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ECHOING AND REVERBING IN TRANSLINGUAL POETRY*

In recent years, the term translingualism has gained currency among literary scholars. In translingual poetry, poets work within the same text with more than one language (or with a nonnative language) to obtain freedom from cultural and monolingual restrictions and identities. At the same time, translingualism manifests itself, among other things, in those formal and semantic effects that arise in the fluctuating zone of transitions between languages. This paper will focus on two types of repetitions in translingual writing: echoing and reverbing. Echoing provides phonetic resonances between morphemes and lexemes of different languages (operating on the paradigmatic axis), whereas reverbing places these repetitions on the syntagmatic axis, making lexemes and phonemes reverberate in the unfolding textual space. The semantic effects of such poetic writing are caused by the overlapping of multilingual interfaces, the interaction between repetitive and resonant elements of two or more language systems. A translingual poetic text can serve as a model for self-translation as a formal and semantic transfer. Such textual practice could be called “trans-language writing”, meaning by trans-language a synthetic, hybridized, creolized language and at the same time a language in which constant internal translation, recoding, and linguistic transfer is in effect.

Key words: translingualism, poetry, repetition, echoing, reverbing, paradigmatics, syntagmatics, resonance, self-translation, trans-language, Elizaveta Mnatsakanova.

*I believe in repetition. Yes. Always and
always write the hymn of repetition*

Gertrude Stein

Repetition across several languages is a specific way of multilingual poets' language policies, not necessarily political. Translingual resonances and reverberations organized into serial or repetitive structures may be thought of as manifestations of the migrant *self*, of nomadic *subjectivity* in transition.

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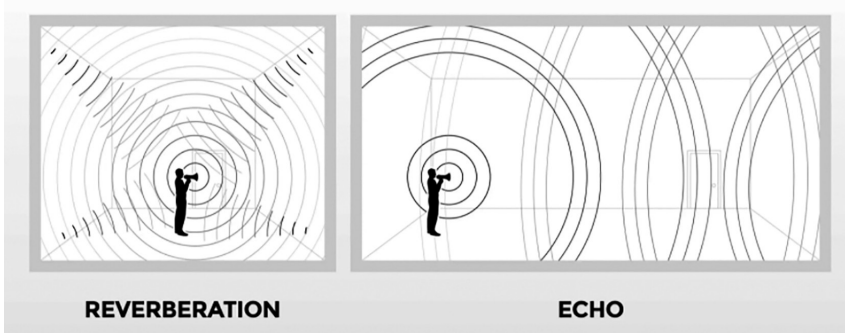


Fig. 1.

My two basic technical terms to render repetitions in this kind of experimental writing across languages are taken from contemporary sound studies and music production techniques: *echoing* and *reverbing*. I especially employ their meanings that emerged with dub music and continue to be in use in all sorts of electronic techno and bass music. In dub music hardware and software, two types of delay effects are used — *reverb*, which is basically the prolonged fading repeat of a sound on a time scale, and *echo*, a reflection of a sound against a distant space, where the reflecting and the returning sound wave may overlap and may reinforce the original sound (see Fig. 1 for an illustration).

Making use of Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic terminology, we might locate the reverb on the *syntagmatic* axis and echo on the *paradigmatic*. Applying this principle to translanguaging verse, by *reverbing* we would then mean sound and word repeats within the same language (as, e. g., in Gertrude Stein's lines *Wet spoil. / Wet spoil gaiters and knees and little spools little spools or ready silk lining. / Suppose misses misses. / Curls to butter. / Curls. / Curls*), and by *echoing* the resonances between morphemes of two or more idioms (as in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* lines *Do you tell me that now? I do in troth. Orara por Orbe and poor Las Animas! Ussa, Ulla, we're umbas all! Mezha, didn't you hear it a deluge of times, ufer and ufer, respund to spond?*). Both repetition effects work as a joint mechanism of linguistic and cultural transfer in a polyglottic poetic text.

In translanguaging poetry, poets work within the same text with more than one language to obtain freedom from cultural and monolingual restrictions and identities. Steven G. Kellman was among the first to discuss translanguaging in relation to literature, in his book *The Translingual Imagination* (2000). Translingual is the term he uses for writers who work with more than one language or a non-native language in order to mark their freedom from cultural and monolingual restrictions. Writers such as Samuel Beckett or Vladimir Nabokov, according to Kellman, can freely move between two or more linguistic identities¹. Another study

¹ See also Kellman et al. 2021 for up-to-date accounts of literary translanguaging.

of this kind, Sarah Dowling's recent book (2018) analyses poetry which is deliberately positioned by authors as translingual. It is mainly concerned with post-colonial poetry, exposing the mechanisms of dominance and repression of one language by another. The term *translingual* is sometimes used in a narrower sense: the bilingual American-Russian poet Eugene Ostashevsky speaks of a kind of writing where each of the national languages involved is not repulsed from the other, just as in cases of foreignisms or heteroglossia, but is used as part of a hybrid multilingual entity².

Self-translation: echoing and reverbing across languages

The Babelian poetics of language universalism dates back to the early avant-garde, to texts by authors representing two or more cultures at once, the migrating authors. This orientation towards *multilingualism* is partly due to the increased role of language contacts in the more mobile and unstable world between the world wars.

