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Foreword

Interrelated Modes of Multimediality, Expressiveness and Code-switching in Arts

Linguistic diversity can be found everywhere – including literature and other forms of artistic expression. Enclosing one or more linguistic codes has indeed been a common practice for poets and writers, painters and sculptors, film makers and actors, but also for music composers, singers and architects belonging to different traditions and eras. Let us think about authors who adopted multiple different tongues in their writing, e.g. Beckett, Nabokov, Joyce, etc. Or movies, such as *Call me by your name*, a film based on André Aciman’s book of the same title and directed by Luca Guadagnino, in which characters interact in three languages: English, Italian, and French. There are also singers, especially opera singers, who sing in languages other than their native one/s, or simply employ multiple languages among those available in their repertoires, such as Zuccherò Fornaciari, who employs Italian, English, Spanish, etc. These are just a few examples among the myriads of multilingual artistic cases we constantly encounter in everyday life when we watch a movie, listen to the radio, or attend an exhibition.

Sometimes we recognize and pay attention to linguistic diversity in an immediate and natural way. It is often the case with explicit multilingual forms which capture our attention, sometimes even challenging our understanding/comprehension. Literary works, such as experimental poetry or the linguistically flamboyant *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce, do not fail to surprise the reader, linguistically speaking. At other times, by contrast we barely or do not even notice that multiple different codes are present in a work of art. The reason can certainly be that languages are present but not directly exposed, which often happens with the so-called latent practices.¹ Examples of the latter can be found in literary works, for instance, in which the author or the narrator linguistically mediates the story to facilitate the reader’s comprehension.

It may also happen that we are simply not used to thinking about multilingualism outside the box. We are not trained to perceive letters of an alphabet in a building,

¹ See Till DEMBECK: “There is No Such Thing as a Monolingual Text! New Tools for Literary Scholarship” *Polyphonie: Mehrsprachigkeit, Kreativität, Schreiben*, 2017/1, hdl.handle.net/10993/31641; Giulia RADAELLI: *Literarische Mehrsprachigkeit: Sprachwechsel bei Elias Canetti und Ingeborg Bachmann*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2011; Gary D. KELLER: “The Literary Stratagems Available to the Bilingual Chicano Writer”. In Francisco JIMÉNEZ (ed.): *The Identification and Analysis of Chicano Literature*, New York, Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1979, 263–316.

we do not identify different codes in dance, we have never compared multilingual creativity to cooking processes and recipes, we do not necessarily search for languages in a painting, etc. This publication starts from the idea that multilingualism manifests itself in various forms of contemporary artistic and non-artistic practices and that it should be investigated in all its modalities and interactions. The real starting point today is that we cannot think in terms of monomodality anymore. Once, as Kress and van Leeuwen suggest, there was, in Western culture, a distinct preference for monomodality. The most highly valued genres of writing (literary novels, academic treatises, official documents and reports, etc.) came entirely without illustration, and had graphically uniform, dense pages of print. Paintings nearly all used the same support (canvas) and the same medium (oils), whatever their style or subject. In concert performances all musicians dressed identically, only the conductor and the soloists were allowed a modicum of bodily expression. The specialised theoretical and critical disciplines which developed to speak of these arts became equally monomodal: one language to speak about language (linguistics), another to speak about art (art history), yet another to speak about music (musicology), and so on, each with its own methods, its own assumptions, its own technical vocabulary, its own strengths and its own blind spots.²

However, above all since the twentieth century, things have changed considerably and today it would be short-sighted and narrow-minded to privilege monomodality over multimodality. The reason is simple: there has been a key perspective change demonstrating that multiple systems and sources must be included in an analysis aspiring to grasp artistic production to its fullest, given that multimodality has become the norm rather than the exception.³ More practically, this means that we should take into consideration all the resources related to a specific work disregarding whether they belong to a specific mode rather than another. Just to give a literary example, as argued by Kress and van Leeuwen, “there are many other resources that can be used to create texts in addition to the spoken and written word.”⁴ Apart from the linguistic ones, there are various other “semiotic systems” that make up texts and “comprise at least language, gesture, music, and movement.”⁵ Wording, in other terms, cannot exist without all the other related factors, such as “typography, layout, color” but also “sound, gesture and facial expression”⁶ which contribute to the meaning-making processes and to the final realization of a work. For this reason, semiotic repertoires – meant as the totality of resources used by people to communicate spanning speech, image,

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² Gunther KRESS – Theo VAN LEEUWEN: *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, 1–2.

³ Anthony BALDRY – Paul J. THIBAUT: *Multimodal Transcription and Text Analysis: A Multimedia Toolkit and Coursebook*, London, Equinox, 2006, 4.

⁴ KRESS – VAN LEEUWEN: *op. cit.* 4.

⁵ KRESS – VAN LEEUWEN: *ibid.* 1.

