out the linguistic incompatibility that the novel enacts and foregrounds, thus rendering the rich interplay of languages less visible than in the original. This, too, is changing, however, thanks to several recent translations that seek to convey the translingual weave of the text, allowing also readers of the novel in translation to read it in a new light.

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65   Pratt, "Comparative Literature and the Global Languagescape," 289.

Reading Between Medieval and Modern: The Case of Eugene Vodolazkin's *Laurus*

Russia's written literary tradition began with translation. For the specific purpose of missionizing among the Slavs, parts of the Bible and other ecclesiastical texts were rendered into a language constructed in the ninth century by the Byzantine monks Cyril and Methodius. When Kievan Rus officially converted to Orthodox Christianity in 988, it received this written language, called Church Slavonic, along with a package of religious texts in translation. This was the yeast out of which medieval Russian literature rose.[1] The new language was different from the East Slavonic vernacular, yet close enough to be comprehensible to its speakers. As Robin Milner-Gulland argues, "the modern perception of Russian and Church Slavonic as separate languages [. . .] can lead to a serious misunderstanding of the subtle and idiosyncratic linguistic situation in Rus.'"[2] Church Slavonic was the target language for translation from Greek, and no translation was needed between it and East Slavonic.

Uspensky characterizes this specific linguistic situation as one of diglossia, in which two languages fulfill different functions within the same language system.[3] Andrew Baruch Wachtel and Ilya Vinitsky describe the two languages as

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1   Church Slavonic had been the official Church language in Bulgaria since the late ninth century, and thus the inherited "textual package derived from Bulgaria rather than directly from Byzantium." Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c. 950–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13. Church Slavonic is sometimes referred to as Old Church Slavonic, Old Bulgarian, Old Slavonic, or simply Slavonic.

2   Robin Milner-Gulland, "Old Russian Literature and Its Heritage," in *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature*, ed. Neil Cornwall (London: Routledge, 2001), 15.

3   Boris Uspensky, "K voprosu o semanticheskikh vzaimootnosheniiakh sistemno protivopostavlennykh tserkovnoslavianskikh i russkikh form v istorii russkogo iazyka," *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch* 22 (1976): 92–100. See also: Boris A. Uspensky, "The Language Situation and Linguistic Consciousness in Muscovite Rus': The Perception of Church Slavic and Russian," trans. Michael S. Flier, in *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. Henrik Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 365–85. For alternative characterizations, see Daniel E. Collins, "On Diglossia and the Linguistic Norms of Medieval Russian Writing," *Studies in Slavic and General Linguistics* 17 (1992), 79–94.

"poles on a continuum," rather than "separate and impermeable systems," noting that they influenced each other: "the religious texts brought to Rus' and copied by local scribes quickly took on features of the local spoken dialect, and the local dialect rapidly began to absorb words and grammatical constructions borrowed from the bookish language of the church."[4] A general view of medieval language practices as operating within a continuum rather than discrete systems is advocated by David Gramling, who argues that "pre-modern speech subjectivity is best understood in terms of linguistic repertoires rather than linguistic systems, as mixing and matching among them carried less of the rigid structural symbolism of allegiance or dissidence as they would in the age of nation-states."[5]

In the following passage, Franklin considers how Church Slavonic might have sounded to medieval East Slavs:

> For readers and their listeners in Rus, Church Slavonic probably had a strong local accent. Our notional untutored East Slav might have been even less struck by the morphological contrasts between his spoken vernacular and Church Slavonic. Inflected word-endings, for example, were broadly similar, and one could quite easily get used to the consistent alternatives in word-formation. More exotic was the way in which words were strung together in clauses and sentences. Devised for the purpose of translating from Greek, Church Slavonic was apt to mirror Greek rhetorical structures unfamiliar to spoken East Slavonic [...] But perhaps most alien of all were many of the words themselves, and their meanings. [...] Church Slavonic brought a mass of concepts which were wholly new to the East Slavs. It was saturated with words and expressions which had no precise precedent in any pre-literate variety of spoken Slavonic: words borrowed or calqued from Greek, or familiar Slavonic words imbued with unfamiliar connotations.[6]

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4   Andrew Baruch Wachtel and Ilya Vinitsky, *Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 12. For a brief overview of various views of the relationship between Church Slavonic and the vernacular, see: Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture*, 86–87.

5   Gramling, *The Invention of Monolingualism*, 13.

6   Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus,* 85–86. Vinokur also argues that "the Old Russian literary language was essentially the product of hybridisation and amalgamation in which the two strains of the Slavonic book language and everyday Eastern Slavonic were mingled." G. O. Vinokur, *The Russian Language: A Brief History*, trans. Mary A. Forsyth, ed. James Forsyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 29.

As the Russian language evolved over time, it increasingly diverged from the more static forms of Church Slavonic. By the end of the seventeenth century, the situation came to resemble bilingualism.[7] By the mid-eighteenth century, Russian served as the official language of the state, with Church Slavonic relegated to the sphere of the Russian Orthodox Church, thus assuming a role similar to that of Latin in Western Europe.[8] Church Slavonic continued to enrich the vocabulary and stylistic register of the Russian literary language, however, just as the medieval genre of saints' lives continued to influence Russian literature in the nineteenth century and beyond.[9] Milner-Gulland argues that the presence of both "the Old Russian and the Slavonic elements within the written Russian language has led to tensions, uncertainties (particularly in the eighteenth century) and great expressive possibilities for Russian writers, a peculiarly Russian situation that readers of Russian literature in other countries have not always understood. The consequent omnipresent awareness of the very materials of literature has often led to a sense of 'the word' itself being the real hero of the literary work."[10]

Eugene Vodolazkin's novel *Laurus* (*Lavr*, 2012) draws extensively on this literary and linguistic heritage. As a scholar of medieval Russian literature, Vodolazkin knows the period he depicts exceptionally well. He has called his novel a saint's life "according to the rules of medieval poetics," yet at the same time, metatextual comments explicitly address readers living in the twenty-first century.[11] It can be read as an adaptation of the medieval *vita*, or a translation (without a specific source text) between medieval and modern literary traditions, languages, and worldviews.

As I will show, the narrative of *Laurus* enacts diglossia, as well as medieval writing and reading practices, offering a fictional depiction of a medieval Russian graphosphere. Franklin defines the term *graphosphere* as "the space of the visible word [...] formed wherever words are encoded, recorded, stored, disseminated

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7   Uspensky, "The Language Situation," 371; Collins, "On Diglossia," 83.

8   Uspensky characterizes the roles of Latin and Church Slavonic in medieval Western and Eastern Europe, respectively, in the following way: "Latin became the language of the Church because it had long been the language of civilization. Church Slavic, on the contrary, became the language of civilization precisely because it was the language of the Church." Uspensky, "The Language Situation," 370.

9   Wachtel and Vinitsky, *Russian Literature*, 19.

10   Milner-Gulland, "Old Russian Literature," 20.

11   Eugene Vodolazkin, "The New Middle Ages," trans. Lisa C. Hayden, *First Things*, August 2016, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/08/the-new-middle-ages.

and displayed through visible signs."[12] Because the medieval graphosphere is different in significant ways from the contemporary one, the novel's detailed depiction of it serves to foreground, stylize, and thematicize language, at the same time defamiliarizing the reader's own language practices.