Wassily Kandinsky was such a migrant artist who fluctuated between Russian and German cultures and languages. In the light of literary translingualism it is interesting to look at Kandinsky's poetic self-translations. Before releasing his poetry album *Sounds (Klänge)* in 1912, Kandinsky tried to create analogs of his poetic miniatures in Russian. This kind of interlinguistic transfer is at hand in the beginning of the poem "Видеть/Sehen" ("See") in Russian and German versions:

Синее, синее поднималось, поднималось и падало.
Острое, тонкое свистело и втыкалось, но не протыкало.
Во всех углах загремело.
Густокоричневое повисло будто на все времена.
Будто. Будто.
Шире расставь руки.
Шире. Шире. (Kandinsky 2016)

Blaues, Blaues hob sich und fiel.
Spitzes, Dünnes piff und drängte sich ein, stach aber nicht durch
An allen Ecken hat's gedröhnt
Dickbraunes blieb hängen scheinbar auf alle Ewigkeiten.
Scheinbar, Scheinbar.
Breiter sollst Du deine Arme ausbreiten.
Breiter, Breiter. (Kandinsky 1912)

We can see both reverberating repetitions of words and echoing resonances between the two versions. The verse suggests sound echoes between the two versions: the sound б in the repeated word *будто* mirrors the sound *b* in the German word *breiter*, and the Russian ш in the word *шире* resonates with the Ger-

² See his interview: <https://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2017/4/4/a-conversation-with-eugene-ostashevsky> (last accessed 8.05.23).

man *sch* in *scheinbar*. There is an interlingual paronymic attraction of two twin texts written by a bilingual poet. The self-translation that occurs here is a translation from the language of pictorial perception into verbal language, albeit in two different versions. This kind of correspondence in abstract poetry can be found in all of the artist's poetic sketches. Kandinsky wrote in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* that *repetition* of a word, its extended iteration does the same job for poetry as the repeated shapes in painting contribute to pure abstract art:

The apt use of a word (in its poetical meaning), repetition of this word, twice, three times or even more frequently, according to the need of the poem, will not only tend to intensify the inner harmony but also bring to light unsuspected spiritual properties of the word itself. Further than that, the frequent repetition of a word [...] deprives the word of its original external meaning. Similarly, in drawing, the abstract message of the object drawn tends to be forgotten and its meaning lost (Kandinsky 1977: 15–16).

Kandinsky evidently influenced the German-French Dadaist Han Arp and the French-American journalist and poet Eugene Jolas who created multilingual poems. Arp interspersed multilingual versions of certain lines in his semi-zaum texts, whereas Jolas switched to other languages within the same texts, self-translating himself in the process of text generation:

Maurulam katapult i lemm i lamm
 haba haba tapam
 ihre sprache ist ihnen im munde zerbrochen

Maurulam katapult i lemm i lamm
 haba haba tapam
 son langage s'est cassé dans sa bouche

Maurulam katapult i lemm i lamm
 haba haba tapam
 his language broke in his mouth (Arp 1966: 61–62)

Mots-Frontiere: Polyvocables

malade de peacock-feathers
 le sein blue des montagnes and the house strangled by rooks the
 tender entêtement des trees
 the clouds sybilfly and the neumond brûleglisters ein wunder stuerzt
 ins tal with
 eruptions of the abendfoehren et le torrentbruit qui charrie les
 gestes des enfants. [...] (Jolas, cit. in Perloff 1999: http))

It is no coincidence that such cases of self-translation were contemporary to Walter Benjamin, who in his 1925 article “The Task of the Translator” noted such a feature of modern languages as their “deep relationship” and “a special kind of convergence” (Benjamin 1996). The kinship of languages is fully manifested precisely in translation, but this happens differently than through the similarity of the original and adaptation. According to Benjamin, translation

does not have the function of repetition in another language, but the function of complementing another language.

The problem of *self-translation as self-repetition* has indeed been a challenge for some poets. For some bilingual poets, such as the Chilean Vicente Huidobro and the Italian Giuseppe Ungaretti, versions of poems in two languages were created without any difficulties; for others, such as Samuel Beckett, who was an exemplary literary bilingual, self-translation was as tormenting practice, according to his own confessions. Beckett's bilingual corpus represents a unique document of translanguing interaction. The early poem "Home Olga" (1932) is an example of Joycean-like multilingualism with foreign words echoing and reverbing, as in the line *O for an opal of faith and cunning winking adieu, adieu, adieu*.

Beckett self-translated at least six of his poems. The first one he self-translated is a 1939 poem dedicated to the absence of love:

elles viennent	they come
autres et pareilles	different and the same
avec chacune c'est autre et c'est pareil	with each it is different and the same
avec chacune l'absence d'amour est autre	with each the absence of love is different
avec chacune l'absence d'amour est	with each the absence of love is the
pareille	same.

(Beckett 1977: 38–39)

This bilingual poem can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, as a text about beloved women who come and go, leaving behind a gap of love. But it can be understood in another way, by reading this text as an autopoetic dialogue: *they* in this sense are lines that in another language are the same and at the same time different. If we place both poems opposite each other, as is done above, we can think of these poems as a kind of mirror image of the two languages.