⁶ Nina NØRGAARD: *Multimodal Stylistics of the Novel: More than Words*, London, Routledge, 2018, 17.

text, gaze, movement, etc.⁷ – have become the real focus, allowing wider and more inclusive and dynamic investigations.

What does all this mean when it comes to multilingualism? If multimodal meaning can be found at the interaction between the different modes, linguistic diversity should also be investigated from a perspective of interaction and integration between different systems. As this special issue *Multimodal Code-switching in Arts*⁸ will demonstrate, these systems cannot be considered as separate entities anymore but rather in their dynamic intercommunication. Whether we consider their multimodal interactions as an extension of monomodal meanings⁹ or as more integrated systems,¹⁰ this opens a series of relevant questions related to linguistic diversity that have to be addressed when we approach literary and artistic production. These sorts of questions, as we will explain after having quickly hinted at what has been already done in the multimodal field until today, directly concern the articles included in this special issue.

To summarize current investigations briefly, we can say that there are some studies on multimodal aspects which are usually related to a specific artistic subfield e.g. literary, film, music or artistic studies. One of the pioneering studies related to figurative arts has been the work of Gardner-Chloros¹¹ on code-switching. By applying the concept of code-switching to figurative arts, Gardner-Chloros demonstrated that language and art – and more specifically the relationship between pictures, sounds and concepts – are much closer than one might expect at first. Not only because the interpretation of pictures might have something to do with linguistic factors,¹² but also because the simultaneous use of art and text is far from being an exception. Let us just think about calligraphy, hieroglyphics, or

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⁷ Annelies KUSTERS – Massimiliano SPOTTI – Ruth SWANWICK – Elina TAPIO: “Beyond languages, beyond modalities: transforming the study of semiotic repertoires”. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 2017/14, 219–232. DOI: 10.1080/14790718.2017.1321651. See also Annelies KUSTERS: “Introduction: the semiotic repertoire: assemblages and evaluation of resources”. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 2021/18, 183–189. DOI: 10.1080/14790718.2021.1898616.

⁸ The term *multimodal code-switching* was first introduced during Johanna Domokos’ ICLA presentation on Tibor Szemző’s film works and discussed in more detail in Johanna DOMOKOS and Marianna DEGANUTTI’s *Literary Code-switching and Beyond. Motivation, Composition, Narrativity, Function, and Multimodal Aspects of Aesthetic Multi- and Translingualism* (forthcoming).

⁹ Victor LIM Fei: “Developing an integrative multi-semiotic model”. In Kay O’HALLORAN (ed.): *Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Systemic-functional Perspectives*, London, Continuum 2004, 220–246; Charles J. FORCEVILLE – Eduardo URIOS-APARISI (eds.): *Multimodal Metaphor*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 2009.

¹⁰ For instance, Francis STEEN – Mark TURNER: “Multimodal Construction Grammar”. In Mike BORKENT – Barbara DANCYGIER – Jennifer HINNELL (eds.), *Language and the Creative Mind*, Stanford, CA, CSLI Publications, 2012, 255–274.

¹¹ Penelope GARDNER-CHLOROS: “Code-switching in art: from semiotics to sociolinguistics”. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 2010/4.3, 635–664.

¹² Michael BAXANDALL: *Patterns of Intention. On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 1985.

contemporary artistic expressions. Code-switching, continues Gardner-Chloros, is a concept which can be applied to style-switches and genre-switches in the arts as well – going beyond the mere linguistic framework.

Not only figurative arts can incorporate linguistic diversity. In fact, all artistic media in all their varieties can, taking advantage of the interaction with other modes and semiotic resources. Multilingualism in films, more precisely, in audiovisual studies, has been the object of multiple investigations over the last decades.¹³ Spurred by the interest in the processes involved in translation, the dubbing and subtitling of movies – and therefore by the interaction of sound, images, texts, etc. – this field presents numerous relevant contributions which aimed to understand the relationship between this media and languages. This is attested by the fact that scholars provided specific definitions of how a multilingual audiovisual text can be defined, and tackled some key multilingual issues straddling different modes and semiotic resources and repertoires.¹⁴ The translation process itself, which involves a considerable number of narratological, political, and aesthetic issues alongside the linguistic ones, represents another key perspective that can be used to elaborate linguistic diversity multimodally.

These are just a few examples of multimodal research conducted in artistic fields, which have unveiled relevant multilingual aspects. Music, theatre, dance and choreography, not to mention literature and many other artistic expressions, have also been approached through similar lenses. For instance, rap has been defined a “musical-literary form”¹⁵ at the intersection of literature and music and dance as a language in itself. Based on Margolis, de Saussure and Halliday’s theoretical premises, Bannerman considers dance being structured as a language, whose

vocabulary and syntax are present in the way that the word vocabulary is often employed to describe the selection of specific movements, and syntax,

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¹³ Lukas BLEICHENBACHER: *Multilingualism in the Movies Hollywood Characters and Their Language Choices*, Tübingen, Francke Verlag, 2008; Gemma KING: *Decentring France Multilingualism and Power in Contemporary French Cinema*, Cambridge, Manchester University Press, 2017; Verena BERGER – Miya KOMORI (eds.): *Polyglot Cinema Migration and Transcultural Narration in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain*, Vienna, LIT, 2010; Ralf JUNKERJÜRGEN – Gala REBANE, *Multilingualism in Film*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2019.