The novel consists of a prolegomenon and four parts that narrate the life of the protagonist from birth to death as he moves from place to place, changing names as he goes. He begins life as Arseny, born in Moscovy in 1440 and raised near the Kirillov Monastery by his grandfather Christofer, who teaches him the art of herbalism. As a young adult, he moves to nearby Beloozersk and then Pskov, from whence he sets off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He gains renown as a healer but lives for periods as a holy fool and ascetic, encountering pilgrims, prophets, holy fools, robbers, monks, nuns, mayors, and ordinary people in need of help along the way. In the final part, he takes monastic vows at the Kirillov Monastery. The novel thus tells the story of the protagonist's life and spiritual development, exploring in the process the big themes of friendship, love, illness, loss, guilt, and forgiveness.

The narrative of *Laurus* adds a psychological and existential dimension to the ingredients of medieval saints' lives, making for a compelling reading experience that evokes the Middle Ages for contemporary readers. At the same time, the reader's immersion in the fictional medieval world is interrupted by reminders of the contemporary age in the form of code-mixing, anachronisms, and metatextual comments. In his essay "The New Middle Ages," Vodolazkin expresses an aim to "invite the reader into the medieval world, which is admittedly rather quirky. I will do so in terms of the written word, because as a scholar of literature and a writer (an ichthyologist and a fish), my exploration of the medieval and the modern must proceed through an examination of texts."[13] The materiality of texts, as well as the processes of writing, reading, and translation, are foregrounded in *Laurus*, creating a defamiliarizing effect.

The prolegomenon immediately draws the reader's attention to words. Noting that the protagonist's nickname was *Vrach* (Doctor), the narrator considers its etymology, which in turn leads to a reflection on the power of words that recalls the title of the 1913 Futurist manifesto *Slovo kak takovoe* (The Word as Such) by Alexei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov: "Words as such, regardless of their meaning. Due to the limited number of medications, words played a more significant role in the Middle Ages."[14] The narrator goes on to

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12   Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere,* 1.

13   Vodolazkin, "The New Middle Ages."

14   Evgeny Vodolazkin, *Lavr* (Moscow: AST), 7–8. My translation. I quote Lisa C. Hayden's

posit that for this reason, medieval people talked a lot, exemplifying in three separate paragraphs what doctors, patients, and relatives all discussed. A more modern kind of talking cure is anachronistically evoked by the refrain "and they felt better after this."[15]

Against the background of this loquaciousness, Arseny stands out for his silence:

> Особенность человека, о котором идет речь, состояла в том, что он говорил очень мало. Он помнил слова Арсения Великого: много раз я сожалел о словах, которые произносили уста мои, но о молчании я не жалел никогда. Чаще всего он безмолвно смотрел на больного. Мог сказать лишь: тело твое тебе еще послужит. Или: тело твое пришло в негодность, готовься его оставить; знай, что оболочка сия несовершенна.[16]

> The defining trait of the person under discussion is that he spoke very little. He remembered the words of Arsenius the Great: I have often regretted the things I have said, but I have never regretted my silence. Most often he looked wordlessly at the patient. He might say only, your body will still serve you. Or, your body has become unsuitable, prepare to leave it; know that this shell is imperfect.[17]

The style of the language changes over the course of the paragraph quoted above, growing more archaic toward the end and then returning to modern Russian at the start of the next one. Through its theme as well as its style, this passage gives the reader a foretaste of the centrality of language in the novel. In the translator's introduction to the English edition, Lisa C. Hayden notes how the original language of the novel "blends archaic words, comic remarks, quotes from the Bible, bureaucratese, chunks of medieval texts, and much more [. . .] the novel's language spans many centuries, creating a kaleidoscopic effect that Vodolazkin

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translation throughout this chapter, with the exception of passages where a more literal translation is desirable for the sake of analysis.

15 Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 8. My translation.

16 Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 8–9.

17 Eugene Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, trans. Lisa C. Hayden (London: Oneworld, 2015), Kindle edition, 3–4.

develops in such a way that it feels utterly natural."[18] Inguun Lunde describes the novel's language as "a peculiar kind of linguistic amalgam" of "standard literary Russian, Church Slavonic and early or middle Rus(s)ian elements (words, word forms, syntax, style), officialese and profanity."[19] Vodolazkin's inventive use of language can be seen as an expression of what Milner-Gulland characterizes as the hybridity of the Russian language: "modern written Russian is a hybrid, whose 'grandparents' are normalized Russian, folk and dialect Russian, west European imports, and Church Slavonic elements. Juggling the balance between them has given modern Russian literature an extraordinary richness of texture."[20]

The presence of translingualism in *Laurus* is signaled graphically by Church Slavonic letters in the chapter headings. Regardless of whether readers are literate in Church Slavonic script, its appearance on the page creates an immediate impression of a medieval text. Readers already familiar with Russian literature of the Middle Ages may recognize these letters and identify their particular function in this context as numerical symbols, indicated by the titlos above the letters.[21] By contrast, readers unable to decode the Church Slavonic letters are more likely to focus on their visual qualities. As Charles Lock argues, "A graphic system that we lack competence to read can hardly be identified as an alphabet, or even as a writing system. For what are the markers that, for the uninformed, might distinguish the graphic from the decorative?"[22] In the case of *Laurus*, uninitiated readers are provided with the key to the code partway into the novel, when the protagonist Arseny explains to the character Ustina how the letters of the alphabet are used to represent numbers.

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18   Lisa C. Hayden, translator's introduction to *Laurus*, by Eugene Vodolazkin, trans. Lisa C. Hayden (London: Oneworld, 2015), Kindle edition, loc 43. Hayden discusses her translation of the novel in "The Care that Goes into Translation: An Interview with Lisa Hayden," by Graham Oliver, Ploughshares at Emerson College, accessed September 6, 2023, https://blog.pshares.org/the-care-that-goes-into-translation-an-interview-with-lisa-hayden/.

19   Inguun Lunde, *Language on Display: Writers, Fiction and Linguistic Culture in Post-Soviet Russia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 149. See p. 149–66 for Lunde's analysis of Slavonicisms and language as a theme in *Laurus*.

20   Milner-Gulland, "Old Russian Literature," 18.

21   Horace G. Lunt, *Old Church Slavonic Grammar*, 7th ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 28.

22   Charles Lock, "On roman letters and other stories: An essay in heterographics," *Journal of World Literature* 1 (2016): 159.