Before his death in 1989, Samuel Beckett wrote an extremely mysterious poem in two versions — French and English. In French it is called *comment dire* ("how to say"), and in English — *what is the word*. This text can be considered the testament of Beckett, a bilingual who suffered all his life with the problem of "languageless" bilingualism. This poem is a minimalist meditation on the theme of "the madness of language", unable to express the inexpressible in any of its idioms:

folly –	folie –
folly for to –	folie que de –
for to –	que de –
what is the word –	comment dire –
folly from this –	folie que de ce –
all this –	depuis –
folly from all this –	folie depuis ce –
[...]	[...] ³

³ Available online at <http://www.beckettarchive.org> (last accessed 8.05.23).

A case of repetitive translingualism: Elizaveta Mnatsakanova

In Russophone poetry of the second half of the twentieth century, translingualism featured most vividly in the work of Elizaveta Mnatsakanova who was a prominent figure of Russian émigré poetry of the neo-avant-garde. Mnatsakanova emigrated from Moscow to Vienna in 1975. She was born to an Armenian family whose original family name was Mnatsakanjan. She later took up a German heteronym for herself Elisabeth Netzkowa⁴. The borderline position between the three linguistic and poetic cultures — Russian, Armenian and German — affected the linguistic poetics of her texts which incorporate various national idioms into the space of verbivocovisual verse.

In a book written in Russian but with the German title *Beim Tode zugast*, Mnatsakanova applies translingual techniques such as quotations from European poets. A poem from the book quotes the German poet Johannes Bobrowski's "Im Strom", which combines love lyric and biblical allusions. The phrase *Als ich dich liebte* echoes Russian phonetics and semantics, involving the mechanism of interlingual paronymy: *liebte* — *либо, любо, люби*; *dich* — *тех* (Fig. 2):

als ich dich liebte
 ах либо ты либо я
 либо *liebte*
 много
 не долбили *liebte*
 liebte либо
 любят не так
 ли не там ли
 liebte
 бо
dich liebte
 dich
 не тех
 dich dich
 dich
 люби *liebte*
 медь *dich*

Fig. 2. (Mnatsakanova 1982: 36)

в прекрасном таком
 в прекрасном моем
in-kog-ni-tus
in-kog-ni-tus
in-kog-ni-tus
 инко
 нья
 тоин
 ко
 нья
 токог
 ни
 токог
 да бы подольше подальше бы да
 своим отвас вмоем
 прекрасном
 таком
 далеком
in-kog-ni-tus
 дад да когда да да ког
 дада
 лекода
 леком бы таком и
 нко
 гни
 то ин
 ко
 гнит
 о
 о мне бы гнить подольше бы
 свамисваси отвас от вас
 гниил и
 в прекрасном далеком
 от вас
 INKOGNITUS

Fig. 3. (Idem: 56)

As is often the case in Mnatsakanova's verse, the poem is built like a song set to a particular tune or motif. In this case, the motif of love is performed using the elementary building blocks of two languages — deictic shifters, conjunctions,

⁴ For her books she often used trilingual heteronyms, a sign of her translingual identity: the Russian *Mnatsakanova*, the German *Netzkowa* and the Armenian *Mnatsakanjan*.

and interjections. In another poem from this cycle, the Latin word *incognito* is embedded (in a slightly modified version, as *inkognito*) into the motif of Nikolai Gogol's "beautiful, unknown distance" (прекрасное далёко), breaking down into forms that do not exist in Russian (*инко, тоин, токоз*), then into semantically significant word forms *когда, гнить*, referencing the key theme of death for the poetic cycle (Fig. 3). Processes of this kind persist in the poet's later work, with a growing tendency towards interlingual polyphony and musicalization of the verse.

The title of another book, *Das Buch Sabeth*, also contains a kind of bilingual lexeme *Sabeth*, which in Russian is read as "testament" (завет), and in German — as an abbreviation for *Elisabeth*, the name of the poet herself. In the first verse of *Das Buch Sabeth*, we see the Latin forms of the Catholic chorale reverberate in the Russian text. Interlingual paronymy is spread throughout the text in verbal consonances (*laudate — когда-то; в марте — aparte; crimossa — грозы*) and in phono-semantic complexes (*lau — лау — оул; март — март — мерм*). Some word forms begin to echo in other languages as well (*part — apart — aparte — à part*), further increasing the translanguing tension in the text (Fig. 4). The translanguing decomposition of words occurs with even greater force than in her previous book, as new word formations appear out of the re-composed fragments of words: *ли, не бо, бо ли, бы ли, ли бо* (Fig. 5).

part
apart
à part
aparte
aparte

о когда-то о когда-то

повстречались лаудамус лаудате

лаудате лаудате

над

про

улком

гулко узком

узком узким

ла crimossa

грозы

марта лац в марте

date

Fig. 4. (*Idem*: 82)

noli
oblivisci
Idus
Martias

ноли ноли ноли

ноли oblivisci ноли oblivisci

но ли ли не

бо бо бо

не бо ли

ли ли ли

бо марта не

не бо ли бо не

бо не бы ли

ло марта но

ли бы ли

Fig. 5. (*Idem*: 84)

Unfolding into sound series resembling atonal music, languages sound with new meanings in Mnatsakanova's repetitive verbal music, as syllables recombine from bilingual lexemes (*viscina*: from *oblivisci* + *тайна*; *тайно*: from *тайна* + *noli*). The author's musical thinking allows the reader to listen to the poetic text across the phonetics of different languages and perceive rhythmic patterns in the minimal units of words. Besides being a poet, Mnatsakanova was a professional musicologist, a specialist of the Vienna school. It is no doubt that as such she was implementing in her verse the techniques of Arnold Schönberg and Anton von

Webern. She also actively collaborated with contemporary electronic musicians in performing her poetic work.