¹⁴ KUSTERS, A.: “Introduction: the Semiotic Repertoire: Assemblages and Evaluation of Resources”. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 2021/18. 183–189. DOI: 10.1080/14790718.2021.1898616, 183–189.

¹⁵ Imani PERRY: *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2004. Christoph SCHAUB: “The Transnational and Multilingual Feature Song in German Rap Music”. *German Studies Review*, 2021/ 44: 1. 107–125. See also Andrea CIRIBUCO: “Dance, multilingual repertoires and the Italian landscape: asylum seekers’ narratives in an arts-based project”, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 2022/22. 111–124. Michael KLIEN – Steve VALK – Jeffrey GORMLY: *Book of Recommendations. Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, Limerick, Daghdha Dance Company, 2008; Erika FISCHER-LICHTE: *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. by Saskya Iris JAIN, London, Routledge, 2008.

to represent the combination or arrangement of these movements (vocabulary) into chains or phrases of dance material as meta-kinetic rather than as meta-linguistic.¹⁶

This parallel has been extended also to other (non-artistic) practices, such as karate, which has also been considered a language.¹⁷

All these and many other related issues are elaborated in this special issue, which aspires to investigate multilingualism in different artistic productions, such as figurative arts, dance, music, or cinema. The main questions the articles in this special issue raise include for example, where can multilingualism be found in artistic production? What happens to languages (or even better, languaging and translanguaging) when multiple modes coexist? How do different modes interact and integrate each other, linguistically speaking? But also, what can be referred to as language?

The six articles of this special issue and Sabira Ståhlberg's artistic reflection will examine different case studies and contexts including multilingual writers (Anne Tardos) and poets (Sabira Ståhlberg), artists from the sixteenth century (Niccolò Nelli, Agostino Carracci, Giuseppe Maria Mitelli and Giuseppe Piattoli), films (Godard's *Le Mépris*), rap artists with an East Slavonic background, modern dance pieces and their choreography. These case studies belong to diverse cultural traditions and contexts; different modes and languages are involved in the works examined. The way artists, musicians, and writers use multilingualism, together with their language choices, aims and motivations, vary considerably, making this special issue a relevant forum in which multimodality and multilingualism are tested. Indeed, what emerges from these articles is that multimodality stimulates different multilingual approaches, ranging across intermedial code-switching, translanguaging, polyglossic and heteroglossic methods, which inevitably also imply power relations and hierarchies between languages as well as the involvement of extra-linguistic factors. Apart from that, multimodality spurs the examination of semiotic repertoires, which may imply bodily perceptions and sensations both from the inside and outside, as is the case for dance. Many other associations and links can be made in a multidimensional approach, in which the intermingling of diverse linguistic and artistic codes contributes to shaping the aesthetic experience. What matters the most, in any case, is the fact that multimodality should be conceived as a sort of integrating principle according to which the various operative modes has always to be considered in their interactions. Therefore, by looking at all factors influencing a work of art, such as the authorial motivation, the composition, the influencing narrative and fictional framework, its communicative functions,

¹⁶ Henrietta BANNERMAN: "Is dance a language? Movement, meaning and communication". *Dance Research*, 2014/32:1. 67.

¹⁷ Hua ZHU – Wei LI – Daria JANKOWICZ-PYTEL: "Whose karate? Language and cultural learning in a multilingual karate club in London". *Applied Linguistics*, 2019/41: 1. 1–33. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amz014

and its multimodal manifestation, the multilingual is highlighted as a powerful aesthetic device appearing in various forms throughout time. Once a multilingual perspective is applied to artistic forms, the possibilities are not only multiplied but multilingualism becomes multi-modal as well. In other words, it will not only manifest along linguistic parameters, but will be reshaped by audio, visual, spatial, temporal and/or kinetic dimensions of the hypermedium they are placed in. Filmic, theatric and visual media open the door for many other combinations inside an artwork. Bearing that in mind, we hope that this contribution will open up new stimulating research on multilingualism seen through a multimodal eye.

The core of this publication includes the edited versions of presentations from the *Code-switching in Arts* (fall 2022), and *Multimodal code-switching* (spring 2023) conferences organized by Gáspár Károli University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and Bielefeld University. The conferences were part of the two-year research project *Code-switching in Arts* (2022- 2024) at Gáspár Károli University, which resulted in three book-length publications at L'Harmattan – Károli Books (*Code-switching in Arts* 2023, *Literary Code-switching and Beyond* 2023, and *Többnyelvűség a kortárs művészetben* 2024).

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