Regardless of the particular scriptal literacies of the reader, however, the presence of Church Slavonic letters in the text draws attention to language itself. As Bodin argues, "heterographic devices intensify readers' awareness of the visual-spatial features of scripts and emphasise the heteromedial dimensions of literary texts. Moreover, we have seen that literary uses of heterographics contribute to heightening readers' awareness not only of the medium of language and of the reading process (as is the case with translingual literary texts), but also of the fact that language in literary texts is mediated through scripts."[23] Different scriptal competencies potentially lead to different perceptions of the chapter headings, with uninitiated readers first encountering them "as a visual signboard, situated within the literary text," and subsequently acquiring, in the course of reading, the competency to decode their meaning.[24] In this way, a process of translation is built into the reading process, as the presence of Church Slavonic script requires all readers to translate the chapter headings in some way, whether into numbers, pictures, or something else.[25]

Learning to Read in *Laurus*

Language is foregrounded not only on the surface of the text of Vodolazkin's novel but also in the plot, which repeatedly enacts the activities of writing, reading, and translation. Three characters are portrayed learning to read: as a child, Arseny is taught to read by his grandfather Christofer and later teaches Ustina and Anastasia.[26] All of these passages depict the activity of reading in ways that foreground the materiality of texts and scripts, potentially prompting readers of the novel to reflect on their own reading practices. For the fictional characters, written language appears as something new, while for the readers of the novel, it is familiar but made to appear new through the device of *ostranenie*, which according to Shklovsky has the potential to counteract automatized per-

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23   Bodin, "Heterographics," 212. In the context of heterographics, it is interesting to note that there existed two alphabets for Church Slavonic: Cyrillic and Glagolitic, which were, as Lunt notes, "functionally equivalent but visually quite different." Lunt, *Old Church Slavonic Grammar*, 15. As a result, medieval readers of Old Church Slavonic were potentially biscriptal. For a brief overview of the use of the Glagolitic alphabet among the Eastern Slavs, see Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere*, 93–97.

24   Bodin, "Heterographics," 208.

25   Tatiana Tolstaya uses Church Slavonic letters as chapter titles in her novel *Kys'* (*Slynx*, 2000). For an analysis of language as a theme in this novel, see Lunde, *Language on Display*, 137–48; 157–59.

26   In Russian the expression for 'learning to read' is 'выучиться грамоту.' The word *gramota* (borrowed from Greek) encompasses both reading and writing skills.

ceptions of the world. A passage toward the end of *Laurus* echoes Shklovsky's idea: the protagonist worries that his healing treatments were received "automatically, which does not prompt these people's souls to stir," to which the monastery elder replies, "Their automatism will pass quickly, when you are no longer with them."[27] The Russian text of the novel uses the same word as Shklovsky to describe the loss of perception of newness: *avtomatizm*.[28]

The device of *ostranenie* in Vodolazkin's novel serves to highlight the materiality of language, which has arguably become less visible in the digital age, as Franklin posits: "The invention of writing turned the word into an object, and into a part of an object. Modern technologies have once more 'de-objectified' or dematerialised the word, enabling it to be stored and transmitted invisibly, splitting production and storage from display. Pre-modern writing exists only as graphic representation on (fixed to, as part of) a visible object."[29] Vodolazkin's depiction of medieval reading practices explores the materiality of texts, and how they were produced, perceived, and used in the fifteenth century.

All of the characters who learn to read in *Laurus* are described as quick studies, and the reader of the novel can vicariously learn things along with them. For example, Arseny reacts to texts he reads in ways that implicitly reveal differences between medieval and modern texts: "At first it bothered him that the words in the majority of books were not separated from each other, but stood in a continuous row." Christofer responds with a rhetorical question: "But they aren't pronounced separately, are they?"[30] Arseny's surprise over the absence of space between words is an anachronism within the medieval setting, reflecting the expectations of a modern, rather than medieval, reader. This passage does two things simultaneously, explaining the medieval convention of *scriptio continua*, while defamiliarizing written language in general.[31] Interestingly, it is not the medieval writing convention that is defamiliarized, but the modern practice

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27   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 328.

28   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 399.

29   Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture*, 20.

30   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 39. My translation.

31   Lunt summarizes the convention in Church Slavonic thus: "The punctuation in OCS mss is primitive. No space is left between words. Large-size letters may occur in headings, but there is no capitalization in the modern sense. A dot on the line (.) or raised (·), or two dots (:), may be written to divide the text into phrases, but they are not systematically used, and occasionally they occur within words. Larger divisions are sometimes marked with more complex symbols [. . .]. No OCS manuscript uses any of these devices consistently." Lunt, *Old Church Slavonic Grammar*, 28.

of separating words with spaces, which is shown to be a mere convention that does not correspond to the sound of oral language.

The depiction of Arseny's reading habits foregrounds the material qualities of medieval texts. Christofer's birchbark writings are described as accessible reading: of a convenient size, with a large and legible script, and readily available, left lying around the home. The process of production of these texts is depicted in some detail: through the eyes of Arseny, the reader sees how Christofer strips bark from birch trees, boils it into "valuable paper," and writes on it with a stylus made of bone.[32] The following passage describes the content of Christofer's writings:

> Христофор записывал прочитанное в книгах: бысть у Соломона царя седмь сот жен, а наложниц триста, а книг осмь тысящ. Записывал свои собственные наблюдения: месяца септемврия в десятый день выпаде Арсениеви зуб. Записывал врачевательные молитвы, состав лекарств, описания трав, сведения о природных аномалиях, приметы погоды и короткие назидательные высказывания: блюдися молчаниа злаго мужа, акы отай хапающаго злаго пса.[33]

> Christofer wrote down what he had read in books: And King Solomon had seven hundreth wives and thre hundreth concubynes, and eighte thousande books. He wrote down his own observations: on the tenth day of the month of September, Arseny's tooth hadst fallen out. He wrote down his doctorly prayers, contents of medicines, descriptions of herbs, information about natural anomalies, weather omens, and brief edifying statements: guard thyself from the silence of a loathsome man as if he were a loathsome dog who doth steale in secret.[34]

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32   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 39. Jos Schaeken notes the following: "Birchbark is a soft material, and it is easy to scratch marks and letters on it with a sharp instrument. You can use it to write notes for yourself or a message to someone else. This was a common practice in Novgorod and other cities in the region during the Middle Ages, when paper was not yet widespread, and parchment too valuable for everyday use. Strips of birchbark suitable for writing quite literally 'grew on trees'; as by-products of the wood used for fuel, building, and handicrafts, they were readily available, easy to prepare, and cost nothing." Jos Schaeken, *Voices on Birchbark: Everyday Communication in Medieval Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), xi. See also the chapters "Writing Technology and Practice" and "Users and Literacy" in Schaeken, 33–43.

33   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 40.

34   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 31.