Translingualism as a poetic technique plays an important role in Mnatsakanova's magnum opus — "Requiem: Autumn in a lazzaretto of innocent sisters". Its first part bears the Latin title *SEPTUAGESIMA*, the name for the ninth Sunday before Easter, a day of rejoicing in Christian symbolism, thereby marking the theme of sevenfoldness, which appears in the poem in several languages. The opening lines in Latin and English introduce September, the seventh Roman month, and Septimus, the name of a male nurse in the hospital (Mnatsakanova 2003: http):

В Лазарете Сестер Неповинных — сентябрь погибели
September. Septimus. Седьмой гнойной
Круг на Небе Седьмом
Небо меркнет в глазах, Брат Septimus, Брат Septimus

Interlingual switches also accompany the motif of light in the last parts of the poem. The Latin phrase from the Catholic prayer "Requiem Aeternam" (*Lux perpetua luceat eis*) is embedded into the bilingual stream of repetitive phrases, echoing in the phonetics of two languages at once: *веселые лейтесь лейся плоть лейся лейтесь luceat лейтесь eis лейся / лейтесь luceat лейся eis лейтесь luceat лейся плоть eis лейся* (Ibidem). The motif of eternal light from the prayer is repeated with the inclusion of the German neologism *ewiglicht* (*ewig* (*lich*) + *Licht*) (Ibidem):

святые eis святыe ewig светом ewiges вечным eis
лейтесь eis ewiges eis
лейтесь lux luceat eis
святитесь ewiges eis
струитесь lux perpetua

[...]

СМЕРТОВОЙ СВЕТОВОЙ СВЕТОВОЙ СВЕТОВОЙ LUX LICHT LUCEAT E I S
DONA EIS EIS ewiglich eis ай, вернись, воротись, обратись, eis вернись
Ewig LUX ewiglich ewig LICHT LUCEAT EIS LUCEAT EIS ewig LICHT
EWIGLICHT EWIGLICH LUX PERPETUA ewiglich eis LUCEAT EIS LUCEAT
EIS luceat eis ei

In the final passage of this long poem, the entire text resembles an anagram permeated with phono-semantic series or motifs (Ibidem):

я верю! CREDO! credo PE
кою волною грозой я шагом я мигом я мимо resurgam волною PE
кою волною я верю! CREDO! приду CREDO! гряну credo PE
квием, реквием, упокой! requiem aeternam resurgam requiem PE
сургам рекою волною водою весною resurgam resurgam PE
чною травую resurgam рекою волною RESURGAM волною
я шагом я рядом resurgam я бродом я бредом
я с небом я светом resurgam я смертью я с веком

я вестью невестой из гроба resurgam восстану
 я рядом я громом RESURGAM resurgam
 я небом resurgam! восстану я гряну

Mnatsakanova's "Requiem" is, therefore, a translingual poetic and musical oratorio, in which a biographical scene from a Soviet hospital is recast as a church chant based on the motifs of a Latin requiem. The multilingualism of chanted or recited phrases brings together the "spaces of times" (a metaphor used elsewhere by Mnatsakanova herself) in a single sounding event of the text-score.

The last published work by Mnatsakanova, the poem "Jelmoli", was finished in 2006. Just like "Requiem", it is a seven-part composition. The title word *Jelmoli* is cryptic: it sets the melody for entire sonorous fabric of the text, yet the actual identity of *Jelmoli* — and her variants *Emilia*, *Elmilia*, etc., mentioned in the text — remains unresolved. The poem begins with a meditation on the sound theme of this name, which takes on a variety of forms in Latin and Cyrillic script (Mnatsakanova 2018: 303, Fig. 6):

ЧАСТЬ ПЕРВАЯ
 PART 1

PREGHIERA

ЕЛЬМОЛИ! ЕЛЬМОЛИ! Открой книгу боли

МОЛИТВА

ЕЛЬМОЛИ, ельмоли, скажи, оттого ли JELMOLI ельмоли о молви того ли ЭЛЬМОЛИ того оттого ли

ЕЛЬМОЛИ о молви ELMOLI о молви ОТКРОЙ МНЕ

О, МОЛВИ, JELMOLI, ELMOLI, ELMILII, О, МОЛВИ, о молви ОТКРОЙ мне открой мне О МОЛВИ ЭЛЬМОЛИ

Скажи, оттого ли ЕЛЬМОЛИ ЭЛЬМОЛИ открой мне ЭЛЬМИЛИИ скажи мне

того ли тебя ли ОТКУДА НА СЕРДЦЕ О МОЛВИ ЕЛЬМОЛИ о молви

давно ли до боли ELMOLI ELMILIE такая оступда ЕМИЛЛИ ЕМОЛЛИА

ELMOLIA ДО БОЛИ БЕЗМОЛВНО до боли JELMOLI до боли откуда на сердце оступда

О молви Эльмолия Откуда БЕЗМОЛВИЕ на сердце до боли БЕЗМОЛВНО безмолвно

на сердце ЭЛЬМОЛИА ELMILIA JELMOLNO JELMOLIA ЭЛЬМИЛИА

того ли ЕЛЬМОЛИ до боли JELMOLI, ЕЛЬМОЛИ открой мне

ельмоли, кого ли безмолвно ЕМИЛЛИ ЕМИЛЛЕ откуда на сердце

ЕЛЬМОЛИ ответь мне ЕЛЬМОЛИ ответь, о ELMOLI, ответь, о ELMILII, ответь, о ЭЛЬМОЛИА, откуда

Fig. 6.

The opening motif of the poem borrows from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Part one, called *Preghiera* in Italian, refers to the last part of the *Commedia* — the prayer to the Virgin Mary. The theme of prayer itself becomes central here, along with the theme of silence. The text incorporates quotations from Dante's opus, individual words which pass through the lines as motifs. Thus, *dolente* resonates with *долины*, and the Russian *домины* and *домовины* with the Latin *domini*. Latin phrases are translingually anagrammed: *IN DOMINIO DOMINI* / *в немых домовинах*. In the last parts of the text, phrases from both the *Commedia* and from church hymns interfere with each other in four languages at once (Russian, Latin, Italian, and German). Multilingualism goes hand in hand with the polyphony of the musically structured poetic text (Idem: 324, 330, Fig. 7 & 8):

DE PROFUNDIS

De profundis clamavi ad te Exaudi vocem meam Sustinuit anima mea in verbo meus Fleisch und lebe ewig	Из глубины глубокой зову и услышится голос и светом вечным светится слово вечно	Aus der Tiefe rufe ich Meine Stimme sei für ewig erhöret und das Wort sei ewig Fleisch und lebe mit euch ewig
--	---	---

ET LUX PERPETUA LUCEAT EIS AMEN

Fig. 7.

L'AMOR
 ЛЮБОВЬ

che move L'AMOR
 что видит и ведет ЛЮБОВЬ

che move il sole
 и бег планет

и солнца путь o grandiose stelle и луч звезд и луч
 звезды

O LUCE ETERNA CHE SOLA IN TE SIDI,
 о, вечный изначальный свет пресветлый,
 o trina luce che in unica stella
 oh abbondante grazia ond'io presunsi

Fig. 8.

The switch between languages naturally complements the polyphonic structure of verbal and musical unity in the graphic space of the page. Interlingual shifts are designed to provide access to other semiotic dimensions of the verse, both visual and aural at once. Most often, it is musical themes, leitmotifs, and reminiscences that motivate the switch between idioms across the barriers between languages. Mnatsakanova's texts are constantly *transmuting* (to use Roman Jakobson's linguistic term) into consistently different sonic and graphic forms, into different versions of the same text, into tautological constructions of minimalist music⁵.

From 1975 on, Elizaveta Mnatsakanova was writing within a foreign linguistic and cultural environment, thereby making Russian a kind of foreign language for herself. It is characteristic that one of her earliest poems, "Dedication" (1966), prophesies an exit from the Russian environment so that she can become more than just a 'Russian poet'. This exit from one culture and entry into another makes her a *translingual* and *transmedial* poet, in whose work languages reverberate like musical voices in a polyphonic composition.

⁵ Stephanie Sandler suggests the "language sculpting" metaphor:

Mnatsakanova's poetry creates a sound environment in which the listener is caught in a seemingly endless present: sounds repeat and recombine, and words shift as speech acts from imprecations to affirmation, from plea to prediction. In that appeal to the imagination, Mnatsakanova asks readers to join her in an experience of the senses and of the mind's capacity to bend language as if it were clay to be sculpted (Sandler 2008: 619).

In her aural orientation, Sandler notes, Mnatsakanova suggests a certain affinity with the American Language poet Susan Howe. We could also extend this comparison to Gertrude Stein, especially due to the role played by incantation and repetitiveness in her texts; and to Louis Zukofsky with the professed musicality of his long poem *A*, cf. his often-quoted passage: *I'll tell you. / About my poetics— / music / speech / An integral / Lower limit speech / Upper limit music.*

Contemporary Russo-Anglophone “Trans-Language” Writing

Emigration as a social and aesthetic prerequisite for poetic translanguaging defines the poetics of Eugene (Evgeny) Ostashevsky, an English-speaking author with Russian roots. At the age of 11, he moved from Leningrad to New York, and by the time his first poems were published in the early 2000s, he had already become a fully integrated English-speaking American author. Nevertheless, the Russian stratum of his biography surfaces in his own texts and translations. Ostashevsky has published English translations of many important Russian linguo-experimental poets, such as Daniil Kharms, Alexander Vvedensky, Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, Alexei Parshchikov, Dmitry Golynko, and Alexander Skidan.