In all three examples of Christofer's subject matter, the narration codeswitches from modern to archaic language. The subsequent paragraph explains *why* Christofer wrote, noting that he believed that "the written word brought order to the world," and that "the written word would remain forever. No matter what happened afterwards, the word, having been written, had already happened."[35] His faith in the lasting power of words is reflected, paradoxically, in his carelessness with his birchbark texts, which he does not bother to pick up from the floor. In a wink to contemporary readers aware that over one thousand birch bark texts have been excavated in the Novgorod area since 1951, the narrator relates that Christofer "vaguely anticipated their discovery, much later, in a cultural stratum."[36]

Once he has cracked the code of written language, Arseny is an avid reader, and his preferences and habits are described in some detail. The narrative exemplifies Arseny's favorite texts and also initiates the contemporary reader into medieval reading practices:

> Берестяные грамоты дитя читало вслух. В Средневековье вообще читали преимущественно вслух, на худой конец просто шевелили губами. Наиболее понравившиеся записи складывались Арсением в особую корзину. Аще кто костию подавится, призови на помощь святаго Власия. Василий Великий глаголет, яко Адам бысть в Раи сорок дний. Не имей дружбы с женою, да не сгориши огнем. Разнообразие сведений поражало воображение ребенка.[37]

> The child read the birch-bark manuscripts out loud. Basically, during the Middle Ages people read predominantly out loud, at the very least simply moving their lips. Arseny piled the notes he particularly liked in a special basket. Yf someone choketh on a bone, appeal for help from the Saint Vlasy. Vasily the Great sayeth Adam was in Paradise forty dayes. Have not a friendship with a woman, and do not burne in fyre. The variety of information staggered the child's imagination.[38]

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35   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 40. My translation.

36   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 31. For current information on the number of excavated birchbark letters, see the following website: http://gramoty.ru/birchbark/.

37   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 41.

38   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 31–32.

Here the practice of reading aloud is implicitly contrasted with what the contemporary reader is likely to do, namely silent reading.[39] That reading aloud was the norm in the Middle Ages is emphasized in a later passage, in which Arseny sees Christofer reading silently:

> Христофор просматривал имевшиеся книги и грамоты. Что-то он пролистывал быстро, на некоторых же листах останавливался и читал их, словно в раздумье. Шевелил губами. [. . .] Арсения это удивляло, потому что в доме все обычно читалось вслух.[40]

> Christofer looked through his books and manuscripts. He glanced through some quickly, stopping at certain pages and reading them, as if in thought. He moved his lips. [. . .] This behavior surprised Arseny because in their home everything was usually read out loud.[41]

The surprised reaction of Arseny, who is the focalizer in the above passage, serves to defamiliarize a practice that is the norm for contemporary readers, namely silent reading.

Another of Arseny's favorite texts is the *Alexander Romance*, a popular medieval adventure story. The physical qualities of this book are described in detail: made of parchment, it had been copied years before by Christofer's grandfather Feodosy. This book occupies a place of pride in Arseny's childhood home, kept in a brass case under the icon in the holy corner. In the following passage, the narrator codeswitches to archaic language in quoting Feodosy's colophon:

> Се аз, Феодосий грешный, преписах книгу сию в память храбрых человек, дабы деяния их не беспамятны были. Так на первом листе обращался к потомкам Феодосий. В лице Арсения он нашел самого благодарного своего читателя.[42]

> It is I, Feodosy, a sinner, who made a copie of this book in memory of brave people, that their deeds not go unremembered. That is how

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39   On the history of silent reading, see Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

40   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 55.

41   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 44.

42   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 41.

Feodosy addressed his descendants on the first page. He found in Arseny his most grateful reader.[43]

Here the act of reading acquires an intergenerational dimension that serves as a microcosmic metaphor for literary tradition: texts are written, reproduced, and read by subsequent generations. Arseny's reading experience is depicted as one of pleasurable immersion not unlike the response described by Felski when discussing readerly enchantment: "Literature seems akin to sorcery in its power to turn absence into presence, to summon up spectral figures out of the void, to conjure images of hallucinatory intensity and vividness, to fashion entire worlds into which the reader is swallowed up."[44] Much later in life, although Arseny no longer possesses a copy of the book, he still recalls episodes from the *Alexander Romance* better than his own adventures on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

When Ustina asks Arseny to teach her to read, he fetches a text in another popular medieval genre, commonly used to teach the alphabet: the Psalter.[45] This passage serves to emphasize the materiality of alphabetic script. First the visual qualities of an illuminated initial letter are described using the adjective "cinnabar" and the verb "glowed." Then the letter is represented graphically through embedding, in boldface Church Slavonic font, in the text.

> Это буква **Б**. Здесь с нее начинается слово «**Блажен**».
> Блажен муж, иже не иде на совет нечестивых, не спеша прочла Устина. И на пути грешных не ста, и на седалищи губителей не седе.[46]

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43 Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 32.

44 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 62.

45 "Few books were more widely used [than the Psalter], both inside and outside church. Apart from readings during services, a good monk should know the Psalms by heart and—as urged by Feodosii of the Caves, echoing a Byzantine commonplace—should constantly have a psalm on his lips. [. . .] With the exception of the Gospels, it is probably the text most frequently cited by native East Slav writers." Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture*, 25. Teresa Shawcross notes that the first texts that people in the Orthodox world would "encounter when learning their letters were the psalms, together with passages drawn from scripture, hagiography and other religious writings." Teresa Shawcross, "Byzantium: A Bookish World," in *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, ed. Teresa Shawcross and Ida Toth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 26.

46 Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 85. As the heterographic effect is lost in translation, I do not include the English translation here.

Code-switching in the text distinguishes the words Ustina reads in the Psalter (in Church Slavonic) from Arseny's pedagogical explanations (in modern Russian). Like Arseny, Ustina is a quick study, helped along by having already learned some of the psalms by heart. She marvels at the fact that the letters of the alphabet have names, which she traces on the ground with a twig. She reflects that the letters seem to have a life of their own.[47]

It is at this point in the narrative that Arseny explains to Ustina how some of the letters of the alphabet, when written with a titlo, symbolize numerals. This is depicted in a way that enables the reader to learn along with Ustina: "Наконец, буквы имели числовое значение. Буква а под титлом обозначала единицу, в – двойку, г – тройку." Ustina then poses a question that may occur to the contemporary reader as well: "Почему после а̄ идет в̄, удивилась Устина. Где же, спрашивается, б̄ ?"[48] To explain why the letter б̄ is not used as a number, Arseny must invoke Greek—a language he does not know. Here, the author lends his medieval scholar's voice to Arseny in order to explain that since the numerical system was adopted from Greek, it uses only Church Slavonic letters that have Greek counterparts. The final symbol in Ustina's question is thus revealed to be a non-existent grapheme, produced by an error of extrapolation that is perfectly logical from the perspective of someone learning to read.

Church Slavonic letters appear several times on this page of the novel:

Наконец, буквы имели числовое значение. Буква а под титлом обозначала единицу, в – двойку, г – тройку.

Почему после а̄ идет в̄, удивилась Устина. Где же, спрашивается, б̄ ?

Обозначение чисел следует греческому алфавиту, а в нем этой буквы нет.

Ты знаешь греческий?

Нет (Арсений положил ладони на щеки Устины и потерся носом о ее нос), так говорил Христофор. Он тоже не знал греческого, но многие вещи чувствовал интуитивно.

Поражавшие Устину свойства букв подкреплялись не менее удивительными свойствами чисел. Арсений показывал ей, как числа складывались и вычитались, умножались и делились. Они обозначали вершину истории человечества: год ҂е҃ф-й (5500-й) от

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47   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 85.