In Ostashevsky's own work, the Russian element manifests itself not only in references and allusions to Russian history and literature, but also in purely linguistic permutations of Russian vocabulary. The names of Russian poets are transmuted into English names, like Boris Pasternak, who is encoded in the title of the book *Enter Morris Imposternak, Pursued by Ironies* (2008a). The process of translating Vvedensky's poetry into English creates an oscillating interlingual vibration, which reverberates in the translator's own writings. Thus, the poem 'Senselessness for Vvedensky' from his first book *Iterature* evokes the ambiguity of the national borders of the author's poetic language: either English, or Russian, or their odd mutual permutation (Ostashevsky 2005: 19): *You've lost your ear, you can't distinguish / plosive from surd, Russian from English, / you comprehend nothing. Accept this verse then /from a Eugene trying to be a horseman.*

Inter-language transitions allow languages to find resonance in each other, permeate each other at different levels, as in the case of linguistic transfer in bilingualism. Ostashevsky invokes the metaphor of a DJ mix (*The Life and Opinions of DJ Spinoza* is the title of a 2008 poetry collection), in which different music tracks are synchronized, merged, and played back in each other. Ludwig Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy is at play in Ostashevsky's work, as he himself acknowledges in an unpublished paper: "As far as whether bilingualism (or, in my case, multilingualism) encourages language games, my answer is an unqualified yes. Language games make you look at language from the outside. They are a kind of meta-poetry in the way that certain logical paradoxes are a kind of meta-mathematics".

Language as such becomes a challenge for Ostashevsky's poetic task, as an epigraph to the book about DJ Spinoza signals: *Language is the first compromise we make.* The plurality of languages and idioms is ironically enacted in this polyphonic and polyrhythmic mix of heteroglossic fragments. The birth of speech (*mother tongue, Muttersprache*) from the muttering glossolalia (*mutter*) as a poly-language is translangually interpreted: *She says: / t // k // p // mutter babble / Her first words / are not in her Muttersprache / She walks / cries mutter / mutter mutter / Die Mutter kann nicht hören.* Brodsky rhymes with Trotsky to the tune of the paronymic similarity of the Italian *zoccolo* ("hoof") and the Russian *цокать* ("clatter"): *DJ SPINOZA: It's me that stalks by the zoccolo / цокая вокруг да около / Come down softly and open your door / cause I got*

more rhymes than Joseph Brodsky / I got more rhymes than Leon Trotsky / Brodsky / Trotsky / Brodsky / Trotsky / La-là.

Multilingual sound samples recall either Andrey Bely's "language of languages", or Mallarmé's "language within language": *the sounds words make / as they plead for life // that's all that remains / of the language of language ...* "Птичий язык" ("bird language") comes to the fore in another book by Ostashevsky, *The Pirate Who Does Not Know the Value of Pi* (2017), both in its Russian idiomatic sense of a secret language and coded speech, and literally — in the speech of the main character, a *parrot* who cannot understand in what language he is producing sounds and meanings. His interlocutor, the "paronymic attractor" and "linguistic alter-ego" *Pirate*, asks questions in the manner of Wittgenstein's language games about what kind of language the two are using to communicate (unless it is one character in two guises?). Does Parrot speak parrot? Is that his native language? Then, is it possible to speak a non-native pirate language, and vice versa? Or, perhaps, they both speak a "private language", the possibility of which was questioned by the same Wittgenstein? A passage of the poem titled "Discussion between P and P about native language cognitive processing" makes a direct reference to Wittgenstein. These questions represent the linguistic situation of Ostashevsky's own linguo-critical writing: he writes in a transnational, transgressive dialect, which is generated by incessant linguistic switchings and shifts that evade any static identities.

Ostashevsky's Russian is an estranged kind of "foreign Russian", as this fragment from the *Parrot's song* lays bare: Попугай попугай попугай попугай / Давай попугай как следует / Извергов низвергай визг извергай / Писк испускай попугай повторяй / Припев / Попирать помаленьку / Напирать на попугая. His poetry incorporates a lot of Russian songs, which echo in-between the English lines as a kind of cultural and linguistic background. The effect of these Russian-language inserts sometimes creates a punning Joycean burlesque: *O half-power sickle! O cowardly dreadnought! O Battleship / Potemkin Village! Row, row, column, column, сегодня /«тò п̃ан», завтра не поймал!*

In recent poems, Ostashevsky interprets this translanguing situation more as a tragedy than as parody. For example, in the cycle "Die Schreibblockade" from his book *The Feeling Sonnets*, dedicated to the Siege of Leningrad, which acquires the names Letterburg and Forgettisburg in one of the poems, based on trans-linguistic punning and "tongue-slipping" (Ostashevsky 2022: 57) :

You have been renamed Letterburg. Lately and literally.
 For you are a littoral city and the river rhymes around your purse.
 Those who part from you place their birthplace on the tip of the tongue, and call
 it their Forgettisburg address.
 The deserts of your squares are speechless, the arch of your General Staff is arch.
 Letter-forgetter, letters are for climbing, die Buchstaben sind zum klettern.