48   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 86.

Сотворения мира, когда родился Христос. Они же знаменовали завершение истории, явленное в страшном числе Антихриста: х͠ѕе (666). И все это выражалось буквами.

У чисел была своя гармония, отражавшая общую гармонию мира и всего в нем сущего. Множественные сведения такого рода Устина вычитывала из грамот Христофора, которые ей охапками приносил Арсений. Неделя имат семь дний и прообразует житие человеческое: а҃-й день рождение детища, в҃-й день юноша, г҃-й день совершен муж, д҃-й день средовечие, е҃-й день седина, ѕ҃-й день старость, з҃-й день скончание.[49]

By switching between scripts in this way, the narrative gives the reader a glimpse of what Ustina sees as she learns to read. At the same time, however, the heterographic elements impede readers not literate in Church Slavonic from reading aloud as medieval readers typically did, rendering it a silent, and thus modern, reading experience. "The effect of an alien script," notes Lock, "is to silence the reader, or at least to make the reader hesitate in that extraordinary phenomenon of inward hearing that is both the condition and the pleasure of 'silent' reading."[50] For such readers, the defamiliarizing effect of the Church Slavonic script embedded in the modern Cyrillic text is arguably twofold. First, it interferes with the audial flow of the reading process. Lock notes that "in meeting alien letters, we allow ourselves to stumble, to be puzzled, to be interrupted in our hearing."[51] Second, it serves to highlight the visual qualities of Church Slavonic script. As Lock observes, "On whatever we cannot vocalize, our eyes become fixated: instead of hearing, we see symbols."[52] As Franklin notes in *The Russian Graphosphere, 1450–1850*, "Script is visible, language is not; script is accessible to all who look, language only to those who can decipher or who can have others decipher for them."[53] In Vodolazkin's *Laurus*, the device of heterographics makes

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49   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 86.

50   Lock, "Heterographics," 100.

51   Lock, "Heterographics," 101.

52   Lock, "Heterographics," 102.

53   Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere*, 102. Later in the novel, however, the narrator helps the uninitiated reader along by providing parenthetical glosses to the most difficult numeral symbols in the narrative. "As soon as a gloss is provided," notes Lock generally, "the inner voice is resumed." Lock, "Heterographics," 100.

strange the relationship between visible script and invisible language, making readers more conscious of what we do when we read.

Second-Language Acquisition in *Laurus*

The process of learning a foreign language is depicted twice in the novel. In the second part, "The Book of Renunciation," Arseny has moved to the town of Beloozersk, where people turn to him for medicinal help. He buys books on the healing qualities of herbs and stones, including one foreign book. For a translation of it, Arseny pays the merchant Afanasy Blokh, who has traveled in German-speaking lands. The translation proves to be unreliable and so Arseny decides to learn German himself. The depiction of his study of a foreign language emphasizes his initial perceptions of it as strange:

> Следя за тем, как купец читает незнакомые литеры и переводит составленные из них слова, Арсений заинтересовался соотншением языков. О существовании семидесяти двух мировых языков Арсений знал из истории столпотворения, но кроме русского за всю жизнь не слышал пока ни одного. Шевеля губами, он про себя повторял за Блохой непривычные сочетания звуков и слов. Когда он узнавал их значение, его удивляло, что знакомые вещи можно выражать столь необычным, а главное – неудобным образом. Вместе с тем многообразие возможностей выражения Арсения завораживало и притягивало.[54]

> By following along as the merchant read the unfamiliar symbols and translated the words they composed, Arseny grew interested in the correlations between languages. Thanks to the story of the confusion of tongues, Arseny knew of the existence of seventy-two world languages, but he had yet, in his whole life, to hear a single one of them beyond Russian. His lips moving, he repeated the unaccustomed combinations of sounds and words to himself, after Blokh. When he learned their meanings, it surprised him that familiar things could be

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54   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 146–47.

expressed in such an unusual and—this was the main thing—awk-
ward way. At the same time, the multitude of opportunities for expres-
sion entranced and attracted Arseny.[55]

In focus here is not proficiency (indeed, the narrator expresses skepticism about
his teacher's mastery of German), but rather Arseny's process of becoming
multilingual and the perspectives it opens on language itself.

The novel's third part, "The Book of Journeys," introduces a new multilingual
character: the Italian Ambrogio Flecchia, who was born near Milan and studies
at the university in Florence. When the Pskovian merchant Therapont tells him
that people in Rus were expecting the world to end in 1492, Ambrogio decides
to learn Russian. The lessons are described as "уроки (древне)русского," using
parentheses in a way that juxtaposes the medieval characters' perspective on
their language (which to them was not old, but simply Russian) with that of the
distanced one of the contemporary reader.[56] As with Ustina's reading lessons, a
Slavonic Psalter serves as course material, which Ambrogio (like Ustina) under-
stands well, having already learned the psalms by heart (in his case, in Latin).[57] He
also masters Russian pronunciation: "To Therapont's surprise, little by little, the
young man became his phonic twin. The Russian originals of the words Ambro-
gio pronounced could not always be discerned immediately, but at times—and
this happened ever more frequently—Therapont involuntarily shuddered as the
purest intonations of a Pskov merchant issued from the Italian's lips."[58] The fol-
lowing passage codeswitches as it conveys variously Ambrogio's direct speech,
passages from a text he reads, and his thoughts. I quote it at length in numbered
sections in order to show the pattern of code-switching in the text:

[1] Все свое время Амброджо посвятил чтению русских книг,
в которых он пытался найти ответ на волновавший его ворпос.
Многие люди, зная о его поисках, спрашивали о времени конца
света.

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55 Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 119.

56 In English, "lessons in (Old)Russian." Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 230. Another example of this
mixed medieval–modern perspective occurs when Ambrogio comments that "due to poor
roads, the people of ancient Rus prefer waterways," adding that "[t]hey, by the way, do not
yet know that Rus is ancient, but in time they will figure it out." Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 258.

57 Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 231–32.

58 Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 187–88.

[2] Мню, яко единому Богу се ведомо есть, уклончиво отвечал Амброджо. В чтомых мною книгах многажды о сем речено, обаче несть в них численного согласия.

[3] Разноречие источников приводило Амброджо в смятение, но попыток выяснить дату конца света он не оставлял. [...]

[4] В лето 6967 (читал Амброджо) грядет рожество Антихристово, и будет в рожении его трус, иже николиже не бывал прежде времени сего окаянного и лютого, и будет плач велик тогда по всей земли вселеньской.

[5] Да (думал Амброджо), Антихрист должен появиться за тридцать три года до конца света. Но 6967 год от Сотворения мира (он же 1459 от Рождества Христова) давно прошел, а знамения пришествия Антихристова все еще не ощутимы. Следует ли из этого, что конец света откладывается на неопределенный срок?

[6] В один из дней посадник Гавриил сказал ему:
Мне нужен человек, который добрался бы до Иерусалима. Я хочу, чтобы в память моей погибшей дочери Анны он повесил в храме Гроба Господня лампаду. И этим человеком мог бы быть ты.

[7] Что ж, ответил Амборджо, я мог бы быть этим человеком. Ты много для меня сделал, и я отвезу лампаду в память твоей погибшей дочери.[59]

[1] Ambrogio devoted all his time to reading Russian books, attempting to find in them an answer to the question that was troubling him. Many people who knew about his quest asked when the end of the world would come.

[2] Me thinketh it be knowne only to God, Ambrogio answered, evading. I have ofte read in books of what is sayde, moreover, there is not any numeric agreement within them.

[3] The contradicting sources flustered Ambrogio but he did not abandon his attempts to determine the date of the end of the world. [...]

[4] The birth of the Antichrist in the year 6967 was approaching (Ambrogio read) and there will be created an erth quake soche as has

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never been before this woeful and fierce time and there will then be great mourning, on all the land of all times and places.

[5] Yes (thought Ambrogio), the Antichrist should make an appearance thirty-three years before the end of the world. But year 6967 from the Creation (this was year 1459 since the Birth of Christ) had passed long ago and indications of the coming of the Antichrist were still not tangible. Did it follow that the end of the world was being indefinitely postponed?

[6] One day, Mayor Gavriil said to him:

I need someone willing to go to Jerusalem. I want him to hang an icon lamp in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, in memory of my perished daughter Anna. And that person could be you.

[7] Well sure, Ambrogio said, I could be that person. You have done a lot for me so I will take the icon lamp in memory of your perished daughter.[60]

The first paragraph of this passage [1] is in modern Russian. The next paragraph [2] codeswitches to archaic language in directly conveying Ambrogio's archaic speech. The narrator then switches back to modern Russian [3]. The fourth paragraph [4] switches to archaic language to convey what Ambrogio reads, while the fifth paragraph [5] conveys Ambrogio's thoughts in modern Russian, translating in a parenthetical aside the year 6967 (mentioned without explanation in the preceding paragraph) from Anno Mundi to Anno Domini, as 1459. The character Mayor Gavriil speaks directly to Ambrogio in modern Russian [6], to which Ambrogio replies in modern Russian [7]. No organizing principle can be discerned in the code-switching of this passage, as Ambrogio's speech is conveyed in archaic language at the beginning and in contemporary language at the end. Rather than consistency, the passage foregrounds language variation and hybridity.

Mixing Medieval and Modern

Linguistic code-switching is just one of the ways in which the novel takes the reader back and forth across the medieval–modern divide. Anachronisms and metatextual comments also have this effect. Christofer, Arseny, and Ambrogio all have the gift of prophecy, and their ability to see into the future renders some

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60   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 196–97.

of the anachronisms logical according to the premises of the plot, while other anachronisms, such as the appearance of an object made of plastic in the medieval setting, remain unexplained.[61] There is an anachronistic playfulness here that can be seen as a kind of code-switching between historical periods.

Ambrogio has prophetic visions of future events that are, from the perspective of the contemporary reader, well-known historical facts. As reviewer Ken Kalfus observes, "The semi-rational notions of the two mystics [Arseny and Ambrogio] resonate in a particularly contemporary register, as fifteenth-century Russian religious thought grazes against the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics."[62] For example, Ambrogio's prophecy about Christopher Columbus's discovery of America in 1492 anachronistically attributes the light in his vision to "excessive electrification of the atmosphere over the Atlantic."[63]

Another of Ambrogio's visions transports the reader to 1977, when a graduate student at Leningrad State University participates in an archeological dig in Pskov. In this intradiegetic story, one of the characters mentions a "holy fool named Arseny" who lived in Pskov centuries before. The typical Soviet-era names in this passage—a car of the Pobeda make, Komsomol Square, Labor Street, Soviet Army Bridge, the Kirov Theater, Leningrad—acquire a defamiliarizing effect because Ambrogio, as the focalizer of the vision, is situated in a historical period five centuries previous to the Soviet one.[64] The vision contains phenomena that are unfamiliar to Ambrogio but common knowledge for the twenty-first-century reader, for whom the Brezhnev era belongs not to the future (as for Ambrogio), but to the past. In a metatextual moment, the archeologist compares the medieval period he studies with the one in which he lives: "historians in the Middle Ages were unlike historians these days. They always looked for moral reasons as an explanation for historical events. It's like they didn't notice the direct connection between events. Or didn't attach much significance to it."[65] Here the narrative blends not only historical periods but also understandings of the world. While archaisms in the language of the novel take the contemporary reader back in time, anachronisms in the plot take the

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61   In a passage describing the melting of snow in Spring, plastic bottles appear on the ground along with old leaves. Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 82.

62   Ken Kalfus, "Holy Foolery," review of *Laurus*, by Eugene Vodolazkin, *The New Yorker*, October 15, 2015. https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/holy-foolery.

63   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 228.

64   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 235–37.

65   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 192.

medieval characters forward in time. Both can be read metaphorically as a kind of translation between medieval and modern periods.

Translating and Transcending Language

Arseny and Ambrogio's language skills come in handy when they set off for Jerusalem with a merchant caravan. The novel's third part, entitled "The Book of Journeys," is filled with travel, exotic places, and action, recalling medieval adventure tales such as the *Alexander Romance*. It also depicts several multilingual situations. While passing through Moravia and Austria, Arseny recognizes words from his German lessons and also notes the incomprehensibility of Latin (to both himself and the locals) when he attends a Catholic mass in Vienna. Multilingualism brings dangers as well as opportunities—for example, when Croatians in a tavern in Zara mistake the German spoken by Arseny and his fellow pilgrims for Turkish and suspect them of being enemy spies.

The many languages spoken in "The Book of Journeys" are not visible on the surface of the text, however, which contains considerably less code-switching than the earlier parts of the novel. Instead, multilingualism is conveyed through descriptive passages and plot twists that require the characters to speak and translate foreign languages. These episodes result variously in mutual understanding or incomprehension, a sense of familiarity or strangeness, making Arseny—and potentially the reader along with him—aware of the contingency of language. He perceives words as "more and more shaky now. Some slip away without being identified."[66] The novel's representation of multilingual situations is taken a step further—beyond language—when Arseny is depicted conversing with a young woman in Venice with whom he has a long and meaningful conversation, although they do not speak the same language:

> Меня зовут Лаура, и я не понимаю твоего языка.
> Я вижу, что ты чем-то подавлена, но не знаю причины твоей скорби.
> Иногда легче говорить, когда тебя не понимают.[67]

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66   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 226.

67   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 311.

My name is Laura and I do not understand your language.

I see you are somehow dispirited but I do not know the reason for your sorrow.

Sometimes it is easier to speak when people do not understand you.[68]

Despite the language barrier, Arseny understands that Laura has leprosy and heals her of it: "Лаура не смогла бы повторить его слов, но они наполнили ее бесконечной радостью, ибо главный их смысл был ей уже открыт."[69] "Laura could not have repeated his words but they had filled her with endless joy, for their main meaning had already been disclosed to her."[70] Similarly, in the novel's final part, Arseny converses with a bear and communicates telepathically with the Elder Innokenty. In all of these passages, communication transcends language and meaning is shown to reside beyond words. Kellman argues that "[t]he translingual project is ultimately and implicitly panlingual. The urge to accumulate languages culminates in a *reductio ad infinitum*, the dream of transcending all languages to arrive at a space of universal truth."[71] Vodolazkin depicts the transcendence of language as a sacred space, in which a religious truth is revealed to the characters.