The shifts between Russian, English, and German (Ostashevsky lives in Berlin, which adds a clear German layer to his translanguing verse) continuously mirror each other here, as in the line: *Your prospects are ladders of beech, bu-*

chene Leitern, for literature is a beech, it is wood or wode. / This wood you call бук, read book, but in the mountains чинарь, makar, and the letter, буква. Бук in Russian means “beech” (the tree), and it is from timber that paper is made for books which contain letters (“буквы”). Чинарь evidently refers to the OBERIU writers (some of whom survived the Siege of Leningrad, like Yakov Druskin, Nikolai Zabolotsky, and Igor Bakhterev) whose other group name was Chinari, stemming from an archaic Russian word meaning “maker”. But the makar following the word чинарь in this excerpt not only reads as the English maker but also as a Russian макар, which has the idiomatic meaning “a way to do something” and at the same time refers to the Russian personal name Макар, in turn borrowed from the Ancient Greek makarios meaning “blessed, happy”.

The texts in this cycle represent the historical experience of an author who was born in a city that survived a tragic siege decades ago and still lives with the memory of the siege and the “word of the siege”. But the Siege also becomes a metaphor for writing itself, the stops, or blockades, one encounters while switching between languages, the gaps that get filled by alternating idioms. Thus, the Russian сугроб is re-etymologized as a “duplicate for coffin” (*Snow-drift is sugròb. A sugrob is no drift. It is an understudy for a coffin*), in order to evoke the experience of the 1942 winter of the Siege, when snowdrifts literally transformed into coffins.

Adrian Wanner (2021: 208) calls Ostashevsky’s poetics “an experimental style resembling the ‘Language’ trends in contemporary American poetics”. The poet himself does not deny his indebtedness to the Language poets. However, Russian avant-garde language-oriented poetry, from Vvedensky to Dragomoshchenko, is just as important a tradition for him. In Ostashevsky’s poetic work, these two trajectories of linguistic experimentation from the last century coincide most closely and produce a new kind of Anglo-Russian translingual poetry. We might even go as far as to call this *trans-language writing*, where *trans-language*⁶ means a synthetic, hybridized, or creolized idiom, and at the same time a language constantly undergoing inner self-translation, transcoding, and linguistic transfer.

A poet of the 2010s generation who also lives in Berlin, Inna Krasnoper, is working in the wake of these translingual experiments in the poetry of the Russian diaspora. However, as opposed to Ostashevsky, she uses multilingualism to explore the motor-rhythmic properties of interlingual paronymy. As a professional dancer and performer, she is interested in movement, the alternation of words at the junction of languages — Russian, German and English. These experiments, on the one hand, are in the tradition of American poetic minimalism and phonic poetry, going back to Gertrude Stein and Jackson Mac Low. On the other hand, they take up Elizaveta Mnatsakanova’s translingual poetics of verbal music, as in this piece playing with Russian-English sound resonances:

⁶ Cf. the term *translanguaging* introduced in the 1980s in the context of first-second language acquisition theory and used extensively in pedagogy and educational research. See, for a basic account, García et al. (2014).

Из зума запахло другим человеком / Из иди из зума — иди по дороге // ...
 Chill a little — out of zoom. And then, chill a little bit more // Out of nowhere —
 a zoom showed up // Show me some zoom and then zoom-in (slightly) // *Шел по*
шоу, пошел за шоу / Зашел за шоу — show me some more // Шоу some more time
 out of zoom — *истина покажется / Истину возьми, a little bit заверни*⁷.

Translanguaging is not only performed but also commented on: *why does 'rite' sound like луч to me / i wouldn't know / let's let it be луч / a rite could be луч /and could be no лучше than no луч*. Creating this kind of poetry is a playful and plastic way of learning languages through the process of writing, as well of learning how to translate and self-translate across languages: *took by surprise — взять за сюрприз / шариться — scuttle through / проходить между — рас-shuffle-иться / раскланяться — take a bow / ударить в грязь лицом — been there done that / всё-таки стену — gegen die wand / побегать тут и там — chop-chop / чебурек и чебурашка — been there done that*. The result of these verbal operations is a moveable language that can slip through the tiniest cracks of interlingual sounds.

Another vector of fusing Russian and American poetry of language is outlined in the work of contemporary poet Ivan Sokolov, who lives between Saint-Petersburg and San Francisco and translates Russian and American poetry. His own poetic work draws, on the one hand, upon Mnatsakanova's experiments with the space of verse on the page, and on the other, on American Language poetry with its reflexivity of poetic writing and its focus on the materiality of linguistic signs. Being essentially bilingual, Sokolov writes texts in two languages at once. For example, his work “Anne Hathaway // Энн Хэтэуэй” (2011)⁸ consists of alternating parts in Russian and English and, in addition, contains translations of other texts from English into Russian, as well as what he calls “self-translations from Russian into Russian”:

suffocated blackness sort of tickled anne
 бедная девочка с букетиком в речушке о
 mrs shakespeare's sight seemed crucially sponged off
 энн макает в чернильницу перо смыкаются
 black ink crept out of the hole and bled into the air round her
 сгоревшие лепестки кончиков пальцев
 it rivered all over and anne couldn't stop it
 следов не смоят все ароматы аравии
 the air got inked
 белое время обращает цвета обнажает зрачки зарешёченные белёсым ситом
 somebody's closed the shutters
 в каждой бледной прожилке словно офелия проплывает прожитая строчка
 recollection waifs started dawdling around
 будь солнцами все буквы не видать ей

⁷ Inna Krasnoper's texts discussed here have only been published on social media. They are used here with permission by the author.

⁸ <https://polutona.ru/?show=0410210050> (last accessed 8.05.23).

she went down to the bottom of the sea
 кто вождь этой слепой

One of Sokolov's recent poems, titled "And night took night and illumined the night" (2021), is written both in Russian and in English. In these twin versions we can observe translingual shifts that involve lexical units from multiple languages, including German and French (Fig. 9⁹):



Fig. 9.

Keeping silent in different tongues becomes an alternative to speaking in tongues. The full poetic potential of these multilingual silences and utterances is yet to be unleashed and elucidated. Trans-language writing has proved to be one of the fascinating crossovers in innovative literature, between various languages, and in various traditions of avant-garde verbal creativity¹⁰. It would be possible to give examples of some other poets of the recent years working with translingual writing, such as Kazakh-Russian bilingual Ramil Niyazov or Sofia Kamill who works with the languages of those countries between which she moved — Swedish, Kazakh, English and beyond. These are only those authors who are associated with Russophone poetry.

The Israeli electronic literary journal *Dvoetochie*¹¹ has been publishing selected writings of language pairs with which contemporary poets work. There are especially many authors working simultaneously with the Russian and Ukrainian languages, which is especially valuable in the light of recent military conflict and humanitarian crisis. One of such authors is the Ukrainian poet Danik Zadorozhny, a bilingual who writes both in Russian and Ukrainian and who is nowadays (as of May 2023) living in Lviv in Western Ukraine, like millions of other people at great risk caused by Russia's war against Ukraine. A recent poem by him, titled "Can't promise you much", addresses precisely the issues of language choice and language mixing/separation:

⁹ Published on-line in *Flagi* journal: <https://flagi.media/piece/521> (last accessed 27.02.23).

¹⁰ See more on linguistic and cultural transfers between Russian and American poetics of experiment in Feshchenko 2023.

¹¹ <https://dvoetochie.org> (last accessed 27.02.23).

[...]

everything's different

and we could never get used to it, but we are
getting used to it. though it's not about me. it's all about listening
to what people who survived the invasion are saying,
in what languages are those people talking?

come and see

and listen

I can't listen to it, for so long, it's too much, but it's what we need to know
and remember

what happened, *sluchilos'* or *trapylos'* to us¹²

Conclusion

Translingualism in poetry allows for what Gilles Deleuze would call “the play of difference and repetition”, the tension between the sameness, likeness and unlikeness of words in multiple idioms. *Reverbing* on the syntagmatic axis (what Gertrude Stein called *insistence*) and *echoing* on the paradigmatic across multiple idioms (what could be called interlingual paronomasia), sound patterns and word combinations in such poetic texts play out the extraordinary language games with ordinary language. The semantic effects of such poetic writing are caused by the overlapping of multilingual interfaces, the interaction between repetitive and resonant elements of two or more language systems. A translingual poetic text can serve as a model for self-translation as a formal and semantic transfer. Such textual practice could be called “translanguage writing”, meaning by *trans-language* a synthetic, hybridized, creolized language and at the same time a language in which constant internal translation, recoding, and linguistic transfer is in effect.

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¹² Translated from Russian and Ukrainian into English by Yuliya Charnyshova: <https://collateral-journal.com/index.php?cluster=33> (last accessed 27.02.23).

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ЕХО И РЕВЕРБЕРАЦИЈА У ТРАНСЛИНГВИСТИЧКОЈ ПОЕЗИЈИ

Резиме

Последњих година термин транслингвизам стекао је популарност међу проучаваоцима књижевности. У транслингвистичкој поезији, песници користе више различитих језика у овину истог текста (или пишу на нематерњем језику) како би се ослободили културних и једнојезичких ограничења и идентитета. Истовремено, транслингвизам се манифестује, између осталог, у оним формалним и семантичким ефектима који се јављају у флукутирајућој прелазној зони између језика. Овај рад ће се фокусирати на два типа репетиције у транслингвистичком писању: на ехо и на реверберацију. Ехо ствара фонетско сазвучје између морфема и лексема различитих језика (на парадигматској оси), док реверберација смешта ова понављања на синтагматску осу, чинећи да лексема и фонеме одјекују у отвореном текстуалном простору. Семантички ефекти овакве поезије постигнути су преклапањем вишејезичких сучељавања, као и интеракцијом између репетитивних и резонантних елемената двају или више језичких система. Транслингвистички поетски текст може послужити као модел за аутопревођење као формални и семантички трансфер. Оваква текстуална пракса би се могла назвати „трансјезичним писањем”, подразумевајући под термином транс-језик синтетички, хибризовани, креолизовани језик, а истовремено и језик у коме се одвија стално интерно превођење, прекодирање и лингвистички трансфер.

Кључне речи: транслингвизам, поезија, репетиција, ехо, реверберација, парадигматика, синтагматика, резонанца, аутопревод, транс-језик, Јелизавета Мнацаканова.