Certain details from the first part of the novel reappear and resonate in a new context in the fourth part. The motif of writing recurs in a long passage with code-switching in which the protagonist, now a monk at the Kirillov Monastery who goes by the name of Amvrosy, copies texts in the scriptorium. As with the earlier description of Christofer's birchbark writings, this passage relates in detail the process of writing on parchment and then incorporates directly into the narrative excerpts from the texts he copies, again employing code-switching as a device. The distanced, scientific style of the concluding paragraph of this chapter creates a striking contrast to the preceding text, locating at the same time these manuscripts in the twenty-first-century world of the reader:

Amvrosy's manuscripts are currently kept in the Kirillo-Belozersk collection of the National Library of Russia (St. Petersburg). Researchers who study them unanimously note that the writer's hand is firm and the script round. In their opinion, this attests to the strength and inner harmony Amvrosy acquired, and the tall height of the letter known

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68   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 254.

69   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 313.

70   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 256.

71   Kellman, *Nimble Tongues*, 31.

as *er* indicates that he had left the kitchen for good by this time and questions related to food for his earthly body were of little interest.[72]

Later the protagonist teaches the young woman Anastasia to read. At this point he lives as an eremite in a cave without books, so he writes words on birch bark or traces them on the ground with a stick. While the first half of the novel foregrounds literacy and the materiality of texts and language, the second half emphasizes the ephemerality of written language, as Arseny erases what he has written in order to make room for new words. The depiction of writing in the dirt also emphasizes a sacral function of language by relating how non-literate visitors perceive the words:

> Они не знают, что именно написано на земле, но им известно, что славянские буквы священны, ибо способны обозначать священные понятия. Неславянских букв они не видели. Делают преувеличенно большие шаги и передвигаются вокруг надписей на цыпочках. Аристид праведник вопросим бысть: колико лет человеку добро жити? И отвеща Аристид: дондеже разумеет, яко смерть лучше живота. Уходят, так и не прочитав беседы с Аристидом. Кланяются Лавру и желают ему многая лета.
>
> Не дай Бог, беззвучно отвечает им Лавр.[73]

> They do not know what, exactly, is written on the ground but they are aware that Slavonic letters are sacred, for they are able to represent sacred notions. They have not seen non-Slavonic letters. They move around the inscriptions on tiptoe and make exaggeratedly large strides. This was inquired of Aristides the righteous: how many yeares is it good for a man to live? And Aristides answerd: untill he does understonde death is better than lyfe. People leave without reading the conversations with Aristides. They bow to Laurus and wish him many more years.
>
> God forbid, Laurus answers them soundlessly.[74]

This passage enacts the process, described by Lock, whereby readers unable to decode the verbal meaning of a script focus instead on another aspect. Although they do not understand the writing, they nonetheless attribute it significance—

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72   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 319.

73   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 424.

74   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 349.

in this case a religious one, believing as they do that "Slavonic letters are sacred, for they are able to represent sacred notions." Scholars have shown that Church Slavonic was indeed perceived in this way in medieval Russia. For example, Uspensky observes that it "was perceived as beneficent and salvatory. Just as the name of God would be considered salvatory, so also could the language of communication with God be acknowledged as salvatory by its very nature."[75] Thus Arseny's visitors do not need to be able to decode the language represented in order to accord the writing sacred meaning. These non-literate visitors "leave without reading the conversations with Aristides," bowing to Laurus and wishing him a long life. This creates a kind of inside joke with the reader of the novel, who understands that such a wish goes against the import of the words traced in the dirt.

The idea of meaning that transcends human language appears earlier in the novel as well. When Arseny hesitates to give away the bag with Christofer's birchbark writings, the holy fool Foma assures him that Christofer's wisdom will remain with him "in an unwritten way."[76] The chapter in which Ustina (and, by extension, the reader) learns to decode Church Slavonic letters concludes paradoxically with Arseny affirming that he and Ustina "already understand each other without words."[77] In a conversation about apocalyptic calculations, Arseny points out that "the letters that denote the numerical figures are subject to flaws," to which Ambrogio objects that the numbers "have their own higher meaning, for they reflect that heavenly harmony."[78] The novel opens, as we have seen, with a description of a medieval belief in the magical power of words, and it ends with the protagonist transcending, through spiritual faith, the need for human language. He also comes to view time, as well, as one of the "relative things,"[79] losing track of linear, "forward-moving time" and sensing "only cyclical time, which was a closed loop."[80]

Each of the four parts of the novel draws the reader's attention to language in different ways. "The Book of Cognition" depicts the pleasures of language acquisition and reading. In "The Book of Renunciation," the protagonist, burdened by sorrow and guilt, prefers silence but continues to read books and

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75   Uspensky, "The Language Situation," 367.

76   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 199.

77   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 87.

78   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 200.

79   Vodolazkin, *Lavr*, 404.

80   Vodolazkin, *Laurus*, 339.

learns German. In "The Book of Journeys," the characters negotiate multilingual situations and translate between languages. The final part, entitled "The Book of Repose," emphasizes a sacred function of writing, as the protagonist's faith frees him from the need for human language. Over the course of the novel, the focus shifts from sign to signified, from speech to silence, and from human language to sacred meaning.

The novel *Laurus* can be read as a sampler of medieval literary genres and language, offering contemporary readers glimpses into what Franklin calls the graphosphere of fifteenth-century Rus. A graphosphere is "a way of looking at words, at cultures of writing, at how and why words come to be where they are in the world around us."[81] The novel depicts different materials, languages, genres, and functions of texts, and exemplifies some of the different ways in which texts were produced, acquired, read, and received in this transitional period before the establishment of print culture.[82]

Vodolazkin has likened medieval texts to Lego sets, in that they "can be taken apart, reconfigured, and combined."[83] His novel *Laurus* can be said to do the same thing with language—taking it apart and combining older and newer elements in order to create something original that imaginatively evokes the Middle Ages for contemporary readers. At the same time, the novel makes us conscious of the reading practices and worldviews of our own time. As Naoki Sakai points out, "today's readers [. . .] inhabit social and discursive formations that are markedly modern. To the extent that they take the modern regimes of reading, writing, reciting, translating and so forth for granted, they tend to assume the *modus operandi* sustained by these regimes to be universally valid, and they can become incapable of imagining the possibilities of regimes other than that of national monolingualism."[84] Contemporary works like *Laurus*, however, foreground language in ways that make it harder to take modern regimes of reading for granted. This may be indicative of a literary trend, as Walkowitz suggests: "Literature in a time of media expansion and renewed nativism focuses, once again, on the happening of language: the ontology of the work, the materiality of words, and the multi-disciplinary, multi-format production of text."[85]

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81   Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere*, 9.

82   For a summary of defining characteristics of this period, see Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere*, 12–13.

83   Vodolazkin, "The New Middle Ages."

84   Naoki Sakai, "How Do We Count a Language? Translation and Discontinuity," *Translation Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 78.

85   Walkowitz, "Less Than One Language," 112.

In his essay "The New Middle Ages," Vodolazkin writes, "Despite the presence of elements of artistry—repetition, wordplay, and the like—the aesthetic qualities of medieval texts were not dwelled upon."[86] Yet it is precisely such elements that his novel *Laurus* invites the contemporary reader to contemplate. Through heterographics, code-switching, anachronisms, and depictions of reading, multilingualism, and translation, Vodolazkin has built linguistic hybridity into the novel, mixing medieval and modern language, religious and secularized worldviews. This creates for the reader moments of recognition as well as defamiliarization. In reading about how the characters in *Laurus* learn to read, write, and translate the texts of their time, we learn things about medieval Rus and its graphosphere, gaining in the process a new perspective on the twenty-first-century graphosphere and our own views of language and the world.

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86   Vodolazkin, "The New Middle Ages."

Chapter 9

Concluding Remarks

Shklovsky coined the term *ostranenie* in order to capture how literature makes objects in the world appear strange and thereby new, giving back to the reader "the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make the stone stony."[87] Shklovsky's concept pertains to literary language in general and not multilingual literature in particular, but it is interesting to note that he evokes the language practices of speaking and writing to exemplify the effect of *ostranenie*, encouraging his readers to "remember the feeling you had when holding a quill in your hand for the first time or speaking a foreign language for the first time."[88] He further notes that poetic language "often is quite literally a foreign language — Sumerian for Assyrians, Old Bulgarian as the basis of literary Russian."[89]

Shklovsky was a Formalist and thus focused more on texts than on readers, but his references to readerly sensations in the above-quoted passages resonate with the contemporary postcritical emphasis on readers' role in the interpretative equation. As Felski writes,

> While we never own language, we are able to borrow it and bend it to our purposes, even as aspects of what we say will continue to elude us. We are embodied and embedded beings who use and are used by words. Even as we know ourselves to be shaped by language, we can reflect on our own shaping, and modify aspects of our acting and being in the world.[90]

Readers bring to texts different competencies and experiences with regard to language, making reading, as Felski puts it, a "two-way transaction" in which "texts pass through densely woven filters of interpretation and affective orientation that both

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87   Shklovsky, "Art as Device," 80.

88   Shklovsky, "Art as Device," 79.

89   Shklovsky, "Art as Device," 93.

90   Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 31–32.

enable and limit their impact."[91] When words on the page impede comprehension, language itself appears strange to us, prompting us to read translingually. In reading translingually, we attend closely to the visual and aural qualities of language, becoming more aware of what we do with it, as well as of what language does with us.

The novels examined in this book deploy multiple languages in a variety of ways—through form as well as content. In some, fictional characters codeswitch and translate in a multilingual fictional world. In others, languages mix on the level of the text. Some of the novels use heterographics to create a visual representation of language differences. By depicting and enacting language practices such as writing, reading, and translating, these narratives foreground the complexity of language as well as its limits. Several of the novels contain a metafictional and metalinguistic dimension, inviting readers to think about not only what language means, but also how it is used in different situations.

Grushin's novel *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* (examined in Chapter 2) depicts the eponymous protagonist's feeling of disorientation in the face of societal change. It depicts in English a fictional world that operates in Russian. Translingual elements in the text thus have the potential to evoke different responses from readers, who may recognize cultural allusions, or alternatively, experience a sense of defamiliarization that parallels that of the disoriented protagonist. As the analysis of Petrova's Russian translation of Grushin's novel shows, literary translingualism can easily get lost in translation, due to the situatedness of the target audience.

The translingual protagonists in Makine's *Le testament français*, Idov's *Ground Up*, and Grjasnowa's *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt* (discussed in Chapter 3) are all depicted negotiating language barriers in transnational contexts. Translingual elements in these novels prompt the reader to reflect on translingual experience, as well as the unequal status and circulation of languages in the world today.

The narrator of Lindén's *För många länder sedan* (Chapter 4) also inhabits a multilingual world, assuming the role of cultural mediator in the plot as well as vis-à-vis the reader. Discrepancies between the language of the narrative and the language situations it depicts open up a meta-level in the novel that draws the reader's attention to how language is represented.

While the activity of translation appears as a motif in the novels analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4, it serves as the central theme in Alameddine's *An Unnecessary Woman* (discussed in Chapter 5). It reflects a current fascination with the figure of the translator in fiction as well as within translation studies. By depicting literary translation as an inherently translingual and creative activity closely related to both reading and writing, Alameddine's novel prompts readers to reevaluate traditional views of literary translation as secondary to original writing.

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91   Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 18.

Research in the field of multilingual literary studies to date has not focused primarily on popular culture, but the study of popular genres such as crime fiction can offer new insights on translingual reading. The case study in Chapter 6 is a contemporary suspense novel in which translingual elements are, at first glance, less striking but nevertheless central to the plot and theme. Different languages that appear in the fictional world of the Swedish thriller *En rasande eld* serve to build suspense in the reading process and, at the same time, prompt readers to question prejudices regarding language.

Re-reading the nineteenth-century classic *War and Peace* by Tolstoy through a translingual lens (Chapter 7) helps us catch sight of the many functions of literary multilingualism, from a device of characterization to metalinguistic commentary. As we have seen, some translingual passages in *War and Peace* highlight instances of failed communication and the incommensurability of languages.

The novel *Laurus* by Vodolazkin (Chapter 8) draws on the complex language heritage from medieval Russia in its depictions of diglossia and other medieval language practices, including writing, reading, and translation. In the process, the narrative defamilarizes reading practices of the twenty-first century. Here, too, a metalinguistic dimension engages readers in thinking about the many uses of language in the world, especially its sacral functions.

The phenomenon of literary translingualism is "as old as mythical Babel," as Kellman points out, but real-world developments have arguably made translingualism more salient in fiction of the early twenty-first century.[92] Pratt suggests that "[h]eterolingual experimentation and improvisation is a proliferating feature of the global languagescape."[93] The visibility of multiple languages in contemporary literature as well as the burgeoning scholarly interest in this phenomenon are responses to changes brought by globalization, digitalization, and migration.

Reading, suggests Peter Mendelsund, "mirrors the procedure by which we acquaint ourselves with the world. It is not that our narratives necessarily tell us something true about the world (though they might), but rather that the practice of reading feels like, and *is* like, consciousness itself: imperfect; partial; hazy; co-creative."[94] Translingual reading turns us into translators and co-creators, inviting us to reflect on the many functions of language in fictional worlds, as well as on our own relations to it in the twenty-first century.

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92   Kellman, *"Preface,"* xi.

93   Pratt, "Comparative Literature and the Global Languagescape," 289.

94   Peter Mendelsund, *What We See When We Read: A Phenomenology* (New York: Vintage, 2014), 403.

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